

Resident Chaplain at Launde Abbey (Part Time) Information Pack



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1 Roles and Responsibilities

1.1 Purpose

As Resident Chaplain, living at South Stables Cottage, you are a member of the permanent praying and working community based at Launde Abbey. As a member also of the Ministry Team, you share responsibility with the Deputy Warden and the team members for the ministry and mission of Launde Abbey, and for sustaining its character as a place of prayer, hospitality, community and sanctuary.



1.2 Responsibilities

Member of the Launde Abbey Community

You will be an active member of the permanent praying community based at Launde Abbey including:

- participating fully in the daily rhythm of prayer in the chapel on all work days (and optionally on rest days)
- living onsite, with South Stables Cottage as your permanent residence
- participating in the life and work of the Abbey as needs arise, and according to the skills and experience you bring.

Member of the Ministry Team

As a member of the Ministry Team, your responsibilities are:

- To be the 'duty chaplain' on specific days (usually 1-2/week) as agreed by rota, including one weekend/month, leading the three daily services and being present for guests as appropriate
- To develop and deliver residential and day retreats, one off reflections and workshops for the Launde Programme and at the request of groups
- To share in the 1-1 work of spiritual direction and pastoral care
- To share in one or two creative projects planned to develop the ministry of the Abbey, in consultation with the Warden and Deputy Warden, and according to gifts and interests
- To undertake some of the routine Ministry Team tasks by agreement, such as responding to prayer requests received via the website, administering bursary requests and looking after one or more of our chapel/prayer spaces.

Other

As a resident onsite, to be a regular member of the twilight and overnight emergency on-call team (usually twice a week).



2 Person Specification

We are looking for an experienced Anglican priest who will bring gifts and experience of value in retreat leading and spiritual direction. We are looking for someone who:

- Is profoundly serious about their own prayer life and is grounded in spiritual practice, including the practices of contemplative prayer and of retreat
- Is drawn to the idea of living and working in a community like that at Launde Abbey
- Is an ordained Anglican, comfortable in leading and participating in multiple daily Common Worship services
- Demonstrates the grace and confidence to lead worship well, whether for a chapel full of bishops and priests or for a single private retreatant
- Has knowledge of, and has been enriched by, a range of different Christian traditions and approaches
- Has a good knowledge of spirituality as a subject of study and respected expertise in teaching or retreat leading in the fields of spirituality, prayer or spiritual formation
- Is an experienced spiritual director
- Is naturally warm and welcoming to all, comfortable with working constructively and sensitively with different diversities, across church traditions and with those of no particular faith
- Demonstrates effective collegial working and being prepared to 'muck in' where necessary
- Demonstrates resilience and is prepared for the hard work and the rewards of a 24/7 hospitality business

You may also bring some of the following:

- Experience of living in a community with a shared life of prayer
- Familiarity with using a range of media for communication such as videos, podcasts/audio, social media sites, and Teams/Zoom
- Experience of event management
- Expertise in working with families
- A good singing voice and/or keyboard skills

The successful candidate must be prepared to share in rota'd overnight on-call responsibilities, and weekend cover. Given the rural location you will need access to a vehicle and a valid driving licence.

2.1 What We Offer

We can offer you:

- Belonging to a praying community
- Opportunity for creativity in designing and delivering retreats and workshops
- Ministry shared with experienced and creative ordained, lay and ecumenical colleagues
- A home and workplace in a beautiful, rural setting, living in a character 2-bedroom cottage on the Launde Abbey site
- Links into the local network of rural village churches and the wider Dioceses of Leicester and Peterborough



3 About Launde Abbey

3.1 Character and Ethos

Launde Abbey is home to the Launde Abbey Community and to the hospitality business of a Christian Retreat House.

For over 900 years the site of Launde Abbey has been a place of prayer and of hospitality. From the days of the 12th century Augustinian Launde Priory, through the heyday of the Tudor Manor House with its estate and family chapel, right through to its present day as a Christian place of retreat for people from all walks of life.

The core of the Launde Abbey Community today consists of the clergy and lay people who live onsite or close by and who daily participate in our pattern of prayer and share in our work of hospitality. Around this constant core, the wider onsite Launde Abbey Community ebbs and flows each day as staff and guests participate in its life.

The Launde Abbey Community is shaped by a shared theological understanding that:

- we are called to love God and love others
- the image of God is embodied in human community,
- the loving welcome of Christ is extended to all,
- God by his Spirit speaks to human beings,
- a heart that is attentive to God is cultivated in stillness,
- spiritual practices form us to live well with others,
- we live in the hope of the risen Christ.

These theological principles are expressed in the Abbey's character as a place of prayer, hospitality, community and sanctuary.

"Beloved brothers and sisters, before all else comes this: love God and love your neighbour. This is the very highest principle we have been given."

The Rule of St Augustine: On becoming those who love



A Place of Prayer

At the centre of the Abbey's life is the daily rhythm of services that take place in the Abbey's chapel – a continuous heartbeat of prayer. The Augustinian canons would have practised a pattern of life framed by prayer, and today most days in the Abbey begin at 8am with a Eucharist. Midday Prayer and Evening Prayer at 5pm follow.

Each day our prayers both look inwards to the life of the Abbey and our guests, and look outwards to the life of the Church and to the needs of the world and of individuals who have asked for our prayers.

All guests are invited to participate in the prayer life which remains steady whilst people come and go. Some find their own pattern of prayer or mindful reflection elsewhere in the buildings and grounds – there are other chapels and corners in which to tuck yourself away – and some days it seems as though prayer and worship are taking place right across the site. Even if guests come without a Christian faith, or are just passing through, many attest that they find this a spiritual place, and they are welcome.

"I find Launde Abbey to be a 'thin place' – where the presence of God is more easily felt, and where prayer and devotion come freely and creatively."

Baptist Pastor Chris



A Place of Hospitality

The statue of the Welcoming (Risen) Christ in our grounds symbolises our commitment to generous hospitality and welcome. Just as those living in the manor house in the past would have welcomed guests, we welcome people into our extended household when they come to the Abbey today. The hospitality of mealtimes and of accommodation is complemented by spiritual hospitality that says, 'just come and be'. Many people come back over and over again and tell us that the Abbey is a kind of 'home' to them.

"For over 30 years, Launde has been our spiritual sanctuary where we have met for prayer, mutual support, and rest. Although our ministries have taken us to different places, it is to Launde [Abbey] that we have always returned."

Anglican Rector Steve



A Place of Community

In the days of the Priory, this site was the home for a community of Augustinian canons who lived and learned here and then went out from here to serve in parishes across a wide area. Today there are many communities centred on the Abbey. There are those who live on site for whom this is literally their home. There are the permanent staff who work here. There are those groups and networks who meet and stay for a while to deepen working relationships or friendships before heading out; some of them go to serve people in other places in contemporary ways. Many people find paths crossing unexpectedly here, resulting in moments of serendipitous conversation or the gentle, silent companionship of retreat. Beyond these are wider networks of those who support the Abbey as volunteers or who give financially to our work. The Launde Abbey Companions is a broad network of those who accompany us with their time, skills, prayer or donations, the Friends of Launde focus on fundraising for projects and the 'Stretchers' are committed to praying for the life of the Abbey.

"The location, space and tranquillity of the stunning scenery has been the perfect place to develop ideas, papers and projects, but also enabled us to spend time together as a group and fostered collegiality."

University Academic Caroline



A Place of Sanctuary

Coming here, into this hidden fold in the Leicestershire countryside, many find themselves better able to step aside from the challenges of life. They find rest, replenishment and inspiration. Whatever their faith or practice, people find the Abbey to be a place of spiritual significance: sanctuary in the sense of being sacred.

The Abbey as a sanctuary also embraces nature. We are actively developing our gardens and encouraging bio-diversity: planting new herbaceous borders, growing more vegetables for the table, and letting wild flowers grow in the grass. Our birdwatching retreats recognize the rich local birdlife.

The Abbey also is a sanctuary in the sense of a safe place, where diversity is welcomed, where you can do some figuring out or take time for a reset, where you can fall apart or put yourself together again, and where you can let the tears fall or find a new well of joy, or where you can just stop and breathe again.

"Be lovers of spiritual beauty, spreading the aroma of Christ through your goodness of life."

The Rule of St Augustine: On staying faithful



3.2 The Launde Abbey Organisation

Launde Abbey today is run by an independent charitable trust and a board of trustees. The trustees are appointed by the Bishop of Leicester. We are the diocesan retreat house for the dioceses of Leicester and Peterborough and we partner with them in various ways and value their support, however, on a day-to-day basis we are financially independent, sustaining ourselves by our work of hospitality. Our income was around £1.2m in 2024.

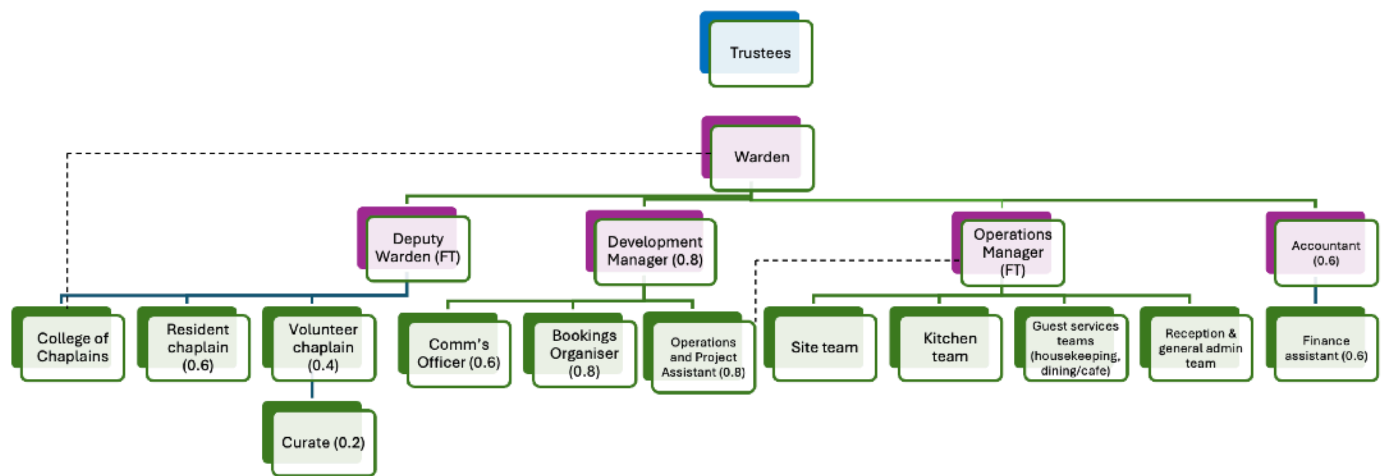


The Warden is supported by a senior team consisting of the Deputy Warden (who is also the senior member of the Ministry Team), the Operations Manager, the Business Development Manager, and the Accountant. The Trust employs around 40 full and part-time staff who work on activities such as taking bookings, managing communications, maintenance, gardening, housekeeping, serving meals, cooking, leading prayer and pastoral care. And there are 20 or so volunteers on our books, largely working in the garden or as chaplains.

Between the Tudor manor house and the 18th century stables, the Abbey has 39 bedrooms, a selection of meeting and conference rooms, a dining room and café open to the public, a library, a number of chapels and prayer space, and various seating areas for guests. Outdoors there is a walled garden under partial cultivation, wider gardens largely managed by volunteers, a 'way of the cross' walk and a grass labyrinth. It is visited by more than 10,000 people a year and has a national reputation. At the heart of the site and its activity is the main chapel – incorporating the remains of the 900 year old priory church – in which the pattern of daily prayer is observed.



Organisation Chart



The Launde Programme

Our flagship programme of retreats and quiet days is a significant part of our ministry and, in business terms, contributes nearly a quarter of our income. Some retreats are based around led addresses, some around creative or practical activities; some are silent or include periods of silence; some focus on learning or rediscovering spiritual practices; some are themed around stages of life; some are aimed at beginners in prayer or making a retreat; some fill the whole site, whilst some are designed to be more intimate. Recent retreat leaders have included Paula Gooder and John Bell and we now include a couple of more specialist, Individually Guided Retreats (IGRs) as well as Beginners' Retreats. We collaborate regularly with Renovare UK&I and the School for Contemplative Life to support the exploration of spiritual practice. The 2026 programme, already nearly in place, will feature Chine McDonald, Sharon Garlow Brown (author of the Sensible Shoes series) and Mark Oakley, amongst others.



Ministry Team and Chaplaincy

The permanent Ministry Team consists of the Warden, the Deputy Warden (recruitment process currently underway), a part time Chaplain who stays overnight (2 days/week), a new curate (1 day/week), and the Resident Chaplain (3 days/week). The curate's supervisor is the p/t Chaplain. The College of Chaplains is a team of 6 experienced volunteer ministers, including lay and non-Anglican, who offer day and weekend chaplaincy by rota to complement the permanent team - taking the day's services, being available for 1-1 conversations with guests and sometimes undertaking other duties.

The ministry offered by the Abbey includes:

- the daily services
- the Quiet Day programme
- the Launde Programme of residential retreats
- selected weeks living and praying with the Community (eg Holy Week)
- the Rural Mission Hubs
- the Holy Listening Programme
- one-off reflections, retreat days and similar as requested by groups
- pastoral conversations and spiritual direction as requested
- prayer for our partner dioceses and for those who request our prayers via the chapel prayer box or the website
- the chapels and prayer spaces
- seasonal prayer stations and similar
- the library and the bookshop.



Groups

Around half our income comes from groups: we host meetings, training, workshops and away days. Groups come for the day, or for a few nights. The majority of these are churches and church-linked organisations, but a fair few are not, though all appreciate the special atmosphere of the Abbey. Here are some of the groups we've enjoyed welcoming in the last couple of years:

- Anglican ordination retreats (four dioceses in 2026) and C of E discernment conferences
- Bishops' Leadership Teams from multiple dioceses
- Charity board members for away days and residentials
- Curates and lay ministers' for training – both Anglican and Methodist
- National & regional networks such as Diocesan Clergy Chairs and rural 'apostolic' pioneers
- Religious organisations such as the Third Order of the Society of St Francis
- Cursillo groups for residential weekends
- Church leadership teams, including Vineyard and Kingsgate churches
- Local churches for away days and weekends, from various denominations
- Academic writing groups
- Social action working groups – Quakers, Salvation Army
- School confirmation retreats
- Special interest groups & workshops – sewing, yoga, singing, photography, meditation, creative arts

Private Individuals and Personal Retreatants

Individuals or couples come here either booking into one of the retreats on our programme or bringing their own activities, perhaps reading, writing, praying, resting or reflecting. In either case, they can come for the day or come to stay. Many who come as private individuals or couples participate in the Abbey's life of prayer, but they don't have to and are welcome just to enjoy the peace and the spiritual atmosphere. Some will take the opportunity for a personal conversation with a member of our Ministry Team.

Visitors to the Abbey Café, Grounds, Services and Events

Anyone can visit the café and grounds, and attend our services. However, the Main House (including the Chapel) and the Stables are reserved for residents. Our café and grounds are almost always open during the day. We run a series of concerts in the Chapel on Sunday afternoons which many combine with a cream tea or perhaps with Sunday Lunch. Before Christmas each year, we offer Christmas meals with a daily Carol Service in the Chapel.



3.3 Our Direction of Travel

Since late 2021 and early 2022, in the aftermath of the Covid lockdowns we have been re-focusing and re-building. We have a new organisation structure, a stronger retreat programme and a more robust ministry offering. We have brought in new hospitality software, launched a new website and increased our operational focus on health and safety, guest experience, care for the fabric and enhancement of the grounds. Over the last few years, we have gradually rebuilt our operating finances and we now generate a small surplus. As we continue, being diligent in responding wisely to our context, budgeting carefully and communicating creatively, we are confident that our financial position will further improve so that our operating surplus replenishes our existing reserves. Our focus continues to be:

- Deepening as a 'house of prayer'
- Developing the Launde Abbey Communities
- Developing our offer to ministers, churches and senior leaders
- Enriching our hospitality
- Connecting more with our natural environment
- Shaping a thriving business and a great place to work.

Over the next few years, we will also increase our focus on supporting spiritual formation and spiritual practice, as we explore how the Abbey and its flourishing can actively contribute to the life of the Church at large.

Our work on all of the above holds in tension these three things: our character, charism and calling; our context and its needs; and our financial sustainability.

Our annual report can be found here: <https://www.laundeabbey.org.uk/about/laundeabbey-today/>



4 Employment Information

Reporting to:

- The Deputy Warden

Significant colleagues:

- Other Ministry Team members
- Members of the College of Chaplains
- Other staff and volunteers living on site

4.1 Working Pattern and Hours of Work

- 3 days in any one 7-day week, to include Holy Communion at 8am, Midday Prayer and Evening Prayer at 5pm on each working day
- Some Saturdays (plus 8-10am on Sunday), as part of this pattern (usually once per month)
- 2 evening/overnights providing onsite emergency on-call cover per week
- Holiday: 6 working weeks plus bank holidays (or days in lieu)
- 1 working week for a retreat; time to see a Spiritual Director by agreement

It is expected that work days and rest days will follow a general pattern each week and month (recognising the need of some weekend days) but diary flexibility will be required for some aspects of the role.

This will all be governed by a Working Agreement with the Warden and Deputy Warden.

4.2 Licensing

The chaplain will be licensed for ordained ministry by the Bishop of Leicester, and this authorisation may also relate to the local Launde Minister Community.

4.3 Housing

South Stables Cottage is an attractive, small, but deceptively spacious, two bedroom cottage attached to the main Stable accommodation block at Launde Abbey. It is approached from a private driveway which also serves the Warden's House. The two adjacent entrances from the courtyard, which is down 3 steps from the main pathway, provide direct access to the kitchen and dining room respectively; these are also connected internally via an open archway. The kitchen is equipped with a washing machine and an electric oven. A short passage from where the stairs ascend provides access to the sitting room, off which is a very useful under stairs cupboard. The very spacious main bedroom is at the top of the stairs and has lovely views over the neighbouring fields and has ceiling height built-in wardrobes and a separate built in cupboard. Along the upstairs corridor is the second smaller double bedroom which also has ceiling height wardrobes installed; this has a view over the courtyard. At the end of the corridor are further useful storage cupboards, a separate toilet and recently installed shower room with a wet room style walk-in shower.

The cottage is supplied with domestic hot water and heating from an externally located oil fired combi-boiler. There is a washing machine, cooker and fridge. There is an extension from the Abbey's phone system in the cottage, and a satellite dish and receiver are provided. Please note however that there is no mobile signal on the site and residents use 'wi-fi calling'. Other than this, the house will be unfurnished.

As onsite accommodation for a staff member the cottage is equipped with sounders for the main Launde Abbey fire alarm system and the assistance call system linked to all specially adapted assistance rooms.





The cottage has its own private rear and front gardens, currently planted with flowering plants and shrubs. There is also a small garden shed near to the entrance to the cottage.

The nearest town to Launde Abbey is the market town of Oakham in Rutland about 7 miles away. There is a small Co-op on the outskirts (about 6 miles), and a Tesco and an Aldi further in, together with Boots and a range of independent retailers, coffee shops and restaurants. Gates garden centre, around 5 miles away, has a farm shop with butcher and bakery, and units for household goods, clothes and shoes as well as plants and garden products. Supermarket shopping can be delivered. Leicester City centre with theatres and shops is 15 miles away and the nearest independent cinema is in Melton Mowbray about 11 miles from Launde. Trains from Oakham station run cross country from Birmingham to Stansted, and connect with the mainlines running through both Leicester and Peterborough.

Launde Abbey is a beautiful place to live but living onsite in a retreat house also places restrictions on residents when it comes to ensuring the site remains quiet and peaceful. Although private and at the residents' end of the site, the cottage is on the end of the Stables and you may be conscious of guests nearby from time to time. Applicants should also be ready for the 'challenge' that Launde is 5 miles from the nearest post-box and 6 miles from the nearest shop, and is occasionally cut off in winter, but those who live onsite and nearby look after each other if this occurs!

You will be asked to sign a 'right to occupy', signed also on behalf of the Launde Abbey trustees, to govern your occupancy of the house.

4.4 Application Process

Please apply by letter setting out your interest, supported by a full CV, together with the contact details of two referees other than your Bishop. We ask you not to use AI in writing either document and to confirm that you have not done so. Please either send to office@launde.org.uk or upload via the Resident Chaplain page on www.launde.org.uk/careers. **The closing date is Sunday 7th September.** Shortlisted applicants will be invited to the Abbey for the evening of September 16th and to stay overnight prior to formal interviews and a viewing of the cottage on 17th September. We will not take up references until the shortlist is drawn up and we will let you know first.

If you would like an informal conversation with the Warden prior to making an application, then please contact her via warden@launde.org.uk to arrange a time.