

Mike's message

My name's Mike Claridge and on 23rd March I'll become your new Minister at The Cotteridge Church! I thought I'd write a few words of introduction.

I won't be joining you alone. I'll be joined by my wife Susan and our daughters Rose (21) and Anastasia (19 later this month). Susan will be looking for work as a Teaching Assistant (part time), Rose works as a Planning Assistant with Sandwell Council (she'll become very acquainted with the Outer Circle bus route), and Anastasia is currently working as a Domiciliary Carer but plans to go to University in the autumn to read English with a view to teaching in secondary school. Oh, and there's a cat too!



I was born in Pelsall and attended schools there and in Brownhills. After 'A' Levels I trained as a Environmental Health Officer with Wolverhampton Council specialising in food hygiene and general public health. In 1989 I was selected for training for the ordained ministry of the Church of England and studied at Queen's College, Birmingham. This included a year based in Handsworth with local church and community placements. This was followed by a year at the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Institute near Geneva where I studied alongside people from all over the world and of many denominations. I've maintained contact with some ever since and recently have renewed contact with others through social media.

I was ordained in 1992 and served three years at Harlescott, Shrewsbury where I met and married Susan. In 1995 we moved to Christ Church, Wellington, Telford where Rose and Anastasia were born. There I developed an interest in inter-faith dialogue with the sizeable Muslim community there. I also became Chaplain (and later Stadium Announcer!) at Telford United FC. In 2003 we moved to St Andrew's, West Bromwich, a C of E / Methodist LEP. While there I've taken on an increasing role on what is now the Black Country Circuit of the Methodist Church.

My interests have been varied and diverse. I was for many years a keen church bellringer. I am an enthusiastic family history researcher, with Kings Norton and Cotteridge figuring significantly in the Claridge lineage around the beginning of the 20th century! I enjoy cycling and completed London to Paris rides for Christian Aid in 2008 and 2012. Most recently I has taken to 'treading the boards' and this month take part in Wesley Church, West Bromwich's annual pantomime for the third year.