

## A Guide to the vestments worn by Anglican Clergy.

This is by no means a complete guide but explains a little about the vestments you may see worn at St Swithun's during the year.

Vestments means "official dress" or "robes", and can refer to any type of ceremonial clothing worn not only by clergy, but by anyone in a ceremonial capacity. In the early days of the church no special clothing was worn, apart from a long white garment put on at baptism to signify "putting on Christ".

The long white garment worn in Roman society by professional people did not become a specifically Christian vestment until the fifth century, although Jerome (341-420 CE) distinguishes between everyday clothes and a special 'suit of clean clothes' for church wear. By the fifth century, priests and bishops were wearing the long white garment called the **alb** (meaning 'white' as in albino and albatross).



The **stole** was added later. This is the long strip of material, like a scarf, often with religious symbols or decorations. A deacon wears the stole over the left shoulder; priests and bishops wear it with the ends hanging down the front. Since the Reformation, when the colours of the liturgical year were fixed, stoles have usually been in liturgical colours. The origins of the stole are unclear - it may have originally been a garland worn at a festival.

Over their *alb* Romans wore a conical tent-shaped garment with a hole cut out for the head, called a 'casula' ('little house') outdoors, and indoors for special occasions. We know it as the **chasuble**. It didn't become a vestment until about the ninth century, when in the West it was accepted that the

priest or bishop presiding at the Eucharist wore a chasuble over their alb. It is generally in the appropriate liturgical colour, and may be decorated with strips of embroidered fabric or tapestry called *orphreys*, or with other liturgical symbols.



The **cassock**, an ankle length garment with long narrow sleeves, is not itself a vestment but is universally worn under all eucharistic vestments. Its Latin name 'subtanea' indicates that it is an undergarment - however, it is worn as an outer garment. In 1602, Anglican church law forbade clergy to go out in public "in the doublet and hose without coats or cassocks." The cassock is not only worn by priests, although in black it has always been the basic item of a priest's attire. Today, bishops wear purple cassocks, while cathedral choirs and others can be seen wearing red or blue.