

Benefice (Family Group) of Ipstones

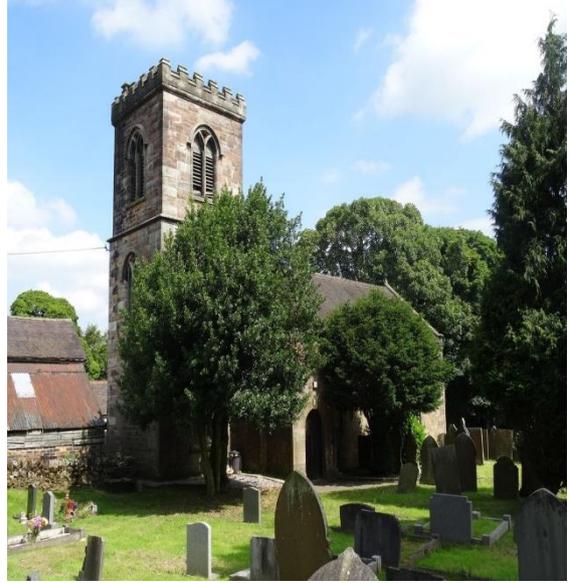
Ipstones with Berkhamsytcch,
Onecote with Bradnop, Butterton,
and Warslow with Elkstones



SERVING GOD-SERVING COMMUNITY

Our Mission statement:

“We strive to be a united, welcoming, hospitable, Christian community; loving God, following Jesus and living as disciples; that is, through God’s grace and love; visible, and missional, growing as church and in our local communities”



Welcome to the Alstonfield Deanery Mission Area Team Ipstones Family Group

Join us in the breathtaking south Peak District, where natural beauty provides a daily reminder of God's presence. The villages are of varying sizes, with each possessing its own distinctive character, but there is a strong unifying spirit – a real sense of being part of a shared community that makes this area an exceptional place to live and work. We live in a rural location in which traditional village life runs alongside working farms and those visiting the area, and where the amenities of towns aren't on your doorstep. The communities provide a welcoming and loving environment where there are wonderful opportunities to do God's work through active ministry and acts of kindness.

We are praying for someone who:

- Holds sacramental worship at the core of their own faith
- Can balance the needs of a diverse community with “traditional” church, is inclusive and broad minded
- Engages well with flexible styles of worship
- Works with us to develop new styles of worship within and across our communities.
- Helps us develop a deeper faith through teaching, prayer, insight into the written word, and by everyday actions.
- Has good organisational skills and energy, enthusiasm for the role, and a good sense of humour.
- Is passionate about engaging with, and supporting, the diversity of rural life in our parishes,
- Leads on supporting the 6 local primary schools in the deanery, taking regular assemblies and holding positions on Boards of Governors alongside Deanery colleagues
- Nurtures and embraces our young people and encourages families into regular church service attendance and at the same time cares greatly about intentional pastoral ministry to our older generations
- Has a collaborative approach to ministry and working as part of the Deanery group, including engaging with Methodist Chapels and local Village Halls, supporting fellow ministers and a lay reader in training, and providing leadership and inspiration for our lay members and volunteers.
- Shows genuine compassion, empathy, warmth and tolerance towards all community members, and is able to communicate effectively to everyone in our parishes.

In return, we feel we can offer:

- Openness to new ideas and approaches, enthusiasm for mission and a commitment to doing everything we can to show God's presence in our community.
- Life in and around the beautiful and unique South Peak
- A sense of belonging to a community of villages large and small
- Support from a deanery ministry team
- Friendship and communion with the people
- A huge amount of support and encouragement to our new vicar to enable them to be an effective spiritual leader in our benefice community.
- PCCs dedicated to the role of nurturing their church and its fabric and developing their worshipping communities
- Members of the community with a wide range of knowledge, skills and expertise.

The way forward

Our Awayday in 2025 identified that our plans for the next 3 years are based on the following framework

We know that:

- We have overcome identified obstacles to working together (but have more to do)
- Have village support and really want to thrive
- Have a limited catchment of volunteers and helpers
- We will have a period of vacancy to manage and maintain momentum

We think that we:

- Have grown stronger as a family group
- Make time for people and have great support from our communities
- Interact well with the villages and are well engaged in many ways with our communities

What we hope for and want to work towards:

- Fewer worries over and less time on buildings and money and more time together in faith-based activity and missional work
- More people attending church and more people engaged with/supporting church
- More use of the power of prayer in our daily and communal lives
- New songs, new music and more variety of worship types and styles (and locations)
- Being able to reach out to the seekers and searchers and become more missional and more pioneering in our ministry

Things we want to do:

- Maintain momentum as far as possible
- Establish new ways to sustain and grow children's ministry
- Create a prayer group to complement the fellowship group
- Fund raise through "big events"
- Develop a more intentional approach to pastoral ministry

What we would like you to do:

- Be a servant leader, able to lead from behind and shape and nurture our own leadership skills and abilities
- Lead us, and walk alongside us, as we grow and change, keep us moving forward and spreading the good news
- Love us, nurture us and challenge us in equal measure
- Lead for the Deanery on working with children, young people, schools and Dovedale
- Lead for the Deanery on administration and governance arrangements
- Be an active Assistant Curate to the other family group churches

What we'd like you to bring to us:

Experience:

- An experienced parish priest with experience of multi-parish ministry
- Experience of developing new and alternative Christian communities
- Experience of growing and nurturing lay ministry and vocations
- Experience of working collaboratively in a team

Skills and competencies

- Be actively excited about the opportunities of a team ministry
- Be passionate about rural ministry and the opportunities it offers
- Be comfortable in a broad-church environment
- Be able to support our progress, challenge our complacency
- Be able to value tradition and innovation in equal measure and lead us towards both
- Be people -focussed, good fun and full of life and laughter (oh, and like cake!!!)
- Be supportive and encouraging, able to nurture our gifts and encourage the ministry of all
- Be collegial and collaborative in all you do, a team player, not a hero leader
- Have good experience with schools, children and families
- Skilled and experienced in governance and administration

- An effective and flexible communicator, orally, in writing and in the social media online world

General attributes

- an inspirational priest and pastor as we grow more missional and more pastoral
- prayerful and prayer-led, able to share the gospel with all
- community minded and Christ centred
- Confident and resilient, compassionate and caring
- Mature in faith (not necessarily in age)
- Inclusive, open, and welcoming
- Warm, emotionally literate, easy with people, and approachable
- An advocate for others
- Great at building relationships with all sorts of folk and all sorts of organisations
- Trustworthy, reliable, and confident

Our Family Group

The family group comprises a distinctive group of parishes. Ipstones is the most populous parish, anchoring the group, while Warslow, Onecote, and Butterton are smaller settlements located entirely within the National Park boundaries. The parish of Bradnop, a small hamlet just southeast of the market town of Leek, is linked administratively with Onecote.

Collectively, the family group encompasses six church buildings: St Leonard's (Ipstones), St Bartholomew's (Butterton), St Luke's (Onecote), St John's and St Mary's (Berkhamsytc), St Lawrence (Warslow) and St John the Baptist (Elkstones). St Mary and St John (a non-faculty jurisdiction mission chapel) has ceased to be used for worship and the process is now underway for its closure.

The Family Group is characterised by strong community cohesion and significant ecumenical partnerships across its parishes, demonstrated through well-attended major services and collaborative events.

Worship patterns and traditions

The Family Group has an agreed pattern of worship, with Holy Communion taking place every Sunday in at least one church in the group, and Morning and/or Evening Worship (mainly lay led) in the other churches. Warslow has one service a month as does Elkstones. There is a service every week at Ipstones, 3 times a month at Onecote, and twice a month at Butterton. Fifth Sundays are joint Family Group services, rotating across the 6 churches in turn and often joint with our methodist colleagues.

Average weekly church attendance is: 15 at Ipstones, 12 at Onecote, 12 at Butterton, 6 at Warslow and 6 at Elkstones. Compline and BCP Evensong take place once a month respectively at Ipstones. Festivals and Civic services are held across all 6 churches. For “big” services the churches tend to be full (200 plus in Ipstones, 70 to 100 in Onecote, Butterton, 40-100 in Warslow and 40-60 in Elkstones)

There is an Ecumenical Family Group Fellowship Group meeting monthly, to study and worship together. We also meet monthly as “Beer and Blessings” rotating round local pubs. We have children’s holiday clubs every holiday, with faith-based activities, and engage children in various other events and services. Our schools worship in our churches for Christmas, Advent, Easter, and Remembrance, and the priest leads collective worship weekly in the two schools in the group.

We have access to three organists, mainly for Holy Communion services, but musically there is much more that could be done to introduce modern music into worship.

Occasional Offices are an important part of our ministry. Across the Family Group in 2025 there were 14 baptisms, 4 weddings, and 19 funerals. Baptisms of babies is still an important part of village life.

Pastoral Care and outreach

We have a strong, supportive lay ministry team that provides essential pastoral care and maintains deep connections within the community. This team ministers to parishioners primarily through informal means, offering neighbourly visits, support during adversity, and encouragement during times of success as well as a shared confidential weekly prayer list. These close bonds foster a supportive 'family group' environment and strong friendships across the group.

The parishes within our family group demonstrate their living faith through a shared commitment to local outreach that addresses the real, practical needs of our community. This collective ministry sees us actively supporting the most vulnerable, primarily by coordinating crucial food bank donations to ensure no neighbour goes hungry, and by offering a "Warm Welcome" in our buildings, providing safe, heated, and friendly spaces during the colder seasons. Crucially, we invest in the future of our area through dedicated work in our local schools, building relationships with children and staff.

Above all, our churches serve as central hubs, bringing the whole community together through engaging and inclusive community events held throughout the year, reinforcing the family group's role as a source of stability, care, and connection for everyone.

Our Governance:

We hold PCCs according to local need but no fewer than 3 a year in each parish. Ipstones, Butterton and Onecote PCCs have 2 churchwardens, a lay vice chair and a deputy churchwarden. Warslow with Elkstones has a single PCC, with no churchwardens or lay chair.

We hold a Family Group Leadership Team Meeting bi-monthly, comprising Churchwardens, Deputy Churchwardens, PCC Secretaries, Treasurers and Lay Vice Chairs, and an Annual Away Day. The majority of decisions about strategic priorities, family group activities, types and patterns of worship, safeguarding, and finances are made at the leadership group. Policies are agreed collectively where possible. We hold one family group fund-raising event a year, usually a very successful joint themed flower festival across all the churches. We have an Annual Away Day to review the past year and plan strategically for the year ahead. This is part quiet day/part worship/part business.

Safeguarding:

All 4 parishes have a parish safeguarding officer, along with an up-to-date Safeguarding Policy, and those officers meet quarterly together. Three of the parishes are linked to the Safeguarding Dashboard. Training is provided face-to-face as well as online. Each church is working on developing a healthy Safeguarding Culture, where issues are raised and the need to be a safe place for all is discussed.

Communication:

- The Monthly Communities News magazine is published monthly, which is 50% church and 50% community content, in hard copy (200 copies) and online (25 subscribers)
- A Church near You pages are kept up to date
- Ipstones, Onecote and Butterton facebook page
- Pew News is published each week with service information and a service poster posted on all relevant web sites weekly.
- A daily prayer and picture is posted on the Facebook Page.
- Word of mouth remains highly effective in the villages, as is the advertising wall in the Ipstones Village Shop.

Your home:

- A well-appointed and maintained, detached 5 bedroom vicarage in a tranquil country lane on the edge of the Ipstones parish, offering privacy while remaining exceptionally accessible.
- Located within a two-minute walk of St Leonard's Church.
- Set within mature, extensive grounds.
- A dedicated, spacious clerical office, two principal reception rooms, a large fitted kitchen, and a utility room.
- Five sizeable bedrooms
- The property benefits from full gas central heating, security lighting and alarms
- A spacious driveway, ample parking area, and an integrated garage.



The house, garden and drive



Ipstones and St Leonards Church.

The Church

St Leonards is large, very well maintained and much loved, positioned on the edge of the village. It has a high footfall of visitors and people accessing the prayer spaces in the church. It is a large Grade 2* listed church, constructed 1789-92 and extended 1902-3 in the Oxford movement style. It has a rare arts and crafts rood screen and Art Nouveau wall paintings. It has an externally accessed toilet, and a kitchen in the bell tower. The churchyard is closed.

Services take place weekly and include a regular Evensong and Compline. It also has a significant number of occasional offices over the year, with a relatively high number of baptisms offering excellent opportunities to build relationships with local families.

There is a very active Bell Ringing Team and a ring of 6 bells refurbished just before Covid.

"There is a strong community spirit across all groups and people are very generous with both their time and money". PCC Secretary and Hall representative

This is the largest village in the Deanery, furthest south and nearest to Leek and Cheadle. Ipstones

- It has a warm, welcoming, hospitable and close-knit community, proud of their village and a generous, caring and very active approach to village life
- There are a lot of events and activities over the year, with a range of significant events involving church and village together

Local services include

- The Church of England First School (catering to ages 4-9), alongside
- Tiny Tots Day Nursery,
- A village shop with Post Office and a family butcher as well as a substantial Country Store serving the local agricultural community.
- Civic resources include a Community Fire Station, a very well used Memorial Hall and the famous Dolly Birds Café, a recreation ground, and a children's play area adjacent to the annual Ipstones Show venue.
- Ecumenically, a welcoming Methodist Chapel is situated within the conservation area, fostering strong collaborative ties with St Leonard's Church.

Ipstones is characterised by proactive ecumenical outreach and high civic engagement. Key collaborative services in partnership with Ipstones Methodist Church include:

- A Joint Walk of Witness and Service on Good Friday
- A joyous and well attended Easter Service
- A lively Harvest involving the school and the village
- Remembrance Day Services including one led by the school are very well attended.
- The Christmas Eve Crib Service draws a good congregation,
- The annual Christmas Tree Service held in the Church at the beginning of Advent is packed
- A well-attended Carols by Candlelight service at St Leonard's Church.

The school attends the church for their Advent, Christmas, Easter, Harvest and Remembrance Services, and the church supports a weekly collective worship in school led by the Priest.

There is a monthly Fellowship group which is ecumenical and meets together weekly for Advent and Lent and monthly over the rest of the year.

There are good relationships with the Memorial Hall, and Ipstones and Foxt Parish Council, as well as a range of other groups. The Parish is a lead partner in:

- the Warm Welcome project (a weekly open to all drop in),
- The Holiday Club in the Summer
- Christmas and Easter Children's events
- The Ipstones and the Villages Community Choir (using the church for rehearsals)
- The provision of a venue (the Church) for festivals and concerts

It also has a presence at many village events and a stall at the very large and popular Annual Agricultural Show. The Priest in Charge role includes the role of Chaplain to the Fire Service.



Berkhamsytc and St Mary & St John's Church: The Diocese is in the process of finalising land ownership details and then it will be formally closed and put up for sale. At present it is closed for worship but has not yet had its final closure service.



Onecote and St Luke's Church

St Luke's Church is centrally positioned within Onecote. The community is sustained by a passionate Church congregation averaging 12-14 a week and a friendly Methodist community centred around its Chapel building. It has services 3 weeks out of four.

The church was built in 1753-5. It is Grade 2 listed but is a small simple building. Loved and cared for, with an organ gallery and a kitchen, and William Morris windows, it is lively, very friendly and is often filled with laughter and fun. The PCC is active, dynamic and well supported.

- Onecote has a deep-rooted sense of community, with many families tracing their lineage back several generations.
- The small parish enjoys a steady and encouraging attendance at regular services, with special occasions, such as the Christmas Eve Crib Service, drawing particularly high numbers.
- Community engagement is strong, with joint fundraising events executed in successful collaboration with the Village Hall and the local Chapel.
- These initiatives not only generate vital support but also serve as joyful, unifying opportunities for fellowship.
- The village community benefits from a Village Hall (the former local school) and a newly refurbished, thriving Public House



Butterton and St Bartholomew Church

There has been a church on this site since approximately 1254. The current church was completed in 1873, having replaced a chapel dating from 1563. A Grade II listed building it stands in a well-maintained churchyard right in the centre of the village. 1,000 feet above sea level and with a spire that rises 132 feet above the ground, the church is clearly visible from miles around.

It has substantial support from the village and a Friends Group. It has a very active, capable, lively and dynamic PCC, well linked into the village. It has two services a month, an active tower team and leads many village activities. The village is a rare “Doubly Thankful Village”.

Community life centres around activities in the Village Hall (the former local school), the village church, and the Black Lion pub situated opposite the church.

- There are regular events throughout the year including the spring flower festival, the annual Harvest Supper and a summer Fayre.
- The highlight is the annual Wakes celebrations, commemorating St Bartholomew,
- The Butterton History Group runs two well-attended events in the church each year,
- A popular fortnightly Warm Welcome drop in, which fulfils a need in the village
- The monthly Beer and Blessings Service in the Black Lion



Warslow and St Lawrence Church

The Church is a Grade 2 listed building built in 1820 with additions in 1908. The side windows are surrounded by rare and unusual mosaic work. It holds a collection of Altar frontals and lectern falls made by the Leek Embroidery Society.

- It is well maintained,
- The Church has not recovered as yet from the impact of Covid on the village.
- Links are improving with Manifold Primary School and Pre School
- The Village Hall Committee is very active and arranges regular events for the village. Links with church are limited currently
- Warslow has its own Silver Band, which was established in late 1860s
- The Peak District National Park Authority has an Office in the Village and the Boys Brigade has an Activity Centre in the old Primary School.

The Warslow members of the Warslow and Elkstones PCC feel that they are

- lost, tired and in need of nurturing to get back onto the right track.
- looking forward to using the changes in the Mission Area Team as a good opportunity to rethink and experiment with new church services.
- Wanting to engage with the community in the love of God.
- Looking to build on their larger congregations at Christmas, Easter and Harvest.
- needing to put the fun into fundraising, as their fundraising has lost its impetus

Elkstones and St John the Baptist Church.

The grade two star listed church was built around 1882. It is a small, picturesque and unique building. It holds services once a month, is central to the village and much loved. The church is the main meeting place because there is no village hall or pub.

- The church is not licensed to conduct weddings but has a number of christenings and funerals annually
- The church is well looked after by a dedicated team of the villagers on a monthly rota and the churchyard too is kept at its best
- Elkstones Wakes is held on the Church Patronal Festival with a service followed by a silver band concert
- Harvest and Christmas see the church full.
- The church team do lots of fund-raising, with different ideas each year.

Elkstones is a small, picturesque village, nestled in the western edge of the Peat District, with a beautiful view. It is a small close-knit community with many farms held by the third and fourth generation. It is right off the beaten track, with a slow steady rhythm of life. It may be a small village, but it has a big heart.

