



Recruitment Pack for the new Alstonefield Deanery Mission Area Team

We're delighted that you're exploring the opportunity to join the Alstonefield Deanery Mission Area Team, set in the beautiful Staffordshire Moorlands and Peak District National Park.

We are looking for three priests who are called to rural ministry and bring both experience and enthusiasm for collaborative working. We are seeking highly motivated and dynamic priests, with a heart for Rural Mission. They need to have experience of parish ministry, and a desire to work as part of a collaborative team across the Deanery team of four. Each role is rooted in its own local geographical area of focussed ministry and wider shared deanery responsibilities, alongside a strong lay ministry team. The 4 posts act as one team. One of the posts will include the responsibilities of the Rural Dean, depending on experience and willingness to carry the oversight leadership role in the Team.

Vacancies:

1. House for Duty: Waterfall Benefice
2. Full-time Priest in Charge Longnor
3. Full-time Priest in Charge Ipstones



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**THE BISHOP
OF LICHFIELD**

A word of welcome to the Diocese of Lichfield

Cradled at the intersection of the Midlands and the North, and the interface between England and Wales, the Diocese of Lichfield is the ancient centre of Christianity in what was the Kingdom of Mercia.

We are rightfully grateful for the inheritance we have from our first bishop St Chad that leads us to focus on Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism as we live and serve among the communities of Staffordshire, northern Shropshire and the Black Country.

By answering God's call to minister in Lichfield Diocese you will benefit from being part of a wide family, mixing with people serving in a variety of contexts – from the grittiest inner-city neighbourhoods of Stoke and the Black Country, to the leafiest rural parishes of Staffordshire and Shropshire, to the sparsest upland communities of the Staffordshire Moorlands and Welsh Borders.

And we embrace the widest spectrum of church traditions – evangelical and catholic, liberal and conservative, choral and charismatic – as we journey together in mission. As a colleague recently put it, it is our goal to be a 'spacious and gracious diocese'.

It is my determination and that of my episcopal colleagues that your calling to minister with us in Lichfield Diocese will be a time of encouragement, fulfilment, challenge and joy. You will not be alone in your ministry; as part of the wider team our colleagues among the diocesan staff keenly bring their various specialisms both spiritual and practical to offer resource and support as you serve our parishes, fresh expressions, schools and chaplaincies.

+ Michael Ipgrave



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Seeking the Kingdom: The Diocesan Five Year Strategy

- Vision is our dream, where we see ourselves in the future.
- Strategy is the plan that fulfils the vision.
- Goals are waypoints or markers which show our direction.

For the five years from 2025-2030, Lichfield Diocese, its parishes, chaplaincies, schools and cathedral are focusing their ministry, activity and service around a strategic plan: '[Seeking the Kingdom](#)' - [download as a pdf](#)

This plan has been worked out from our vision. Lichfield Diocese's vision is encapsulated in a prayer:

"As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad, we pray that the two million people in our diocese encounter a church that is confident in the gospel, knows and loves its communities, and is excited to find God already at work in the world. We pray for a church that reflects the richness and variety of those communities. We pray for a church that partners with others in seeking the common good, working for justice as a people of hope."

The Alstonfield Deanery Mission Area Team is based firmly on this strategy and its 10 goals, with a focus on supporting, in particular,

- every worshipping community **reflecting the diversity of the community** they serve
- an active plan in every parish for **engaging with their local population beyond the church walls**
- a strong **connection between every primary or secondary school and their parish church**'
- a **growth in the overall worshipping community**

The Alstonefield Deanery Mission Area Team

Aim:

- to enable growth in Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism across a rural deanery which is numerically small but geographically large
- To facilitate sustainable, life-giving, mission and ministry across the Deanery

The context

Located in the Staffordshire part of the Peak District and adjacent parts of the Staffordshire Moorlands, the Deanery covers a geographical area the size of Liverpool and is set within a very rural, beautiful area of deep and narrow fertile valleys and high moorland hills:

- each valley leads in a different direction, and each has its own distinctive characteristics.
- The valleys were well populated and home for centuries to a thriving mining industry alongside farming. This has largely given way in the last century to farming and tourism and a smaller population.
- These remain the key industries, coupled with several big companies on the edge of the deanery, including quarrying and manufacturing (such as JCB) as well as Alton Towers.
- The population is just under 6,000 in the whole Deanery area, and the demographic structure reflects the changing nature of the area's economy.
- The age profile is predominantly 50 years and above with a significant number of 70 plus. Children, young people and young families are in the minority. The area is 98% white.
- The District Council is Staffordshire Moorlands. The Deanery is bordered by Derbyshire and Cheshire.
- The population are strong, resilient, independent, capable and proud of their villages and communities, but the aging population is having an impact on deep rooted traditions and approaches, leading to new thinking and activity.

The Deanery has four legal benefices, each with a good Vicarage based in that benefice's largest village (Alstonefield, Longnor, Ipstones and Waterfall).

- It is home to 18 churches, 21 villages and a significant number of other hamlets.
- Every village has its own identity and culture.
- Quarnford Parish includes Flash, the highest village in England.

Our church family groups do not quite match the legal benefice boundaries at the moment, allowing for a better spread of workload for each member of the clergy team. The Parish of Warslow and Elkstones is in the Benefice of Longnor but is part of the

Ipstones family of churches. Pastoral reorganization may be undertaken in the future to reflect practice on the ground.

Set in beautiful countryside of high moors, deep valleys and big views, the villages combine long-established families with retirees and commuters to nearby towns. Tourism is significant, supported by second homes and self-catering properties. The church remains central to village life, with close ties to village halls. A few churches have no nearby community, affecting them over time (Blore Ray and Berkhamstitch).

Ipstones is the largest village (approx. 1,600), followed by Longnor and Waterhouses. With no market town, each family group looks to a different nearby centre. Healthcare is limited: one GP surgery in the Deanery and several just outside, plus hospital services in Stoke, Derby, Macclesfield and Stockport. There are no care homes, and with a significant number of vulnerable older people pastoral care is important to the villages.

All the villages are resilient, community minded and hard-working, with the majority of villagers being straight talking and practical, pragmatic people, proud of their area and heritage

The area is very mixed financially, with both wealth and deprivation. The area has mixed finances, with both wealth and deprivation. Digital connectivity is poor, with unreliable mobile signals and limited internet access in some places. With no local banks, the community still relies heavily on cash

Education: We are blessed with 4 nurseries and 6 small Church of England first and primary schools, ranging from 8 to 100 students, located across the deanery. Each Church Family Group has at least one local school and Longnor and Ipstones have two. This is an important and fertile mission field for the future

- The 6 schools are Ilam, Waterhouses, Ipstones, Warslow (Manifold), Longnor and Hollinsclough. They are all part of the same The Moorlands Primary Federation academy trust and are keen to work together.
- At 9 years many children move to middle schools outside the deanery. Secondary Education is in Leek, Cheadle, Buxton or Ashbourne.
- There are no youth services and maintaining contact with young people becomes challenging when social and friendship networks move outside the deanery.



Transport is a significant issue across the Deanery. Cars are essential, as transport options are limited. Community Transport operates in some areas, and a few villages have bus links to nearby towns. Accessing shops and healthcare can be difficult, and travel between valleys or remote hamlets is only possible by car. The nearest mainline stations are in Stoke, Derby or Macclesfield

Congregations and occasional offices:

Although congregations may seem small at regular worship, they are often a significant percentage of the village population, in the main are stable or growing and are very loyal. (see *appendix B for data*).

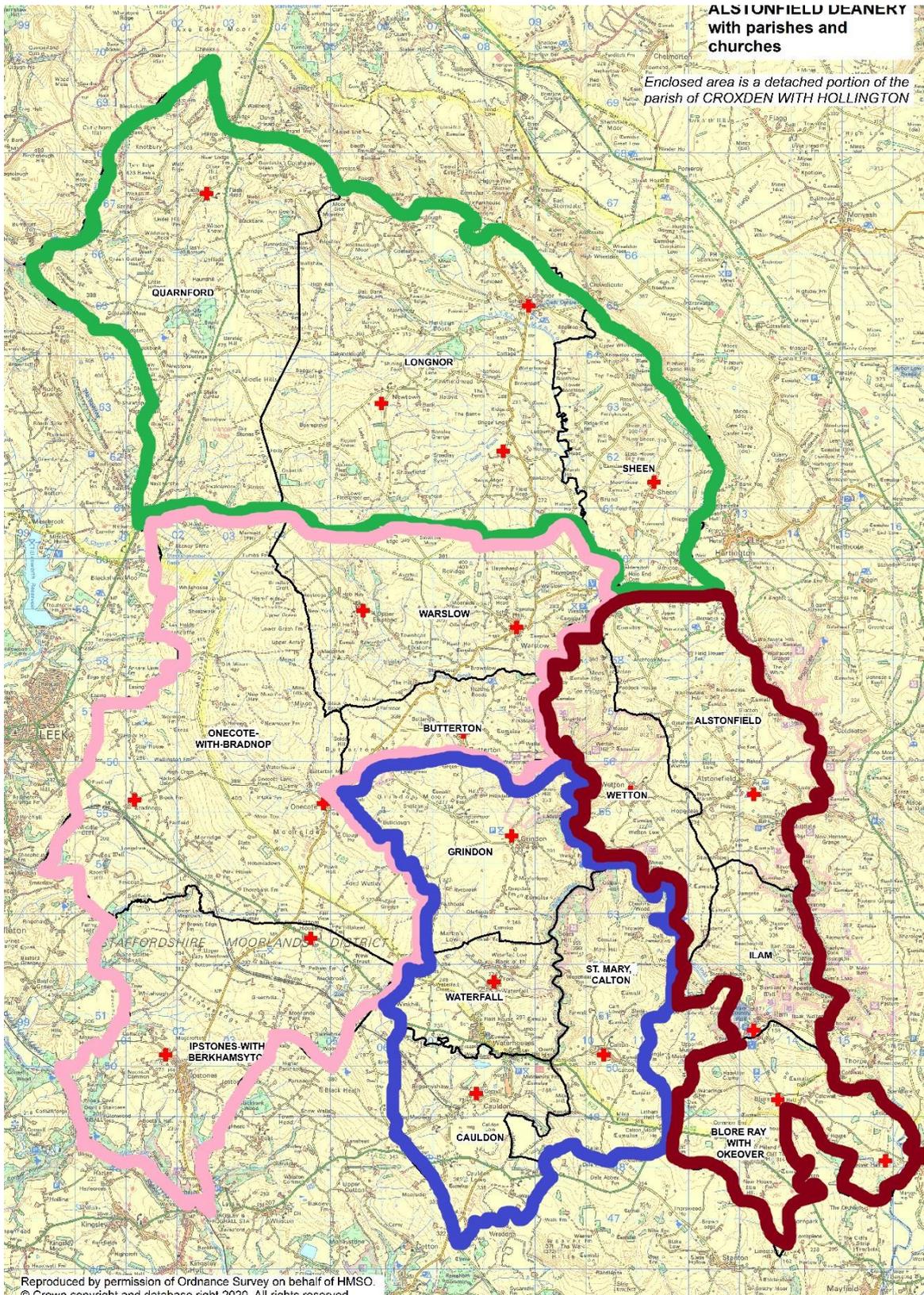
Occasional Offices vary village by village. Funerals remain significant, usually with committal by burial, and there is a very strong tradition of infant baptism. The Deanery has between 12-16 weddings a year, but some churches have had none for a long time. 2 churchyards are closed (Onecote and Ipstones).

Finances:

The Deanery met the Common Fund Request in full (100%) in 2025. Some parishes have significant reserves, and endowment funds. Others are working hard to pay their way. Two have historic debts which need to be paid off, although the Diocese has made very helpful offers to assist with this. Regular giving is variable (cash is still important) as is seasonal giving, harvest being the main season for gifts. Wills and legacies and funeral donations are important sources of income.

Dovedale House: The deanery is home to Dovedale House in Ilam, a Diocesan retreat house and centre primarily used for work with schools, youth services and projects involving Children and Young people. The new Centre Managers are included in wider deanery chapter. The Diocese has invested significantly in Dovedale recently and it is a key part of the Diocesan strategic goals regarding children and young people. It has great potential to support the mission of the deanery too.





The church family groups

The story so far...

Four years ago, the four benefices each developed plans for how locally they were to deliver on the goals of the Diocesan priorities of Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism. Discussions between the parishes led to an agreement to work collaboratively wherever possible. The outworking of this was developed over the following two and a half years and became the basis for designing an entirely new approach, where the clergy team work collaboratively as one team, each with a family group of churches but part of the other three. This was designed to address the four key challenges facing the Deanery and to maximise the opportunities we identified by working in a new way.

The key **challenges** were

- our capacity to work missionally,
- our ability to generate sufficient finances to maintain and grow our churches and Christian Communities,
- the isolation of the clergy as “sole priests”
- the recruitment challenges inherent in rural ministry.

The **opportunities** we see from our new collaborative approach are that we will

- be working together on those things best done collectively, whilst maintaining our local identities and priorities
- be working differently/better to enable all our parishes to grow and thrive
- be sharing what we do well, and find solutions to common problems together,
- be able to support each other as communities.

The **vision** we had was that the new team would give us:

- A heart for mission
- Growth in faith across our population
- Increasingly active faithful communities and churches
- Each church important and all churches equally so
- Serving all, available to all, from the beginning to the end of life in good times and bad regardless of faith
- Church teams that are confident in faith
- Church life organised to meet need, custom and practice as well as new initiatives
- Pragmatic and practical decision making
- Varied services and worship styles, balancing the old and the new
- Joint initiatives; skills, knowledge, talents and gifts shared, resources employed collaboratively and wisely
- Working together to complement each other and share the load

The approach is designed to enable clergy and the wider ministry team to work together. The two full time roles take a deanery lead on specialist areas (occasional offices, schools, children and young people, the farming community, missional projects etc), rather than all 4 posts doing everything needed 4 times over. It provides parity of workload and frees up the opportunity to invest time together on specific mission work

and growth. It also reduces the administrative burden and supports financial sustainability.

Our approach also ensures each village continues to know who ‘their vicar’ is. Every family group has a clearly identified priest who lives locally, focuses on their villages, and remains visible in the community.

Currently the Deanery Mission Area Team’s development and planning is “held” by the Deanery Mission Area Forum (churchwardens from all the churches) and the Deanery Treasurers Group. Plans for a Deanery Administrator and a Deanery Safeguarding Officer are underway but at an early stage. The rota is prepared initially by family groups then amalgamated into a Deanery Rota. Occasional Offices are centrally booked and co-ordinated. From 2026 the Common Fund contribution is to be allocated to the Deanery as a whole, to then be apportioned at Deanery level to parishes.

The Deanery Mission Area Team has 4 clergy posts: 2 full time and two House for Duty. Each post is designed to be the Family Group’s familiar and visible face of ministry, licensed to that family group with primary responsibility for the churches and communities within it. All 4 clergy are also licensed as Assistant Curates in all the other parishes. The team also currently includes 2 local PTO priests, 3 Readers, and 4 locally commissioned lay ministers, one of whom is a funeral minister. There is also a reader in training.

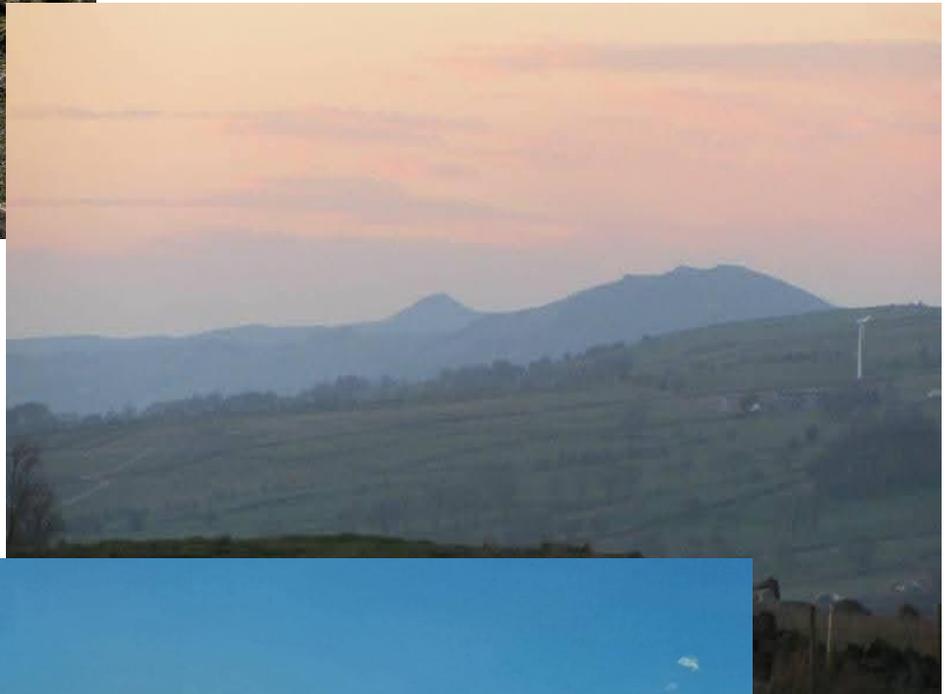
The 2 full time posts are being appointed as Priest in Charge, rather than vicar, as pastoral reorganization may be undertaken once the new model of ministry is fully rooted to make the benefices and Church Family Groups match. The office-holders at the time would become the incumbents.

See appendix A for the Deanery Plan

See appendix B for deanery data

See Appendix C “to meet the team”

It's a beautiful part of the world



Alstonefield Deanery Rural Mission Area Team.

Aim:

- to enable growth in Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism across a rural Deanery which is numerically small but geographically large
- To facilitate sustainable, life-giving, mission and ministry across the Deanery

Key areas of mission identified:

1. Schools 6 church schools, in one academy trust

- Longnor
- Manifold (Warslow)
- Hollingsclough
- Ipstones
- Waterhouses
- Ilam

Ipstones, Longnor and Hollingsclough have an Executive Head between them.
Manifold, Waterhouses and Ilam have individual Heads
Numbers in all schools are small, so they feel vulnerable.

2. Tourism and pilgrimage

Including scope for:

pop up café in holiday-let areas such as Longnor

Possibly offering spiritual care to Dovedale

Attending key events – wakes festivals, well dressing, muddy boot marathon etc

Deanery pilgrimage route linked to the Peak Pilgrimage Walk

3. Farming communities

4. Carboot sale at Alstonefield, last Sunday of month and three main agricultural shows a year

5. Ipstones largest centre of population which relates to Stoke rather than the Moorlands.

6. Buildings as mission

7. Vulnerable and dependent isolated elderly and their carers

8. Occasional offices most funerals have attendance of > 250, with repeated congregations (so opportunity to develop relationships)

Weddings – people ‘do time’ to develop a qualifying connection. A number of very picturesque churches.

Current clergy posts:

- 1.0 Vicar Longnor Benefice
- 0.5 IM Ipstones Benefice
- 0.5 Vicar Waterhouses Benefice
- 0.2HfD Alstonefield Benefice

Licensed lay leadership:

- Clare Day - Reader at Alstonefield
- Roger Cutts - Reader at Ipstones (also Methodist lay preacher)
- Gordon Burgess Parker - Reader at Waterfall

Active PTO clergy

- Rev Nicola Pepper
- Rev Arthur Hack

Licensed lay ministers

- Karen Kidd (Funeral Ministry) Longnor family group
- Toby Gaddum Ipstones family group
- Sharon Ford Longnor Family Group

Laity in training and supporting worship

- Malcolm Hawton Longnor Group
- Debra Tickell Ipstones group

New clergy mission team

2 FT clergy plus 2 House for Duty clergy

- 1 FT mission responsibility for schools, families and young people, Ipstones and oversight of ministry and pastoral care, and missional development of occasional offices. (Living in Ipstones)
- 1 FT mission responsibility for tourism and pilgrimage, buildings as mission, the farming community and key responsibility for developing fresh expressions, including the carboot sale and online presence. (Living in Longnor)
- 1 HfD (living in Waterhouses)
- 1 HfD (Living in Alstonefield)

Governance & structure

No formal pastoral reorganization will take place unless in the future, when the mission area is well established, it is agreed that reorganization would be helpful.

- The aim is to share more governance functions across parishes whilst maintaining local independence where this is genuinely beneficial.
- Each benefice to have a leadership team (Ipstones and Longnor already have them) initially. This can then be constituted as a Joint Council to which PCCs can delegate whatever power they choose as they begin working together more closely. Eventually it would be ideal to move to one PCC per benefice, but with DCCs and as much local control of money as possible.
- Clergy initially to be licensed to the current benefice structure and also as assistant curate in the other parishes in the Deanery. Then to move to a group ministry.
- The FT clergyperson in Ipstones would take on oversight of Warslow and Elkstones parish, and the HfD Priest in Alstonefield would also oversee Blore, in order to even out responsibilities between FT and HfD clergy

Sunday worship

Principles:

- FT clergy do max 2 morning services +/- an afternoon or evening
- HfD clergy do max 2 services per Sunday
- Ongoing development of lay ministry and non-eucharistic services
- Clergy to sometimes lead non-eucharistic services to demonstrate that other forms of worship are just as meaningful and to allow support/supervision of lay people developing as worship leaders.
- Clergy shouldn't be putting so much time/energy into provision of Sunday services that there is no missional energy left.



Appendix B: Deanery Statistics

	Deprivation rank (1=most deprived, 12,154=least deprived)	Parish popn (2021 census)	Area (square miles)	Average Sunday attendance	Electoral roll	Funerals	Baptisms
Alstonefield	4244	266	5.5	18	35	1	0
Blore Ray with Okeover	4852	136	4.3	In closure process – no current Sunday services	12	2	0
Ilam	4244	84	2.6	15	14	2	1
Wetton	4244	158	4.1	14	25	0	0
Calton	4244	169	4.5	9	36	0	0
Cauldon	4899	449	3.5	4	4	3	1
Grindon	2972	205	5.1	7	23	1	1
Waterfall	4244	749	2.5	14	42	1	0
Ipstones	7234	1214	8.0	20	49	10	10
Onecote	4700	598	13.5	10	26	3	4
Butterton	2972	199	2.3	12	33		
Warslow with Elkstones	2972	321	6.8	8 W 6 E	16	0	0
Longnor with Newtown	2869	736	12.9	27	35	6	2
Quarnford (Flash)	2486	377	11.1	8	8	7	1
Sheen	2972	222	4.5	7	14	2	1

Appendix C: Meet the Team

Meet the Vicar of Alstonefield, Ilam and Wetton

Revd Patrick Griffin



I have the pleasure of serving the Church family of Alstonefield, Wetton and Ilam.

I was attracted to this scenic deanery by the strong sense of collegiality that pervaded its culture and mission. I have a young family who support me tremendously both within my ministry and in my secular employment. This deanery is unrivalled as a place to settle and flourish as a family. There are many opportunities here that require proactive and effective ministering. I would value the chance to work alongside any minister appointed to the post and continue to work upon our vision of transforming tourists into pilgrims.

Meet our Retired Priests:



Revd Nicola Pepper

Rev Nicola has been involved in rural ministry for a number of years. She leads worship in all the Longnor churches and coordinates Wild Church at Sheen and Open the Book at Longnor and Hollinsclough Schools.

'I particularly like the feeling of community in the rural parishes. Every parish has their own quirks and unique identities.'



Revd Arthur Hack

Meet our Readers:



Roger Cutts

Roger is licensed to the Ipstones Group

"Roger Cutts is a Lay Reader in the Church of England and Local Preacher in the Methodist Circuit and enjoys working ecumenically throughout the area..."



Gordon Burgess Parker

Gordon is licensed to the Waterfall Group

"I've been a Lay Minister for nearly 20 years and the ministries I've found most rewarding are Funerals and Home Communion. I quite like leading Morning and Evening Prayer as well!"



Clare Day

Clare is licensed to the Alstonefield Deanery but supports worship across the Team

"I enjoy working as a Reader in the Alstonfield family group and look forward to being able to extend this to the exciting new Rural Missional Deanery and working with new colleagues."

Meet our Locally Commissioned Lay Ministers



Sharon Ford

Meet Sharon; one of our locally commissioned lay ministers. Sharon leads services at Longnor, Sheen and Newtown, and assists in other family groups

'Being a worship leader is an important part of my life. It's a privilege to be able to join with all our church communities to worship the Lord, and to be part of a team that is growing discipleship and mission in the area'



Toby Gaddum

Toby leads services across the Ipstones Group and is the lay chair of the Ipstones Leadership Team.

*'As a Deanery we are stronger together with our God leading us through our time of vacancy. **Psalm 62:6-7:** "He only is my rock and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be shaken. On God my salvation and my glory rest; The rock of my strength, my refuge is in God".'*

Meet our Locally Commissioned Lay Funeral Minister



Karen Kidd

Karen takes funerals in all the Longnor Family Group churches.

"I'm just a farmer who does funerals. Becoming a Funeral Minister felt like a natural thing for me to do, as my dad was an undertaker for many years. When I first heard about the opportunity I didn't hesitate to sign up - and I made a little bit of history by being one of the first to take up the role".

Meet our lay ministers in training



Debra Tickell

Debra is training to become a Reader currently

Being part of the deanery mission area team allows me to contribute to a collective vision that transcends individual parish boundaries.



Malcolm Hawton

Malcolm is training to become a Locally Commissioned Lay Minister currently

Malcolm Hawton, appreciates having retired to a beautiful part of the country in a supportive community, and enjoys helping on the Sheen PCC and occasionally leading Sunday worship and midweek meetings

