

TEAM RECTOR



© Readers Digest 1992



THE UNITED BENEFICE

of Cheswardine, Childs Ercall, Hales, Hinstock, Hodnet with Peplow, Sambrook and Stoke on Tern

Our Benefice Prayer



Knitted Bible figures from the Knitted Bible



Benefice Prayer

Heavenly Father,
you have welcomed us into your kingdom
and your heart's desire
is to draw every human being to yourself.
Grant us clear eyes to see people as you see them,
sensitive feet to stand in their shoes,
and warm smiles to welcome them in your name.

Give us such generous hearts
that our church becomes a taste of heaven
where everyone you send us
finds their loving home
in the community of your Son,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen



Sections

Introductions

1. The Context
2. The Challenge
3. What we can do together
(role description)
4. Applicant Specification
5. How we can support you
6. Meet The Ministry Team
7. The Benefice
8. Our Ministry
9. Communication
10. Pastoral Offices
11. The Churches
12. The Schools and their villages
13. The Vicarage
14. The Local Area
15. Closing Prayer
16. Appendices
 1. Role Description & Person Specification
 2. Parish Finances

Welcome from the Bishop of Shrewsbury and Archdeacon of Salop



We're delighted that you're looking at this post, as Team Rector of this United Benefice, crossing Shropshire's border into Staffordshire. We pray that God will give you a clear sense of whether he might be calling you to serve in this role. Should you join us here, we look forward to working with you in God's service!



In Lichfield diocese, much of our shared life, leadership and mutual support is lived out through episcopal areas, so we would expect to get to know you and to encourage you in your ministry and mission here. We have much to do in God's service, and a wonderful area in which to serve him together.

The Shrewsbury Episcopal Area (which covers the same area as the Archdeaconry of Salop) covers a large area and many communities across North Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin. Reaching from the Cheshire border to the north to the edges of the Shropshire Hills (and the Diocese of Hereford) in the south, and from the outskirts of Wolverhampton in the east to across the Welsh border in the west, it also includes churches of all sizes, traditions and history. Mostly rural, we also serve the ancient town of Shrewsbury, fast-growing Telford, and a number of substantial market towns, *Seeking the Kingdom* of the one God whose love is constant in all places.

This is a substantial team, in terms of the area covered and the range of parishes you would serve. It is also a strong team of ministers (lay and ordained) and other lay leaders. We have already approved the appointment of a 0.5FTE Team Vicar, alongside the benefice's own provision to appoint a 0.5FTE Primary Schools and Families worker. We hope that the new Team Rector will be involved in these appointments soon after induction, shaping the team as it comes up to strength.

The benefice is deeply committed to its churches, communities and schools, and there is a real will and desire to move forward in deeper unity and mission with the right Team Rector in post. You will see in this profile something of what is already happening, and we hope you will also see the beginning of a vision of how you could lead the benefice in building on this.

We hope that this profile gives you enough insight into the benefice and role to discern with God whether or not to apply. If you'd like to know more before deciding, please contact Archdeacon Nick on 07506 748 702 or at archdeacon.salop@lichfield.anglican.org.

Thank you.

+Sarah and Archdeacon Nick

From the Rural Dean, Hodnet Deanery

Thank you for your interest in the position of Rector for the 'United Benefice', in the Hodnet Deanery. I hope as you read the following profile you'll get a real sense of the churches and their communities and the missional challenges and (importantly) opportunities there are in these rural villages.

Our Deanery Vision, is to be **Growing... deeper in Christ, ...together in unity and ...out into our communities**. We seek to work together, whilst respecting and celebrating our different traditions and contexts and want to see everyone having the opportunity to go deeper in their own personal journey with Christ. We are committed to equipping, training and empowering our laity to use their gifts to serve their churches and communities. We endeavour to model collaboration and sharing of resources, for the sake of mission across our whole area and want to continue to encourage benefices to look for ways to simplify structures and models for worship, reduce administration and encourage partnerships that will release energy for mission. It has been good to see much of this already happening in the 'United Benefice'.

May the LORD guide you as you seek to discern his path forward for your ministry.

Revd Catherine McBride, Rural Dean Hodnet Deanery



Section 01

The Context

The present time

We are a truly United Benefice, not only in name but also in our passion for community and our support for each other.

This is an interesting time in our journey with God and one another as we develop mission, especially with our schools and young families, whilst sustaining and nurturing varied and vibrant worship in our traditional church buildings.

We are a financially sound Benefice seeking a Team Rector to build on our strengths and lead us forward.

You will not be starting from scratch but will have a unique opportunity to make a very positive difference.

Who are we?

We are a Benefice of eight rural churches (seven parishes) to the south of Market Drayton in North Shropshire (one parish is in Staffordshire). Six of these parishes have been working together since 1995 as 'the United Benefice'. In March 2025 the seventh parish (Hodnet with Peplow) was officially added, after a two-year period of working together.

We are blessed with a committed ecumenical Ministry Team: Assistant Minister (a part-time NSM), two retired clergy, three Lay Readers, two LCLMs, prayerful and active church members and lay teams involved with pastoral care and ministry to schools and families. Our united fellowship is nurtured through our Benefice cycle of prayer, joint Benefice services, Wardens' meetings and Benefice Synods (gathering all seven PCCs twice per year). We work closely with a URC chapel at Wistanswick and a Free Methodist fresh expression at Hinstock.



Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism (DVE)

Our Vision is for a Benefice where all church members are growing as disciples of Christ in a manner appropriate to their age and ability and being equipped to share their faith in word and action. We encourage churches and individuals to discern and follow God's particular call on their life and witness and have a strong history of lay-training for ministry. We welcome our communities into our buildings with warm hospitality, and go out to serve our four schools, three nursing homes and communities, sharing the Gospel where appropriate. These three goals (DVE) are simplified as 'listening, learning and loving' and form the basis of our mission action planning.

Listen
Learn
& Love



Section 02

The Challenge



What WE are looking for

An energetic and enthusiastic priest with a calling to rural ministry and mission who will guide, nurture and grow the spiritual development of our congregations whilst valuing our existing traditions in our group of beautiful and well-loved churches.

We hope our new Team Rector will be a visionary leader of the Benefice ministry team and help us to strengthen our churches as the heart of our communities with compassionate and creative ministry.

You will have the support of a committed and dedicated team of ministers, lay readers, LCLMs, churchwardens and congregations, so we hope you are a good listener whilst being empathetic!

Section 03

What We Can Do Together

We are praying that you can:

- Be an inspirational and engaging leader, working with the Benefice Ministry Team, and our PCCs and congregations to discern where God is leading us.
- Take services across the Benefice.
- Be pastorally skilled and committed to ensuring the provision of pastoral care, supported by the existing Pastoral Care Teams and, the to be appointed, 0.5 Team Vicar.
- Oversee our continued melding into an effective Benefice with our collegiate and team-based system of working. Our congregations still focus primarily on their village church but organisationally we are Benefice-minded, for example funding a proposed 0.5 Schools & Families Worker.



Can you help us to:

- Sustain and grow the existing worshipping communities and grow our children's, young people's, and families' ministry. We feel the need to focus on new generations before it is too late. We have excellent links with **the 4 non-church Primary schools**. Tactful involvement by the new Rector could make a real impact and drive this forward.
- Develop a post-primary school youth initiative with the support of the, to be recruited Team Vicar, and the, to be appointed, Schools & Families Worker.
- Encourage what is good and develop opportunities for improvement. Train and empower lay people to play their part in Christ's Church. Develop worship that reflects the breadth of the Benefice, including traditional and liturgy-lite styles of worship.



- The future life of our Benefice relies on continued growth, collaboration and mutual support among all the churches and their congregations.
- We would like our Team Rector to lead, encourage and inspire us in worship and they should feel equally comfortable wearing robes and/or vestments for formal and traditional services or going in plain clothes for family and informal worship.
- We hope to encourage the parents of young families in our villages to become involved in church life; in this way we will start to fill the gap in our demographic: encouraging and driving forward the initiatives in family worship and primary schools' ministry. You will be involved in appointing a 0.5 Team Vicar and part-time Schools & Families Worker to help you in this process.
- Finally, you will need a full driving licence and a reliable car to travel the rural roads between the villages – it's a 20-minute drive between the furthest-apart churches – and a sense of humour: essential when you get stuck behind a tractor on the way to taking a morning service!



Section 04

Applicant Specification

A profile of the person we're praying for

We are hoping to appoint someone with life experience and enthusiasm for rural ministry who is also at home and able to communicate with small rural communities. We are praying that God will send us the person He has prepared for His Kingdom work among us but who may not necessarily match all our expectations.





Essential

- Commitment to personal and corporate prayer
- A team-player committed to our collaborative and flexible mode of working
- Approachable, listening and committed
- A heart for children and families
- A passion and ability to communicate the Gospel to young and old
- An inspirer and enabler of lay ministry



Section 05

How We Can Support You

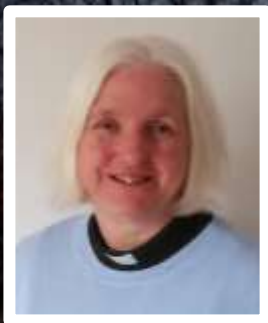
Our commitment to you

- Colleagues with whom to share the highs and lows of ministry
- Respect for days off and holiday entitlement
- Encouragement to take time for training and networking
- A spacious and well-appointed vicarage in a sought-after village
- Solid prayer support
- Administrative support
- A 0.5 Schools & Families Worker (to be advertised)
- A 0.5 Team Vicar (to be advertised)
- Full reimbursement of expenses
- A financially solvent Benefice which has managed its common fund payments for the last 30 years
- Laughter and adventure
- A willingness to be nudged but not kicked out of our comfort zones!



Section 06

Meet The Ministry Team

**Assistant Minister****Rev Christine Alexander**

Hello, my name is Christine, but most know me as Chris. After spending my curacy in the United Benefice, I was licensed as Assistant Minister here in

July 2025. I have a passion to see people grow in their faith and to discover and use the gifts that God has given them. Walking is one way that I resource myself and feel close to God, along with relaxing in front of a good film that has a strong storyline like 'Hidden Figures'. Originally from

Somerset, my family and I have moved quite a few times. We have three grown-up children and three grandchildren under five. In 2022 my husband and I moved to Shropshire which we love. I am probably a country girl at heart.

**Rev Chris Simpson (PTO)**

I live at Tern Hill with my husband, Michael. We have one son, five grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. I was licensed to the Benefice as Associate Minister (NSM) in August 2014. I retired in June 2022

but have PTO and still minister primarily in the Benefice. My main areas of interest are those of pastoral care, healing ministry and spirituality.

I have been a Sessional/ Volunteer Chaplain at Stoke Heath HMP/YOI since 2014 where I find it a great privilege to see men finding new hope and purpose through faith in Christ. I have recently completed training to be a Spiritual Companion for the Lichfield Diocese. I enjoy walking, spending time in nature, contemplative prayer and retreats.

**Rev Marcus Griffiths (PTO)**

A Baptist minister - always non-stipendiary (previously alongside being a GP). For the past eight-plus years (after 'retiring') working with the Benefice as an 'Authorised Minister' since moving to Hales. For the last three years I have also worked with Wistanswick URC (as their Minister for the past year). I remain committed to sharing God's love in Christ in the communities I live and work with.

06 Meet The Ministry Team



Janice Parker

I have been a churchwarden at Hodnet since 1998. In 2012 I started to train as a Lay Reader, and in 2014 I obtained my reader's licence.

I have a deep love of funeral ministry. I feel it's the last good thing you can do for the deceased and support the family who have lost a loved one. My husband supports me in all that I do.

We have two adult children, three grandchildren and last December we were blessed with a great-grandchild. My hobbies are reading 'who done it' books, swimming and family history.



Barnaby Reeve

I was licensed in September 2019, live on my own in Cheswardine and serve across the Benefice. I was Churchwarden for six years and still serve on the PCC mainly as boiler kicker and clock monitor, occasional bell ringer too. My concern is for youth, the post-Sunday school youngsters. I was involved with the Benefice youth group for over ten years and still act as an occasional mentor. Explaining and teaching is what I enjoy most in my Christian life. The day job is mending canal boats and I have a collection of live-aboard customers that I do my best to keep alive, sane and afloat. I keep an eye on my grown-up stepdaughter a few miles away. My own 17 year old daughter lives with Mum in Somerset but visits regularly to mock me and help with boat work.



Denzal Evans

I have lived in Hinstock since 1984 and married Jenny in 2005. Over the past decade I have become deeply involved in the benefice, worshipping at St Oswald's and serving in several roles. I am currently a Church Warden and bell ringer.

My ministerial journey has developed over many years, guided by clergy, mentors, and encouraged by the congregation. I have completed the Bishop's Certificate, Pathways to Ministry, and St Chad's Ministry Training. Since 2025 I have been training as a Lay Reader on the Durham Common Awards programme and will be licensed in September 2026. I am also exploring funeral ministry as a future calling.

OUR LAY READERS



OUR LCLMs



Peter Cartwright

After being confirmed, I became an Altar Server, was given the job of Sacristan and am a member of the Guild of Servants of the sanctuary. I have been a Lay Minister, administered the Chalice and assisted priests in leading worship.

I have served on a PCC for the past 47 years and been a District Church Warden.

I moved to Cheswardine 4 years ago.

I completed the Chad Foundations course and was appointed as a LCLM for Cheswardine and Hales. I lead services such as Morning Worship and Evensong and preach sermons.

I still work and run the family business of farming, but look to retire shortly.

I feel a calling to contribute to leading worship in the expanded Benefice.

Tracy Waters

I have been churchwarden at St Peter's, Stoke on Tern since 2022. In 2025 I was given the honour of commissioned as Locally Commissioned Lay Minister for St Peter's. As LCLM I assist worship, supporting clergy and helping nurture faith. I am also a link with our local prison where I work as an ESOL tutor. I have a heart for pastoral care and am on the pastoral care team offering spiritual and practical support to individuals within the church and the wider community. I am also safeguarding lead for the Benefice providing face to face training for those requiring to undertake basic and foundation safeguarding qualifications.

I live in Telford with my husband who is a great support in all that I do. We have one adult son and two lovely grandchildren who love to join me at church when they are visiting. I enjoy spending time with family and friends as well as photography and yoga. I also enjoy sitting with my feet up, a good book, cup of tea and biscuit.

How we work together:

Our service rotas are prepared quarterly by the Ministry team (Assistant Minister, two PTO clergy, three Readers and two Locally Commissioned Lay Ministers). We meet to pray and plan these together, along with any teaching series or missional outreach. We take a Retreat together twice a year on a Saturday morning, finishing with lunch.

The Ministry Team is part of the Covenant Team where prayerful representatives from each Parish meet twice per year to seek God's direction for ministry and mission across the seven parishes.



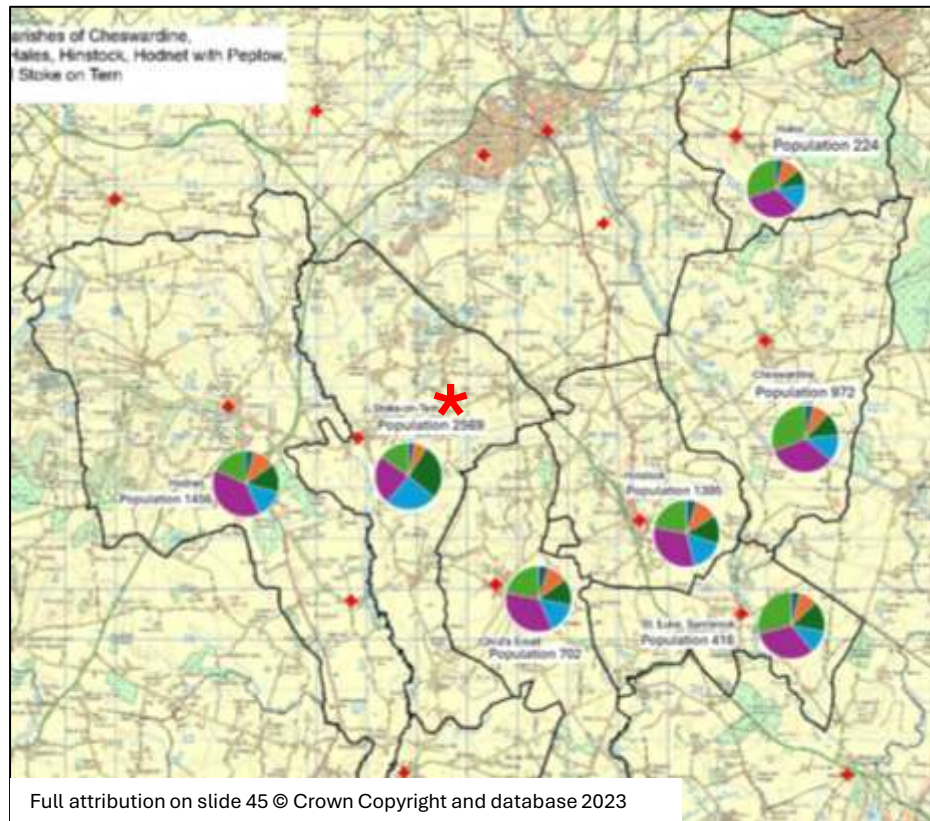
Leadership & Governance Summary

- **Ministry Team** -Team Rector plus Clergy, plus Readers plus Locally Commissioned Lay Ministers (7)
- **Children's Team** -Rev Chris Alexander plus 10
- **Pastoral Team** -Rev Chris Simpson plus 15
- **Covenant Team**-Rector plus 10 (a prayerful direction discerning group)
- **Wardens** - Clergy plus 14 (a great Benefice builder!)
- **Benefice Synods**- twice yearly: PCC meetings first half; information sharing in second half (again a Benefice builder)
- ***We have agreement from the bishops to appoint a 0.5 FTE Team Vicar and have funds ready to advertise for a 0.5 FTE Schools & Families Worker to work with them. We have committed funds for 6 years in the first instance. We hope that you will quickly help us finalise and recruit to these key posts***

Section 07

The Benefice

Population of our parishes and ages



Key for pie charts

0 to 4	5 to 14	15 to 29
30 to 44	45 to 64	65+

★ The population of Stoke on Tern includes the Tern Hill Army Barracks and Stoke Heath Prison

Local Amenities	Cheswardine	Childs Ercall	Hales	Hinstock	Sambrook	Stoke on Tern	Hodnet and Peplow
School							
Ecumenical Partners							
Post Office							
Shop							
Community Cafes/Coffee Morning							
Prison							
New Housing Developments							
Nursing Home							
Youth Clubs *							
Regular Community Groups*							
Doctors							

*Including uniformed groups, football and other activities

Section 08

Our Ministry

Discipleship (learning)

Most of our learning and growing occurs through the teaching and preaching in our Sunday Services. We usually have a sermon series in Lent, Advent and other times like Creationtide, when we give out notes and publish resources on-line. There are currently three study-groups meeting fortnightly in the Benefice and a monthly 'soup and bible study'.

Most churches have a monthly service more suited to young families: family church, café church and Sunday school. We all follow a programme for the year, decided by the 'Children's work team' who meet three times a year. Resources are produced to enhance this learning.

Four times a year, on a fifth Sunday, we meet together for our Benefice Service when we often invite an outside speaker on an aspect of discipleship. These are real times of fellowship and celebration.

There is a strong emphasis on prayer. Our Benefice Cross spends one month in each Parish and during that month we pray for the needs of that church and community in our Sunday services. Most churches have weekly or fortnightly weekday prayer, led by clergy or lay people. During the ten days of 'Thy Kingdom Come' we carry the cross around our Benefice, praying for our communities and talking with people we meet.



Our Benefice Cross



Vocation (listening)

For a long time, the Benefice has strongly encouraged lay involvement, especially through youth and children's work and pastoral care, but also in the lay-leading of Services of the Word. Since the Benefice was formed in 1995, there have been six Lay Readers trained. We have one soon to be licensed and three entering the discernment pathway (Chad Foundations). We also support people to discover their mission in the world, understanding that God's Kingdom work is much broader than the church! In Benefice services recently we have commissioned a Waterways chaplain and a Lay person to work as a 'chaplain'/church link in one of our primary schools. We understand that the practice of silence for hearing God and reflecting on His call is vital to the discernment of vocation for individuals and churches. We try to build this listening time into our services, meetings and especially our twice-yearly Benefice retreats. In addition, we have two people recently qualified in spiritual listening, who can help with this process.

Evangelism (loving)

All our churches look for positive ways to engage with and serve their communities. Sometimes this involves putting on events like the Big Breakfast or church Open Days. Sometimes it involves serving within the community on a regular basis for example Sambrook run a Community Café. All these strengthen connections with our communities. Our greatest opportunities for evangelism occur at the occasional offices (see below).

We also pray and plan well for the annual festivals of Christmas, Easter and Harvest. We appreciate that people rarely travel far, identifying with their local Parish Church. However, our Children's work and Pastoral Care Teams help us to share ideas and resources across the Benefice.

Since the Pandemic we have held 'Dementia-friendly teas' at Easter time and Harvest, gathering elderly people and their carers from around the Benefice and often involving local school children.



Dementia friendly Afternoon Tea



Evangelism (loving) continued...

Our principal outreach occurs through the schools and nursing homes we visit regularly.

There are four non-church schools in our Benefice (Cheswardine, Hinstock, Hodnet and Stoke on Tern). Lay volunteers take an assembly one month alternating with the new 'Open the Book Team' the next month. The church is often invited to run workshops around the Christian festivals or support the RS Curriculum in other ways. All four schools come into our church buildings at Christmas and sometimes at Harvest or to celebrate the end of term. We are aware these opportunities could be developed further and offering worship after school might be better than encouraging people to come to Sunday services. We have a group for pre-school children which meets weekly in term-time, offering fellowship and learning. After our Pandemic learning when we worshipped outside in churchyards, we decided to start 'Forest Church' which currently gathers twice per year on a Saturday afternoon in one of our Parishes, taking part in nature activities or walks, telling a bible story round the fire and toasting muffins. We would love to develop and promote this further.



Section 09

Communication

How we communicate

The Benefice uses ACNY and a Facebook page. Each week, our Benefice Administrator publishes our Sunday services and other events in the Bulletin which is e-mailed out to all congregation members who have signed up for it. It is also uploaded to our website. Families receive a monthly newsletter by e-mail.

Seven of our villages have newsletters or magazines in which the church publishes services and events and the clergy team contribute a monthly letter or reflection, also uploaded to the website. In Childs Ercall, Cheswardine & Hales, Sambrook and Hodnet the church produces and distributes these as part of our service to the community.



Cheswardine	
6th	10:00am Morning Worship
13th	10:00am *Harvest Communion
20th	10:00am Family Worship
27th	6:00pm Evensong

Hales	
6th	7:00pm *Harvest Service
13th	3:00pm *Family Harvest Service
27th	10:00am Holy Communion

*Join us for our Harvest Service with Harvest theme and hymns. You are welcome to bring some tins or packets for the Food Bank or some money for our collection, but neither is expected.

Contacts
Rev Becky Richards
01630 661204

Churchwardens
Cheswardine
Harold Lewis
01630 661329

Hales
Alexander Hall
07788 145959

Find us at www.theunitedbenefice.com

THE HARVEST BREAKFAST AT CHESWARDINE PARISH HALL

SUNDAY 27th OCTOBER
9am—12 noon

FULL ENGLISH BREAKFAST WITH ALL THE TRIMMINGS
BACON AND SALSADE FROM BUTTERCROSS FARM
LOCAL EGGS AND HOME MADE PRESERVES

ADULT £7.50

CHILD £3

Do you know someone who is experiencing short-term financial difficulties, or are you?

The Cheswardine Charity exists to support those in need of support to cope with:

- Funeral expenses
- Redundancy
- Hospital journeys
- Write goods failure
- School uniform
- and many other situations

If you or someone you know could benefit from a grant contact 01630 661204 in complete confidence.

Section 10

Pastoral Offices

10 Pastoral Offices

In a rural community the pastoral offices are still a valuable opportunity for mission, and many people re-establish contact with church through positive experiences of pastoral care during these important life events.

The Occasional Offices:

Figures from 1/1/2025 - 31/12/2025

Church	Weddings	Funerals	Burials & Committals	Baptisms
Cheswardine	5	4	3	3
Childs Ercall	0	0	2	3
Hales	0	5	8	1
Hinstock	0	3	1	5
Sambrook	0	4	1	1
Stoke on Tern	2	5	1	2
Hodnet & Peplow	2	10	3	9
TOTAL	9	31	19	24



Adult Baptism in St Swithun's Church

Baptisms

Couples asking for a christening are visited at home and the difference between baptism and blessing is explained. They are then encouraged to make an informed choice. Every year we conduct a few blessings for those who do not feel ready to commit to the baptismal promises. For those who choose Baptism, we meet with parents and Godparents to prepare them, giving the basis of the Christian faith, the meaning of the service and ways they can encourage their children to grow in faith at home. We take very seriously the church's promise to support parents in this, and most churches offer a monthly family worship. We also notify parents regularly of activities for families and visit with resources like Advent calendars and Easter books. Cards are sent on the anniversary of baptism. We have had two adult baptisms recently, including one in the River Tern. Our preference is to baptise within a Sunday service, but we are flexible and will often hold an individual service and welcome the family at the following family worship.



Weddings

These are shared between the Ministry Team. We work together in the preparation. Couples marrying in the coming year are gathered on a Sunday afternoon nearest Valentine's Day for preparation which is both practical and spiritual. We have an open policy on re-marriage after divorce, but take time to discuss the individual circumstances with the couples concerned. We offer blessings after secular ceremonies and renewal of vows on significant anniversaries. We have a number of PCCs who, after further consultation, may be open to using Prayers of Love and Faith in their churches.



Funerals

There are a lot of funerals, burials and cremations in our rural churches and these are shared between the clergy and the Lay Reader at Hodnet, who has a particular gift and calling in this area. You would be expected to do your share. We are currently gathering and training a bereavement team to assist in following up these services.



Section 11

The Churches

11 The Churches

The churches of our Benefice could be described as 'middle of the road Anglican'. Recent vicars have been very biblically-based and gently charismatic. In the recent past we have had a vibrant youth fellowship which blessed us with band-led worship at special services. For regular worship we rely upon a dedicated and adaptable group of five organists, supplemented by recorded music. Only one of our churches (Peplow) lacks a sound system. Cheswardine and Stoke on Tern have a screen and AV Projector in situ.



Electoral Roll Numbers

	Cheswardine	Childs Ercall	Hales	Hinstock	Sambrook	Stoke on Tern	Hodnet	Peplow
Average Attendance	20	15	10	12	15	26	18	6
Electoral Roll Numbers 2025	27	21	51	33	25	56	32	9

Regular Service Pattern

	Cheswardine	Childs Ercall	Hales	Hinstock	Sambrook	Stoke on Tern	Hodnet	Peplow
1st Sunday	10:00am - Morning Worship	11:00am - Holy Communion	6:00pm - Evensong		9:30am - Holy Communion		11:00am - Morning Prayer	
2nd Sunday	10:00am - Holy Communion	9:30am Sunday School		10:00am - Café Church		11:00am - Café Church	11:00am - Holy Communion	6:30pm - Evensong
3rd Sunday	10:00am - Family Worship			10:00am - Holy Communion	9:30am - Village Service	11:00am - Holy Communion	11:00am - Morning Prayer	
4th Sunday	6:00pm - Evensong	9:30am Bible Film and Family Prayers	10:00am - Holy Communion	10:00am Morning Prayer		11:00am - Morning Prayer		11:00am - Holy Communion
5th Sunday	Benefice Service 10:30am - moves around the Benefice, often with external visitor/speaker							
Weekday Services	Morning Holy Communion 4th Thursday Evening Prayer 1st and 3rd Wednesdays	Morning Prayer Services 1st & 3rd Thursdays	Monday Morning Prayer when there has been no Sunday service	Wednesday alternating between the two churches		Monday Prayer Evening & Soup & Study on 1st Friday	Wednesday Morning Prayer 1st and 3rd Wednesdays	



St Swithun's - Cheswardine

St Swithun's, Cheswardine

St Swithun's church is blessed with a wonderfully welcoming congregation. Our services range from a family friendly Café church which is starting to be supported by young families to BCP Evensong which has a loyal following that can reach a dozen. In between we use various liturgies for Holy Communion and Morning Prayer ranging from a sung service to Celtic worship. We have good links with our small village; Remembrance and candle lit Carols are particularly well supported. Our small village School has Christmas, Easter and leavers services. We run a fortnightly Bible group and a term time Parent and Toddlers group. Our PCC is very experienced and forward looking. Significant reordering has taken place in the last 15 years, and we are progressing an ambitious disabled access plan. We need support and guidance for our focus on children and families.



Youth Service 2019



St Michael's, Childs Ercall

At Childs Ercall, we are blessed with a dependable and committed PCC. Our team is constantly striving to improve the beautiful church building and churchyard, running many fundraising events throughout the year.

Our regular congregation can be less than ten, so we celebrate monthly communion with St Peter's Stoke on Tern with whom we share good fellowship. At Easter, Harvest and Christmas we try to think outside the box to encourage more people into church, for example our annual crib walk through the village.

Our Sunday school is well attended by loyal families from around the area. We have found that altering the location, meeting sometimes in church and sometimes on a farm, helps maintain the regular attendance with over 15 children and their parents.

Childs Ercall hopes the Team Rector is a supportive person to assist and inspire us to try something new.



Sunday School

11 The Churches



St Mary's, Hales

St Mary's church is set in a small village parish with a strong farming emphasis. Our church is keen to embrace new ideas that will bring more of the village to pray and give thanks. The majority of those who come to church are from the immediate village and of an older age group. We do have an encouraging and growing group of young families who come to church when their busy lives outside school and work make this possible. We host a popular bluebell walk in the Spring for the Benefice children and hold two fundraising events annually: the Hales Fete and the Hales Fun Ride.

Although our average congregation is small, we love our singing and make up for size with our voices !

We would warmly welcome an energetic Team Rector who would support the current worship team and develop our ministry among young families in the coming years.





we are the
open the book
team

Be
Ready
Respectful
Safe
Successful

11 The Churches

St Oswald's, Hinstock

We are a welcoming, accessible and dementia-friendly church. The regular congregation is mainly elderly, with a few younger families attending Café Church and special services.

We have bell ringers and a dedicated organist. During 2025 we re-tiled the entire church roof after many years of fundraising.

Our main challenge is the reducing number of families who attend services.

In the new Team Rector we are hoping for someone to help us better connect with the young families in our community and inspire us to try something new.



Youth Service 2019



St Luke's, Hodnet

We are quite a traditional parish which matches our church – a striking 11th century building which has beautiful stained glass windows and the only octagonal tower in Shropshire. The tower has eight bells and a committed group of ringers to ring for services and weddings.

The church stands proudly at the top of the village next to Hodnet Hall with its renowned gardens which are open to the public. Our current congregation is mostly of the older generation and we are hoping the new Team Rector can inspire us to grow the congregation with many of the families moving into the new housing development. We are really keen to connect with young children and to grow the church choir.

We enjoy trying out new services, perhaps with much loved hymns and poems suggested by our congregation; another favourite is an evening stroll around Hodnet Hall Gardens stopping to pray and hear bible readings on the subject of the earth and nature.



Church Fete



11 The Churches

The Chapel of the Epiphany, Peplow

Peplow Chapel has a small but dedicated community who create a warm welcome for all!

Fundraising is at the heart of our social activity, including a thriving craft and preserve group who regularly hold sales at local events.

We are especially proud of our Christmas Eve service, which is attended by families and friends from near and far.

We are hoping for our new priest to bring enthusiasm, approachability and a fondness for all things connected to a rural parish.



11 The Churches

St Luke's, Sambrook

St Luke's is a small rural church experiencing encouraging growth, with increasing attendance at both our Communion services and our village-led worship.

We are working towards installing a toilet and kitchen area, which will allow us to host study groups, social gatherings and community activities in a much more comfortable and flexible space.

Our fortnightly Tuesday Tea Room is a valued part of village life, offering friendship and connection while also contributing to fundraising for these new facilities. It has helped widen involvement in church activities and strengthened our links with the community.

Our priority is to build on this momentum by offering worship and opportunities that feel relevant and welcoming.

We would appreciate the new Team Rector's support and guidance as we continue developing sustainable ways of encouraging greater engagement with St Luke's.





**Sambrook Church
Congregation**

11 The Churches



St Peter's, Stoke on Tern

As a welcoming and supportive church family with fellowship at its heart, St Peter's attracts people from a wide area of all ages and diverse interests. We enjoy a beautiful location, surrounded by fields.

We serve the wider Benefice and can host retreats or courses, providing versatile surroundings with an adaptable interior to accommodate different needs and a fully functional kitchen.

Our challenge is to maintain and strengthen our connections to the school, prison and parish and to sustain our finances whilst supporting our clergy.

We are looking for someone with enthusiasm, a God-led heart, sympathetic to rural challenges, happy with all ages; a team member with the ability to work independently.



Forest Church

Section 12

The Schools and their villages

Stoke on Tern 117 pupils

Stoke on Tern parish has a population of 2,569. The catchment includes Tern Hill army Barracks and Stoke Heath Prison with their housing at Buntingsdale. The village itself is very spread out and has no centre.

The school has an excellent and well-established relationship with the church, which plays an active and valued role in school life. Pupils regularly visit the church, benefit from its support in collective worship, and take part in key celebrations throughout the year. A rolling programme of shared events includes the school choir performing at Harvest services and dementia-friendly community events, while the church proudly hosts the annual Christmas Concert attended by pupils' families and friends. The annual Leavers Retreat provides year 6 pupils from local schools with a supportive opportunity to take part in activities to ease the transition to secondary school, fostering a strong sense of togetherness.

A good example of the relationship was the 150th anniversary of the church's rebuilding. The pupils participated in workshops led by church members, wrote songs and poems, and performed a musical concert at St Peter's.

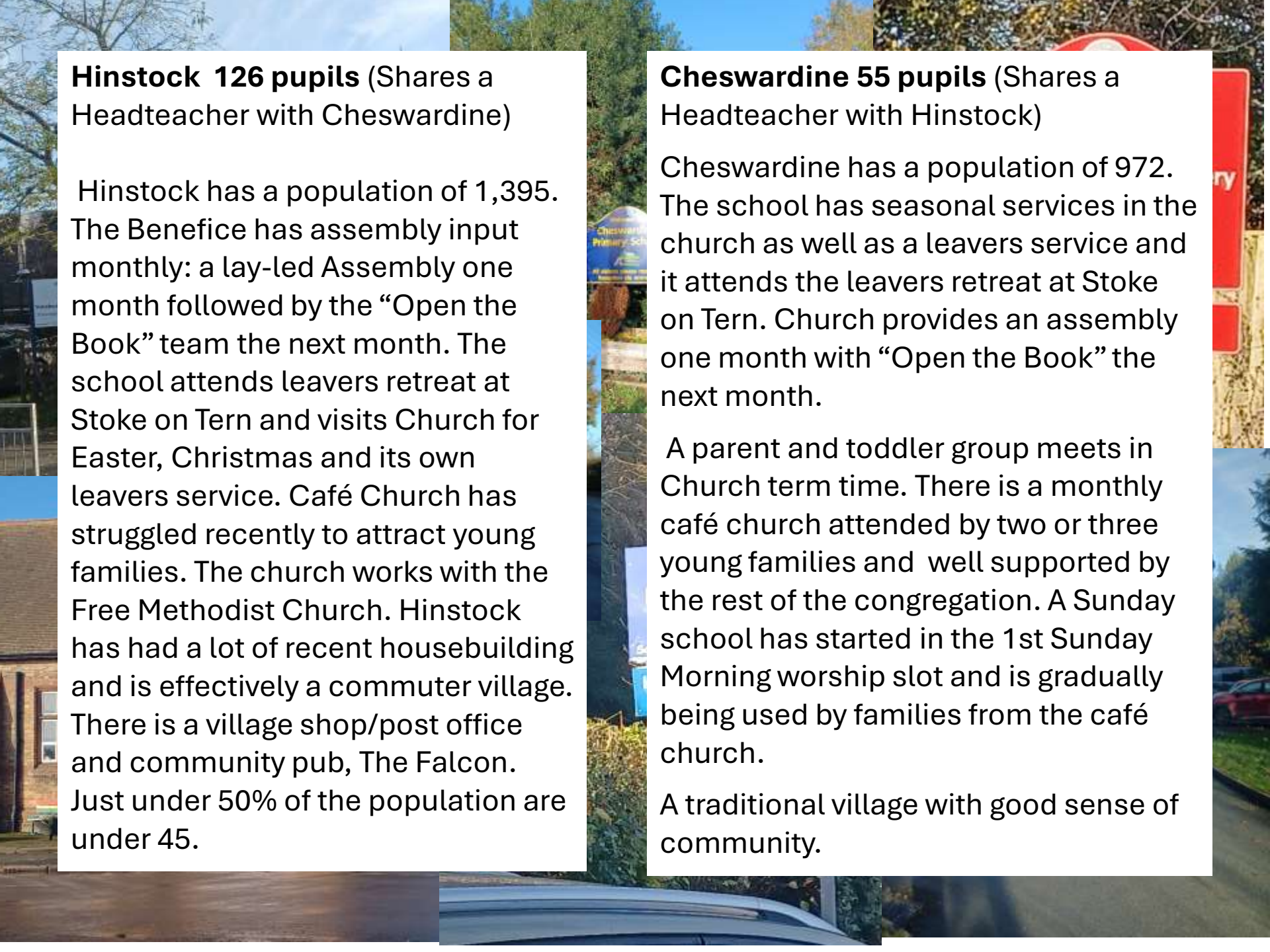
The links are further strengthened by weekly pastoral and reading support by a church member, who also leads regular assemblies.

This strong partnership enriches pupils spiritual and moral development and ensures they feel connected and supported and valued within the wider community.

Hodnet 193 pupils

Hodnet has a population of 1,534. The school attends the leavers retreat and has a church-led Assembly one month followed by the "Open the Book" team the next month. The school hosted an after-school Christingle the last two years. There is no Sunday school or provision in services for families or young children at the moment but with a growing young population in the village the church hopes to make positive changes under the new Team Rector. Hodnet has been included in the United Benefice for the past two years but only officially joined in August 2025. They have been without a priest for over three years.

Hodnet has had significant new housing in recent years. It has a shop, the Bear Inn and a doctors' surgery. The village supports uniformed organisations and has various Sports clubs with under-18 take up.



Hinstock 126 pupils (Shares a Headteacher with Cheswardine)

Hinstock has a population of 1,395. The Benefice has assembly input monthly: a lay-led Assembly one month followed by the “Open the Book” team the next month. The school attends leavers retreat at Stoke on Tern and visits Church for Easter, Christmas and its own leavers service. Café Church has struggled recently to attract young families. The church works with the Free Methodist Church. Hinstock has had a lot of recent housebuilding and is effectively a commuter village. There is a village shop/post office and community pub, The Falcon. Just under 50% of the population are under 45.

Cheswardine 55 pupils (Shares a Headteacher with Hinstock)

Cheswardine has a population of 972. The school has seasonal services in the church as well as a leavers service and it attends the leavers retreat at Stoke on Tern. Church provides an assembly one month with “Open the Book” the next month.

A parent and toddler group meets in Church term time. There is a monthly café church attended by two or three young families and well supported by the rest of the congregation. A Sunday school has started in the 1st Sunday Morning worship slot and is gradually being used by families from the café church.

A traditional village with good sense of community.

Section 13

The Vicarage

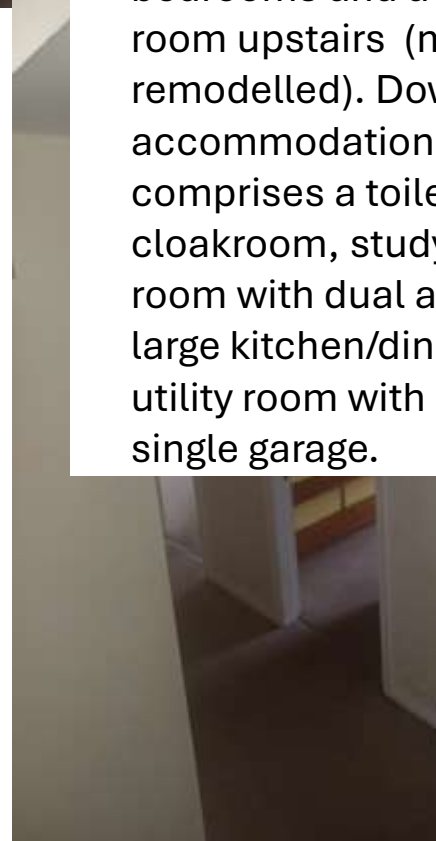
Cheswardine Vicarage

The Vicarage (High Street, Cheswardine, Market Drayton TF9 2RS) was purpose-built in 1975 for the incumbent of the parish and is a modern brick two-storey house in a large mature garden mainly laid to lawn.



Cheswardine Vicarage

It is spacious, having four bedrooms and a large wet shower room upstairs (may be remodelled). Downstairs accommodation off a large hallway comprises a toilet/washbasin with cloakroom, study/office, living room with dual aspect, separate large kitchen/diner with adjacent utility room with boiler, and door to single garage.



13 The Vicarage

Cheswardine Vicarage

The house is situated on the quiet High Street in the centre of the village, 100 yards from St Swithun's. The volunteer-run village shop is five minutes down the road in the Parish Hall. The village pubs, playing fields and school are equally close.



13 The Vicarage

Cheswardine includes the hamlets of Chipnall and Soudley and has a population of 972. It is a traditional village with a strong sense of community. There is a community shop open seven mornings and the community café opens two half days, Monday and Friday. The village hall is well used. Two pubs, Red Lion and Fox & Hounds, are open most evenings. The population is stable but gradually ageing. No new housing for 20 years. Some immediate post-war housing comprises two small estates, and there are scattered social housing. There is a significant number of invisible teenagers! Guides and Brownies run and there is a youth club in the village hall. One third of the population is under 45.



Section 14

The Local Area

14 The Local Area

The eight churches of our Benefice are situated in rural villages of North Shropshire to the northern end of Lichfield Diocese in the Archdeaconry of Salop and lie geographically between the market towns of Market Drayton and Newport.

There is much beautiful countryside for walking, including the Wrekin and the Shropshire or Welsh Hills and the towpath of the Shropshire Union Canal. Also easily accessible are recreational sites like the Ironbridge Gorge Museum. Proximity to the M54 and M6 makes travel north or south relatively easy.

Market Drayton hosts films and live events at an excellent Arts Centre, and has a swimming pool and gym provision. There are football clubs in Hodnet and Market Drayton, cricket, bowling and tennis in some of our villages. Indoor pitches and squash courts are in the Benefice too.

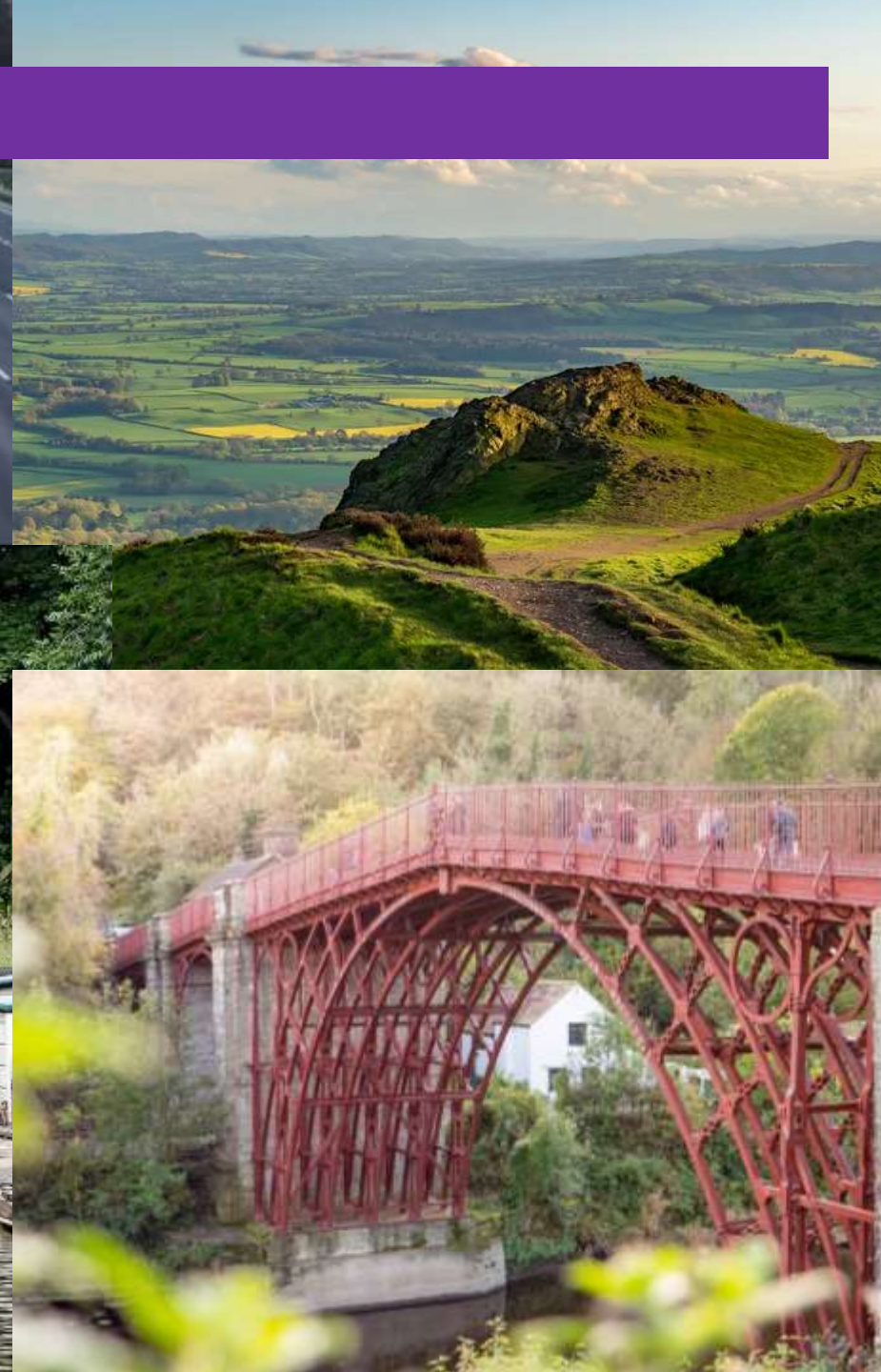


14 The Local Area

For secondary schools there is a good choice locally. Children travel to Market Drayton (The Grove), Wem (Thomas Adams), Whitchurch (Sir John Talbot), The Newport schools (Adams Grammar, Newport Girls' High School and Burton Borough) and private schools in Wellington, Shrewsbury and Stafford.

Although some residents commute to Telford, Wolverhampton, The Potteries, Shrewsbury and further beyond, many of our parishioners are still involved with the agricultural industry of which Shropshire is justly proud, transport, food manufacture eg: Palethorpes and Müller in Market Drayton. Stoke Heath Prison is also a significant local employer. We have four primary schools and four residential nursing homes.

Chester is just over an hour away and Shrewsbury with its theatre and award-winning market is 45 minutes distant.



Closing prayer

Almighty God, we pray for your blessing on all who share in the life and work of this Benefice; in the ministry of word and sacrament, in teaching and pastoral care, in service to the diocese, the community and those in need, in ecumenical fellowship and cooperation.

We pray for all members of our congregations that in their varied callings they may advance your Kingdom and bear witness to your love.

We pray that you will send us the right person to serve as Team Rector in our Benefice.

Save us O Lord from being inward looking or backward looking in our work together and in the work of our parishes.

Help us to take our eyes off ourselves and turn them on the world around us, to be concerned less with what we have accomplished and more with what remains to be done, that with our vision enlarged and our love rekindled, we may go forward to attempt new and greater things to your glory, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Role Description and Person Specification –

Team Rector of Cheswardine, Childs Ercall, Hales, Hinstock, Hodnet with Peplow, Sambrook and Stoke on Tern

Initial Role Description

This will be reviewed with the Archdeacon of Salop after six months in post

General

- To exercise faithfully and diligently the ministry of a parish priest as canonically defined and as appropriate in the benefice, deanery and diocese
- To lead, pastorally and collaboratively, the mission and ministry of the parishes of the benefice, in living out our vision of '[Seeking the Kingdom](#)'
- To exemplify and promote good safeguarding policy and practice, in line with '[Promoting a Safer Church](#)' as [implemented in Lichfield diocese](#).

Specific

The parishes have identified the key responsibilities for their new Team Rector (see section 03 of the profile), and so the person appointed will be expected to lead, inspire and resource the churches in:

- Leading the Benefice Ministry Team, the PCCs and the congregations as they discern God's calling;
- Leading, preaching within and resourcing worship as part of the team across all churches of the Benefice, developing varied worship that reflects the breadth of the benefice, including traditional and less formal approaches;
- Oversee the continued integration of the parishes into an effective benefice with collegiate and team-based ministry, while honouring the distinct identity and life of each parish;
- Enabling the sustaining and growth of the existing worshipping communities;
- With the appointment of a 0.5FTE Schools and Families Worker and 0.5FTE Team Vicar, build on school links and develop post-primary school youth initiative;

Person Specification

Essential characteristics - We are looking for a person who:

Is in priest's orders in the Church of England or in a church with which the Church of England is in communion, and has completed successfully IME4-7 or the local equivalent; and who has at least three years' ministry experience in the Church of England or other Anglican church;

Is committed to personal and corporate prayer

Is committed to and passionate for rural ministry and mission through and beyond parish churches;

Is pastorally skilled and committed to ensuring the provision of pastoral care through working with a clergy and lay team;

Is approachable, listening and committed;

Has a heart for children and families;

Has a passion and ability to communicate the Gospel to young and old, long-standing church members and new enquirers;

Is an inspirer and enabler of the ministry of others;

Is able to drive for work purposes.

Desirable characteristics – We hope to appoint someone who, in addition:

Has experience of ministry in schools;

Is compassionate and sensitive to the pastoral needs of varied communities;

Has good self-organisation;

Has a good sense of humour.

This post will be offered subject to the completion of appropriate safeguarding training and to the receipt of a clear Enhanced DBS check.

Appendix 2

Parish Finances Snapshot

Cheswardine

Income	TOTAL £38,559
Planned giving Gift Aided	£17,414
Plate collections	£5,495
Other source eg Fundraising & Fees	£14,842
Expenditure	TOTAL £40,141
Common Fund (Parish Share)	£16,456
The rest	£23,685
Reserves	TOTAL £124,018
Comprising	
Restricted funds	£59,400
The rest	£64,600

Childs Ercall

Income	TOTAL £15,491
Planned giving Gift Aided	£3,865
Plate collections	£1,644
Other source eg Fundraising	£2,197 + £7,785
Expenditure	TOTAL £12,435
Common Fund (Parish Share)	£5,642
The rest	£6,793
Reserves	TOTAL £51,129
Comprising Restricted funds	£49,941
The rest	£1,188

Hales

Income	TOTAL £30,000
Planned giving Gift Aided	£2,440
Plate collections	£6,581
Other source eg Fundraising	£20,982
Expenditure	TOTAL £18,031
Common Fund (Parish Share)	£7,221
The rest	£10,810
Reserves	TOTAL £65,073
Comprising Restricted funds	£48,075
The rest	£16,998

Hinstock (end 2024)

Income	TOTAL £28,514
Planned giving Gift Aided	£8,666
Plate collections	£8,170
Other source eg Fundraising	£11,678 (inc grant of £3250) All for roof repair.
Expenditure	TOTAL £14,856
Common Fund (Parish Share)	£8,496
The rest	£6,360
Reserves	TOTAL £41,968 (for roof repair)
Comprising Restricted funds	£21,000
The rest	£20,968

Hodnet with Peplow

Income	TOTAL £35,908
Planned giving Gift Aided	£ 9,083
Plate collections	£4,148
Other source eg Fundraising	£21,992
Expenditure	TOTAL £57,683
Common Fund (Parish Share)	£15,783
The rest	£41,900 (£7,333 major repairs)
Reserves	TOTAL £125,387
Restricted funds	£30,091
The rest	£41,900 + £26,580

Sambrook (2024)

Income	TOTAL £20,353
Planned giving Gift Aided	£3,442
Plate collections	£1,882.
Other source eg Fundraising	£15,029
Expenditure	TOTAL £19,474
Common Fund (Parish Share)	£8,545
The rest	£10,929
Reserves	TOTAL £17,388
Restricted funds	£1,410
The rest	£15,978

Stoke on Tern

Income	TOTAL £23,800
Planned giving Gift Aided	£7,002
Plate collections	£6,628
Other source eg Fundraising	£2,150
Expenditure	TOTAL £28,000
Common Fund (Parish Share)	£11,754
The rest	£16,250
Reserves	TOTAL £84,000