

Pipe Gate

Baldwin's Gate

Bearstone

Hill Chorlton

The Loggerheads Benefice

Ashley | Mucklestone | Broughton | Croxton

sharing God's love through word and action

Maer

Mucklestone

Ashley

Loggerheads

Chatcull

Broughton

Benefice Profile 2026

Croxton

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"Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad"

Sugnall



The Loggerheads Benefice is Shaping for Mission in the Diocese of Lichfield



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CONTENTS

1.	Welcome	3
2.	The Context	3
3.	The Role	4
4.	The Challenge	4
5.	What we have to offer	5
6.	Working with our schools	6
7.	Safeguarding	7
8.	The surrounding area	7
9.	Our hope for the next chapter	8
10.	The four parishes:	
10a	Ashley	9
10b.	Mucklestone	11
10c	Broughton	13
10d.	Croxton	15
10.	The Benefice in a nutshell - Sunday service patterns and statistics	17
11.	Map of the Benefice	18

“Together as a church we are called to be a community of light, sharing God’s love through word and action, whether through outreach events, supporting one another in times of need or simply living out Christ’s love in our daily interactions.”

Revd Dawn Walker – Curate





1. WELCOME

Welcome to our benefice. We are a warm, friendly group of churches rooted deeply in our rural communities, and we are looking with hope to the future. We believe this is a place where a new Rector can flourish spiritually, and together, we can grow in faith, and mission. We are excited to share our lives with someone who feels called to rural ministry, and who values both tradition, and imagination, and is eager to help us develop a sustainable, and joyful future.



2. THE CONTEXT

The Loggerheads Benefice was formed in 2008 to bring together the four parishes of Ashley, Mucklestone, Broughton and Croxton. Each parish has its own distinctive character and historic church building. In the rural setting of North Staffordshire and close to the Shropshire border, there has been considerable development of new housing, meaning the population of our Benefice is growing significantly and rapidly.

The Loggerheads crossroads is roughly at the geographical centre of the Benefice where we have shops and a primary school with a large school-hall also used for community activities.

Our most recent Rector began his ministry here at the beginning of Covid and life became further complicated when his wife became incapacitated. We were fortunate to have a non-stipendiary Minister who undertook the majority of funerals, weddings, baptisms and regular Sunday services so that this shared ministry kept the momentum of the benefice going. We were also blessed with a Curate who mixed her training with practical ministry. These two ordained ministers have continued working throughout our vacancy to the relief and delight of our parishioners.

A new Rectory is being purchased in Loggerheads which will be central to the Benefice.

We now seek to make an appointment of a Rector to give us continuity of long-term spiritual leadership and nurture the gifts of our church family to secure further growth to our churches and the life of our communities.





3. THE ROLE

With God's guidance, we pray our appointed Rector will:-

- be a person of prayer, confident in faith to preach the Word of God, with conviction.
- be able to lead worship and share the Faith, valuing the different traditions, across the Benefice.
- lead us forward in spiritual growth, by strengthening the faith and commitment of church members.
- work with and alongside the existing clergy and ministry team, Church Wardens, and PCC members developing both spiritual growth within the church family and outreach to the wider community.
- take a lead in pastoral visiting and encourage others to be involved in this ministry.
- lead worship in our two primary schools and support their Christian vision.
- be a visible presence in the neighbourhood, and engage gladly with all sections of our community on every possible occasion.

Because our benefice is very rural, with churches spread across several villages, and there is limited public transport, a full driving licence, and regular access to a car are essential. Travelling between villages is a normal, and valued part of weekly ministry.



4. THE CHALLENGE

- To promote better Christian outreach through more effective engagement with families, particularly, those new to the area. The number of new houses being built in our benefice is truly staggering. This is a huge challenge, but one which offers real opportunities for mission, and deeper community engagement, and we hope our next Rector will help us connect with these growing communities.
- To establish a new Ministry Team of Readers, to replace what we had, but has fallen away under the last two incumbents.
- To be a more visible Christian presence in the life of the local communities and to develop strategies for ensuring good pastoral care.
- To foster the good relationships with our two Church of England primary schools and other organisations within the area, so that we can more effectively encourage people of all ages in their spiritual journey.
- To encourage us to study the Word prayerfully and to grow in faith and discipleship.
- To encourage fellowship and unity within and across the four churches of the Benefice.
- To nurture us, as together we seek God's guidance, in discerning His will for our Benefice.





5. WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER

We offer a warm and open welcome; a supportive church family, who expect to work closely with their ordained ministers, developing a shared vision with trust and imagination as we journey together. This is an opportunity to develop ministerial skills in a variety of settings across the Benefice, alongside a range of volunteers who support the life and ministry of God's church in this place.

[Our Church Wardens](#) meet together four times a year with the clergy to share parish issues and plan joint activities. These meetings have been a growing point for the bringing together of our diverse Benefice.

[Our four PCC's](#) follow the same format of starting our meetings with an act of worship and a clergy report. Whilst each church operates with separate governance and finance there is a growing mindfulness to work together whilst respecting our differences.

[We have one Benefice Safeguarding Officer](#) who works across the Benefice bringing us all together in joint in-person training sessions, often preferred to online training, and well attended by PCC members. This important joined-up Benefice safeguarding programme draws us closer together as we share the necessity for this vital work.

[Together we pay a Benefice Administrator](#) to assist the Clergy in administrative tasks and bringing together our benefice diary. She works up to 10 hours a week with a routine presence in the Ashley Chapterhouse office. Whilst we have lots of voluntary help from the church family in all aspects of our Church life, this appointment brings energy and structure to the operational work of our benefice.

[Our congregations are a caring people](#), and good pastoral work is shared across the benefice. We do have an aspiration to have a more formal team who will take home communion and be called upon to make pastoral visits where necessary.

[We enjoy sharing worship together](#) at our joint Benefice Communion Service on the fifth Sunday of the month. We take it in turns to have these services in each of our four parish churches and get a good turnout from our congregations.

Throughout the church year we have joint midweek services to celebrate Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Ascension Day at respective churches plus a Benefice Easter Sunrise Service at Broughton.

We join together with the Methodist and Catholic Church for the World Day of Prayer service and ecumenical services on Good Friday. Broughton and Croxton have local joint services.



Together we have launched an Alpha Course for spring and summer which we hope will appeal to a wider audience across the benefice to nurture our spiritual growth and share the good news of the gospels. We will promote this together.

Shaping for Mission is an initiative from Lichfield Diocese in which we are all engaged. We regularly try to refresh our efforts to interact with our communities and create inviting church events for their inclusion. We hold an annual Baptism Party to which all recently Baptised Children are invited.



6. WORKING WITH OUR SCHOOLS

We are blessed to have two Church of England primary schools in the Benefice, both rated Good by OFSTED.

Hugo Meynell (rated Good by SIAMS) has 215 pupils on its roll and is linked to Ashley church with regular bused visits to Ashley church for whole school celebrations linked to festivals. and for single class visits to support the RE syllabus.

St Mary's with an extremely positive inspection report by SIAMS last year has 50 pupils on its roll and is situated next to its link church at Mucklestone - the school benefits from regular visits to the church for worship and RE lessons and church members support the school's Focus on Faith programme.

An Open the Book team from all four Benefice churches lead collective worship in both schools every week and is well received by pupils and staff.

A weekly 'worship through song' session is also held in both schools, led by organists from the two churches. The children have a wide repertoire of traditional and new hymns which help them to fully join in parish worship at community services such as Remembrance Sunday and Mothering Sunday.

A lunchtime Church Club at Hugo Meynell school with themed bible stories, games and craft activities is held weekly.

A children's 'Thursday Choir' practice weekly at St John's Ashley and sing at occasional services.

Confirmation classes are delivered to Year 6 pupils in both schools as part of RE lessons ahead of a Benefice Confirmation Service.



7. SAFEGUARDING

There has been much discussion nationally about the failings of the Church of England regarding safeguarding. We recognise that this is significantly damaging to the reputation of the church at all levels. Public trust and respect have been diminished by seemingly endless headlines, where safeguarding issues have not been appropriately managed or well handled.

Locally we regard safeguarding as an integral part of our life within the church, promoting a safe culture, where the welfare of everyone, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults is a priority.

The Benefice has an up-to-date Safeguarding Policy in line with national guidance, and our PCCs are committed to Safeguarding and Safer Recruitment. We have one capable Benefice Safeguarding Officer, who also acts as the DBS administrator.

The Benefice Safeguarding Officer attends PCC meetings at all four churches, reporting on new or amended Church of England safeguarding requirements, updating the Safeguarding Dashboard and directing the necessary training to ensure everyone in our PCCs and those working with children and vulnerable adults is appropriately trained and DBS checked.

Our PCCs discuss Safeguarding at every meeting and advice is available locally from the Benefice Safeguarding Officer or from the safeguarding team at Lichfield Diocese.



8. OUR SURROUNDING AREA

We are a rural/semi-rural community with a mix of small and large villages surrounded by farmland and woodland. There are good road links and rail links via either Stoke on Trent, Stafford or Crewe. We are a sought-after place to live in with much new housing development.

We have the two local Primary Schools, High Schools in Market Drayton, Madeley and Stafford and Independent schools in Newport, Newcastle and Stafford.





Our shops are in Loggerheads - Co-op, pharmacy, barbers, library, Post Office, with a small convenience store/Post Office/petrol station in Croxton. Nearby Market Drayton has a banking hub, several supermarkets, garages and a wider range of shops and services with a popular weekly street market. It has an excellent swimming pool and the community-run Festival Drayton Centre, showing films and a variety of live entertainments, with daytime language and keep fit classes.

The Doctors' Surgery in Ashley and Health Centre in Market Drayton serve our community, with dentist surgeries in Market Drayton, Eccleshall, Stafford, Newcastle.



There are several Public Houses, restaurants and take-aways in Ashley and Loggerheads.

Just one of the many large new housing developments in Loggerheads



9. OUR HOPE FOR THE NEXT CHAPTER

We want to work with a Rector who will travel alongside us with compassion, humour, faith, and hope. We need someone who can see the potential in our villages, and congregations. We need you to encourage us, challenge us gently, and help us grow into the church God is calling us to be.

Together, we believe that God has good things ahead for our benefice.

We pray that you may sense, in these pages, whether you might be called to join us.



The 2026 World Day of Prayer Service at St Paul's Croxton



10. THE FOUR PARISHES

10a. ST JOHN'S, ASHLEY

The parish church of St John the Baptist, Ashley is in a once small village of Ashley but now, due to the vast number of local new developments, serves a more densely populated community of approx 6000 including Hookgate and large parts of Loggerheads.

With 14th century beginnings, St John's was rebuilt in the 1860s, given a lavish restoration in 1910 and extended in 2000 to include an attached but independently heated chapterhouse meeting room, well equipped kitchen, office, toilets and modern entrance.



St John's Ashley showing the Chapter House

Our broadband connection enables us to stream all our main services, offer a wi-fi connection to our office computer and others using the church for meetings. Our bi-monthly church magazine takes church and local news to 500 homes in the parish and is printed in-house on our colour copier which also prints Sunday Services Sheets in full for our attending congregation.

The finances of the church are in a healthy condition and the common fund paid up to date

Our services

For many our weekly Sunday morning eucharist is the central part of their spiritual discipline. We use Common worship liturgy, and our services are supported by a traditional robed worshipping choir and a fine pipe organ, using a wide repertoire of contemporary and traditional hymns, songs and anthems. An open invitation is extended to 'one off singers' to form non-robed choir for Christmas and other occasional services.

As a community church there is a breadth of mixed theologies including people who come from Baptist, Methodist Churches, and Catholic backgrounds, with an average weekly congregation of 48 and around 57 on the electoral roll. The church is usually filled to capacity [180] for the Candlelight Christmas Carol Service, Remembrance Sunday and local funerals and weddings.

A group of dependable lesson readers, servers, sides-people, and intercessors serve on a rota and we have a well-used and much valued prayer chain. We enjoy good relations with our brothers and sisters at the local Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches and join together for ecumenical services on Good Friday and Lent lunches.



The church family has an appetite for spiritual growth. We enjoy, and usually get, a good sermon message. We have held midweek services and study courses in the past and are looking to support a benefice wide Alpha Course which we hope will enrich our church with the Holy Spirit.

We enjoy a full social calendar with ambitious dinners, bingo, quiz nights and parish parties held throughout the year. These are always fully subscribed and are often enjoyed by folks who have no other connection to the church. This is a lovely way to share the love of God.



Christmas Feast in the Chapter House

On Monday's folks come from miles around for our coffee mornings. With no agenda, just a warm welcome and friendship.



Celebrating 25 years of the Chapter House



Benefice Baptism Party at St John's

The churchyard surrounds the church and has received good attention from mowers, tidy-uppers and the replacement of a rotten gate which we now call 'The Coronation Gate'. Tightening up of churchyard rules has been met with some resistance but people are enjoying noticeable improvements. A new memorial wall has been in the pipeline for the past three years to bring much needed order to burial of ashes in our Garden of Remembrance.



10b. ST MARY'S, MUCKLESTONE

The ancient Parish of St Mary's Mucklestone is still largely rural, containing the small villages of Mucklestone and Knighton in Staffordshire, Bearstone in Shropshire, and several even smaller hamlets. The landscape is gently rolling countryside with scattered farms, small woods and country lanes. But at its southern end the parish also includes part of Loggerheads, with extensive modern housing estates and several sizeable new developments currently under construction. The village of Mucklestone itself consists of the church, about 30 houses, some old farm buildings converted for business use, a plant nursery/garden centre and the flourishing St Mary's Church of England Primary School, located close by the church.



The style of worship at St Mary's is broadly traditional, with both Common Worship and the Book of Common Prayer being used. On any Sunday, our robed choir is drawn from a loyal band of about a dozen committed individuals, joined by others when needed for weddings and funerals.

The Congregation

As in many rural areas, the age profile of our normal Sunday worshippers is predominantly 70+. We look forward to having a Rector who will take an active lead in pastoral visiting, ministering to the elderly as well as the sick and bereaved. And with a very significant number of new houses being built in our parish, we are seeking a Rector who will actively engage in outreach to these newcomers to the area. And with the C. of E. primary school right next to the church, we are seeking a Rector who will build a new focus of outreach to the parents as well as building on our mission with the schoolchildren.



School Christmas Service in church

Although a normal Sunday attendance maybe 18-20 adults, there are occasions, for example Remembrance Sunday, when numbers rise to over 50. At a School Harvest or Christmas service, the church will feel almost full – maybe 50 children, their mums and dads, little brothers and sisters, and many of the school staff. After-service refreshments are immensely popular and an invaluable opportunity to chat.

Like many other rural churches, we depend heavily on the work of a relatively small number of volunteers. We are seeking a Rector who encourages and empowers us all to play our part better, whether that be in pastoral visiting, or helping with children's activities, or PCC admin, or something else entirely, for all of us to hear God's calling to discover His purpose in our lives



The Church Building

Grade 2 Listed, St Mary's Church, with its Mediaeval tower and its connection to the Battle of Blore Heath in 1459, is the oldest church in the area. It was significantly restored in both the 18th and 19th centuries and has Rectors' and Priests' names displayed as far back as the Domesday Survey. The 2024 Quinquennial Inspection Reports states that the Church is generally in a good state of repair.

Money for maintenance and repairs is being provided primarily as a result of fundraising by the Friends of St Mary's Church, a registered Charity established in the early 1970s specifically for this purpose. Its membership is drawn from the congregation, and they arrange the major parish social and fundraising events, often using the Village Hall in Knighton which provides an excellent venue for the Harvest Supper and Carols by Candlelight. These are joyous occasions, well attended by the local community.



Hearty Soup Lunch in Mucklestone Church hosted by The Friends of St Mary's

The church is surrounded by a closed churchyard, maintained by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council. Adjoining this is a small Garden of Remembrance for the Interment of Ashes, and across the road is a cemetery for burials, both of which are looked after and mown by volunteers.

Church Finances

Regular (covenanted) giving is encouraged but, with an Electoral Roll diminishing over time, church income has been dwindling. As in many other walks of life, it will be a challenge to the PCC to meet rising costs. Common Fund obligations are currently paid in full. There are no Parish Trusts or Endowment Funds, but the PCC does have some legacy money, pending decisions on how it is used.



St Mary's Mucklestone - interior showing some of the Kempe stained glass windows





10c. ST PETER'S CHURCH, BROUGHTON

Broughton is a very rural parish with a population of 248 residents. It consists of a few scattered hamlets and a number of isolated farms. It includes Broughton, Fair Oak, Charnes, Wetwood, Bromley, Podmore and part of Hookgate. There are 25 on the Electoral Roll.



The church building

The church is Grade I listed and is believed to have Saxon origins, the current building was consecrated in 1633 as a private chapel for the Broughton family, who lived in the adjacent hall and eventually it became the Parish Church. Along with Ashley Church, it features in Simon Jenkins England's 1000 Best Churches. The church escaped the restoring Victorians and remains today in outline the same as when it was built 426 years ago.



Interior – St Peter's Broughton

It has 18th century box pews and some of the finest medieval stained glass in Staffordshire. It also has a very fine peal of eight bells, which attract visiting ringers. The church organ has recently undergone a significant restoration.



18th Century Box pews

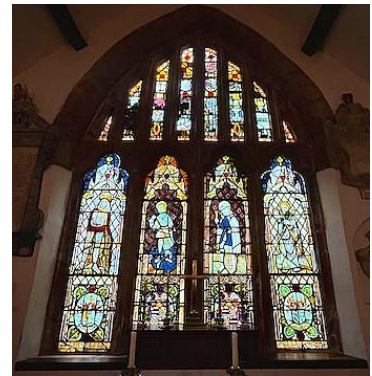
The church is structurally sound and very well maintained, and the churchyard is kept in excellent condition. It is considered important for the status of the church that this high standard of upkeep continues. There is currently no toilet on site, but it is planned to install one in due course within the stone building in the churchyard. The finances of the church are in a healthy condition and the common fund paid up to date

Liturgy

The PCC has tended by tradition to resist modernisation of the liturgy. The Book of Common Prayer and the King James Bible are cherished by most of the older members of the congregation, but we do recognise a need to be flexible and have adopted readings



from the Common Lectionary at our regular services. Individual service booklets for Matins, Holy Communion and Evensong in an easy-to-follow format and large print are available for visitors who are not familiar with the Prayer Book.



Services

We hold a service every second, third and fourth Sunday, alternating between Holy Communion and Matins at 11 am. On the first Sunday of the month the congregation attends the Songs of Praise service at Croxton. Attendance on average is about 12. We have a considerable amount of lay participation. Even though the congregation is small, we take vocation seriously, and in the past few years have produced a Bishop [Bath & Wells], and two Priests.

We hold special services for Mothering Sunday, Good Friday, Harvest, and Remembrance, as well as a Carol Service and Christmas Eve Mass, and always make a point of inviting non-regular churchgoers from the parish to read at these services. We also hold an annual service to commemorate those buried in the churchyard. If there is a fifth Sunday in the month, the four churches hold a joint Benefice Service.

We host a Civic Service when asked by the Eccleshall Parish Council. A joint parish magazine, the ABC (About Broughton & Croxton) is issued quarterly to 400+ households.

Broughton Church always participates in the Staffordshire Historic Churches Trust annual sponsored Ride & Stride in September. We organise Carol Singing around the parish on several evenings before Christmas, as well as a New Year's Day Walk, to raise funds for charity. We support the Market Drayton Foodbank with donations of food, as well as the Staffordshire Women's Aid Refuge by donating seasonal gifts for the children at Easter and Christmas.

Broughton organises several social activities either in the church or in Broughton Parish Room at Wetwood, these include a Village Harvest Lunch in October. Broughton Tennis Club maintains two grass courts behind the Broughton Parish Room for use by all members of the community.



There is a friendly, informal atmosphere at Broughton Church, and visitors are always made to feel welcome.



Broughton Parish Room





10d. ST PAUL'S CHURCH, CROXTON

Croxton, on the B5026, lies on the edge of what is known as the Woodland Quarter, so called after the extensive Bishop's, Burnt and Sugnall Woods, near the source of the River Sow which flows through the parish down the glorious Langot Valley. It is a large parish extending from Chatcull to the northeast, to Four Lane Ends in the southwest via High Lanes, Sugnall and Walk Mill to the Outlands and Wetwood – approximately 5 square miles; with about 411 inhabitants.



It is an attractive, small, rural village with social housing including older people's bungalows as well as higher priced country properties and is surrounded by mixed and dairy farms and outlying cottages. It is no longer served by public transport but has a petrol station with small shop and post office.

The Church building

The Victorian, sandstone church is Grade 2 listed, dating from 1857. The building is in good repair, having been renovated in 2008, when underfloor heating and radiators; and kitchen and toilet were added.



Interior- St Paul's Croxton

New moveable pews and chairs were also installed, allowing for diverse use of the building and creating space for community activities such as coffee mornings, afternoon teas, community choir concerts, exhibitions, and social events. The church is also used for local and national elections. The organ, installed in 1873, was restored in 1979 and is supplemented by an electric organ, also very useful for community events.

There is ramped access to the church, churchyard and car park, which is of good size. The churchyard, containing Commonwealth war graves from both World Wars, is active but not easy to maintain; however, an annual budget allows an acceptable management policy.



St Paul's only hold one Sunday service a month on the first Sunday of the month, which is a non-eucharistic 'Songs of Praise' in which some of the congregation participate with readings of prose or poetry, and it is usually accompanied by a very proficient local pianist.

This attracts several attendees of the monthly coffee morning, established seven years ago at the request of residents, which serves up to 20 local people. The Associate Minister has introduced an abbreviated monthly Holy Communion service after the monthly coffee mornings, but there is little enthusiasm for this from the congregation.



Coffee morning at St Paul's Croxton

On other Sundays our congregation are invited to attend the service at St Peter's, Broughton. For some community activities and meetings, St Paul's Croxton shares the large and well-appointed parish room at Wetwood with St Peter's.

The Common Fund is paid up to date and, although funds are not strong, we are fortunate that several members of the community give their skills and services free or at reduced rates to help maintain the church.



We are a very small, elderly congregation, and there is a recognition that help is needed if we are to maintain our church. There is a local tradition of pastoral care, which we hope our new incumbent will become part of and we will welcome them warmly into our fellowship. We hope they will be able to lead worship here occasionally and will be visible at as many community events as possible.



THE BENEFICE IN A NUTSHELL

SUNDAY SERVICE PATTERNS

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, ASHLEY

Weekly Sunday	9.30 am	Parish Communion [CW]
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ST MARY'S, MUCKLESTONE

First Sunday	11.15 am	Holy Communion [BCP]
Second Sunday	11.15 am	Sung Matins [BCP]
Third Sunday	11.15 am	Holy Communion [CW]
Fourth Sunday	11.15 am	Morning Prayer [CW]

ST PETER'S, BROUGHTON

First Sunday	No service	The congregation is invited to attend the Songs of Praise at Croxton
Second Sunday	11.00 am	Holy Communion [BCP]
Third Sunday	11.00 am	Matins
Fourth Sunday	11.00 am	Holy Communion [BCP]

ST PAUL'S CROXTON

First Sunday	11.00 am	Songs of Praise
Second Sunday	No service	The congregation is invited to attend Broughton's service
Third Sunday	No service	The congregation is invited to attend Broughton's service
Fourth Sunday	No service	The congregation is invited to attend Broughton's service
Last Friday of the month	12.15 pm	Said BCP Holy Communion

OCCASIONAL OFFICES

Funerals, weddings and baptisms take place as and when required.

STATISTICS

	Ashley	Mucklestone	Broughton	Croxton
Parish population †	2775	1419	248	411
Electoral roll*	57	50	25	Incomplete
Avg adult attendance*	48	18	12	10
Attendance under 16s*	3	0	1	0
No. of weddings*	2	3	0	0
No. of weddings booked for 2026	3#	4	3	0
No. of baptisms*	6	7	2	0
No. of funerals*	13	4	10	2

† 2021 census [due to new housing developments, the figures for Ashley and Mucklestone have increased significantly since the 2021 census was undertaken, but are unavailable at this time]

*2025

includes two renewals of wedding vows



MAP OF THE BENEFICE

