

Parish Profile 2026

Benefice of Longton and Meir Stoke on Trent





Welcome

St James and St John, Longton and Holy Trinity, Meir form the Longton and Meir Benefice – two welcoming parishes on the southeast side of the City of Stoke on Trent.

We seek a Priest to help us move forward with energy, to reconnect with our communities and to encourage our congregations.

Our new Priest will live in Longton, which offers a comfortable, modern rectory close to public transport links. All expenses are paid in full, and the parishes are respectful of rest days and holidays.

Why come to the Longton & Meir Benefice?

We believe that we are an encouraging, supportive benefice who want to join with a Priest to revitalise our parishes. We believe there are exciting opportunities within the benefice with the potential for someone to make a real, positive impact in the area. Whilst we are older congregations there is hidden strength within us in need of love and encouragement to help us reenergise.

Meir and Longton have been working together as a joint benefice for 11 years. We are a collaborative and supportive benefice who get on with one another. We understand a priest can only be in one place at one time (!) and are flexible to allow for joint flourishing.

All expenses are paid in full, and we are supportive and respectful of holidays and days off.

Role Description

We need someone to lead us in

- Bringing us to a deepening of faith through teaching of the Word and celebration of the sacraments;
- Identifying and developing opportunities for outreach within the communities, serving local needs as well as inviting people to explore faith;
- Reviewing how our patterns of worship can connect with those who aren't yet part of the church;
- Building up a culture of discipleship amongst our current congregations, encouraging growth and confidence in faith, and releasing all to play their vital part in the life of the church;
- Exploring new connections with families and young people, especially through connection with schools;
- Finding ways for our buildings to become part of the heart of the community;
- Developing a diversity which reflects our communities

Person specification

- Rooted in prayer and the sacramental life;
- Offering a lively, winsome faith
- Having a pioneering mentality to revitalise the parishes and try something new, maximising opportunities with schools and engaging with community development opportunities.
- Being approachable and having a pastoral heart, sympathetic to older congregations but also able to encourage younger people/families.
- Recognising the opportunities occasional offices can bring to create new connections with those outside the church
- Believing in collaborative ministry and able to encourage, equip and enable those already in the congregation
- Being able to communicate the gospel in a down-to-earth, accessible way
- Able to lead us in our current worship tradition whilst also helping us to try new things



Welcome from Stoke on Trent Deanery

Our Area Dean writes...

Stoke-on-Trent is a larger deanery with, when at full complement, some 30 clergy. We have a breadth of tradition, belief and practice; this enables growth and security within our own traditions and a generosity towards those with differing perspectives. Our Chapter is marked by committed collegiality and warm friendships. Typically, we meet 8 or 9 times a year: we worship, eat and then discuss matters of particular concern. Once a year we enjoyed a fully funded dinner together.

Deanery Synod meets two or three times each year, and our aim is to focus on topics that will equip parishes for mission.

We have an Area Bishop and Archdeacon who are kind, supportive and available.

We are blessed to have a fund available for clergy welfare: clergy receive an annual amount to spend on their wellbeing, and money is available to top-up the CME grant available from the Diocese. In addition, the fund may provide grants in cases of special need.

Our chapter aims for warm personal relationships that lead to meaningful support in our demanding ministry contexts and provide a catalyst for churches to work together where appropriate.

Rev Preb Shaun Morris
Area Dean

Living in the Benefice

Longton

Longton (population approx. 10,094) is an old pottery community lying to the southeast of Stoke. Today, the community is more multicultural and whilst Duchess China and Gladstone Pottery Museum (of Great Pottery Throwdown fame) are near-neighbours of St James' Church, most people now work within other industries.

Work opportunities include local car dealerships, JCB at Uttoxeter, or BET365, which is a large employer in Stoke - often favouring more high-tech job opportunities.

Longton is a lower income, large parish which includes mostly private housing, with some social housing. Transport links are good with access to the A50 and M6 alongside good bus services. Train provision is good with a local station which links to the mainline at Stoke and Derby.



Chris Allen (Creative Commons)

Whilst there are larger derelict buildings (old potteries), Longton town centre has recently grown, with only a few shops remaining to be let in the regenerated Longton Exchange Shopping Centre. On the outskirts is a large Tesco Extra alongside Next and Argos. This is next to the Phoenix Retail Park which has a number of big brand stores.

The town centre, within the one-way system, has a variety of shops, restaurants and cafes. The town still boasts an iconic Victorian indoor market. Longton is seeing a renewal of community life with artisan markets and events led by the Urban Wilderness CIC, and has been nominated for the Town of Culture award.

The town is well situated to access a range of facilities around the local area. Stoke lies 10 minutes drive away, whilst Hanley (15 minutes drive) and Newcastle (20 minutes drive) are accessible for town centre shopping and theatre/cinemas. Trentham Gardens also lies 15 minutes away and



offers a large garden centre and a variety of shops and restaurants, as well as leisure facilities including the Italian Gardens, woodland walks around the lake and other nature-based pursuits. These include the Monkey Forest and evening Beaver Safaris.

Just outside the parish boundary is Queen's Park, a Victorian park laid out on land gifted by the Duke of Sutherland to the people of Longton, which is now managed by the Queen's Park Partnership and which organises community events. For those who enjoy the great outdoors, Park Hall Country Park and Barlaston Downs (National Trust) are just a stone's throw away.



Meir

Meir (population approx. 9,474) has a mix of social housing and private housing and some of the parish lies within the newer housing development towards Meir Park. The creation of the A50 tunnel split Meir in half, creating a physical division and thus Holy Trinity is separated from the south section of Meir. There are significant pockets of deprivation which include those who sleep rough and struggle with drug taking, which has led the Government to aim to invest £20 million in Meir North through the 'Pride in Place' scheme.

We have a new NHS Centre and local shops which include a local Co-op. We also have 'Meir Matters Community Hub' which supports the community with social events, live music, a food bank and community services, for example a Citizens Advice Clinic.



There is also a Community Centre which incorporates a library and IT support service. The Coal Board Regeneration Trust organises a monthly community meal in the community centre, which is free to the people of Meir.

Tesco, Aldi and B&Q lie 5 minutes away at Meir Park (travelling east, as opposed to west through Longton) or a wider variety of stores can be found at Hanley and Trentham.

The parishes are approximately 5 minutes' drive from one another.

Church Buildings



Holy Trinity, Meir

Holy Trinity (built in 1894) is an 'early English' style building, which includes a chancel, nave, central aisle, porch plus vestries. There are LED light fittings throughout the church and there is an attached church hall (1977) which includes toilets (including disabled) and a kitchen. The building is in good repair and there is a small area within the churchyard for cremated remains.

The common fund is paid in full, and the parish's finances are ok, although there was a deficit in 2025. There are significant reserves (both restricted and unrestricted) and no immediate significant additional expenditure on the horizon.

St James, Longton

St James is a large, imposing building that can be seen from a long distance away. Built in 1834 as a Commissioners' Church, the interior of the church has been more recently divided into the main church, a Lady Chapel for smaller services and a multi-use space (or internal hall) which lies at the back of the



church. The internal hall walls are mostly glass allowing views into the Lady Chapel and the impressive main church. The building is generally in good repair with some external maintenance needed. The quinquennial report has been received. The churchyard is closed and the Council looks after the maintenance.

The Common Fund is paid in full, and the parish's finances are stable. There are reserves in a restricted fund, however the boilers are no longer working and discussions around a new heating system are taking place. There are LED lights in the main church.

St John's Oratory, Longton

Attached to the rectory, the Oratory of St John the Baptist (1994) seats 30 and has a small kitchen, vestry and toilet. It is used for midweek worship and meetings.



Worship and Services

Longton: We are a friendly congregation which has a welcoming atmosphere. We have an 11am Sung Eucharist which sees approximately 40 people attend, including a small number of children.

St James' has, for many years, had a strong choral tradition. We still have a choir and a paid Director of Music, and follow Common Worship. The choir leads the singing of the hymns (from Common Praise), the responsorial psalm and a variety of settings of the Eucharist, and also sings anthems during communion.

The Clergy wear vestments, and acolytes process with candles and crucifix, including for the Gospel. There is a small children's corner within the Church however there is no Sunday School at present though we are working to develop one. We have one 12-year-old who serves alongside the three adult servers, who are members of the Guild of Servants of the Sanctuary. After the Eucharist, most of the congregation stay to socialise over a cup of tea or coffee.



We also have a 6.30pm BCP Sung Evensong, which the choir leads. This service attracts a small congregation, including some from other parishes unable to provide this opportunity.

For some services, such as the Carol Service, the parish choir is augmented by our small chamber choir, St James' Voices, extending the repertoire we are able to sing. The parish choir rehearses weekly on Thursday evenings.



Meir: We are a welcoming church who try and include all who attend, whether regular or not. The age range of our congregation is between 40-90 with occasional younger families.

The Sunday service currently runs at 9.30am (this used to be at 9.15am to allow the Priest to get to Longton for the 11am service) and currently sees approximately 24 attend. Our service follows Common Worship and the Priest wears vestments; incense is available for special occasions.



Unfortunately, our organist left and our choir no longer runs, so we currently sing from CD's (Hymns Old and New). The service is Eucharistic when there is a Priest in the parish and this is preferred by those who attend. A server is available if needed. We used to process with candles and the cross, however the pandemic stopped this, we would like to see this restored if possible. There is a small area at the back of the church for children.

We also have Wednesday Communion at 9.15am which sees around 12 people attend. Other services used to be offered but they have unfortunately fizzled out.

St John's: is an Oratory Chapel attached to the rectory, which at present is used for a said Eucharist at 10.30am on Wednesday mornings, where 8/9 people attend. It was built in order to maintain a church presence on the site of St John's Church (demolished in the 1970s) nearer to the centre of the town. This space is also used for PCC meetings and the Lent course run by St James'.

Church life beyond 'regular' services



Meir: we offer the usual festival services; we hold a combined Christingle and Crib service which particularly incorporates people who are not regular congregants.

A Tots' group has run previously; however, resource challenges means that this no longer runs. Similarly, we would have liked to run our own Lent course this year however, due to resource limitations it was more feasible to join with St James' Lent group held at the Oratory, to avoid cancelling it altogether.



We hold an annual Harvest celebration Supper which is followed with a quiz and is open to both churches of the Benefice. A member of the Church leads a 'Gamblers Anonymous' Group which meets weekly in the church hall, and he has been commended for the success rate which he has achieved with the group in cessation of gambling. Annually we hold an All Souls Service, which is very special and usually quite well attended.

Longton: We run a 'Knit and Natter' which is well attended (approx. 20 people), mostly by non-church people and is seen as a space for people to connect and find community. We have a Harvest Supper on the Saturday evening before the Sunday celebration, when we support a local charity, and run 'tabletop' sales twice a year. Crib Services unfortunately have not been well attended but we would like to see these re-established; however, we do run a Lent course. Guiding groups and Slimmer's World use the internal hall in the week and there is the opportunity to create further connection with these groups. Whilst the Guiding groups are not officially sponsored by the church, they would like to be seen more as a part of parish life. Baptisms are at 1pm usually on Sundays and at the moment are only offered within the general service times to those who are already part of the church family. St James' is a popular venue for funerals, the community seeing it very much as 'their' church, with sometimes as many as two or three within a week. We still produce a monthly Parish Magazine. St James' has often been used by local musical groups for concerts; with its generous acoustic, good three-manual digital organ and recently refurbished grand piano, the Director of Music is working to promote the church as a concert venue within the community and to establish a series of monthly organ recitals.



Leadership and Governance

	Church Warden(s)	PCC Secretary	PCC Treasurer	Parish Safeguarding Officer	PCC Members	Deanery Synod Rep	Readers etc
Meir	2	1	1	1	7	1	1 PTO Lay Reader 1 Sacristan & Verger 1 Person for flowers Rotas for Bible readings, intercessions and servers
Longton	2	1	1	1	15	3	1 Sacristan/Head Server 1 Verger Rotas for Bible readings and intercessions. Serving team Flower arranging team Choir and Director of Music

The Licenced Reader with PtO, assists the priest with worship services, and also regularly leads nonsacramental services. She preaches on occasional Sundays normally but has taken on a much greater responsibility of ministry during the interregnum. She also conducts funeral services in both churches of Longton and Meir.

Parish Safeguarding Officers, hold independent responsibility in their own church, but occasionally work collaboratively in support of each other. There is currently no admin support for either church.

The church building and grounds are looked after mostly voluntarily by maintenance, gardening and cleaning teams.

Schools and Community Connections



Meir: the majority of the local schools lie within Meir parish, and they include Abbey Hill Academy and College (SEN), Alexandra Infant School, Alexandra Junior School, Sandon Primary, and Co-op Academy Florence MacWilliams (a new school currently in its 2nd year of intake). We have had links with Alexandra and Abbey Hill offering Stations of the Cross at Easter, and Christmas services. Abbey Hill is very interested in partnership working. Currently there are no links with Sandon, however this could be because they have links with another church.

There is the potential to have stronger links with 'Meir Matters' at the Community Hub, and Holy Trinity is known to the owner (Mrs Swift, pub owner - locally very well known). Alongside this, 'Pride in Place' will be looking for venues to use and Holy Trinity Hall is ideally placed.



Longton: The Clarice Cliff Co-op Academy is interested in forming links with the church and is the only school within our parish. There is the potential for links with Gladstone Pottery Museum from a heritage perspective, possibly with linked carol services, and the Urban Wilderness CIC.

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities - 3-5 Year Vision

Both **Longton** and **Meir** wish to reach out to younger generations for growth and diversity. Whilst we recognise the challenge of this, with older congregations we see an opportunity to engage people, to release new energy, as people are encouraged to become more actively involved.

There are great opportunities to reconnect with community contacts, particularly the care homes and school connections.

Challenges

- Both **Meir** and **Longton** struggle with retaining young people in the area, due to limited work opportunities. Alongside this we have recognised that the focus on a Sunday morning service doesn't fit as well now with all people's other commitments
- The multicultural communities of Longton and Meir, whilst living together amicably, are not integrated.
- **Meir** particularly has a reputation for drug taking and anti-social behaviour, but this is not representative of the community overall.
- A key challenge is the issue of resourcing work; as both congregations grow older there is increased pressure on the few sustaining the work, which has led to tiredness and a feeling of being stretched. Whilst there is very much the hope and want for growth and development it is becoming more challenging to find those with the energy to do more (many people having previously served faithfully). This has led to activities lapsing and struggling to restart.
- **Longton** struggles a little with its location; whilst a prominent building on the skyline, it now lies in an industrial area that does not benefit from passing footfall, although St John the Baptist church is in a residential area.
- To support financial giving, **Longton** has now obtained a card reader and is signing up to use the 'Cornerstone' software to aid financial planning; **Meir** currently does not have one but is not averse to getting one. Tech confidence, however, is a challenge and has caused

some people to shy away from becoming involved in things due to online courses being part of the process (safeguarding etc).

