

Benefice of Shifnal, Sheriffhales and Tong  
St Bartholomew's Church, Tong

Resident Minister  
(House for Duty)



## An invitation from the Bishop of Lichfield

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

St Chad, Lichfield's first Bishop, journeyed around Mercia with heavenly hope and the good news of Christ's resurrection. He believed that there was 'a new opening for the gospel' in Mercia. Many people became followers of Jesus.

Accounts of the apostles' journeys, as they travelled in the power of the Spirit, with little other than the stories of Christ's life, crucifixion and resurrection, were Chad's only companions. His plan to walk Mercia was as daring in its simplicity and boldness as God trusting the gospel first to the shepherds and then to just twelve apostles.

Chad set out believing that he would bear fruit, and that the kingdom of God would grow. Bede describes Chad as 'humble, devout, zealous and apostolic'.

**Today, in our much more complex world, I recognise a similar opening for the Gospel in these parts and I invite you to join with me in seizing this opportunity to follow Christ in the humble, devout, zealous and apostolic footsteps of St Chad.**

Over the centuries, we have become immersed in Chad's legacy - as we are immersed in Christ at baptism. Chad's church of ordinary Mercian people became a growing community of Christian faith through the example of Chad's pilgrim life and ministry pointing to Jesus. This must have encouraged him in his arduous and sacrificial journey for the sake of the gospel. To truly follow Christ in Chad's footsteps today, we must be committed to this life and ministry. **This is zealous.**

Chad's legacy of a vibrant community of faith leads us today to charge our clergy with nurturing, outside weekly worship, confident knowledge of the faith handed down to us. Such faith is characterised by a readiness in each member of our worshipping communities to speak about what Jesus Christ means in their lives and how they are being shaped by him. Doing this, we will recognise and rejoice in the gifts of all those, lay and ordained, who contribute to the life and ministry of our churches. **This is apostolic.**

Our clergy should take responsibility for their own flourishing and effectiveness, supported by the wellbeing and learning programmes in development and through prioritising participation in peer support and review. Chad would have been spurred on seeing God's unfolding plan in Mercia, just as the flourishing of the gifts of all God's people can contribute to our clergy's human flourishing and effectiveness as ministers. **This is humble.**

Together, as the Body of Christ in this place, reflecting Chad's legacy in giving priority to purposeful evangelism, creative engagement with local communities, and to becoming more diverse and growing younger, our trajectory is given full expression in our diocesan strategy, 'Seeking the Kingdom'. It is a manifesto for what I invite us by God's grace to achieve as a diocese.

If we are truly to follow in Chad's footsteps together, we will go forward with his devotion to prayer. So doing, we will go believing that God will be faithful and will build his kingdom. **This is devout.**

Our journey together begins with our vision prayer:

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



+Michael

## Welcome from the Bishop of Shrewsbury and the Archdeacon of Salop



We're delighted that you're looking at this post, as Resident Minister (House for Duty) in the benefice of Shifnal, Sheriffhales and Tong, with a focus on ministry in the parish of Tong. 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 in 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 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 including Shifnal, *Seeking the Kingdom* of the one God whose love is constant in all places.

This post will give the person appointed an opportunity to develop a focused part-time ministry in a small parish with a unique church and a wide reach, while also being supported by and playing a part in the ministry of a wider team including the larger and very active church of St Andrew, Shifnal and the smaller and more rural church of St. Mary, Sheriffhales. As you will see from this profile, the congregation of Tong treasure their heritage and their historic building, and are keen to continue to develop its use and life in the years to come. The prospect of significant parish population growth in the future gives this role an aspect of planning ahead for mission and ministry in a rapidly-changing context. As with many churches with a wide reach through heritage and events, a key focus to develop the life of the church over the coming years will be in leading engagement with visitors to help them into growing Christian faith – we are looking for someone who will thrive on this challenge!

This post is licensed as a Resident Minister (House for Duty). While no house is provided, a housing allowance is offered in lieu. The role is that of an Associate Minister within the benefice team, with a particular focus on the life and ministry of St Bartholomew's, Tong. The post-holder will share fully in the ministry of the whole benefice and will not be appointed solely to Tong.

We hope that this profile gives you enough insight into the benefice and the 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](mailto:archdeacon.salop@lichfield.anglican.org).

+Sarah and Archdeacon Nick

## Shifnal Sheriffhales and Tong Benefice

The Parishes of Shifnal, Sheriffhales and Tong work together as one benefice. We have a great team of clergy and lay ministers who support one another in “Reaching out together to share God’s amazing faith hope and love!”



We are broadly central and inclusive churches and there are opportunities for a wide expression of theology and worship, from our very contemporary HeartSpace service to Taizé and Iona worship as well as BCP and CW services. Each church has a different flavour, with Sheriffhales offering a very rural/agricultural programme, Tong featuring its rich historic and heritage background, and Shifnal working as a new ecumenical partnership with Trinity Methodist Church in the heart of the community, open every day for everyone.

Each parish has its own PCC, and we meet as a combined PCC twice a year for mutual support and encouragement. We run Alpha groups each year, and a combined Confirmation preparation. We have a shared Parish Administrator who helps organise occasional offices. We meet each day on Zoom for Morning Prayer and have a weekly staff meeting, with lots of laughter!

*Chris Thorpe, Vicar of Shifnal, Sheriffhales and Tong*

*Note – Rev’d Chris Thorpe has announced that he will retire from stipendiary ministry in July 2026. The Diocese will seek to appoint a successor as Vicar of the Benefice, and we seek in this process to appoint as Resident Minister a priest who will minister through the vacancy and support the new incumbent in due course. The Resident Minister will be licensed to serve across the Benefice, but it remains the expectation at present that their primary responsibility will be for the parish of Tong.*

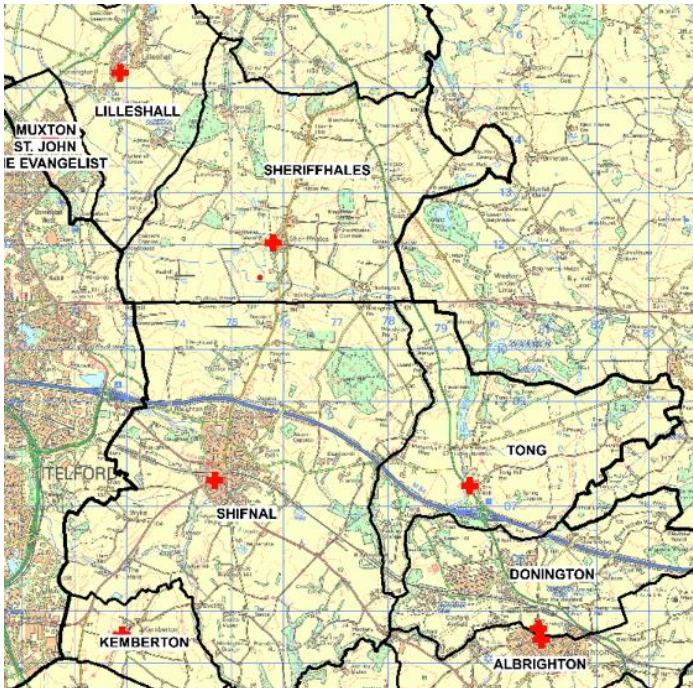
## Who are we looking for?

We are looking for a minister who will be approachable, have a sense of humour, be prepared to become involved with the wider community, have a pastoral heart, a caring nature, be a good listener, and be enthusiastic.

This will be a house for duty post with a housing allowance in lieu of a house, including Sunday duties and two days (or equivalent).

Whilst the new minister will have a primary focus at Tong, they will be part of a strong and supportive team who can offer cover for services and who meet regularly to support one another, to plan and review.

## Where are we? Who are we?



The parish of Tong covers 5.5 sq miles with two main clusters of houses at Tong and Tong Norton. Tong's proximity to Telford and Wolverhampton lends itself as a home for commuters. Many in the village are retired. The parish sits amid some large rural farming estates and is very rural at the moment.

The population in this rural parish is 257 and there are 108 occupied households. The majority of the population are aged 45 and over. The deprivation ranking is 9888. There is however a planning proposal to build 3000 additional houses in the parish, which would make Tong into a much larger settlement. With the current government encouragement to build housing, it is now more likely that this development will take place.

Tong is on the A4,1 next to Junction 3 of the M54, which gives very easy access from Wolverhampton, Telford and the rest of the West Midlands. There are good railway links to Albrighton and Shifnal, and at Cosford.

Tong church is situated in the village of Tong but draws people from around the area for worship, activities and events. The unique history of Tong Church draws huge numbers of tourists who come from further afield to visit our beautiful and historic building.





Some statistics:

Electoral Roll	63
Usual Sunday Attendance	35
Easter Day 2023	69
Advent special services 2023	310
Christmas 2023	77
Congregation aged 18-69	13
Congregation aged 70 plus	36
Baptisms 2023	9
Weddings in 2024	7
Funerals in 2023	9 church 3 crem

For more information about our church, please visit our website: <https://tong-church.org.uk/>

## Our Worship

On the first Sunday of the month we have two services: 8am BCP Communion  
11am Family Service

On other Sundays we have a Common Worship service of Holy Communion at 11am

Other special services take place seasonally, for Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, etc.

## Our History and Building

The Collegiate Church of St Bartholomew, Tong is a 15th-century church notable for its architecture and fittings, including its fan vaulting in a side chapel, rare in Shropshire, and its numerous tombs. It was built on the site of a former parish church and was constructed as a collegiate church and chantry on the initiative of Isabel Lingen, who acquired the advowson from Shrewsbury Abbey and additional endowments through royal support. Patronage remained with the lords of the manor of Tong, who resided at nearby Tong Castle, a short distance to the south-west, and the tombs and memorials mostly represent these families, particularly the Vernon Family of Haddon Hall, who held the lordship for more than a century. Later patrons, mostly of landed gentry origin, added further memorials.

The building is grade I listed and had its lead roof replaced with steel during 2017 to deter thieves. Due to its many monuments inside the church and ornate architecture, it is sometimes labelled as The Westminster Abbey of the Midlands, often featuring as one of the best churches in the Midlands and in England.

## **Mission Opportunities**

With all the churches in Lichfield Diocese we share the challenge to grow younger, to become more diverse, to be purposeful about evangelism and to be more engaged with our local community. There are planning proposals for Tong to become the centre for a community of new housing which would greatly increase the local population. This could provide many exciting possibilities for Tong Church.

Tong's unique heritage and history draws hundreds of tourists and visitors throughout the year. Church members put on numerous historic tours, offering hospitality and a warm welcome. This also generates significant funds for the church. The civil war cannonball and musket holes tell of a bitter struggle for the soul of the nation. The nearby Monarch's Way traces the path of King Charles II as he evaded capture after the battle of Worcester. Little Nell's grave from Charles Dickens imagination found a home in the churchyard, whilst William Shakespeare penned memorial lines on one of the tombs in the church. Alongside the history and heritage there are many opportunities to share the faith story of Tong, and to connect with the spirituality of pilgrimage, connecting with those who visit from all over the world.

Tong Church is very prominent and over the years many have asked to be married here, loving the beautiful church building. We have used the opportunity to encourage families to attend worship, and many of our current congregation started as parents of wedding couples! We hope that this can be further developed in the future.

We have developed links with the Country Kids Nursery and supported their special services, both at the Nursery and in church. We have also developed links with RAF Cosford and enjoyed occasional visits from their chaplain. Again, we hope that both of these links may be further developed.

## **The Task**

We have a very committed congregation who are engaged in many aspects of church life and ministry. Churchwardens and members of our PCC lead on managing the fabric of the building, working with the architect to progress various building projects. Others put on a range of community events, most recently a classic car show that drew huge crowds and was very effective in fundraising. Others support wedding couples, and baptism families.

We recognise that with a part-time post, the Resident Minister will need to prioritise their time and focus on the key priorities. Our congregation, with other colleagues in the benefice, will continue to be active in supporting them.

We are looking for someone to help us make the most of the mission opportunities that we have identified for Tong Church. The key tasks that we would ask of our minister would be to provide leadership, teaching and pastoral care; to chair the PCC, to lead services of worship, and to preach; to take occasional offices, and to train and enable others to become more involved in the mission and ministry of our church.

We are excited by the possibilities for future mission and ministry at Tong Church, and we look forward to welcoming a minister to walk alongside us and enable us to make the most of the opportunities that we discover together.

## Initial Role Description – Resident Minister (House for Duty)

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

*The role is 'House for Duty' with a housing allowance in place of a benefice house. This is expected to constitute Sunday ministry and two days per week of ministry.*

### 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 parish of Tong and to contribute to that of the wider benefice, in living out our vision of '[Seeking the Kingdom](#)'
- To work creatively and collaboratively with the Rector of the benefice and the wider staff team
- To exemplify and promote good safeguarding policy and practice, in line with '[Promoting a Safer Church](#)' as [implemented in Lichfield diocese](#).

### Role-Specific

The Resident Minister, working as part of the benefice team, will be expected to:

- Lead worship with engagement and creativity, resourcing and encouraging others in their contributions;
- Preach and teach well and engagingly to regular and occasional congregations, communicating clearly and in ways suited to each group;
- Preside at pastoral offices, using them sensitively to support families and to help them in their faith and discipleship;
- With the churchwardens to lead on governance in the parish, including chairing the PCC;
- Offer good pastoral care to congregation and wider community, personally and through supporting wider lay pastoral care;
- Encourage, train and support others to become more involved in the mission and ministry of the church.

### Person Specification

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; who has at least three years' experience in the Church of England or other Anglican church in the British Isles; and who has the right to work in the UK;
- Committed to and passionate for ministry and mission through and beyond parish churches;
- Enthusiastic for the care, development and promotion of historic church buildings to serve the church's mission;
- Approachable and with a sense of humour;
- Able and willing to be involved with the wider community beyond the congregation;
- Gifted in and committed to good pastoral care;
- Creative and energetic, leading and resourcing the congregation in finding and using opportunities for mission and ministry;
- Skilled and disciplined in management of self, work and time, including preserving the boundaries of a part-time ministerial role.

Appointment to this post will be conditional upon a satisfactory enhanced DBS disclosure.