

Benefice Profile

Whitmore, Maer and Chapel Chorlton



St Mary and All Saints, Whitmore



St Peter's, Maer



St Laurence, Chapel Chorlton

The post of part-time Rector

1. Cover

This Benefice Profile has been produced by PCC members representing the three parishes in the Benefice to support the recruitment of a part-time Rector.

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3. A word of welcome from The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave OBE

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**THE BISHOP
OF LICHFIELD**

A word of welcome to the Diocese of Lichfield

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

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

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

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

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

+ Michael Ipgrave



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4. The Context

- a. The benefice is situated southwest of the market town of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, and close to the borders of both Shropshire and Cheshire. Formed in 1981, it comprises the churches of St Mary and All Saints, Whitmore (rural village, sited about a mile outside Baldwins Gate, a semi-rural village), St Peter, Maer, and St Laurence, Chapel Chorlton (rural mainly agricultural villages). The benefice has a fascinating history dating back to the Norman Conquest (with Anglo-Saxon and Roman origins) and manorial halls at Whitmore and Maer.

5. The Challenges

We know that as churches we need to:

- a. develop and challenge the spiritual life of the church community in our changing and challenging world; to inspire the growth of Christ-centred lives and a deepening of faith
- b. to transition well to being led by a part time rector (previously full-time)
- c. to develop a mixed ecology of worship, suitable to our rural context, including developing the involvement of all ages with worship and finding innovative ways of making our churches more family-oriented environments
- d. develop relationships and communication between the three churches so that we can act more cohesively
- e. develop relationships with the expanding community, especially in new housing estates with many young families in Baldwins Gate, to encourage a base of faith for coming generations; A specific challenge for St Mary Whitmore is that the church is a mile or more out of the village of Baldwins Gate where the centre of population is located
- f. build on our strong connections with Baldwins Gate church school to enable children and families to explore and discover Christian faith
- g. expand the outreach of the church beyond community engagement with the main festivals, and to expand the cultural activities of the church through social functions designed to place the church more centrally within the life of the local community
- h. address, develop and support inclusivity, and diversity across the church community and the parishes, building partnerships with others seeking the common good
- i. respond actively and positively to the financial challenges of the current economic climate

We're looking for a leader who can help us rise to these challenges and grow through them.

6. Role Description

- a. lead the church and its worship by setting and highlighting its mission
- b. the ability to challenge, inspire and guide our Christian faith
- c. being visible and participative in the community is vital, developing close relationships with the three churches of the benefice and across the communities

- d. enable members of the church community to develop and build on opportunities for mission and ministry in the life of the school and local youth organizations
- e. developing relations with community and external organisations to promote wider positive links with the church via events, social and spiritual, in order to raise the profile and message of the church for all ages and diversities
- f. identifying pastoral care needs of the community and ensuring appropriate structures and skills are in place to address these needs
- g. identifying and putting in place structures for safeguarding, and ensuring their effectiveness

7. Person Specification

Essential

- a. be able to preach succinctly and inspiringly, and to engage the congregation's lived experience and to challenge them intellectually and spiritually, appropriately across all ages
- b. have good technical ability and skills in the use of a range of IT channels, for communication and outreach
- c. demonstrate a willingness to embrace diversity and inclusion.
- d. have a willingness to adapt to changing needs and circumstances.
- e. be warm, friendly, a good listener and communicator - someone with empathy and emotional intelligence
- f. be outgoing and engaging with younger people, and be motivated, creative and open-minded in finding ways to achieve a broader church if outreach is to succeed
- g. have good interpersonal skills to develop and maintain effective relationships within the benefice and across the wider community for outreach
- h. a willingness to develop and nurture discipleship groups such as bible study/ Alpha groups, home groups, choir, messy church etc
- i. be keen to identify pastoral needs with visits to hospitals, home visits to members of the congregation, etc, where needed
- j. have efficient and timely communication skills
- k. be registered with the Disclosure Barring Service

Desired

- a. have leadership experience; organisational and management experience; pastoral experience; experience in revitalising organisations (parishes)

8. What we have to offer:

The benefice is a very special place to live and offers huge potential.

We are friendly, welcoming and active communities with a desire for further spiritual and social innovation, and readiness for revitalisation. All the Wardens know and respect each other and are used to working together. The 3 churches are geographically close with good roads between them.

We have a growing local community in Baldwins Gate with the potential to develop outreach and to grow local family involvement with the church.

We have a strong relationship with the local church school in Baldwins Gate which we would like developed further.



Chapel Chorlton

We have excellent organs and organists at St Mary (Whitmore) and St Peter (Maer). St Laurence has an excellent organ restored in 1980. We have an organist for key services during the year and make use of other forms of musical accompaniment for regular services.

We have volunteers in the congregations who are willing to share in aspects of the services and home communion. We have an established mainly mature congregation that needs inspiring and rejuvenating. The PCCs are open-minded, flexible and supportive.

We have a volunteer Communications Officer who takes care of our benefice e-mail list, fortnightly email containing services and notices, creates and prints the weekly notice sheet for all three churches, manages the St Mary & All Saints Facebook page on which news for all three churches is posted, and manages the 'A Church Near You' website pages for the three churches in our benefice. Our benefice mailing list consists of around 156 subscribers.

There is the possibility of employing / providing administrative support and assistance to the part-time Rector.

9. The Church Leadership

The Benefice considers that effective parish church leadership is essential for creating a nurturing a united community. All three churches benefit from dedicated PCC's, they meet at least 4 times a year.

Hard-working church wardens in each parish (Two at Whitmore and Maer and one at Chapel Chorlton) also contribute significantly to the church's functioning, this has been particularly evident during the period of interregnum, they organise worship services, events and outreach initiatives. Working collectively across the Benefice they ensure an inclusive and compassionate environment, encouraging growth in faith and active engagement within the church community.

In challenging economic conditions, effective treasurers in each parish have been essential for managing the finances of the benefice as a whole. The treasurer's expertise in monitoring income and expenses, careful financial planning, and transparent reporting enables the parishes to make informed decisions and allocate resources wisely. Additionally, the treasurer's creativity in fundraising and resource allocation contributes to sustaining each parish and supporting the shared mission during difficult economic times. Their dedication to financial management strengthens the collaboration among the three parishes, enabling them to serve their communities effectively.

10. The Benefice Area and Parishes

The Area

All three villages are small collections of houses and farms very rural in nature, which is surprising when you realise how close they are to Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent.

There are shops in Baldwins Gate, which has a Post Office and newsagents, a very good butcher's shop which also sells groceries, wines, fresh fruit and vegetables, and has a good delicatessen counter.

The residents of the villages mainly have occupations connected to farming, commute to Manchester, Birmingham, and Stoke, or work from home. There are a fair percentage of retired residents and children.

Baldwins Gate has an excellent primary school with some 175 pupils aged from 3-11.

Madeley High School provides secondary education, with further education in Newcastle and Stoke. Newcastle High School is a private school with both junior and senior departments. Some 10 minutes' drive from Whitmore is the village of Keele with the large campus of Keele University. The university medical school has an excellent physiotherapy clinic and is connected to the University Hospital of the North Midlands (Stoke), again only 15 minutes from Whitmore.

Baldwins Gate has a doctor's surgery open in the mornings, an outpost from the main surgery in Madeley.

The area is well served with supermarkets: Aldi, Morrisons, Sainsburys, Iceland and Tesco are about 15 minutes away. A large M&S with extensive food department and Asda are about 20 minutes away. Other major retailers, e.g., Boots, Currys, PC world are some 25 minutes away on Festival Park, Stoke. Newcastle itself offers a number of shops, including banks, charity shops, travel agents, Boots, etc, with an outdoor market at weekends on "the Stones".

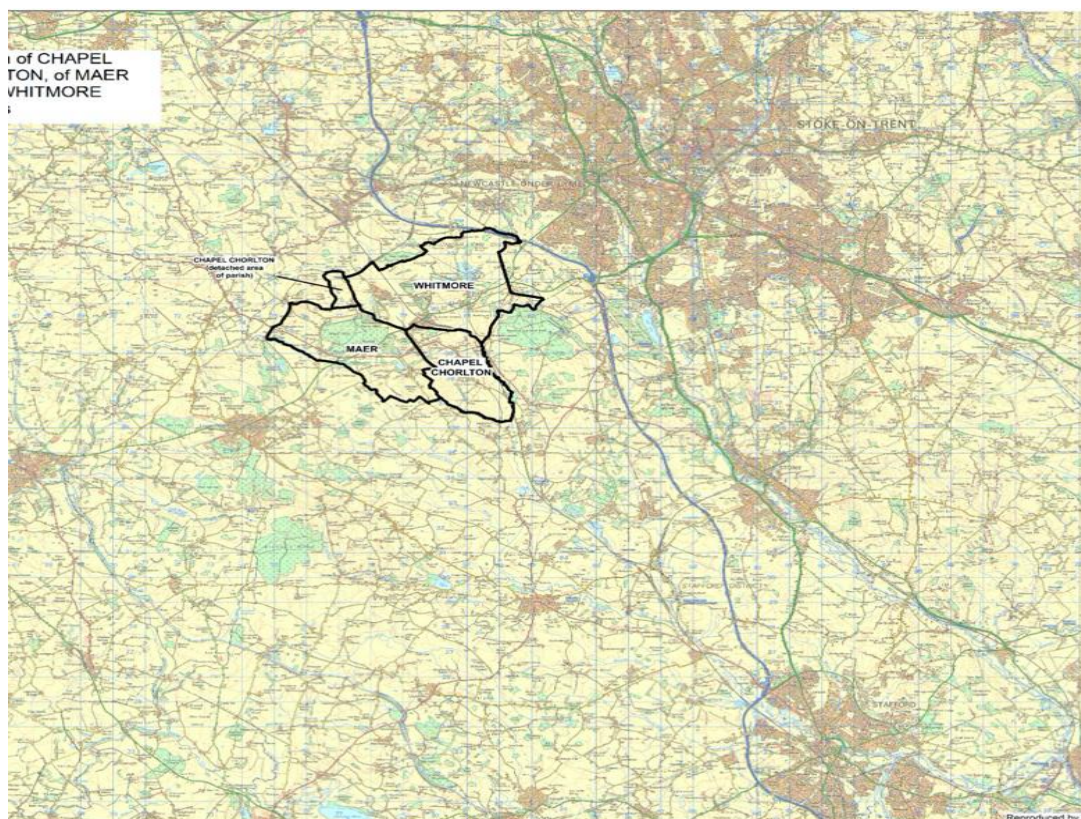
There are cinemas in Festival Park, Hanley and Newcastle, and the New Victoria Theatre in Newcastle. The Victoria Hall with its magnificent organ is in Stoke-on-Trent, as is the Regent Theatre, some 30 minutes from Whitmore. Trentham

Gardens offers numerous shops, restaurants, garden centre, formal gardens, lake and extensive walks is only 15 minutes from Whitmore. The beautiful Dorothy Clive Gardens are only 5 minutes drive from Maer.

Other garden centres, such as Bridgemere Garden World (which also has Lakeland, Mountain Warehouse, Pavers, and fresh food outlets), Garners and Clayton, are also within easy reach.

The area is well supplied with restaurants: The Block House in Baldwins Gate, The Mainwaring Arms and Tea Rooms in Whitmore. Some 10 minutes from Whitmore are The Swan with Two Necks and Slaters Country House restaurant and B&B. There are several good country restaurants in other villages not too far afield.

Nearby to Chapel Chorlton, Maer and Whitmore are the towns of Market Drayton, Shrewsbury, Newcastle and Hanley with a connecting bus service Stoke train station is 20 minutes drive away and Crewe station some 35 minutes, placing major cities within easy reach. There are good connections to the west coast mainline and east



Large scale map of parish boundaries

via Stoke railway station. Junction 15 on the M6 is 10 minutes from Whitmore/Baldwins Gate.

The whole area provides many opportunities for walking on well-marked country paths and in two large areas of woodland, Maer Hills and Hanchurch forest all from your front door. Sporting facilities include four golf clubs within the area, together with the Bet365 Stadium (the home of Stoke City FC), swimming pools, and Whitmore has its own Cricket Club.

There are village groups in Whitmore/Baldwins Gate and nearby Madeley offering guided walking groups, book clubs, choir, yoga, social events, and many other activities and interest groups.

The Parishes

Table 1 below shows census data from 2001 to 2021 and shows the population data for the three parishes.

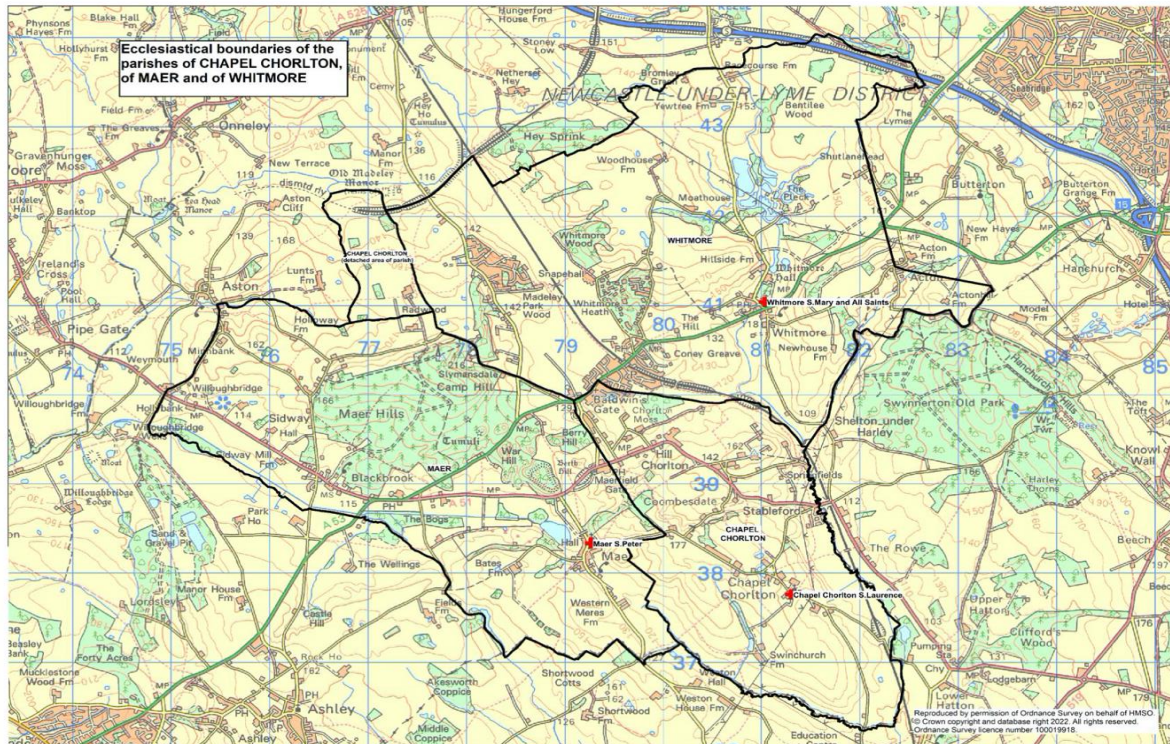
Name	Status	Population Census 2001	Population Census 2011	Population Census 2021	Area (km ²)	Population Density (2021) per km ²	Annual Population Change (2011- 2021)
Whitmore	Parish	1,520	1,554	1,757	20.63	85.16	1.2%
Maer	Parish	484	489	507	15.23	33.28	0.36%
Chapel and Hill Chorlton	Parish	402	425	406	7.064	57.47	-0.46%

Table 1 - 2001 to 2021 census data

Table 2 shows the current number of people on the electoral roll at each Parish in the Benefice.

Parish	Number of People on the electoral roll
Whitmore	62
Maer	51
Chapel Chorlton	29

Table 2 – current electoral roll numbers



Parish Boundaries

a. Whitmore

The largest village in the parish is Baldwins Gate. The sale, by the Cavenagh-Mainwaring family, in 1920 of a large parcel of land either side of the railway allowed the village to develop and expand. In recent years further significant expansion has occurred.



The central area of the parish is Whitmore, through which passes the A53, to the side of this trunk road sits the St Mary & All Saints Church adjacent to the entrance of Whitmore Hall, the Meece Brook and a beautiful bluebell wood. Also nearby is the recently refurbished Mainwaring Arms country inn and the Whitmore tearooms, both of which are popular with local residents. The Whitmore Village Hall is situated near the Baldwins Gate boundary and is utilised by both villages.

Whitmore Hall, a key feature visible from the churchyard, is surrounded by green lawns and parkland. The Hall is open to visitors at specified times. Whitmore Church depicts the coat of arms on the west window of the families who held Whitmore Hall since the Norman Conquest.

Until recently St Mary and All Saints Church has benefited from the patronage of Guy Cavenagh-Mainwaring, who died on the 25 July 2021, aged 87, and was the hereditary Lord of the Manor of Whitmore. The patronage is currently in probate, with the expectation that the patronage will shortly pass to Edward Cavenagh-Mainwaring, his son, a historic privilege that the parish of Whitmore is proud to recognise.

b. Maer

It is less than a 15-minute drive from Maer to the towns of Newcastle-under-Lyme to the east and Market Drayton to the west, yet the village feels a different world. Maer Parish includes a large area of woodland, with walks and extensive views: the Maer Hills and Maer Village itself. The area around ancient Maer Hall and St. Peter's Church is a Conservation Area that has changed little since the 1890s. There is a supportive and enthusiastic Village Hall committee, and a variety of events and activities take place at the Village Hall.

Maer (church and village) is worth seeing anyway but our main 'claim to fame' is the Darwin connection. Charles Darwin visited his Wedgwood family at Maer Hall throughout his childhood and on returning from his momentous 'Beagle' voyage, he married his cousin, Emma Wedgwood in Maer Church in 1839. It is because of this connection, that we regularly have visitors from across the globe.



c. Chapel Chorlton

The modern parish of Chorlton comprises the hamlets of Chapel Chorlton, Chorlton Moss, Hill Chorlton and Swinchurch. The caravan site at Stableford sits at the bottom of Stableford Bank, down the hill from Chapel Chorlton. There are residents permanently living on site and also tourist campers who visit for short holidays. The main A51 road cuts through the parish in an east to west direction, linking, ultimately, Lichfield to Chester. The London to Edinburgh mainline railway runs briefly along the east boundary.



There has been limited house building in the area and there is little crime, deprivation or anti-social behaviour. If not connected to agricultural, a number of people work developing their own businesses either from home or by commuting to work. There are some older residents who were born in the parish, and there are some of the “recently retired”, seeking somewhere peaceful to live. Families with young children attending Baldwins Gate School also live in the Parish.

In Chapel Chorlton itself a sense of history still pervades the area especially as there is no major road passing through it. Farm vehicles pass back and forth to the fields. The area is a favourite place for ramblers, cyclists and horse riders. There are many attractive walks to challenge the fit and able. There are also more

leisurely routes to exercise your dog and chat to people as you go. Some visitors just want to sit under the Jubilee Oak on the Green planted to commemorate Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee and watch the world go by.

The hamlet of Chapel Chorlton has the Parish Church of St Laurence, a pond, and one of the few surviving village greens. The church has held some successful church-led events on the Green. The most recent being the Platinum Party in June 2022 which brought the whole Benefice together to celebrate the late Queen Elizabeth’s Platinum Jubilee.

11. Baldwins Gate CE (VC) Primary School

Baldwins Gate Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) primary school is a growing, vibrant and popular school that serves the parishes of Whitmore, Maer and Chapel Chorlton and the surrounding villages including Butterson. It has strong links with Whitmore church. Currently there are 175 on roll including nursery provision. The school has grown rapidly over the last few years with the increase in housing in the area but has maintained a ‘village school’ approach that parents appreciate.

The incumbent is a Foundation Governor of the school, and previously the Rector has attended approximately six Governor meetings per annum. The church appoints one additional Foundation Governor, who is currently also the Chair of Governors. The previous Rector led weekly assemblies and volunteers from the church support classes with reading, as an act of Christian service.

During the Interregnum all church wardens have attended school worship at particular points in the church and school year.

The present Headteacher, appointed January 2022, is proactive in fostering the spiritual development of pupils and establishing the Christian distinctiveness of the

school. Much has already been achieved with a prayer space in classrooms, a welcoming area with Christian focus, wall display, area for prayer requests, crosses displayed in every classroom and the establishment of a worship team of young leaders who actively take part in school-based Christian worship. There is a distinct division between worship and assembly. The introduction of a simple liturgy for worship provides familiarity for pupils. The recent SIAMS (Nov 2022) deemed the school to be 'GOOD' and, in conversation, the inspector noted that some areas were beyond good.

12. The Churches



a) St Mary and All Saints, Whitmore

Our small parish church is an attractive Grade II* listed building with a history dating from the Conquest. The church was remodelled in the 17th century and a further remodelling/restoration in 1880 saw the characterful timber-framed tower rebuilt and the beautiful tiling to the interior added. More recently the tower was substantially repaired, with a new curtain wall and nave arcade.

The church is within the Whitmore conservation area and also the immediate setting of Grade 1 listed Whitmore Hall, whose grounds are separated from the churchyard by a ha-ha.

To find out more about the history, archaeology, and architecture go to the Church of England's online heritage database: [the Church Heritage Record](https://www.churchheritagerecord.org/).



The 2021 quinquennial reports that the superb building is in very good condition and without significant defects.

The church seating capacity is about 120. There is a vicar's vestry which houses the sound equipment and safe etc. and a small choir vestry with sink and dishwasher. The belfry houses 6 bells and although we do not have enough bellringers in the congregation yet. Ringing for weddings is catered for with the help of members of the local association of ringers.

There are many memorials to members of the Mainwaring family on the walls of the church together with a sealed vault below the chancel.

We are currently investigating a number of options for toilet facilities. Plans had been approved some years ago but were unable to proceed and have now lapsed. It is also hoped that the mosaic tiling behind the altar can be restored. There is no essential work required.

The churchyard is open for burials and cremation plaques. There are two entrances to the churchyard, the first from the A53/Three Mile Lane junction is via a lych gate. A tarmacked path leads up to the church door with a view down the long drive to Whitmore Hall. The second entrance is from the quieter Three Mile Lane up steep steps and path. The church has no car park but some limited parking is possible in the lane.

The churchyard is quite extensive and laid to lawn with numerous trees and shrubs and is kept mown and reasonably tidy but now with some paid help and some from the estate.

b) St Peter, Maer

St. Peter's church is a Grade II* listed prized asset of our community, set in breathtaking surroundings. It is well cared for and much loved and admired by the congregation, passers-by and visitors.



Although the church records only date from 1588, as there are Norman traces within the Church we can conclude that St. Peter's has been in its current position for the best part of 1000 years. In its present form it was probably built in 1610 and refurbished in the 1870s. All the stained glass is twentieth century and includes two particularly beautiful abstract windows in memory of the Clive Family.

The present-day church is in a good state of repair, has a new heating system, toilet facilities and a child friendly social space where refreshments are served. It enjoys an elevated position with 32 steps. It was re-decorated in 2022.

c) St Laurence, Chapel Chorlton

St Laurence is a Grade II listed village church just off the A51 at Stableford. There has been a Christian church on the site for at least 800 years. It was once a Chapel of Ease but in 1743 it became the parish church for Chapel Chorlton and Hill Chorlton. The Tower has a single bell which is rung to welcome the congregation to Sunday worship. There are several memorials inside the building but the overall effect is one of simplicity. There is seating capacity for 110.



The quinquennial report from 2021 states that "the church is a fine building without major defect, mostly thanks to regular inspection and maintenance." The Churchyard is still open for burials and is maintained by a group of volunteers. There is also a public footpath running through the grounds.

The church building lacks a toilet and kitchen. This means it is difficult for the church to be easily used for activities other than traditional worship however, having a supplier of portaloos next door is useful should the occasion demand!

13. Church Life



Services follow the Church calendar, and we have licensed chalice bearers to assist at Holy Communion and regular volunteers for reading the Lessons, and for preparing and leading the intercessions.

A particular feature of Whitmore Church are the volunteers who lead the first part of each service. We have a church organist for Sunday services and weddings, and baptisms are currently officiated during our Sunday Holy Communion Service: further details are shown below.

We have tea, coffee and biscuits for all served by volunteers at the end of services.

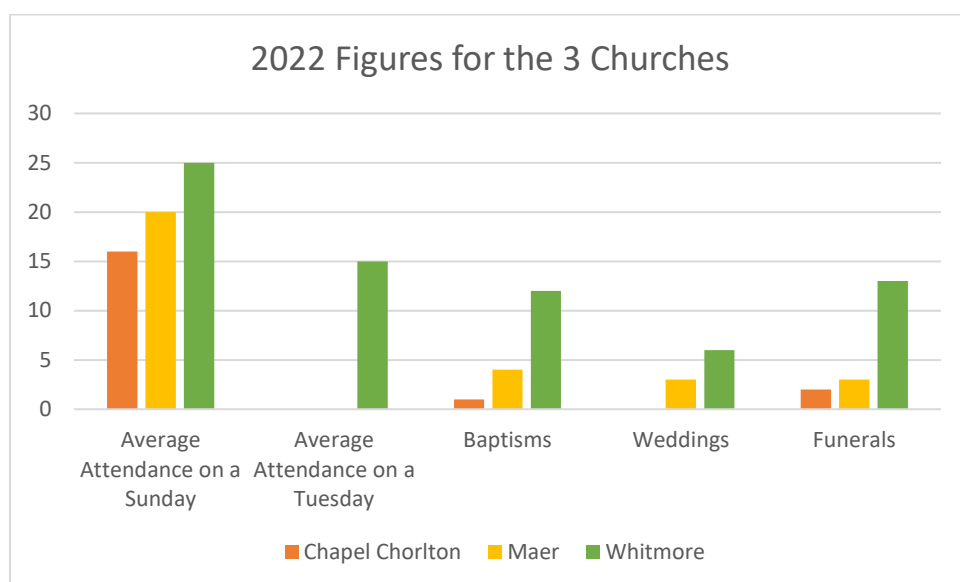


Typical Service Structure across the Benefice

	St. Mary's - Whitmore	St. Peter's – Maer	St. Laurence's – Chapel Chorlton
1st Sunday	11am Holy Communion		9.30am Holy Communion
2nd Sunday	11am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	
3rd Sunday	11am Holy Communion		9.30am Holy Communion
4th Sunday	11am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	
5th Sunday	Benefice Service to be held at one of the three churches		
Every Tuesday	9.30am Holy Communion		

Average attendance, Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

The chart below shows the average attendance at each church and the number of Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals during 2022.



In Maer the congregation, usually around 20 people, is made up mostly of regular attenders, who tend to know each other well. Many have lived in the village for decades. The warm welcome we extend, and friendship we offer, is often commented upon by newcomers and we are keen to attract more people to join us in our worship.

At Chapel Chorlton On alternate Sundays at 9.30am, there is a Communion service with hymns and songs lasting about an hour long. There are soft toys, books and colouring sheets in the children's corner. Refreshments are served after the service. As a rural church, a Rogation Service is held as outreach. A service has been held at the Girlguiding campsite and at local farms in the past. The Easter Morning service to "Greet the Risen Lord" is held at 6.30am in the churchyard.

The PCC believes in the power of music as part of worship but now have to prioritise using an organist for key services during the year. This means being innovative with the use of modern technology on other occasions. The PCC is committed and is helped by a small group of volunteers in cleaning the church and making floral decorations.

One of our challenges is finding how to spread the sense of fellowship to the wider community. Church-led events and fundraising have enabled us to reach out to the

local residents but our real challenge is in being effective disciples to encourage them to become part of the Church of Christ along with us.

14. Church Halls and other Facilities

There are village halls in Whitmore/Baldwins Gate and Maer with excellent facilities and many activities scheduled.

In Chapel Chorlton the church has good links with the Stableford Caravan Park including the Madonna Club and also the local Girlguiding campsite and holiday accommodation which fall within our parish, we are able to make use of both these venues to host meetings, events, and services.

15. Church Finances

Currently, the benefice is meeting all its financial commitments. A financial summary is in Appendix 1.

For all the Churches, but in particular Chapel Chorlton, fund-raising has been successful in the past but as costs are rising this means finding new ways to remain self-sustaining. The effects of closure during Covid hit hard.

16. The Rectory



The Rectory is on a small country lane off the A53 (Newcastle-under-Lyme to Market Drayton road). It overlooks the village of Baldwins Gate and the main west coast railway line (the dividing line between Baldwins Gate and Whitmore) which runs mostly in a deep cutting below the village with the Maer hills beyond. It is 1 mile from Whitmore Church, 3 miles from Maer Church, and 4 miles from Chorlton Church.

The Rectory is a detached brick-built comfortable family home from the 1960's in a much sought after location. A side extension provides a single-story large study and toilet, with a separate entrance, and a single garage with small store shed.

The house is a good-sized family house with a large entrance hall with a small cloak cupboard in the hall, lounge with double doors leading into the dining room, new well fitted kitchen with plenty of cupboards and breakfast space, a utility room containing the central heating gas boiler and with space for a washing machine.

Upstairs there are 2 large single bedrooms and 2 large double bedrooms, one with an ensuite bathroom. The main bathroom has, in addition to the bath, hand bowl and toilet, a separate shower cubicle.

Outside there is a large area of lawn to the side of the house bordering and shielding the house from the main A53 which runs through the village. In front of the house is space for parking 2 cars and a crescent shaped driveway with double gates at each end connecting to Snape Hall Road.

Appendix 1 – Parish Finances

A full copy of the audited accounts for each of the three churches is available on request.

St Mary & All Saints, Whitmore

St Mary & All Saints, Whitmore is blessed to have a loyal group of regular givers, many of which are registered for Gift Aid which adds significant value to their donations. We have received generous legacies of late totalling around £46,000. These will be used to complete major projects such as the restoration of our beautiful reredos and stained-glass windows.

Our church finances comprise our Treasurer's account which is our day-to-day account for receipts and payments, with the balance currently standing at around £6,685; our Reserve account for major projects related to upkeep of the church fabric and churchyard, standing at around £88,705; and our Fixed Rate Bond standing at around £23,500 (*correct at time of writing 21/08/23*).

Whitmore contributes regularly via standing order to the Diocese of Lichfield under the Common Fund scheme. For 2023, Maer and Whitmore PCCs voted to support Chorlton church by providing a generosity of £819 each towards Chorlton's Common Fund share. Furthermore, all three churches voted to return to the 50:30:20 ratio (Whitmore: Maer: Chorlton) meaning that Whitmore's CF request for 2023 is now £17,413 which has been split into 12 equal monthly standing order payments.

The finance team consists of a treasurer for each church, plus a group treasurer and a Gift Aid Officer for the benefice – all of which are volunteers.

St Peter's, Maer

St Peter's monetary assets stood at circa £12k available in bank current accounts with investment accounts totalling £151k at the year-end 2022. We have benefitted from very generous legacies over the past several years, which have added to our investments, as well as contributed to church repairs and maintenance. This has given stability to our church and enabled us to support others. However, our Treasurer cautions that our service collections do not cover our costs and the congregation needs to be increased. The PCC and wider congregation give their time and resources in various fundraising initiatives, to ensure that we meet our financial obligations, including the Parish share.

St Laurence Church Chapel Chorlton

St Laurence Church, Chapel Chorlton has a small committed congregation, who give as generously as they can. Our regular donations cover our regular monthly bills

(excluding our common fund contributions). Previously we have paid our common fund bills in separate amounts throughout the year, and been able to keep up with payments, however we have now found ourselves in a position for the first time (in 2022) where we were unable to pay our full share of the common fund, despite our fundraising efforts.

We are grateful for all support received from the other churches in our benefice towards contributing towards our common fund share.

Our current account stands at around £7,000, (with £1,000 of this reserved specifically for paying for organists); with our deposit account (to be used for reserves) at £10,000. A separate bond fund of £3,000 is also available if required to use for larger church projects.

Our annual fundraising efforts and additional donations are vital in paying our share of the common fund.

Appendix 2 – Mission Action Plan

Statement agreed by Churchwardens of all 3 parishes.

A. What we are:

3 small churches in beautiful rural settings with faithful but ageing congregations.

B. What we aim to be :

3 lively congregations, growing in numbers serving God and all in the local community, sharing the good news of Jesus.

How do we get from A to B?

- Making the church more open – open to new ideas, new ways of worship, new relationships – as well as actually open every day.
- Keep up the profile of the church, using all means – FaceBook, Church near you, as well as local noticeboards etc.
- Encourage non-church members to see the church as theirs – special events (free if possible), personal invitations
- Look at demographics of the Parish – are there non Church members who might be able to use their particular skill sets to help and thus become involved?
- Review all we do realistically – was this a success or a failure and review aims annually.

Getting from A to B – road map.

Worship.

- A. A well established, weekly pattern of 2 services each Sunday plus a Tuesday morning Holy Communion at Whitmore. Special services at high points of the Church year, e.g. Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, Remembrance, Christmas.
- B. Specific services aimed at young people, not necessarily in a church setting.

Church Teaching and Evangelism. To grow the numbers of the church family.

- A. Lent courses every year. Christians, known to be church goers, very prominent locally in all community activities.
- B. Informal ways to explore Christian faith (or faith generally). Those active in the community to be more prepared to share their faith. Consider reviving Bible Study groups.

Pastoral Care. To maintain and expand our community network.

- A. Communion taken regularly to the sick and housebound by those authorised. In our area, pastoral care is very much linked with 'neighbourliness', not seen as a Christian act.
- B. System of prayer lists so different areas are prayed for regularly – and let people in those areas know they are a focus of prayer.

Children and young people.

- A. Ministry at Baldwins Gate school using volunteers. Youth groups specifically invited to and asked to take part in particular services – Remembrance, Carol Service.

- B. Seek more involvement with young people in whatever way possible – services with church trails, family services. Keep up more with families who already have a link with church through weddings and baptisms. Anything that promotes familiarity with the churches and the Christian faith.

Music

- A. Traditional hymns at all services accompanied by organists or digital organ accompaniment.
- B. People like to sing! How do we capitalise on that?

Fabric.

- A. All 3 churches in good condition. Church members regularly check the fabric of church buildings and churchyards.
- B. Maintain the high standards we already have in this respect.

Communication.

- A. Notice sheet kept up to date every week contains details of services and other information. Paper copies at each church each week plus more copies sent out by email. Volunteer Communications Officer who oversees communication matters for all 3 parishes.
- B. Regular Church magazine is much missed and gave an opportunity for contact and evangelism. Need to resurrect some form of this . We need to evaluate and take every opportunity to raise Church profile using whatever means possible.

Priorities for Mission – what we can realistically do ?

Newsletter? $\frac{3}{4}$ /times a year or every term? Delivered to every house .

Reconnecting with people who already have church links through

Baptism/Wedding/Funerals?

Encourage Church giving by Direct Debit?