To show God’s love in this community and to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ
ENDORSEMENT BY THE ARCHDEACON

“Loggerheads benefice is full of lively and committed people who know there is much to celebrate in what they do already but who are also ready to move forward into new things. In this profile you will sense the desire to work more closely together as a benefice, grow more deeply in prayer, worship and discipleship and engage more fully with the local community. There are challenges, of course, but this is a wonderful place to live and to minister and there are exciting times ahead for the people of God in this benefice!”

Ven. Matthew Parker
Archdeacon of Stoke-upon-Trent

Abide in my love….. that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father….. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last…..I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another. (from John 15:9-17)

(Words from the Bible study led by Archdeacon Matthew at the recent Awayday. The highlighted text indicates key points of discussion and reflection and which, we think, suggest what God might be saying to us as a Benefice at this point.)
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1. THE CONTEXT
The four parishes of Ashley and Mucklestone, Broughton and Croxton, situated in North Staffordshire close to the Shropshire border, came together as a Benefice in the year 2008.

Although the parishes are mainly rural, Loggerheads, roughly at the geographical centre of the Benefice, is an area of modern housing which continues to expand. Whilst Loggerheads doesn’t currently have a church building, there is a church school, the large hall of which could be used for public worship.

Each parish has its own distinctive character, but with the common aim of witnessing for God.

We are now seeking to appoint a Rector who will work across the Benefice, giving spiritual leadership and developing the gifts of the existing Ministry Team and members of the wider community.

2. THE ROLE
With God’s guidance, we are praying for a Rector who will:-
• be a person of Prayer, confident in their faith and who will preach the Word of God, with conviction.
• be able to lead Worship and share the Faith, valuing the different traditions, across the Benefice.
• encourage us to study the Word prayerfully and to grow in Faith and Discipleship.
• work with the Ministry Team, the Church Wardens, and Parochial Church Council members developing both spiritual growth within the Church family and outreach to the wider community.
• take a lead in pastoral visiting, encouraging and empowering others to also be involved in this important aspect of ministry.
• lead the worship of God in the two primary schools and support the Christian vision of the schools.
• engage gladly with all sections of the community on every possible occasion.

3. PERSON SPECIFICATION
We are looking for a person who:-
• will be flexible in approach, respecting existing traditions, whilst not being afraid to propose innovations.
• can reach out and develop our work across all generations.
• will be a team builder and motivator; someone able to teach and inspire, so that we are able to play our part in growing God’s Kingdom, seeking to enable others to discover and express their gifts and ministries.
• has good inter-personal skills and wants to engage with people inside and outside the church, also developing and maintaining effective working relationships with the Benefice team.
• knows when, and how, to delegate.
• has a sense of fun and the capacity to enthuse others.
• Is able to accept us “as we are” and with patience and sensitivity, guide us on our spiritual journey.
4. THE CHALLENGE

- To be at the heart of our communities, in order to bring the love of God to all.
- To lead us forward in spiritual growth, by strengthening the faith and commitment of Church members.
- To encourage fellowship and unity within and across the four churches of the Benefice.
- To promote Christian outreach through more effective engagement with families, including, those new to the area.
- To foster 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 be a visible Christian presence in the life of the local communities and to develop strategies for ensuring good pastoral care.
- To nurture us, as together we seek God’s guidance, in discerning His will for our Benefice.

5. WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER

In the Loggerheads Benefice we have to offer a warm, open and inclusive welcome; with a supportive and active laity, 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, as follows.

5.a Support for the Minister

- One SSM/OLM Curate
- One retired priest PTO
- Four Licensed Readers
- One Authorised Lay Minister

Benefice Action Group

The group is made up of members of the Ministry Team and all the Church Wardens who meet to support the Incumbent and each other in the leadership of this Benefice, to work together in building God’s Kingdom and to implement mission opportunities throughout the Benefice.

Coordinated PCC

As an innovation in late 2018, the four PCCs began gathering for bi-monthly Coordinated Meetings, starting with a plenary session of shared worship and reports on group activities such as Clergy Report, Safeguarding, New Generations and Deanery Synod, followed by individual Parish PCC meetings. This system is still in development, and it is important that it is subject to periodic review and evaluation by the individual PCCs.

New Generations Team

A group of volunteers with one representative from each Church who meet to oversee the work with children and young people in the Benefice, ie school clubs and Messy Church.
Benefice Worker/Administrator
We have recently appointed an Interim Benefice Worker/Administrator funded by the four churches. This is an evolving role and the remit is very flexible to suit an incoming incumbent.

5.b PASTORAL CARE
Pastoral care and home communion visits are taking place in the Benefice, but we currently don't have a formal team in place or way of monitoring. Interest has been expressed by various members of the churches to join a team and receive training.

5.c SHARED SERVICES
On fifth Sundays we hold a Benefice Service in one church, rotating around the four churches, with each church taking its turn to host a Eucharist service of its own tradition.

Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Easter Day Sunrise are also Benefice Services.
- The Benefice hosts two ecumenical Good Friday services:
  - Ashley holds a joint walk of witness service with the Roman Catholic church
  - Broughton/Croxton/Croxton Independent Methodists take turns in holding an evening service.

Ascension Day is a Deanery service rotating around the Eccleshall Deanery.

5.d RECENT INITIATIVES
There is a genuine thirst within the Benefice for exploring our own faith and understanding of where God may be leading us. We have successfully run Alpha several times over the years. Grave Talk was well received by the small group that attended. Various lay-led Lent groups happen each year and as a Benefice we have recently undertaken a Spiritual MOT Course led by our Interim Minister Rev'd Philip Swan. Our Benefice awayday, facilitating spiritual refreshment and fellowship as well as an opportunity to discuss the process of calling a new incumbent was attended by approx. 40 people and proved to be very popular. There is therefore a golden opportunity for our new incumbent to breathe new life into our ministry of all believers.

5.e SAFEGUARDING
We have a Benefice Safeguarding Officer and are committed to complying with Diocesan safeguarding policy and procedures.
5.f THE RECTORY
The Rectory is in Ashley and is situated on the Charnes Road opposite St John the Baptist Church. The house has 5 bedrooms, one bathroom, a downstairs WC, lounge, dining room and kitchen, utility room, separate study and garage. There is a large lawn to the front and rear. The property is currently undergoing refurbishment and restructuring by the diocese. It is positioned close to bus stops and the Ashley Surgery.

5.g THE SURROUNDING AREA
This is a beautiful part of the country with good road links and rail links via either Stoke on Trent, Stafford or Crewe. It’s mainly rural/semi-rural, with a mix of small and large villages surrounded by farmland and woodland. There is a considerable amount of new housing development underway in Loggerheads, Ashley and Hookgate.

There are two Church of England Primary Schools within the Benefice, one in Loggerheads [The Hugo Meynell] and one in Mucklestone [St Mary’s]. There are High Schools in Market Drayton, Madeley and Stafford and independent schools in Newport, Newcastle and Stafford.
The closest shops are in Loggerheads [Co-op, butchers, pharmacy, barbers, library, Post Office], with a small convenience store/Post Office/petrol station in Croxton. Nearby Market Drayton, with several supermarkets, banks, garages and a wider range of shops and services also has a weekly street market, 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 and a coffee shop.

There is a popular Doctors’ Surgery in Ashley, with dentist surgeries in Market Drayton, Eccleshall, Stafford, Newcastle. There are several Public Houses/takeaways/eateries in Ashley and Loggerheads.

6. WORK WITH LOCAL SCHOOLS

Children and Families’ Work

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 205 pupils on roll and is linked to Ashley church and, though originally built close to the church, was moved to Loggerheads, which makes physical links between the church and school more challenging. However, a programme of visits to Ashley church has been developed for whole school celebrations linked to festivals and for single class visits to support the RE syllabus.

St Mary’s (rated Outstanding by SIAMS) has 64 pupils on 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.

Church activities for children

A small Junior Church meets at Ashley, term time only, during the Sunday morning service, except on the 3rd Sunday in the month when the children contribute to the family service. Junior Church activities are led by a few parents on rota.

There is a weekly lunchtime club at Hugo Meynell school for years 1-4 with over 30 children attending. Games and craft activities are based around the Open the Book Bible stories. A small group of volunteers help to lead on a rota basis.
Mucklestone has a weekly after school mid-week ‘Sunday School’, held in church in the summer and in school in the winter, drawn from pupils from the school, with around 18 attending. Games, drama and craft activities are based around the lectionary readings and the children help to plan and lead the monthly family services. The Club is led by a small group of Mucklestone members.

Church/school links
An Open the Book team, currently 12 members drawn from all 4 Benefice churches and Croxton and Ashley Methodist churches, was formed in March 2019. Currently leading collective worship in both schools fortnightly, we hope to increase this to weekly in the new year. This 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. Links have also been forged between the schools and the local community choirs.

Messy Church
Beginning a couple of years ago as a monthly session it now meets half-termly, linked where possible to festivals. Two regular families are now involved in planning activities and providing refreshments, supported by several church members and are joined by 4 or 5 different families at each session. The Open the Book team now help to lead the worship.

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

Holiday Bible Club
Successful week-long Holiday Bible Clubs have been held for several years, making use of the facilities of our church schools. Lots of positive feedback was received this year from parents and the adults who took part; 38 children attended altogether, 2 adult leaders and 10 mini team leaders were previously members of our church clubs, indicating the long-term impact of our work with children.
7. DISCIPLESHIP, VOCATION AND EVANGELISM

As a Benefice we are keen to align ourselves to the Diocesan invitation to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Chad, as well as to Developing Discipleship, Encouraging Vocation and Inspiring Evangelism.

Using the Diocesan format recognising what we do, what we want to do and where we hope to go, we are adapting the ‘DVE’ (discipleship, vocation, evangelism) format for use in our Benefice. We are keen to develop with the new Incumbent clear, realistic and attainable goals, and to use DVE as a catalyst for continuing and furthering the work we do in the Loggerheads Benefice. At a recent Away Day the following were included amongst our Benefice Priorities: building on good links with the two schools, engaging meaningfully with children and young people, making missional connections with the new housing in the area, improving communication particularly through social media and providing spiritual resources for our community.

The Vision 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 God already at work in the 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 people of hope.

This vision is to be owned by Parishes, Chaplaincies, Fresh Expressions, Schools and the Cathedral, each in their own way and context. [link to vision]

8. ENDORSEMENTS

RURAL DEAN
“Eccleshall Deanery is a beautiful area of rural Staffordshire lying to the west of the Stafford episcopal area. You’ll receive a warm welcome from your deanery colleagues, including a supportive clergy chapter, as we seek to serve God together.”
Rev’d Jules Walker
Rural Dean

INTERIM MINISTER
“This is an exciting and strategic post. I have particularly valued the support and forward-looking vision of Sara, the recently ordained SSM, as well as the input of a team of hard working and gifted lay leaders and other church members. Ashley is a good centre to work from and whilst much of the Benefice is rural, it feels somehow connected and well placed. Yes, there is definitely a job to be done for someone who feels called, but from my experience I would say that you can expect a high level of engagement and fulfilment.”
Rev’d Philip Swan
Director of World Mission, Lichfield Diocese and Interim Minister in Stafford Episcopal Area
9. INDIVIDUAL PARISHES

9.a ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, ASHLEY

Introduction

Situated in an elevated position in the small village of Ashley is the church of St. John the Baptist. The church is the focal point for regular Anglican worship in the area, serving both the village and the wider more densely populated areas of Loggerheads and Ashley Heath.

The village is set in the rural area of Staffordshire close to the Shropshire border. The catchment area of the church includes the highest cultivated heathland in the country and extensive area of woodland which have community access.

Local residents have good access to the nearby towns of Market Drayton and Newcastle with a regular bus service connecting the two. There are fast rail services to London, Manchester and Birmingham from Stoke, Stafford and Crewe and there is easy access to the M6 motorway for long distance car travel.

St John’s is a village church, situated on the bus route from Market Drayton to Newcastle under Lyme, around the corner from the Doctor’s Surgery, with farm fields in one direction and mixed housing in the other. The village itself has become subordinate to the main population centre and facilities in Loggerheads, and many of our members live there.

Being a village church means the congregation has a mix of theologies and churchmanship, which by and large co-exist contentedly. With an average weekly congregation of 48 and around 117 on the electoral roll, the church has a large choir and is supported by three lay readers and a retired priest, as well as lesson readers, servers, sides-people, and intercessors, not to mention the churchwardens and treasurer. The church is filled for the candlelight Christmas Eve service, for Remembrance Sunday and other events. There is a 9.30 am sung communion service with sermon each Sunday, varied slightly with a monthly family service (which could do with a refresh).

Look around you on an average Sunday, and you will see quite a large choir who will lead hymns and occasionally an anthem or more contemporary music. The regular congregation will include three mothers with their children who attend/lead our small Junior Church; a published local poet who is turning his talent to hymn writing, a number of former and current professionals and academics, and quite a lot of retirees. Look closer and you will see the mother who followed her daughter in being confirmed recently, the recently widowed and a few older people with mobility issues (and their spouses who worry about them).
Until recently there was a monthly Recharge service on Sunday with more modern music and ways of exploring issues and praying for each other - but this came to an end when two of the prime movers left for another church, and it might have run its course anyway.

**Discipleship**

For many of the congregation the weekly Sunday morning eucharist is the central part of their spiritual discipline.

Small groups for prayer and bible study have operated in the past, and occasionally at present, but could do with a reboot. Many of us have followed the suggestion of our interim minister to undergo a Spiritual MoT using material from the Fellowship of St Chad (a discipleship group in the Lichfield Diocese, named in honour of its founder).

One of the Readers organises a prayer chain, which shares news and takes requests for prayer (in confidence). Intercessions in the Sunday service are always led by members of the congregation.

**Vocation**

Three of the four Readers in the Benefice are based here. They are encouraging, as they were encouraged, people from all the churches to explore licensed lay ministry; there is scope for a new incumbent to develop this.

**Evangelism**

Members of the congregation are active in many of the Benefice activities with young people mentioned in the Benefice profile, such as Messy Church (which now meets in the Chapter House at Ashley) and Open the Book in the local primary schools. There is a small Junior Church which meets during the 9.30 morning service.

Occasional offices, particularly funerals, are helpful in serving local families at a point of need, and there are some examples of the bereaved joining the regular congregation. A new incumbent might profitably develop this.

Music is important beyond services - our Director of Music draws people in to sing with the church choir, but also with the larger Community Choir, which sings a mixture of sacred and secular works, sometimes with guest performers, and with a good record of members ‘graduating’ to the Sunday morning choir. Two members of the choir run a local Youth Theatre, with a strong musical element, that uses the church for rehearsal and performance.

There is a weekly coffee morning on Mondays, which has occasional elements of ‘Fresh Expression’, for example with readings in Lent. The parish magazine, produced 11 times a year, is a vital source of community information and advertisements, distributed to 560 local homes. As well as letters from each of the church ministers in the parish, there is a mix of general and local interest articles, including explicitly Christian material.
We have good relations with the Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches in the village, both served by ministers with wider local commitments. Lay people from the three churches operated a successful Christian Aid week this year, with various activities instead of house to house collections; and the Catholic and Anglican churches join together on Good Friday with a walk of witness for one to the other. We have had joint Lent groups in the past, and this might be revived.

The Church Building
The parish church of Ashley has stood in its position on the edge of the village for over seven hundred years. During this time, it has been restored and rebuilt at least three times. The present building, with the exception of the tower, is a Victorian restoration (1860-1862). The tower is the oldest part of the church, dating probably from the 14th century, and was restored in the early 17th century, about 1612.

There was a further restoration in 1910. Comfortable new chairs have replaced the old church chairs which gives us great flexibility for seating and the opportunity to stack all the chairs away and clear the floor. The church is currently exploring new lighting. There is recently installed sound system.

The Chapter House was built in 2000 and has a main hall, modern kitchen, toilets and small meeting room, which also houses the photocopiers. It is well used for Sunday Junior Church and after Church coffee as well as for various meetings and rehearsals during the week.

The church fabric has received steady attention in recent years and is in a good state of repair. We occasionally get visitors as a result of the church appearing in Simon Jenkins’ Thousand Best Churches book (as does Broughton). There are some spectacular memorials in alabaster and marble to local families now departed.

The Churchyard
The churchyard surrounds the church and is open for burials and committal of ashes. It also houses the village’s war memorial. The extensive churchyard is mown and maintained by a small band of church and non-church volunteers and is kept presentable. The churchwardens try to maintain a delicate pastoral balance between mourners, especially those of children, who want to decorate the graves and the demands of tidiness and the Diocesan Chancellor’s rules. A policy document is currently underway and will be made publicly available. The planting around the main church door and path is also maintained by volunteers.

Ashley House Hospital
Is a care facility that provides low secure and locked rehabilitation services for men and women aged 18 and over with a mental health condition. Because of the nature of this facility, contact must be with a light touch, however some residents occasionally attend the eucharist service at Ashley and help at the weekly coffee morning. They also receive pastoral visits from our retired priest.
9.b ST MARY’S, MUCKLESTONE

An Overview

The ancient Parish of St Mary’s Mucklestone is still largely rural, containing the small villages of Mucklestone, Knighton and Bearstone, and several even smaller hamlets. The landscape is gently rolling countryside with scattered farms, and a patchwork of green fields, hedges, small woods and country lanes. But at its southern end the parish also contains a considerable number of houses built in the last 50 years, on the edge of Loggerheads, with new developments currently under construction, and more in the planning process. 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, and with excellent links with the church. The recently appointed head teacher (2018) offers the school building for church use when needed and attends family services whenever possible.

Worship

The style of worship is normally traditional, with both Common Worship and the Book of Common Prayer being used on different Sundays in the month. However, Family Services generally follow a less formal pattern, and provide an opportunity for the children of the after-school Church Club to lead the Service. We also have a simplified Family Eucharist included in the Family Service once each term. We look forward to welcoming a new Incumbent to this Benefice and we hope that person will recognise our wish, initially, to maintain the range of services offered at Mucklestone, and personally lead worship here on a regular basis.

Music

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, who will gladly pitch in if a combined choir is requested for services elsewhere in the Benefice. We are well served by a rota system of local organists who cover all our services. Without a Director of Music for regular practising, we have in recent years borrowed the services of a Market Drayton enthusiast to help an augmented Christmas Choir gear up for Carols by Candlelight in the Village Hall and the Carol Service in church.

The Congregation

There are 90 people on the Electoral Roll, of which 66 are resident in the parish. Some of these will be drawn from local farming families who have lived and worked here for generations. Others are relative newcomers to the area, drawn perhaps by the attractive countryside and available modern family housing, within commuter distance of several larger towns in Staffordshire and Shropshire. There are many folk who have now retired, and amongst these we have some wonderful volunteers engaging enthusiastically in various aspects of church life. But around the parish there are also those who no longer feel fit enough to make the journey to church. We look forward to welcoming a Rector who will take an active role in pastoral visiting, ministering to the elderly as well as the sick and bereaved.
As in many rural areas, the age profile of our normal Sunday worshippers is predominantly 60+. Although an average normal Sunday attendance is maybe 20-25 adults, there are occasions, for example Remembrance Sunday, when numbers rise to over 50. At a monthly Family Service there will be perhaps a dozen youngsters and their parents, more on Mothering Sunday; and on Sundays with a particular School Service, such as Harvest and the Leavers Service in July, the church will feel almost full – maybe 40 children, their mums and dads, little brothers and sisters, and many of the school staff. The whole school also attend a week-day service on the final day of each term, to which members of the wider congregation are invited, as they are to sports day picnics and summer fetes.

**PARISH ACTIVITIES**

**Discipleship**

Intercessions are led by members of the congregation at Holy Communion Services. A member of our congregation has recently established a small Friday afternoon prayer group in the parish. A number of Mucklestone folk engaged in the Spiritual MoT recently, led by our Interim Minister, and we understand there is a “hunger” for more. We are seeking a Rector who will encourage us to study the Word prayerfully to grow in faith and discipleship.

**Vocation**

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.

**Evangelism**

Members of our congregation founded and are active in much of the New Generations work with young people, including the Holiday Bible Club, and the weekly Children’s Church Club (CCC) at St Mary’s School, founded some 16 years ago to build better links between St Mary’s School and the Church. CCC attracts around 15 children each week, enjoying Bible stories, drama, games, singing and worship. The Club’s activities are often shared at Family Services, when the children act as Sides-persons and participate with dramatized readings, prayers and songs. We are seeking a Rector who will support and engage with the good work with young people already going on in the parish and extend that outreach to their parents in a meaningful way.

Members of our congregation are also active in a variety of Voluntary Organisations, such as the Loggerheads & District Befrienders, and the Loggerheads & District Voluntary Car Scheme and other community groups such as the Mucklestone WI, and the Friends of Knighton Village Hall, all of which give opportunities for the wider community to “encounter” our church in these different places around the locality. Likewise, other valuable links with the wider community are maintained through the Mucklestone Parish Magazine, produced quarterly and distributed with Loggerheads’ Community News, by volunteers, to some 480 houses in the area. We are seeking a Rector who will help us make the most of these opportunities.

Such is the need for Christian outreach in this our secular world, and with a significant number of new houses being built in our parish, we are seeking a Rector who will actively engage with us in welcoming newcomers to the locality, and to our church family.
Church Finances

Regular (covenanted) giving is encouraged, but with an Electoral Roll diminishing over time as elderly parishioners depart to meet their Maker, church income has been dwindling. As in many other walks of life, it will be a challenge to the PCC to meet rising costs.

There are no Parish Trusts or Endowment Funds, but we currently have some legacy money, pending PCC decisions on how it is used.

As a Church Community, we support the Christians against Poverty organisation together with the Food Bank, both based at St. Mary's Church, Market Drayton.

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 Church, which was re-roofed some 27 years ago, is currently in a good state of repair. The window bars of the notable 19th Century Kempe stained glass windows were repainted in 2017, the tower roof re-leaded in 2018, weather-protection in the belfry and a new clock dial for the tower clock were installed in 2019.

The Church is well looked after by the PCC, with money for maintenance and repairs 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, which are well supported and thoroughly enjoyed by churchgoers and other local residents.

The kitchen and toilet facilities installed at the back of the church in 2007-8 have proved to be a significant asset. After-service refreshments, which are now a regular feature, have proved to be immensely popular and an invaluable opportunity to chat. The facilities are also used to provide refreshments after the annual Bluebell Walk, occasional Prayer Walks and the Ride and Stride supporting Staffordshire Historic Churches.

Knighton Village Hall

The Village Hall in Knighton, built and consecrated in 1900, provides an excellent venue for larger Parish functions, such as our Harvest Supper and Carols by Candlelight, led by the choir. These occasions are well attended by the local community. A range of other community events are currently being planned at the Village Hall to raise money for its upkeep and essential repairs.

The Churchyard

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.
Broughton is a very rural parish with a population of about 250 residents. It consists of a few scattered hamlets and a number of isolated farms. It includes Broughton, Fairoak, Charnes, Wetwood, Bromley, Podmore and part of Hookgate. There are 25 on the Electoral Roll.

The church is Grade I listed and 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 386 years ago. 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 been returned after undergoing a significant restoration.

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 parish share 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 recently 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 Book of Common Prayer.

Services
We hold a service every Sunday, alternating between Holy Communion and Matins usually at 11 am except on the second Sunday in the month, when we meet for a said Eucharist at 10 am. Attendance on average is about 12 including children. We have a considerable amount of lay participation from the Benefice ministry team, but particularly from one Reader and the Curate, who are both ‘home grown at Broughton’ members of that team. Even though the congregation is small, we take vocation seriously, and in the past 15 years have produced a Bishop [Hertford], a Priest and a Reader. We are liberally minded and non-discriminatory regarding the appointment of an incoming priest.

A good Rector:
Makes learning about Christianity creative and fun, someone who likes children and helps them.

[Pupil from St Mary’s School]
We hold special services for Mothering Sunday, Harvest, Remembrance and Christingle, as well as a Carol Service and Midnight 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. The Centenary of the Women’s Institute was also celebrated at a special service. On fifth Sundays in the month the four churches hold a joint Benefice Service.

We join with Croxton Church and the Croxton Methodists for a Rogation Service, and a Civic Service when required by the Eccleshall Parish Council. We join up in Lent to follow a recognised Bible Study Course, and throughout the year for a monthly prayer meeting. A joint parish magazine, the ABC (About Broughton & Croxton) is issued quarterly to 400+ households.

We support the children’s work both financially and practically within Ashley and Mucklestone because we as a church appreciate the importance of sowing the seed.

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 held a successful Flower Festival in the church in 2017 with participation by many local community groups. We support the Sanctus St Mark’s (Stoke) programme with donations of food, as well as the Staffordshire Women’s Aid Refuge by donating presents for the children at Easter and Christmas.

Broughton joins with Croxton for many well-attended social activities in Broughton Parish Room at Wetwood. These include a Village Harvest Supper in October, Croxton & Broughton Garden Guild, Broughton WI and Broughton Community Choir. Broughton Tennis Club maintains two grass courts behind the Broughton Parish Room for use by all members of the community. The Croxton Well Dressing is a successful biennial communal project initiated in 2012 by Broughton WI, with input from local schoolchildren and many local groups and individuals. The 5th Croxton Well Dressing Festival took place on 6th July 2019.

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

More information is available on St Peter’s website www.broughtonchurch.com
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 Highlanes, Sugnall and Walk Mill to the Outlands and Wetwood – approximately 5 square miles; with about 350 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.

For some community activities and meetings, St Paul’s Croxton shares a parish room at Wetwood with St Peter’s, Broughton – we are one community with two churches. 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. New moveable pews and chairs were also installed, allowing for diverse use of the building and creating space, not just for worship, but for community activities such as coffee mornings, afternoon teas, community choir concerts, exhibitions, children’s activities 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. No longer having a regular organist, the PCC purchased a sound system to ensure there is music at all services.

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.

Services at St Pauls are varied in nature, with the Book of Common Prayer being used for the monthly Holy Communion. Two services per month are shared with our Independent Methodist neighbours with whom we have a covenant, one held in the parish church and one in the chapel.
The first Sunday in the month is a ‘Songs of Praise’ in which most of the congregation participate with readings of prose or poetry, and which is usually accompanied by a very proficient local pianist. This attracts several attendees of the monthly coffee morning, established two years ago at the request of residents, which serves around 40 local people.

The Parish Share 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 small but enthusiastic and accepting congregation, working well together as a team to maintain our weekly services of worship and to use our versatile premises to reach out to the local community. There is a strong 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 at least once a month and be visible at as many community events as possible.
10. THE BENEFICE IN A NUTSHELL

SERVICE PATTERNS

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, ASHLEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Time(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Sunday</td>
<td>Parish Communion</td>
<td>9.30 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Sunday</td>
<td>Parish Communion</td>
<td>9.30 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Sunday</td>
<td>Said Holy Communion</td>
<td>8.00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Communion</td>
<td>9.30 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Sunday</td>
<td>Parish Communion</td>
<td>9.30 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Thursday</td>
<td>Said Eucharist</td>
<td>10.00 am</td>
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ST MARY’S, MUCKLESTONE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Time(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Sunday</td>
<td>Holy Communion</td>
<td>11.15 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Sunday</td>
<td>Matins</td>
<td>11.15 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Sunday</td>
<td>Holy Communion</td>
<td>11.15 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Sunday</td>
<td>Family Service</td>
<td>11.15 am</td>
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ST PETER’S, BROUGHTON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Time(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Sunday</td>
<td>Matins</td>
<td>11.00 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Sunday</td>
<td>Said Holy Communion</td>
<td>10.00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Sunday</td>
<td>Matins</td>
<td>11.00 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fourth Sunday</td>
<td>Holy Communion</td>
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ST PAUL’S CROXTON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Time(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Sunday</td>
<td>Songs of Praise</td>
<td>11.00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Sunday</td>
<td>Holy Communion</td>
<td>11.00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Sunday</td>
<td>United service at St Paul’s with Croxton Independent Methodists, usually CW Service of the Word</td>
<td>11.00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Sunday</td>
<td>United service at the Chapel with Croxton Independent Methodists, usually Divine Worship</td>
<td>11.00 am</td>
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PRAYER MEETINGS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Service Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fridays</td>
<td>5.15 pm</td>
<td>Occasional Friday Night Prayers at Mucklestone [Spring, Summer and Autumn months]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Wednesday</td>
<td>4.00 pm</td>
<td>United prayer meeting rotating between St Peter’s, St Paul’s and Croxton Chapel.</td>
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</table>

OCCASIONAL OFFICES

Funerals, weddings and baptisms take place as and when required. We don’t have a set time and date for baptisms.

STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ashley</th>
<th>Mucklestone</th>
<th>Broughton</th>
<th>Croxton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parish population</td>
<td>2992</td>
<td>1306</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>440</td>
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<td>Electoral roll*</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avg adult attendance†</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Attendance under 16's</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12#</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of weddings†</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of baptisms†</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of funerals†</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*2019
† 12 months Oct 2018 to Oct 2019
# Attendance at the monthly family service
11. MAP OF THE BENEFICE
12. A TASTE OF LIFE IN THE LOGGERHEADS BENEFICE