

Six Parishes Benefice
Our Benefice Profile
2025



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Foreword from 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 to truly 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 Archdeacon & Associate Archdeacon of Salop

Thank you taking the time to read this Benefice Profile as part of the discernment process we are all engaged in to find the person that God is calling to minister here.

We are looking to appoint an Interim Minister to work with the people of the Six Parishes to build up the mission and ministry of the churches to their communities. The Benefice was previously served by a stipendiary incumbent who retired in June 2023. He was appointed to a 1.0 post but this was reduced to a 0.5 post partway through his ministry, partly due to the financial situation in the parishes. During the vacancy, the parishes have built good relationships with each other and formed a Joint Council to create a more collaborative style of working together, as well as developing a desire to be more creative about mission.

We believe that there is real potential for these parishes to flourish, under the leadership of someone who is open to building links with the various communities in this benefice and who will respect existing traditions while being open to more pioneering forms of ministry. To enable this to happen, grant funding has been provided from the diocesan *Resourcing the Future* Fund to supplement the benefice's Common Fund payment, so that the post can be full-time.

Due to the nature of the funding of the post, this is an Interim Ministry, with an initial appointment for three years. The hope is that, as mission and ministry begin to flourish, the benefice's financial situation will improve and the post may revert to that of a full-time Rector. We will review progress with the appointee and parishes 18-24 months into post before consideration of such an appointment or of a possible renewed interim appointment period, for which funding has been secured up to a further two years. We hope that the person appointed will also be able to share their learning more widely in the archdeaconry and the diocese about how to develop mission/ministry in a very rural context.

As you read further, we pray that you will sense God's guidance helping you to discern whether you are the person that God is calling to the Six Parishes.

Ven. Nick Watson and Rev'd. Preb. Jo Farnworth.

Welcome to Edgmond and Shifnal Deanery

We're really pleased that you are interested in becoming the minister of Badger, Beckbury, Kemberton, Stockton, Sutton Maddock and Ryton (known to us here as the "6 parishes.") If you were to minister here, you would not only be moving to a beautiful part of the country but also be joining a great team of colleagues.

Incorporating 24 parishes, Harper Adams University and RAF Cosford, the deanery covers deeply rural areas of Shropshire, the market towns of Newport and Shifnal, the "large village" of Albrighton and some suburbs of Telford. Despite this variety of contexts, communities and church traditions, the sense of collegiality in the deanery chapter has been a strength to date. Currently, the chapter is in a transitional phase as some colleagues have been called on to new ministries. However, we also aim to support one another, pray and eat together at our Chapter meetings every 6 weeks. Some of these meetings are shared with our neighbouring deanery of Telford. We also have been meeting online to "catch up with each other" in between these.

In 2020, Lichfield Diocese inaugurated the "Shaping For Mission" process and teams within each deanery have prayerfully discerned where God is calling us in the next stage of our life together. In this deanery, in line with our diocesan priorities, we have a vision to encourage all people of the deanery to focus on growing in faith (discipleship) and sharing faith (evangelism) as core aspects of Christian life and growth; particularly among children and young people. We aim to adopt more collaborative patterns of mission and worship across the deanery and through this to explore ways of reducing the administrative burden on clergy and parishes. We hope to do all this while being sensitive to context and where appropriate opportunities arise.

All of this means both ministers and parishes are being encouraged to work more closely with each other and to build trust through stronger relationships. If you were to join us here, you would be welcomed as a valued and supported member of our team.

Matthew Lefroy, Rural Dean.

Welcome & Introduction to the Six Parishes Benefice

Welcome to our Benefice Profile.

We are a group of six parishes located in the picturesque countryside of south east Shropshire and working together as a single benefice to proclaim God's word to our local communities – Badger, Beckbury, Kemberton, Ryton, Stockton and Sutton Maddock.

Recently all six parishes have begun to work more closely together and have formed a Joint Council for the benefice to symbolise this growing collaboration. Moving forward we believe that we are entering a new phase in the life of our benefice, with the prospect of becoming more outward-looking through increased engagement with our local communities and being purposeful about evangelism.

As such we would like to highlight the following points around the way we see things moving forward, along with the things that we would be looking to be reciprocated through our new minister.

- We recognise that we need to do things differently and be prepared to move outside our 'comfort zone' if we are to engage effectively and be relevant in our communities. Our new minister will effectively have the opportunity to start afresh in a number of key areas as we look to grow and rejuvenate. We hope that our priorities (outlined below) demonstrate that you will be able to make an immediate and positive impact within the communities we serve, working in partnership with us.
- You won't be surprised that we have some challenges, like many rural churches. These include: a decline in regular attendance at church services and activities, financial fragility and a difficulty in appointing the full complement of church officers and PCC members in each church. We do believe that, with the right minister working with us, we could bring about change.
- By the same token we also believe that the Six Parishes Benefice represents a tremendous opportunity for you to work alongside us in spreading Jesus' message of hope, love, salvation and fulfilment. We have recently been encouraged on a couple of occasions where personal invitation and different formats have resulted in attendance by some of the community that don't ordinarily come to church.
- We are mindful that we do not want our new minister to feel overwhelmed and are not looking for you to be superhuman and all things to all people! Instead, we primarily hope you will focus initially with us on the small number of current priorities we have identified and which we feel are essential to realising growth, as well as discerning with us other ways in which we can flourish.
- We understand that we won't get everything right as a benefice team and appreciate that not all new ideas may work. We are seeking to create an environment where we are all comfortable with giving things a try, learning from best practice both inside and outside our benefice and with our enthusiasm and your support and guidance, feel that we can make a real difference in our communities. To do this as the six parishes we pledge to you our support, practical help and prayer as we move forward together and we realise that we will all need to 'step up' and get involved.
- We have recently set up our Joint Council designed to streamline the work and administration of the Six Parishes Benefice and we are already seeing the benefits of this as we have been working more closely together as a benefice (instead of as six individual parishes). An example is this Benefice Profile you are now reading which (whilst compiled by a small benefice working group for practicality) has very much been the product of all Joint Council members who have all agreed the profile and subscribe to its contents. The Joint Council is now responsible for all benefice affairs (excepting finance, assets and buildings which remain the responsibility of the individual PCCs). Moving forward the Joint Council will be the 'engine house' through which we will collectively focus and work on our mission and outreach priorities (outlined below).

Our Vision and Priorities

The Diocese of Lichfield has recently presented and challenged us with the Strategic Framework 'Shaping for Mission' 2024-2030.



Developing Discipleship,
Encouraging Vocations
Inspiring Evangelism
since 669

Shaping
for Mission
Strategic
Framework
2024 -2030



Our Christian community and each of us within it will have something to offer to this mission as it unfolds and as a designated Pioneer Ministry with a desire to be more outward-looking we have considered our current priorities and which of the nine goals most closely aligns with these as follows;

Prayer

- [Prayer](#) is the essential common thread needed if we are to realise all our mission priorities.

Our 'Start Point'

- We believe that we need to re-energise regular prayer life within the benefice and that this should be the most important thing that we do together. We have jointly devised the below prayer that we are using when we meet, but wish to see more regular opportunities to meet together to offer heart-felt prayer as we seek to further God's kingdom through our mission priorities.

'God our Father, hear our prayer for our six parishes. Help us to recognise each other's gifts and give us the grace to use them together for the good of all. May we be patient as we wait for a new leader and support those responsible for preparing our profile and choosing a new minister. May we trust you, our faithful and generous God, to guide us through this time, so that we are ready to enter a new chapter in the life of our benefice for your glory. May your Kingdom come, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen'.

Our Three Priorities:

1. Community Engagement Plan

- **Reach out to our community** – proactively work together to 'build bridges' with our local communities with a regular schedule of engaging and relevant activities for all ages. Ultimately through doing so have the opportunity to communicate the message of hope, love, acceptance, salvation and fulfilment that is found through faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Communication** – better communicate using new approaches to provide community updates regarding 'what's going on' within the churches.
- **Pastoral care** for those in need, the lonely, the isolated and the grieving. To reflect the care and love of God recognising that church is community and not just a building.
- **Stronger together** - consolidate the work done to unite our six parish groups (and following the recent set up of our joint council). To promote further relationship building and cooperation within the benefice so that we are stronger in Christ and in our community engagement.
- **Regular worship patterns** – we have been (and continue to be) extremely grateful to all the support we are currently receiving from local clergy (and retired clergy) during this period of vacancy. On appointment of a new minister however we will be looking for support to reintroduce regular patterns of worship (recognising that this may not always be using the church buildings and not always on a Sunday). To warmly welcome all, and show that Christian worship is not a set of doctrines and not just for the few in order to encourage discipleship.



Our 'Start Point'

- We don't currently have a formal plan and whilst we are attempting to engage with our respective local communities through a small number of ad-hoc 'events' across the year, this is currently quite fragmented across the six parishes with not nearly enough community activity taking place. We are keen therefore to increase this with regular activity throughout the week and year to be relevant to and engage with differing sections of our communities at a time and place that works for them. As a Pioneer Ministry we are looking to try new things and work with other churches and clergy both inside and outside the area for mutual support, learning, ideas and resource sharing.
- We are lacking a structure in the area of pastoral care, ensuring that this happens as it should and is effective. There is an essential need for routine pastoral visits to take place (something that is appreciated by the wider community). There is also a need for communion to be offered in the home to those who are now too sick or frail to attend church.
- As a church community (let alone the wider community) we are not always fully aware of activities and events going on within the benefice and currently rely on updates given at Sunday services and through monthly newsletters and postings on church and parish notice boards. We know this can be improved on (perhaps through the introduction and use of social media). We have a website, but whilst it is up to date, it is neither easy to locate nor particularly engaging.
- All six churches in the benefice are Dementia Friendly and local parish newsletters regularly include a dementia related article. One of our Joint Council members is the Dementia Friendly Coordinator and strengthening links to local groups, both church related and beyond, presents a valuable opportunity for the church to help support people with dementia and their carers.

2. Connection with our Primary School

- **Rejuvenate the relationship with our local Primary School and Nursery** between children, parents, teaching staff and the church community.

Our 'Start Point'

- Active links with the school have lapsed over recent years to a point there are no longer any regular activities initiated by the church taking place (either in or out of school). We do however retain good links with the School Head and in putting our profile together asked her what the school would want from a new minister. She took the time to ask the pupils and staff to ensure all views were included and we have all been really encouraged by the positive response we have received (as outlined in the 'Interim Minister we need' section below).

3. Age profiles reflect community age profiles

- **Grow the next church generation** – aim to increase our engagement with families and young people in relevant ways. Recognising that younger people and in particular teenagers and children will naturally migrate to where others congregate. We aspire to start a 'young peoples' / young families work within the benefice.

Our 'Start Point'

- Our congregations are not getting any younger and we do not now fully reflect the age profile of the wider community we serve. Whilst there are a high proportion of older and retired residents living in our communities, there are also an increasing number of working couples and young families that have moved into the area some of whom are keen to be actively involved in 'village life' of which the churches are clearly a part.

- An Under-14 Youth Club previously ran for many years within the six parishes. Our benefice currently has links with the 'sayYes' Christian Youth Project for 11-18 year olds (based in the nearby villages of Albrighton and Shifnal) and our aspiration is that we could initiate closer connections as an early step towards helping re-establish a similar work across the six parishes to inspire young lives.

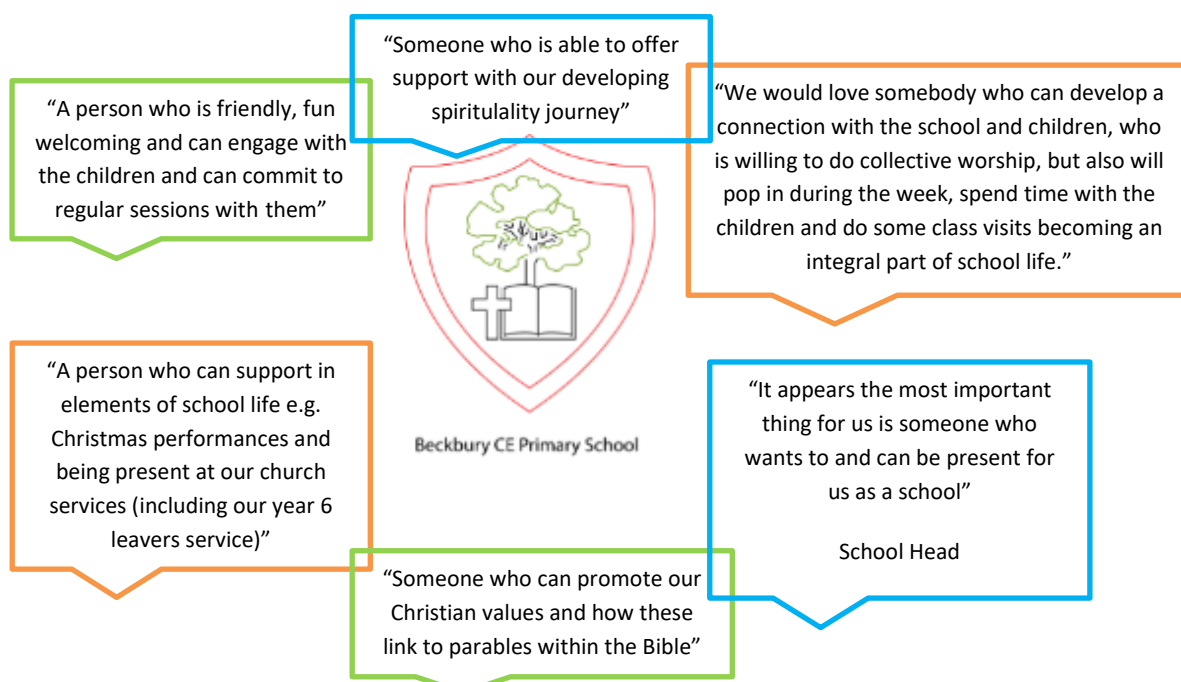


The Interim Minister we need

The amount of experience you have is not necessarily a deciding factor for us in the Six Parishes. More important is a minister with vision that can bring energy and enthusiasm.

We are looking for someone who is happy taking the lead when required, but also values working collaboratively, being an enabler and willing to work with us to introduce new ideas for the ministry of the six parishes. We need a minister who is comfortable engaging with and motivating our communities.

We asked pupils and staff in our school what they are looking for in our new minister and they responded as follows:



In addition some parishioners, who do not currently attend our churches on a regular basis, have been asking about the appointment of our new minister and are keen to know the latest update. We are encouraged by this interest and the potential opportunity it may present in future. We have asked some of them what they would be looking for in a new minister. All have responded positively, but the overriding thread is that they would like our new minister to be approachable and visible in the community

Having listened to those in our communities, and through our prayerful consideration we are looking for someone who will...

- Help us to develop our prayer life
- Be a visible presence in our local communities and build links with those who live and work in our benefice
- Work with us to develop an effective pastoral ministry
- Help us to work ever more closely as a benefice
- Engage with and nurture people in the early stages of their Christian journey
- Work with us to develop a pattern of regular services and activities at all six parishes and look for opportunities to develop a team to increase these.
- Enable us to communicate well with all in the benefice, including effective use of social media.
- Connect with our local CofE primary school and nursery and take a regular and active part in school governance, collective worship, spiritual teaching and guidance which are a fundamental part of our school life, and enabling others to take part in this ministry
- Help us to engage better with families and young people in relevant ways.
- Develop lay involvement in all areas of the mission and ministry of the benefice
- Build an effective team of church officers
- Help us to develop imaginative uses for our church buildings
- Work with us to ensure our financial sustainability.

What we can offer you

- A friendly, supportive and committed six parishes team.
- A benefice team prepared for change and to new try new things i.e. prepared to start afresh and effectively giving our new minister a 'blank canvas', to review what and how we do things both currently and for future to support growth.
- An opportunity to make an immediate positive difference
- Protection of your non-contact time and encouragement to take your regular days off, annual leave and time on retreat.
- A beautiful rural location in which to live and work yet within easy reach of local amenities and infrastructure via neighbouring and nearby villages, towns and cities.
- A rectory with garden in the heart of the six parishes and two minutes' walk from the primary school and a community shop.
- A team who are good at hospitality
- Welcoming local communities
- Payment of all ministerial expenses

About our Area

The Six Parishes Benefice is made up of the villages of Badger, Beckbury, Kemberton, Ryton, Stockton and Sutton Maddock within the Deanery of Edgmond and Shifnal in the Diocese of Lichfield. The benefice is nestled within the beautiful Shropshire landscape with easy access to several larger towns and cities. A local bus service runs through each of our villages and there are good train services nearby with stations in Shifnal, Albrighton and Telford. The M54 motorway is easily accessible and the local road network leads to Shrewsbury and onto Wales to the west and Wolverhampton, Birmingham and the M6 to the east. The locality has much to offer with the Monarch's Way long distance path running through the area and the market towns of Bridgnorth and the historically important Ironbridge very close by. The six parishes provide abundant opportunities for walking, cycling and many other outdoor leisure pursuits with the River Severn and Severn Valley Steam Railway also nearby. All the benefits of larger towns and cities are within easy reach providing numerous activities and amenities such as theatres, museums, sporting events, music concerts, restaurants, independent high street shops, retail parks, supermarkets, hospitals, doctor's surgeries, schooling etc. In short, the best of both worlds and something for everyone. (Further information about each of the six individual parish areas and a six parishes map are contained in Appendix 1).



About our Churches

The Church - as a worshipping people

Our Services

Presently a Sunday morning service is being held on rotation across the six churches in the benefice and these are attended primarily by a small number of regular worshippers (details of which are contained in Appendix 2). During vacancy these have been a communion service in the main, although prior to this a communion service was alternated with morning worship and this resulted in a Sunday service being held in each church at least once or twice a month. It should be noted that there is currently some overlap in our attendance figures as church members will on occasion travel to attend and support each other's services, but this has also resulted in stronger unity as referenced elsewhere in this profile.

A number of special services are also held throughout the year across the six churches and include Plough Sunday, Rogation Sunday, Easter, Lammas, Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas and a Dementia Friendly service. A number of these services are often supported by the wider community and provide an opportunity to build links.



Following services and where possible we enjoy an extended time of fellowship together over a drink and cake/biscuits and this also enables us to offer a drink to any visitors or villagers who don't ordinarily attend and to make people feel welcome.

There are currently no regular church-initiated mid-week activities within the six parishes although this is not by design and we would be keen to rekindle opportunities to meet as a group of churches for fellowship and prayer and to create community-based activities, both of which could take place throughout the week.

Our churches currently use a mix of both the contemporary and more traditional orders of service across the Six Parishes Benefice (there is a legacy fund in place at Badger church for building and maintenance that requires a traditional service be held on a regular basis although it does not define the frequency).

Church Leadership and Local Teams Support

Our Joint Council that has recently been set up contains two representatives from each of the six individual PCC's (see Appendix 3 for local team support).

As previously highlighted the Joint Council has been set up to promote a closer working relationship across the Six Parishes Benefice, but also to help create efficiencies around the leadership and general administration of the benefice.

In support of our new minister we would envisage that our new Joint Council will substantially reduce the number of church meetings that you would need to attend. In fact, unless you wanted to arrange things differently or particularly wanted to be involved at individual PCC meetings, then we would far rather you were given as much scope as possible to work with us on our vision and priorities by spending time with our community and not be excessively 'burdened' with 'day to day' administration within the six parishes.

Whilst we may currently only have a very small number of church wardens and one reader within the six parishes, we do however have a number of PCC and wider church members working as part of the local teams that are both able and willing to help organise and lead simple services and events, set up the church and take care of the 'day to day'.

In addition we are ably supported by a good number of villagers from our respective local communities who do not profess to have a Christian faith and do not ordinarily attend church services, but are prepared and willing to help with the organisation of church-based activities and events along with other 'day to day' duties for which we are grateful.



All Joint Council & PCC representatives have completed the required diocese safeguarding training and are DBS checked, and we currently have a safeguarding officer in place.

Our Congregations

The current 'make-up' of our typical Sunday service congregations is primarily of an older age profile and in this respect does not reflect the wider community we serve. We do occasionally have families with children attend, but this is more usually when we have a special service and not every week. This having been said there is significant scope to change this balance with a number of younger working couples and young families having recently moved into the six parishes.

The ethnic 'make-up' of our congregations is white British which largely reflect the current six parishes community. We have people from all different walks of life and backgrounds in our congregations and everyone is valued and is made to feel welcome. In line with the diocese strategic framework and the challenge that 'our diversity needs to reflect our community diversity' then we appreciate there is always more we can do to increase accessibility and relevance for some, but see this as an inherent part of our 'community engagement plan' rather than a stand-alone priority.

Music

'Common Praise' or 'Hymns Ancient and Modern - New Standard' are used for services across the benefice and each of the churches has use of a CD player for accompaniment. Each of the churches has an organ, but only a few of the churches still has an organist available to play at Sunday services. Whilst it is always great to hear the organ being played, this is very much an informal arrangement with the organist having recently 'retired' from playing on a regular basis. All six churches primarily therefore use CDs.

The one exception to the above is in the case of weddings and funerals when there is a list of local organists that can be approached to play and for this reason the church organs are all maintained in good working order.

The six churches do not currently have PA systems in place and services are not recorded or streamed although we recognise that moving forward it would be good for someone unable to attend church (perhaps as a result of ill health or frailty) to still be able to listen to services.

Bells are still rung within the six parishes and as such there is an active team of bell-ringers that meet weekly at Beckbury church to practice.

The church - and the community it serves

Six Parishes Benefice Community Links

Each of the churches organises and runs a number of events across the year within the six parishes. By way of some recent examples from Harvest, the below events have been organised and run by our local teams (with support from our Rural Dean);

Sutton Maddock 'Sausage Sizzler' – an evening of food and social all with a harvest theme held in the church for the community (including an act of worship).

Kemberton Cake Sale & Harvest - A fund-raising cake sale held in the church which was well supported and which prompted many villagers to then also come along to the Harvest service the next day.



Stockton Harvest Festival – a service held in church followed by a two course lunch for the community in the nearby village hall.

Badger Harvest – a short church service for the community held in the afternoon and followed by refreshments and with a food donation for a local food bank.

Other activities and events across the last twelve months (during vacancy) and specifically aimed at community engagement include the following:

Badger – coffee mornings and drinks and nibbles evenings held in the church.

Kemberton – An open garden event called ‘Diana’s coffee morning’ with refreshments and all proceeds to the church fund.

Sutton Maddock – a mid-week six parishes Songs of Praise Dementia Friendly service.

Stockton & Sutton Maddock – a mother’s day afternoon event held in church for the community with donations for mothers, babies and toddlers in need, posy making and a ‘cuppa and chat’.

Ryton – Summer Tea Party for the village which was to celebrate the church clock being restored.

Kemberton – Songs associated with Remembrance sung by a male voice choir with refreshments for the community.



All churches – Six Parishes Benefice support for Ride & Stride organised by the Shropshire Historic Churches Trust (SHCT). Participants are sponsored to cycle, walk or drive between all six churches in the benefice which are all open with refreshments available for those taking part and an opportunity for some villagers from across the six parishes to get together.



Inter-denominational and Other Links

Our Benefice has links with 'Churches Together' in Shifnal a nearby market town and a PCC member is a trustee of the 'sayYes' Christian Youth Project that is based locally covering Shifnal, Albrighton and the surrounding areas of east Shropshire of which the six parishes forms a part. The Six Parishes Benefice also has links with several local food banks in the areas surrounding the benefice including Albrighton, Bridgnorth, Dawley and Shifnal food banks and Telford Crisis Support. A donation of toys, games and puzzles is also made to Oakengates Salvation Army at Christmas.



Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

Baptisms, weddings and funerals take place across the benefice, with all administration organised through the Joint Council. Whilst we don't currently have church warden cover at every church across the benefice, individual PCC and church members are willing and able to assist our minister with these duties. (For total numbers of baptisms, weddings and funerals over the last twelve months see Appendix 4). Life events across the benefice are considered by us to provide good missional opportunities to be developed.

Of particular note is Stockton House, a recently renovated and award-winning venue (which was formerly the church rectory). The venue is adjacent to St Chad Stockton with both being located on the Apley Estate. It is increasingly becoming a popular local choice for couples holding their wedding service in the church followed by celebrations in Stockton House, where the family and friends have exclusive use of the venue. Stockton House also caters for baptism celebrations and funeral wakes following a church service.

The church - buildings and resources

The Rectory

The rectory is located on Badger Lane in Beckbury and has a garage and ample off-road parking. The house is a modern and spacious four bedroom detached property offering plenty of natural light and far-reaching views across open countryside from the main living rooms and bedrooms to the rear. The gardens include a lawn, vegetable patch, productive fruit trees and shed. There is also an adjacent field which belongs to the diocese. The village primary school, community shop and Beckbury church are all within a two minute walk of the rectory. The diocese has confirmed that some refurbishment works are to be carried out prior to you moving in and that these may also include works to increase the energy efficiency of the house.



The Churches

We have six churches across the parishes as follows all of which have grade 2 or grade 2* listing:

St Giles Badger
St Milburga Beckbury,
St. Andrew & St. John Kemberton
St Andrew's Ryton
St Chad Stockton
St Mary Sutton Maddock

Church Buildings Condition

In general all six church buildings are in a good state of repair for their current use and works completed in accordance with our last quinquennial inspection reports. The only exception to this that needs highlighting is that the boiler at the St Milburga church in Beckbury has recently stopped working and now needs to be replaced which will result in a period without heating during this coming winter. Quotes for this and associated works needed to the heating system are currently being obtained by the Beckbury PCC which is handling this.

A variety of building projects across the six parishes have either been recently completed or are planned as follows:

Stockton – New roof and parapet guttering (completed Oct 24). Plans are also in place to install a speaker system.

Ryton – Repairs to the roof and stone parapets completed. Restoration of the church clock (completed in Jun 24). A project is currently underway to update the heating system with an electric infrared system that is not only more efficient, but also supports the overall diocese carbon net zero target (with estimated completion mid 25).

Badger - Refurbishment of the church clock and organ completed.

Kemberton – Two additional bells added (from 6 to 8). The local bell-ringing team use them for practice and tuition and several bell-ringing teams from around the country have also visited to ring.

All the above have been funded through a variety of sources including donations, grant applications (including SHCT), village fund-raising events, sponsorship schemes and a legacy fund. A dedicated charity (Friends of St Andrews Church Ryton & Grindle - FOSACRAG) and the 100 club are also in place at Ryton, both of which are well-supported by the local community and facilitate fund-raising specifically for Ryton church.

The maintenance and repair of church buildings across the six parishes is overseen by the respective PCCs (and in the case of Ryton also with involvement from FOSACRAG as part of a building sub-committee). The churches are regularly cleaned by a number of church and community volunteers.



Possible Future Developments

Only one of the churches has a kitchenette (Kemberton), but all are able to provide simple refreshments. None of the churches have 'on-site' toilet facilities however (although some have the use of a nearby village hall or similar) and realistically this does restrict the scope with which the buildings can presently be used.

Whilst we currently 'make do' with this situation some of our churches are exploring the feasibility of these facilities being installed which would increase the breadth of use for our buildings. For example one of our churches has a lady chapel to one side and subject to required permissions this could be potentially be converted into a more informal and relaxed seating area separated from the main church area along with kitchen and toilet facilities for a variety of mid-week outreach activities. All of the churches currently retain pew seating although the choir stalls can be removed at Kemberton and the pews at Beckbury, to create a more flexible space for activities, concerts and displays etc.

We also recognise as stated previously that the church is not the building, but the people and we are open to new ideas for engaging with our communities that may not always be within the church buildings.

Other use of the Church Buildings

In the case of Badger and Ryton the churches are the only public buildings in these villages (there is no village hall or other community space) and as such they are used for other purposes e.g. for community events and meetings of the associated local parish councils. This also however gives rise to strong community support and affinity for the churches to be open (for example a village volunteers rota to open and close the church daily is well-supported in Badger) and a desire for the buildings to be used for more community activities and events (where deemed appropriate).

Churchyards

All the churches have a churchyard and organising the upkeep of these rests with the PCCs and is either carried out through paid contractors, church and parish volunteers or in the case of Stockton by the Apley Estate. Some of our churches already have conservation areas set aside with sections allocated to meadow and others are also looking to now do the same as a way of helping wildlife and fauna, reducing cost and improving our carbon footprint. The 'Caring for God's Acre' framework offers a means to develop this idea and involve the local community in caring for their churchyard.



Finances

A summary of each church's 2023 total income and expenditure and Common Fund position is shown in the table below. Total income includes income from all sources during the year (inclusive of any extraordinary donations). Total General Fund includes all items both unrestricted and restricted (ring-fenced).

Full Year 2023	Total Income	Total Expenditure	Income in excess of expenditure	Total General Fund (includes restricted & unrestricted items)	Common Fund
Badger	£26,353*	£14,859	£11,494	£45,914*	£3,803
Beckbury	£11,437	£8,983	£2,454	£20,576	£3,686
Kemberton	£16,079	£11,465	£4,614	£30,854	£3,003
Ryton	£17,038**	£7,550	£9,488	£24,277**	£3,276
Stockton	£12,438	£9,076	£3,362	£38,172	£2,457
Sutton Maddock	£8,612	£8,321	£291	£28,734	£3,891

**Includes an extraordinary ring-fenced donation / fund of £20,468 (maintenance).*

***Includes extraordinary ring-fenced donations / funds of £9,706 (clock).*

Role Description and Person Specification – the Six Parishes Benefice

This appointment will be on an interim basis for three years, part-funded by the diocesan 'Resourcing the Future' fund. This additional funding provides for us to offer a full-time Interim Minister appointment and is based on the assessment, that with the right leadership and encouragement, the benefice can develop the capacity to support full-time stipendiary ministry and enable a permanent appointment to be made.

Initial Role Description

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

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 six parishes of the benefice, in living out our vision of '[Seeking the Kingdom](#)'
- To exemplify and promote good safeguarding policy and practice, in line with '[Promoting a Safer Church](#)' as [implemented in Lichfield diocese](#).

Specific

- To lead work towards the three particular priorities identified by the parishes from 'Seeking the Kingdom'
 - Developing community engagement
 - Building connections with the local primary school, including governance and involving volunteers
 - Growing the congregations so as to reflect better the age profile of local communities; in particular to help the churches engage with children and young families
- To lead us in developing pastoral care
- To build the financial sustainability of the benefice
- To help church members to develop deeper prayer life
- To engage with and nurture people in the early stages of Christian discipleship
- To build upon work already done in building a single benefice of six distinct parishes
 - Identifying and enabling change in areas where closer work together is advantageous
 - Enabling good communication across the benefice (within and outside church), including developing use of social media
 - Developing a pattern of regular services and activities across all six parishes, and a team to increase these
 - Building an effective team of church officers, and develop lay involvement in all areas of the mission and ministry of the benefice

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;
- Happy to lead actively and collaboratively, in a setting where there is a recognised need for and openness to change and growth;
- At ease with the need to make progress in the churches' life and sustainability over a three-year period;
- Committed to and passionate for rural ministry and mission through parish churches;
- An innovative thinker and effective communicator;
- Comfortable engaging with and motivating small rural communities, with a ministry of presence as well as of proclamation;
- Familiar with and committed to the principles and practice of safeguarding in parish leadership;
- In possession of a full driving licence and with use of a vehicle for work purposes

All applicants should have 3 years' experience in the Church of England or other Anglican church in the British Isles

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Six Parishes Area Summaries

Badger

Badger is a small rural village not far from the Shropshire county border with Staffordshire. Badger remains a small but thriving community with its own parish council and a population of around 125 people. The surrounding landscape consists mainly of arable farmland operated by a small number of farming families. There are no new housing developments planned and it is therefore unlikely that the village will see much growth in terms of total population size. Housing is a mix of local authority, rented and owner-occupied. Over the last five years some long-standing elderly residents have died and a number of younger families have moved into Badger. A village whatsapp group is in use. There are a good number of popular local walks (including the historic Badger Dingle) which are enjoyed by residents and also visitors from outside the area. A useful farm and country store exists in nearby Stableford which sells just about everything!



Beckbury

Beckbury is the largest village in the benefice, with a population of around 350 people and is where the Rectory is situated. There is a Lichfield Diocese CofE school and nursery which has around 70 pupils from Nursery through to Year 6. The pupils are a mix of local children and others from further outside the village. Adjacent to the school is a children's playground. The local pub is called the Smokey Cow serving a good variety of food. The Village Hall has been redeveloped by the local community over the last two years with a modern kitchen and sound system and provides a useful space for hire and a variety of organised village events. A community shop which is open throughout the week has been successfully operating for the last five years and is staffed solely by volunteers. The annual profits are distributed to various projects in the community. The village has a thriving junior football club that attracts young people from a wide area (the pitch was recently restored by staff from Wolverhampton Wanderers FC). The popular Beckbury Trail 10K running race takes place annually with participants from across Shropshire and the wider West Midlands taking part.





Kemberton

Kemberton has a population of approximately 220 and it is situated three miles from both Shifnal and Telford. The local pub is the Masons Arms. The refurbished Village hall, opposite the church steps, has an active committee who run several events for the village throughout the year. Other groups, such as exercise classes, pilates, and the Women's Institute use the hall regularly. A Facebook page (Kembertonians and Evelithians) as well as the monthly newsletter is used to advertise events and news.

Ryton

This parish comprises the village of Ryton and the smaller settlement of Grindle. This small parish has a population of fewer than 200. Some villagers work within local agriculture although most are now employed in Telford, the wider West Midlands and beyond. Housing stock spans the full spectrum between small tenanted properties through to large listed detached properties. There are some early plans for a building development within Grindle which would be partly eco-friendly new build and partly conversion of redundant farm buildings.

Stockton

Stockton is located on the Apley Estate, near the village of Norton, which has a population around 350 with the A442 running through the village. The area consists mainly of farmland and no new housing development is planned that would significantly affect the population. A special education school (Options Higford) is nearby, as well as a childcare facility for children up to the age of 5. Stockton House, beside the church is a wedding and events venue, which hosts a number of both of these throughout the year. The Apley Farm Shop, Butchery, Café and Play barn are across the road from the church and a good number and variety of other small businesses also operate on the same site. There is also a programme of events here throughout the year. There are two play parks, one at the farm shop and one in nearby Norton village

and a football field. The Hundred House in the village is a busy pub, restaurant, hotel and wedding venue. Norton Village Hall, with a capacity of 80 seated, is very modern, has a good kitchen and is available to hire for events. The hall hosts church events and other sociable community and weekly activities, namely an art and knitting groups. A very active bowling club in Norton Village organises tournaments and an annual barbeque. There is also a very active book swap as well as a seed and plant swap in Norton.



Sutton Maddock

Sutton Maddock is a small village with a population of approximately 250 people and incorporating the nearby settlement of Brockton. The parish covers a wide area spread out between and along the A442 and the B4176 with the church located on the edge of the parish. The parish primarily consists of a number of farms (arable and dairy) together with some small businesses operating from a group of commercial units. There is a local petrol station, van hire business and an organic dairy that operates the first organic milk vending machine in Shropshire.



Appendix 2 - Example Six Parishes Vacancy Service Rota - September / October 2024

(Attendance at each service shown in brackets).

	Badger	Beckbury	Ryton	Kemberton	Stockton	Sutton Maddock
1 st Sept				11.00am Communion (19 adults, 1 child)		
8 th Sept						11.00am Communion (24 adults, 1 child)
15 th Sept	9.30 Communion (16 adults)					
22 nd Sept		9.30am Communion (17 adults, 2 children)				
29 th Sept					11.00am Harvest (30 adults, 2 children)	
6 th Oct			9.30am Communion (9 adults, 1 child)			
13 th Oct				11.00am Harvest (28 adults, 1 child)		
20 th Oct	4.00pm Harvest (23 adults)					
27 th Oct						11.00am Communion

Appendix 3 - Local Support Teams

	Badger	Beckbury	Ryton	Kemberton	Stockton	Sutton Maddock
PCC Members	3	3	4	3	5	3
Church Warden	0	0	0	1	0	2
Readers	0	0	0	0	1 (retired)	0

Appendix 4 - Baptisms, Weddings & Funerals (previous 12 months)

	Badger	Beckbury	Ryton	Kemberton	Stockton	Sutton Maddock
Baptisms	0	1	0	0	0	1
Weddings	1	0	1	1	8	1
Funerals	1	2	1	1	3	1

Appendix 5 – Mission Statistics 2023

It should be noted that there is some overlap in our Usual Sunday Attendance figures as church members travel to attend and support each other's services.

	Usual Sunday Attendance	Easter Attendance	Christmas Attendance	Electoral Roll
Badger St Giles	10	0	14	14
Beckbury St Milburga	12	16	0	42
Kemberton, St Andrew	15	0	0	29
Ryton St Andrew	9	0	43	20
Stockton, St Chad	17	0	0	29
Sutton Maddock, St Mary	19	32	34	32