

# The Benefice of Alstonfield, Ilam and Wetton



*Comprising the parishes  
of*

St Peter's Church, Alstonefield  
The Church of the Holy Cross, Ilam  
St Margaret's Church, Wetton

House for Duty Vicar

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## **Section 1 - Introduction**

Welcome to the Benefice of Alstonefield, Ilam and Wetton, within the beautiful Peak District National Park.

Our beautiful rural benefice offers an opportunity for a new vicar to help us continue to develop strong links with our communities, with Ilam school, Dovedale House, the National Trust and with all the tourists and pilgrims who visit this area.

We have established a strong co-operative and collaborative way of working together as a benefice team to serve the best interests of our respective communities. We want to support a new vicar to make effective use of their time, creativity and ministry.

We have been fortunate to have a newly licensed Lay Reader in the Benefice, who has taken on a leadership role during the vacancy, plus a small number of people who are able to prepare and lead a service of worship. We hope a new vicar can be part of that team. Our Lay Reader is looking forward to working with the new Vicar so that they can offer each other mutual support.

We would expect our new 'House for Duty' Vicar to be able to spend more time in a community ministry role, as well as developing high quality worship and be freed up from focussing on the routine of servicing the rota.

Each parish has a unique identity, and individuals offer a variety of skills, talents and opportunities to develop ministry.

This post is part of the new development of the Alstonefield Deanery as a 'Rural Mission Area'

## **Section 2 - Who we are looking for**

We are looking for someone who is able to guide and lead us, but who is also keen and able to work creatively, co-operatively and collaboratively with us to develop ministry in the following key areas:

- Pastoral Care with a strong community focus;
- Active involvement in the school and with young people;
- Responsive styles of worship ie: not 'one size fits all approach.'

**To do this role someone will need to:**

- be committed to growing and developing rural ministry
- have On-line skills – an enthusiastic, competent, frequent user rather than an acknowledged expert.
- Offer a visible (community) presence e.g. Home Communion for housebound parishioners, pastoral visits if needed.
- engage with the local primary school, and also young people in the benefice
- be actively interested in the community and willing to participate in village events
- to be practical and approachable
- have a current valid driving license and car

To offer an indication of the service plan, this is an example from March 2024:

**BENEFICE OF ALSTONEFIELD, ILAM  
& WETTON**

**CHURCH SERVICES MARCH 2024**

SUNDAY 3 <sup>rd</sup> MARCH	11.00AM	HOLY COMMUNION	ALSTONEFIELD CHURCH
SUNDAY 10 <sup>th</sup> MARCH	10.30AM	MOTHERING SUNDAY	ILAM CHURCH
SUNDAY 17 <sup>th</sup> MARCH	11.00AM	MORNING WORSHIP	WETTON CHURCH
SUNDAY 24 <sup>th</sup> MARCH	11.00AM	PALM SUNDAY HOLY COMMUNION	WETTON CHURCH
FRIDAY 29 <sup>th</sup> MARCH	3:00PM	GOOD FRIDAY	ALSTONEFIELD CHURCH
SUNDAY 31 <sup>st</sup> MARCH	10:30AM	EASTER HOLY COMMUNION	ILAM CHURCH

**Living here**

The benefice is situated within the Staffordshire Moorlands on the Staffordshire /Derbyshire border and is part of the Lichfield Diocese. It is one of four benefices within the Alstonefield Deanery.

As in many rural areas, food and other shopping needs require travel to the nearest larger village or town. Hartington is a village nearby (about 5 miles away) with convenient village stores, newsagent, post office and cafes.

A van bringing fish, poultry, bread and essential provisions comes every Monday. There are excellent butchers at Newhaven and Tissington. We have a window cleaner visiting monthly too.

The nearest town is Ashbourne (about 8 miles away) and the market towns of Leek and Buxton are both also in easy reach by car. Bigger supermarkets also offer home delivery services to the area.

There is no regular public transport service, although Ashbourne Community Transport offers a 'Connect' service where a ride into town can be booked. This is a useful service for those who don't drive but wish to maintain their independence.

Our rural benefice still has a high number of remote working farms, predominantly livestock – sheep and cattle, which adds to the potential for social isolation within the benefice's rural upland farming community. The other major industry is tourism. Tourists come for the day, a weekend or longer to enjoy the breathtaking scenery and many local footpaths for walks. They visit local pubs and tea rooms, as well as visiting our local parish churches.

Alstonefield and Ilam churches form part of the Peak Pilgrimage, attracting pilgrims from the UK and overseas.

House prices can be high, being in the National Park, and there are some second homes and holiday lets. There is no social housing in the benefice, but Peak District Rural Housing Association has affordable housing in Alstonefield rented to local people with a qualifying connection. In Wetton village the Chatsworth Estate has a number of properties rented locally as well as holiday lets.

## **Education**

Primary school education (reception to Year 6) is offered at Ilam school, a small Church of England (VA) school in Ilam village. Some local children also attend Warslow primary school (Manifold Church of England Academy) and Fitzherbert C of E Primary School in Fenny Bentley. There are school buses to each school from the villages.

Secondary education is available at Queen Elizabeth's School in Ashbourne, Derbyshire, or Leek High Specialist Technology School, incorporating The Meadows School and Westwood School.

Ofsted ratings are "good" for both primary and secondary schools in the area.

## **Health**

There are three Doctors surgeries serving our communities – a small practice in Hartington and two in Ashbourne.

There are community hospitals in Ashbourne, Leek and Buxton, all of which have some form of ‘walk-in’ access.

Personal home visits from podiatrists and hairdressers can be organised.

Main hospitals are the Royal Derby Hospital, Queens Medical Centre Nottingham, the Royal Stoke University Hospital, Chesterfield Royal Hospital and Stepping Hill Hospital (Stockport), all of which are 20+ miles away.

We have a group of volunteer Community First Responders who are trained by West Midlands Ambulance Service to respond to emergencies, directed by 999 operators to give vital treatment before an ambulance arrives. Alstonefield has a telephone response network with CPR defibrillator trained volunteers (AVETS).

## **National Trust**

The National Trust has its South Peak office in Ilam and manages Ilam Country Park, the Manifold Tearooms and the famous tourist spot of Dovedale. They have a strong presence within Ilam.

## **Dovedale House**

Dovedale House is a former Victorian vicarage situated in Ilam village, which opened as a residential centre in 1967. It is part of the St Chad’s Retreat Centre family within the Diocese of Lichfield. There are strong ties between the village and Dovedale House and it is often used (groups permitting) for church and village activities.

## **The Vicarage**



This is a large well-appointed centrally heated four bedroomed property in Alstonefield, next door to the church. It has a large rear south facing garden and private patio. The front of the property has a large driveway, access to a single garage and front door, with entrance hall.



This leads to separate clergy office and door to the property leading to a large living room, dining room, cloakroom, kitchen diner (with separate utility room). The stairs lead to four double bedrooms, rear bedrooms have far reaching views over Dovedale and corridor to family bathroom

Spacious dining kitchen



Sitting room with far reaching views



## The Deanery

The Alstonefield Deanery is the most northerly deanery in the Lichfield Diocese and is predominantly rural. Much of the Deanery is within the boundaries of the Peak District National Park – an area of outstanding natural beauty. There are 19 churches and 6 church schools in the Deanery, divided into four benefices and served by four members of the clergy.

The Deanery team is very supportive and are excited about the development of the whole deanery as a Rural Mission Area. The details are in the Appendix. Clergy will continue to have prime responsibility for their own parishes but also be licensed across the deanery, building a strong ethos of working in together in mission and sharing skills and resources.

The Deanery has 17 Parishes and 19 churches and will have 4 clergy – 2 full-time and 2 house for duty.

The Deanery has 2 Permission to Officiate clergy and 2 Lay Readers based in Alstonefield and Ipstones. Specific lay ministries (e.g. Funeral Ministry) are developing across the Deanery as well.

No specific Deanery portfolio is allocated to this appointment but areas of interest can be developed. The postholder will oversee the very small neighbouring parish of Blore Ray, though conversations are underway about the future of this church.

Our rural benefice offers an exciting opportunity for a new Vicar to develop strong and exciting links with our respective communities, with Ilam school and Dovedale House, with the National Trust, and also with the many tourists and pilgrims who visit the area.

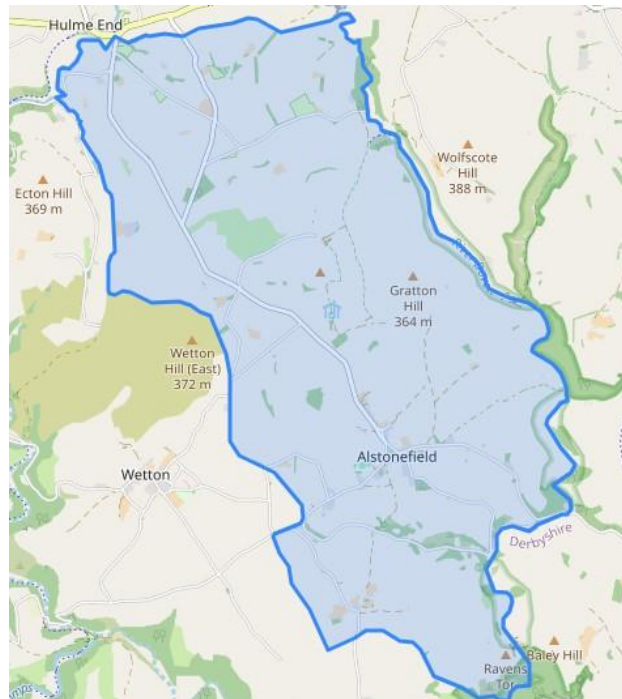
As a benefice 'team', our collaborative style of working would ensure that a 0.2 Vicar would be supported in making the most effective use of the time available to them for an effective, creative and responsive Ministry.



## Section 3 – the Three Parishes

### The Parish of Alstonefield

Alstonefield is a picturesque village in the Peak District National Park and the Staffordshire Moorlands district of Staffordshire, and includes the hamlets of Hope, Hopedale, Milldale and Stanshope. It has a resident population of 247 (2021 Census), rising in the summer months with many visitors that come every year.



The recent 2021 Census identifies an age distribution of 33 in the range of 0 - 17yrs, 127 in the range of 18-64 and 101 in the range 65+. 165 individuals identify as having a Christian religion, and 78 identify as having no religion. A number of children have come to the village in recent years.

The Village Hall is central to the village, hosting many village events and groups. It is well supported and well resourced. Examples of events include Mother and Toddler Group, Pilates, Music concerts, Friendship Club meetings. It has space for booking of ad hoc meetings, and is used by the PCC when it's too cold to have PCC meetings in church.

Every May the Leaden Boot Challenge takes place. This event was set up after 2010 theft of lead from the church roof, hence the name! It is a 26.2 mile walking challenge and has taken place annually except for when Covid restrictions led to

cancellation. The church has continued to be a grateful beneficiary of donations from funds raised, in addition to supporting many local good causes in communities on the route of the walk.

More information can be found at [www.alstonefield.org](http://www.alstonefield.org)

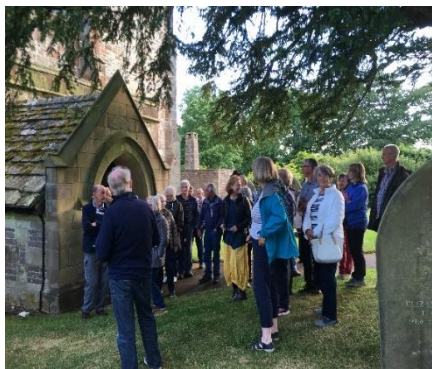
**About St Peter’s church, Alstonefield:**

We have a communion service on the first Sunday of each month, and often a lay led service later in the month, on 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday. Communicants from St Peter’s also participate in the regular communion services at Ilam (second Sunday) and Wetton (third Sunday).

Refreshments are available after each service, extending hospitality, community fellowship and an opportunity for social engagement.

Average church service attendance for 2023 was eleven, but the congregation increases significantly at festival services, where villagers celebrate Christmas, Easter and Harvest. We hold a ‘Wakes’ service annually in June, and in 2023 an outdoor event, was held in the next door garden of The Manor, attended by Bishop Matthew with entertainment by Warslow Silver band.

Church services are supported by committed local people within the community, who manage the building, the service, the everyday routine tasks without which we’d be unable to have such a welcoming Christian space.



We have had many community-based awareness and fundraising events in recent years. Our ‘Ann Green Festival’ was inspired by a 16<sup>th</sup> century headstone in the churchyard – reputedly the oldest legible gravestone in the country, from 11 April 1518. Events were run for Queen Elizabeth II jubilee and for the Coronation, as well as open days, art exhibitions and teas throughout summer months.

The PCC is small in number (3) and works to ensure the church remains open daily and easily accessible. We have a close working relationship with the PCCs of our fellow churches in benefice, to share resources and help each other.

The church is supported by many villagers who do not regularly attend services, but to whom the church remains important, and central to their view of the

village. They support the cleaning and maintenance of St Peter's, flower arranging, bell ringing, clock winding, daily opening and closing, all tasks the small PCC could not accomplish without this valuable community support.



Flower arranging team at work



Church Yard Awards

The churchyard is well managed by a local team and has been given the Gold Award under the Churchyard Award Scheme for several years running, including commendations for our wildlife areas and sensitive mowing.

The church is a Grade 1 listed building which is included in Pevsner and is one of Simon Jenkins 'best churches'. It contains many historical items from its 1000 year history. Although the earliest features of the present church are Norman, Anglo-Saxon carved stones survive on the site, most of them parts of standing crosses.

The oldest parts of the church are C12: partly rebuilt in C13 and C14; extended and repaired in C16; refurbished C17: re-roofed C18 and restored 1870.



St Peters Church is subject to Church of England Quinquennial Inspection requirements, and the PCC Maintenance Committee have developed an asset management plan from the recent Quinquennial Report as a basis for maintaining the physical integrity of the church. All projects are funded from grants and/or fundraising activities. The church is both well loved and cared for.

In addition, the PCC promotes additional projects, the most notable being the recent installation of a toilet, which now enables the PCC to engage with the local community on a broader range of community functions., not just services. Net zero carbon 2030 is an important target for the PCC, with the Energy Footprint Tool identifying the need for the PCC to improve the church Net CO2 Percentile position. A major step forward is the PCC Maintenance Committee promoting installation of a renewable energy high efficiency bio-fuel boiler (currently subject to a Faculty application).

The splendid organ is serviced regularly and played at services, festivals and occasional events. The clock is wound weekly by a team of volunteers. The church bells are rung for services by a team of ringers from around the benefice, and visiting bellringers are welcomed.

The church is open every day and we are able to offer self-service refreshments for visitors, from the kitchen. This is popular, especially with those walking the Peak Pilgrimage. Donations received are a useful, appreciated additional source of income for church funds.

## **The Parish of Ilam**

Ilam is a small and very pretty village with a resident population of circa 126 people. It nestles at the foot of Bunster Hill in the Staffordshire Moorlands and on the southern edge of the Peak District National Park.

During the summer months Ilam is a popular spot for tourists and much of the church income is raised from visitor donations at this time. Ilam Country Park and nearby Dovedale are particularly popular with visitors.

Within the church, the tomb of St. Bertram (Bertelin) can be found. St. Bertram was a Mercian Prince who became a hermit following the death of his wife and child. The tomb has become a 'Pilgrims Shrine' for many visitors, not least our

Greek Orthodox friends who visit every year to celebrate various events and worship at the tomb, pictured below, as well as at St Bertram's well and cave.



Ilam is now also firmly established as part of the *Peak Pilgrimage* walk between Eyam and Ilam and this has increased visitor numbers throughout the year.

Dovedale House, the former Victorian vicarage, is close to the church and is owned by the Diocese. It opened as a residential centre in 1967 and now forms part of the St Chads Retreat Centre family, for the Diocese of Lichfield.

We have formed close ties with Dovedale House throughout the years, and many village events have taken place there. It is a parish asset and the nearest thing we have to a village hall, therefore it is important that strong links continue to be nurtured.

Ilam school is a Church of England (VA) school situated close to Dovedale House. The schoolchildren have some services in church and there is a wonderful opportunity for a new incumbent to strengthen links with the school, the parents, teachers and governors.



## About Holy Cross Church...

The church of the Holy Cross is a Grade I listed building and brings with it various restrictions when improvements or changes are necessary. Currently, we are in the process of upgrading the heating system and replacing rotten floorboards. Discussions are in also progress with our church architect to install a kitchen in the church and to develop a community hub.

Our regular worshipping congregation is around six people per service, but this increases for special services.

We have one service per month which during the interregnum has comprised of either a lay led All Age Worship service—or a Holy Communion service (on a visiting clergy/lay led rota basis). The church is fortunate to have members who are willing and able to lay lead regular services.

Another welcome income stream is through weddings, of which there are usually several during a year. We also benefit from ‘wedding couples’ attending regularly, building a link with the church and the community, thus boosting the congregation numbers.

Holy Cross Church has become a ‘wedding church of choice’ for many couples wishing to get married in the area.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a small but enthusiastic group of people, who work hard to ensure that the church remains open and that there are sufficient funds to pay our Parish Share and other bills. We are fortunate that a large proportion of our income is derived from the many visitors who visit our beautiful location, and also from the ‘destination weddings’.



Festivals at Holy Cross:



## The Parish of Wetton

This includes Ecton and Wetton Mill, and is predominantly a farming area, with a resident population of 157 (Census 2011.)

There is a Tea Room down in the beautiful valley of Wetton Mill, which offers refreshment to the many walkers and visitors to the area attracted to Thor's Cave and the surrounding majestic countryside.

The village has a Public House, Saint Margaret's Church, and the popular village Tea Rooms based in the Village Hall, that provides accessible facilities during church services and related functions, with recent cooperation in offering a "warm space" funded from the church awarded grant for this purpose. The Village Hall has a long tradition of being used for various community events such as Film Nights, church fund raising activities, eg., Summer "Strawberry & Pimms, the annual Harvest Supper and the Village Christmas Lunch. As a result of the Covid lockdown, some of the above have lapsed, but attempts are being made to restore these valued social and festive community events.



A significant number of properties in the village are owned by the Chatsworth Estate and are rented out to local people. In addition they also own a number of holiday properties within the village which prove to be very popular with tourists who wish to stay in the area.

Every year the village plays host to The Derby Kids Club, which make their annual camp within the village and who have just been awarded the Kings Award for Voluntary Services, on their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



Christmas festivities:



### **About Saint Margaret's Church.....**

The church is dedicated to St. Margaret of Antioch, and is believed to be of Saxon origin and although the main body of the church was destroyed by fire in 1820, the bell tower survived and our church is a Grade II\* listed building. The church was rebuilt incorporating the original tower, which housed a bell from each of the previous five centuries. A sixth bell was commissioned with grants and the community supporting this ongoing commitment to toll all the special moments, both local and realm wide, attracting visits by groups of bell ringers from near and far. Inside the church there is a fascinating display of "Historic Graffiti" from the time the roof was reroofed!



The Parochial Church Council are few in number but meet regularly to ensure that all necessary obligations are managed effectively. Our agreed full Parish Share has been funded recently, with admirable efforts of our members during these times of austerity, as we have endeavoured to maintain the fabric, warmth and community heart of the church.

The benefice of the three churches have often worked closely, as in the supporting the recent classes and confirmation of six souls into the Church of England.

One of St. Margaret's Church Wardens has continued her own journey and studies to become a Licensed Reader, this year, working for the whole benefice.



As in previous times of interregnum, the three churches of the benefice have pulled together in supporting the needs of the church, in so far as the church warden duties are currently shared among the regular members of the church and PCC., and all efforts are made to keep the church open daily.



## Section 4 - The Wider Community

The three parishes of Alstonefield, Ilam and Wetton are situated within a few miles of each other and whilst each village has a distinct identity, there are many commonalities across the benefice.

As a rural benefice we realise that there is a need to be resilient, self-sufficient and outward looking in order to maintain a sense of continuity within our respective communities. The church in the benefice offers fellowship but there are opportunities for ministry beyond the villages and hamlets within the wider isolated farming community.

For example, the Friendship Club attracts members from across the benefice and is a life line for social interaction for those who could become isolated. Parent and toddler groups offer a chance to get together and make friends.

For someone with a calling to rural ministry and a focus on village life, there are rewarding opportunities in our benefice and community.

## Appendix

### **Alstonefield Deanery Rural Mission Area.**

#### Aim:

- to enable growth in Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism across a rural Deanery which is numerically small but geographically large
- To facilitate sustainable, life-giving, mission and ministry across the Deanery

#### **Key areas of mission identified:**

**1. *Schools*** 6 church schools, in different academy trusts

- Longnor
- Warslow
- Hollingsclough
- Ipstone
- Waterhouses
- Ilam

Warslow and Ipstones share an executive head, as do Waterhouses and Ilam. Warslow and Hollingscough are in the same academy trust. Numbers in all schools are small, so they feel vulnerable.

**2. *Tourism and pilgrimage***

Including scope for pop up café in holiday-let areas such as Longnor. Possibly offering spiritual care to Dovedale.

**3. *Farming communities***

**4. *Carboot sale*** at Alstonefield, last Sunday of month

**5. *Ipstones*** largest centre of population which relates to Stoke rather than the Moorlands.

**6. *Buildings as mission***

**7. *Occasional offices*** most funeral have attendance of > 250, with repeated congregations (so opportunity to develop relationships)

Weddings – people ‘do time’ to develop a qualifying connection.

#### **Current clergy posts:**

- 1.0 Vicar Longnor Benefice
- 0.5 IM Ipstones Benefice
- 0.5 Vicar Waterhouses Benefice
- 0.2HfD Alstonefield Benefice

#### **Licensed lay leadership:**

- Claire Reader at Alstonefield
- Roger Reader at Ipstones (also Methodist lay preacher)

#### **Active PTO clergy**

- Rev Nicola Pepper
- Rev Arthur Hack

#### **New clergy mission team**

2 FT clergy plus 2 House for Duty clergy

- 1 FT mission responsibility for schools, Ipstones and oversight of ministry and pastoral care, and missional development of occasional offices. (Living in Ipstones)
- 1 FT mission responsibility for tourism and pilgrimage, buildings as mission, the farming community and key responsibility for developing fresh expressions, including the carboot sale and online presence. (Living in Longnor)
- 1 HfD (living in Waterhouses)
- 1 HfD (Living in Alstonefield)

### **Governance & structure**

- No formal pastoral reorganization will take place unless in the future, when the mission are is well established, it is agreed that reorganization would be helpful.
- The aim is to share more governance functions across parishes whilst maintaining local independence where this is genuinely beneficial.
- Each benefice to have a leadership team (Ipstone and Longnor already have them) initially. This can then be constituted as a Joint Council to which PCCs can delegate whatever power they choose as they begin working together more closely. Eventually it would be ideal to move to one PCC per benefice, but with DCCs and as much local control of money as possible.
- Clergy initially to be licensed to the current benefice structure and also as assistant curate in the other parishes in the Deanery. Then to move to a group ministry.
- The FT clergyperson in Ipstone would take on oversight of Warslow and Elkstones parish, and the HfD Priest in Alstonefield would also oversee Blore, in order to even out responsibilities between FT and HfD clergy

### **Sunday worship**

#### Principles:

- FT clergy do max 2 morning services +/- an afternoon or evening
- HfD clergy do max 2 services per Sunday
- Ongoing development of lay ministry and non-eucharistic services
- Clergy to sometimes lead non-eucharistic services to demonstrate that other forms of worship are just as meaningful and to allow support/supervision of lay people developing as worship leaders.
- Clergy shouldn't be putting so much time/energy into provision of Sunday services that there is no missional energy left.