

# Staffordshire Border Group of Churches

## Benefice Profile



*The Church of which we are members  
is not defined by the walls of a building  
but by the Body of Christ  
of which we are members. . .*

# THE STAFFORDSHIRE BORDER GROUP OF CHURCHES

## BENEFICE PROFILE 2025



<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<i>Foreword from the Bishops of Lichfield and Stafford</i>	2
<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>The Story So Far</i>	3
<i>Person Specification</i>	4
<i>The Next Chapter</i>	4
<i>How our Parishes fit together (Benefice map)</i>	5
<i>The Benefice Team</i>	6
<i>The Vicarage</i>	6
<i>Our Deanery and Diocese</i>	7
<b>PARISH PROFILES</b>	
<i>Adbaston</i>	8
<i>Gnosall</i>	10
<i>High Offley &amp; Knightley</i>	13
<i>Moreton</i>	15
<i>Norbury</i>	18

## Words of welcome to the Diocese of Lichfield

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

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

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

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

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

*+ Michael Hutch*

*Bishop Michael of Lichfield*

I am delighted to contribute a foreword to this excellent profile document.

Each of the parishes have their own unique character and life but this is a benefice that works well together and has increasingly sought to look outwards in service and witness. There is a healthy mixture of traditional Christian ministry in a rural context combined with a genuine willingness to explore new things.

This is a parish that will suit a minister who is an encourager and who brings a warm and open heart to the role, not just for the churches and congregations but for the villages and communities they serve. Key to this is a commitment to work collaboratively across the benefice drawing out the many gifts of the people of these parishes. There is an excellent tradition of lay ministry and leadership and whoever comes to join in the work of God in the Border Group will be assured of a generous and supportive welcome.

Engagement with schools in the benefice is key to this post and there is good existing work with children and young people that need to be nurtured and encouraged.

As you read the profile, I pray that, if you sense the Spirit's prompting, you will consider applying for this rewarding and exciting post.

Yours in Christ

*+ Matthew Stafford*

*Bishop Matthew of Stafford*

## Introduction



We are a rural benefice of six churches in five parishes who enjoy working and worshipping together.

Our benefice lies to the west of the county town of Stafford, close to the border with Shropshire. Each village has its own distinctive character and context: Gnosall is a large village whilst the others are smaller and spread across the surrounding countryside; all the churches are very welcoming and well cared for. There are two

Primary CE Academies, one in Gnosall and the other in Woodseaves (between Knightley and High Offley).

The map on page 5 shows the location of the villages and the benefice.

## The Story So Far

Our benefice has developed in stages over a period of approximately 15 years as the result of a series of local reorganisations. We have adopted a deliberate approach of developing collaborative patterns of worship and work, whilst maintaining the distinctive character of each parish.

Schedules of services across the benefice are arranged by the Leaders' team, together with the provision of ministerial cover for occasional offices. We use the same service booklets and hymn books in each of our churches. The parishes take it in turns to host Benefice services and special services such as Confirmation. Messy Church is a benefice-wide service for families held in Gnosall as this is the largest church building.

The pattern of worship in each parish is outlined below. In addition the following Benefice services are held each month:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday – online (average attendance of 27)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday - Messy Church attracting up to 40 children & 15 adults
- 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday – Benefice Holy Communion

Each parish has its own PCC. Churchwardens also meet regularly to co-ordinate practice across the benefice where possible. For example, joint purchasing arrangements, including service contracts, are increasingly being used. Weekly collections of food and toiletries for The House of Bread in Stafford are organised on a benefice-wide basis.

We make regular use of online technology benefitting both sustainability and our ability to reach those unable to attend services in church. In addition to the monthly Sunday service, Morning Prayer is held weekly via zoom and Compline is celebrated three times a week. The weekly pew sheet is distributed by email throughout the benefice and beyond.

We have strong links with our two primary schools (both of which have 'excellent' SIAMS reports) and with other community groups; some of these links are ecumenical in nature.

The churches of the Benefice are committed but ageing communities. During this period of vacancy, people are spending much time and energy maintaining the day-to-day practicalities of our five parishes. At the same time, we are committed to living as healthy

church communities, serving the village communities in which we're set as faithfully and creatively as we can. Fellowship, friendship, working together and sharing expertise help us with the challenges we face as a rural benefice.

## Person Specification

We wish to appoint someone who understands the challenges of rural ministry, who has an imaginative approach to mission and who can work within our particular rural context. Although our congregations are small they are very faithful and committed. We need a leader with the vision to encourage and enable us within the limits of our resources.

We recognise that we need to reach out to a wider age range to grow our churches. We need someone who can engage with our communities and take advantage of the many active groups within our villages.

Other qualities and characteristics of the person we are looking for include

- a 'people' person - an inspirational, energetic and collaborative team player, willing to maintain some traditions whilst helping us to explore new ideas;
- someone who is pastorally sensitive, kind and tolerant;
- a prayerful person, who can encourage us on our individual and shared faith journeys;
- a team leader who can build and sustain our team of willing volunteers without exhausting people;
- a good organiser who is willing to delegate and who will explore and encourage the gifts of all parishioners;
- someone who will engage with people of all ages in our local communities;
- a good communicator with appropriate IT skills.

## The Next Chapter

Could you be the person to help us write it?

We welcome the Strategic Framework that has emerged from the Lichfield Diocese 'Shaping for Mission' process. Our review suggests we have many things to our advantage and would benefit from Diocesan support to help us develop our outward-facing culture and share effectively with local communities. To learn more about this, please visit [shaping-for-mission](#).

There is a strong desire throughout the benefice to strengthen our church communities so we hope the process will help us and our new Rector to best understand how we can develop our congregations. We trust the process will lead and guide us as we work together through the opportunities and the challenges we will face.

We recognise our strengths as

- our ability to work well together as a benefice whilst maintaining the individual character of each parish
- very faithful and willing volunteers throughout the benefice
- our existing community engagement including with local schools
- well established and supported lay ministry



- historically important church buildings in prominent locations

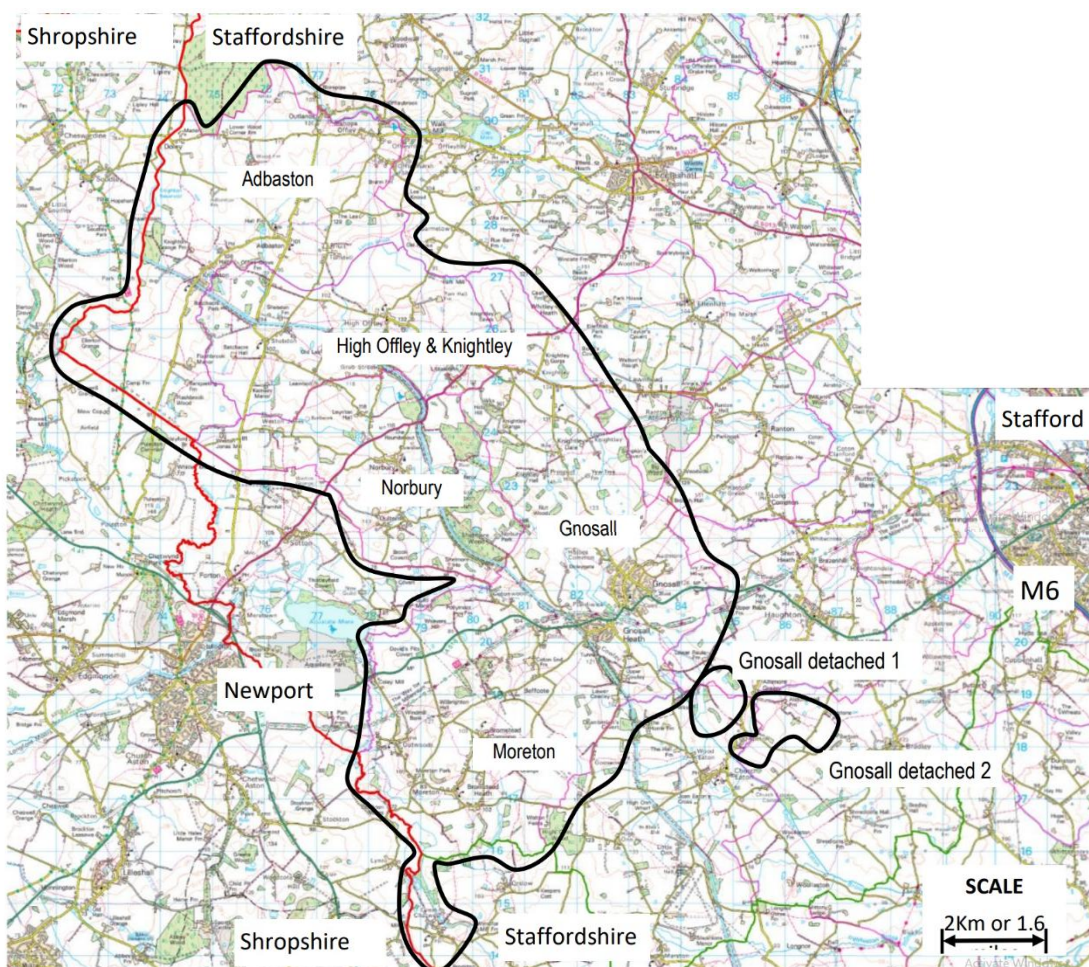
We see our main challenges as

- our rural setting with significant distances between churches/parishes
- ageing congregations, with limited scope for 'succession planning' due to the lack of younger members
- effective management of our church buildings, which although valued assets, drain cash resources due to the cost of both day to day upkeep and ongoing maintenance and repairs

Our vision is to

- make new disciples and increase our congregations
- be recognised as a church which is both 'gathered' (a worshipping community) and 'sent' (a visible Christian presence in the local area)
- increase the effectiveness of our Christian witness & service within our communities

## How our Parishes fit together



## The Benefice Team

Rector	Vacant.
Associate Minister	Rev Cathy Dakin lives in Gnosall and offers up to 24 hours a week including Sunday. Her licence comes to an end in July 2025.
Lay Ministers	Gwen Flavell's ministry is centred on pastoral care and leadership of services as part of the Worship Team. John Underhill is a Reader who lives outside the benefice and currently leads a number of services a month either individually or as part of the Worship Team. Tina Henderson is a Reader who was licensed to the Benefice in September 2021 and who currently works mainly in the parish of St Lawrence, Gnosall.
Benefice Worship Team	Made up of five church members from across the parishes who lead non-Eucharistic services throughout the benefice. The team was commissioned by the previous Bishop of Stafford. More recently, Sarah Smith has achieved a Certificate of Higher Education in Christian Ministry & Mission and Ben Drewnicki is a Reader-in-training.
Eucharistic ministers	There are eight eucharistic ministers, some of whom administer home communion across the benefice.
Safeguarding Officers	Adie Harris maintains an overview of safeguarding across the benefice. Each parish has a safeguarding officer.
Benefice Administrator	Victoria Hainsworth was appointed in March 2023 and has been running the office very effectively before and during the vacancy.
Benefice Treasurer	Vacant. Discussions are being held with a potential candidate. Each PCC has their own Treasurer.



## The Vicarage

The Vicarage is an attractive large detached four-bedroomed house approximately 150 yards from St Lawrence Church in Gnosall. It was built in 1954 and benefits from a recently updated gas central heating system. It is in good decorative order throughout.

## Ground Floor

Entrance hall	L-shaped with parquet flooring giving access to all ground floor rooms.
Cloakroom	With toilet, handbasin and coat-rail.
Study	A large room currently used as the benefice office. A door in the entrance hall separates this and the cloakroom from the living accommodation.
Kitchen	Well-proportioned with vinyl flooring, a good range of fitted units, a two-year-old cooker and space for a dishwasher. A walk-in pantry leads to a utility room with plumbing for a washing machine.
Dining Room	A good size with attractive parquet floor. A wide folding glass door opens into,
Lounge	A large room with parquet floor, patio doors and a fitted electric fire.
<b>First Floor</b>	Four double bedrooms, one with an en-suite shower room, all with carpets & curtains. Bathroom, separate toilet & airing cupboard.
<b>Outside</b>	Single garage, parking for several cars. Large, well-stocked, secure rear garden with greenhouse.



## Our Diocese and Deanery

Lichfield Diocese is one of the largest in the Church of England, stretching from the Welsh Borders to the Peak District and from North Staffordshire to the Black Country.

We are in the Stoke-on-Trent Archdeaconry. The Eccleshall Deanery consists of 18 rural parishes in 5 benefices. The post of Rural Dean is currently vacant as a merger of deaneries is being considered. Chapter meets on an ad-hoc basis and Deanery Synod three times a year.



## INDIVIDUAL PARISH PROFILES

### ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS, ADBASTON



Adbaston is a large rural Parish, covering 6.8 square miles. It is made up of five hamlets and two villages, one of which was mentioned in the Domesday Book, with a fascinating history. We are separated from all neighbouring parishes by large areas of farmland with no A or B roads in any part of the parish.

The parish population was 514 at the time of the 2021 Census.

Apart from farming, which now employs far fewer people, the main employment within the parish was, until recently, provided by Ideal Foods, a packaging plant situated beside the Shropshire Union Canal; sadly this closed last year. The site has now been purchased by Excelsior Foods who manufacture baby foods: at present they employ a skeleton staff running the office and sorting out the factory areas, but they have stated that 100 jobs will be created in the coming year.

There is no longer a school in the village so children usually travel to Woodseaves, Eccleshall or Cheswardine for primary education and Stafford or Newport to attend senior school.

**Issues and Concerns** - younger people move away from the area for work and housing, leaving an ageing population who value tradition, whilst showing a willingness to embrace new ideas. Further detail about local issues can be found [here](#) on the Adbaston Parish Council website.

#### CHURCH AND WORSHIP

**The Worshipping Community** - over the years we have seen many changes for Adbaston Church and the parish has adapted and grown accustomed to being self-contained. Under the tenure of the last rector, integration into a wider multi-parish benefice has started to take place: we now host regular benefice services and events such as the benefice quiet day last Easter.

The Parish Church is definitely seen as the centre of the community, with most people showing considerable willingness to support maintenance of the fabric whilst actual numbers attending services remain disappointing.

There are currently 29 people on the electoral roll and we have volunteers who clean the church and maintain the churchyard. There is a Methodist Chapel within the nearby parish of Bishops Offley, but there are currently no links.

## Worship at St Michael's

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday – Holy Communion
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday – Morning Worship
- Attendance at services throughout the year ranges from 6-30, with a weekly average of 12

We now have a regular family Holy Communion service, designed to allow children to follow and be engaged in the service: this has attracted a young family to return to church. This shows an upward trend in attendance following the difficult times we had a few years ago. A member of our congregation is a Reader-in-Training, reflecting the benefice's culture of vocation which is part of the Diocese Shaping for Mission Strategic Framework. As the Jubilee Room now has Wi-Fi we are considering the possibility of live-streaming some services: this would be a first for the benefice!

St Michael & All Angels has been long supported by Lay Reader, John Underhill, who routinely takes services of Morning Worship and Communion by extension as per the monthly benefice service rota.

## Occasional Offices.

	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
2021	0	0	2
2022	3	1	4
2023	1	1	5

**Life of the Church** – we organise a range of fundraising/social events and activities including mini 'Fayres', breakfasts, teddy bears' picnic, and harvest meals reaching out to the wider community.

**The church building** is beautiful and well-maintained with some parts of dating back to Norman times. Additions have been made throughout the centuries, the most recent being an oak and glass screen separating the vestry from the nave, erected to mark the Millennium.

The Quinquennial inspection in October 2023 identified a number of issues and an action plan has been put in place to address these.

**Other church buildings** - the freestanding Jubilee Room is run very successfully by the Adbaston Community Group, providing support and friendship to the people of Adbaston and the wider community with regular social and recreational events – weekly handicrafts & knitting groups and fortnightly painting classes. It is also hired by the parish council for meetings and for use as a polling station.

**The churchyard** is open and well maintained by volunteers with Adbaston Parish Council usually contributing towards the cost of maintenance.

**Events** - the Adbaston Community Concert Society presents live Classical Concerts by excellent professional musicians four times a year in the Church; these attract audiences of between 60 and 100 people from a very wide area.

### ORGANISATION AND FINANCE

**PCC** meets on a quarterly basis. The posts of Secretary, Treasurer and Vice Chair are filled but there is currently no Churchwarden.

**Giving and Money** - the PCC was in the black last year and is heading for the same this year. The Common Fund contribution of circa £7,779 per annum is being paid in full.

**Website:** <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/4115/>

## ST LAWRENCE'S CHURCH, GNOSALL

Gnosall is a large friendly village of some 6,000 people. It is situated on the A518 approximately half way between Stafford and Newport.

There is a Primary Academy, a very active Parish Council and a Methodist Chapel. It also has a Health Centre, two dental practices, a pharmacy, a vets and a petrol station with a small Morrisons supermarket. Gnosall is also served



by another two grocery shops, three long-established garages, five pubs, several hairdressers, a Sports and Social Club, a café, a community-run library, and several takeaways. There are clubs and societies catering for a wide variety of interests There is a good choice of secondary schools (both state and independent) in Stafford and Newport, all of which are easily reachable from Gnosall. Buses run half-hourly to Stafford and Telford.

Gnosall is set within rolling countryside. The well-used Stafford to Newport Greenway is ideal for walking, cycling and horse-riding. The Shropshire Union Canal runs through the village and brings many visiting boaters, cyclists and walkers. We have won the best kept large village in Staffordshire a number of times.

An area known as the Acres has been reclaimed from a natural marsh and provides varied facilities for all ages. The area is also a valued wildlife habitat for many birds, amphibians and mammals. The wetland areas can be accessed via a boardwalk.

Further details can be found [here](#) in the Gnosall Parish Council Annual Report.

## OUR CHURCH AND WORSHIP

- Holy Communion on Sundays at 8am and Holy Communion or Morning Worship at 10.30am.
- Average Sunday attendance is 44 comprising 38 adults and 6 children: this covers all our services including Messy Church which attracts our biggest congregation!
- We have 94 on our electoral roll
- St Lawrence's has a strong musical tradition which we seek to maintain, however we do not currently have an organist or choir. We have an excellent pipe organ and a gifted member of the congregation who plays once or twice a month for us. Two of the churchwardens in the benefice are also organists who play for weddings and funerals.
- There is a small music group focused on more contemporary music who play at services from time to time
- We have an extensive collection of recorded music files which can be played through the church PA system

St Lawrence's maintains close links with both the Primary Academy and with the privately-run nursery in the village. In 2016 we set up an ecumenical Open the Book team which visits school on a fortnightly basis; this is always well received by both children and staff.

The most recent SIAMS report (found [here](#)) summarised the Christian ethos within the school as follows: "The Christian vision has been carefully crafted... As a result, pupils and adults are 'shining lights' in the community."

### Occasional offices

	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
2020	5	2	17
2021	6	4	16
2022	13	5	19
2023	10	3	19

**Additional support** - we employ an excellent church cleaner.

**Ecumenical** activity is an important part of Christian life in Gnosall and we have a Churches Together group which co-ordinates a programme of regular ecumenical services and other activities. There is a large Methodist Chapel with a good-sized congregation. Until 2014 the local Roman Catholic community said Mass in our church building each Sunday.

Unfortunately, this has now ended due to a lack of clergy but the Catholic community lead a Vespers service on a quarterly basis.



**Life of the Church** - the Friends of St Lawrence organise regular social functions through which they have funded a good number of projects related to fabric and amenities, the most recent being the £12,000 refurbishment of the Church clock.

A 'Coffee and Chat' group meets monthly. This is open to all and provides friendship & fellowship.

Gnosall Singers is an excellent community choir who use the church for rehearsals. In 2024 they sang at the Christmas Carol Service and at the Victorian Christmas Market, organised by The Friends.

**The church building** is open daily thanks to a rota of volunteer key-holders. St Lawrence's is an impressive Grade I listed building, dating back to Norman, or even Saxon times. The first incumbent is recorded as being appointed in 1086. A more recent addition is a vestry built in 1994 in a sympathetic style. We are fortunate to have a full peal of eight bells in the tower.

The most recent quinquennial inspection was carried out in 2020 when very few significant issues were identified; this reflects the good level of maintenance over the years. The parish is very grateful to the Carnival committee and the Friends of St Lawrence for their invaluable fund-raising efforts.

**The churchyard** is closed and maintained by the Borough Council. There is a separate burial ground within walking distance of the church which is managed jointly with the Parish Council.

**Events** - since 1985 the Church has organised a summer carnival, the largest social event in the village. It is attended by about 2,000 people including a good number from outside the parish and is supported by other village organisations. The carnival is important in terms of fellowship, social cohesion and finance as it has been our primary fundraising event. In recent years it has raised about £5,000 per year for church amenities and restoration projects.

## ORGANISATION AND FINANCE

**PCC** currently meets six times per year. There are Standing, Finance, Building and Burial Sub-Committees meeting on an ad hoc basis.

**Giving and Money** - income from all sources in 2023 amounted to £70,625 with £152,293 invested reserves. Our current Common Fund (2024/25) is £39,720.

We have a track-record of charitable giving and offering support to local causes. The maintenance of our beautiful building remains one of our priorities.

**Local Trusts** - the Vicar and Wardens are Trustees of the following:

- the land and buildings of the former St Lawrence School, which is leased to St Lawrence Private Day Nursery. The income from which is divided annually between the Trustees and St Lawrence CE Academy as per the terms of the Trust;

- a field rented out to a local farmer on a grazing licence;
- a set of 95 handbells used by Gnosall Handbell Ringers; and
- Knightley Educational Charity (the income from which is used for work with children and young people).

**Website:** <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/4284/>

## ST MARY'S CHURCH, HIGH OFFLEY & CHRIST CHURCH, KNIGHTLEY



High Offley with Knightley is a rural parish with two beautiful churches which serve the villages and hamlets around Woodseaves. In total, a population of about 1,150.

Woodseaves is a popular village within easy

commuting distance of Stafford, the Potteries and Telford. It is surrounded by picturesque countryside comprising a mixture of old and newer homes. There are a number of working farms in the parish, but most of the working population commute outside the area.



**School** - Woodseaves primary school is a Church of England Academy including a nursery and has close links with Christ Church. The school's vision and values place a strong emphasis on equipping children with the wisdom and knowledge to live well in God's world, with a focus on developing their spirituality. In February 2024, the school underwent a very successful SIAMS Inspection. The report (found [here](#)) stated "The partnership with the local church further embeds the school's Christian vision."

Our churchwarden has been on the Board of Governors since 2018 and regularly spends time in school supporting their maths, music and RE Curriculum. We organise a Christingle Workshop in school at the beginning of December and an Easter workshop in the Spring Term. All of the children, supported by a good number of parents, participate in these. The children visit Christ Church quite regularly, for example to study the stained-glass windows as part of their art curriculum, learn about different church artefacts or attend a Leavers' Service, when they are presented with Bibles. At the end of the Summer Term the whole school spent a morning at Christ Church, both inside and out, on an investigative trail. In Autumn 2024 our PCC donated £15,000 towards developing a Reflective area in the playground and to provide resources for Prayer Bags.

### OUR CHURCH AND WORSHIP

- 9.30 am service on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays, generally alternating between our two churches
- This is normally Holy Communion but occasionally Morning Worship is led by members of our Benefice Worship team.

- We have a loyal and supportive congregation who attend church regularly. Our average Sunday attendance is between 10 and 20 but this number greatly increases for special services and seasonal festivals. At present there are 45 on our Electoral Roll.
- Regular groups in our parish include bellringers and The Ann Wetton Singers.

### Occasional offices

	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
2020	5	0	4
2021	0	1	6
2022	3	3	2
2023	4	2	3

**Life of the Churches** - as well as the events shown below, regular contributions are made to The House of Bread, a Christian charity based in Stafford, helping the homeless and needy.

Along with the parishes of Norbury and Adbaston we produce a monthly Church & Village Magazine which is distributed free to each household.

### The Church Buildings

**St Mary's** is situated in High Offley village, less than a mile from Woodseaves. It sits on a rise with spectacular views westwards into Shropshire and south towards the Shropshire Union Canal. Part of the church is late Norman, dating from about 1200 and it is open daily to welcome visitors and for private prayer.

**Christ Church** is situated in Knightley on the B5405 approximately one mile from Woodseaves towards Stafford. It was built in 1840 on land given by Lord Lichfield. The stained-glass windows are of particular interest and the War Memorial window, installed in 1921, is listed in the records of First World War Memorials in The Imperial War Museum in London. The church is open at weekends.

Both churches have pipe organs and we are fortunate to have our own organist (who also happens to be our Churchwarden); she plays for our services, weddings, funerals and baptisms.

Quinquennial inspections were carried out in Autumn 2024 at both churches. "Christ Church, Knightley is a relatively modern church dating from the early 20th Century. It remains in generally sound condition. The interior of the building is in largely good order with no evidence of current water ingress noted." A new heating system was installed early in 2024 comprising ten Halogen heaters.

St. Mary's is "generally, considered to be in good condition, however, some work on external masonry is required. Roofs are generally sound."

During the past year expenditure was high due to the new heating system at Knightley and roof repairs at St Mary's. The two church clocks have been repainted - money for this project was raised from donations, funeral legacies and some fund-raising.

Both churches have sound-systems including a hearing loop. Their churchyards are open, and are beautifully maintained. Both have achieved Bronze Eco status.

**Events** - we have a busy social agenda including an annual Church Fete, Harvest Lunch, concerts and coffee mornings all of which raise valuable income for the upkeep of our church fabric. We also organise a monthly lottery to boost our funds.

Woodseaves Village Hall is a popular venue for events within the parish, some of which are organised jointly with the Church.

### ORGANISATION & FINANCE

**Our PCC** has 10 members, including a Churchwarden, and the Area Safeguarding Officer. Five meetings are held each year.

**Giving and Money** - our treasurer efficiently keeps our accounts in order and ensures that our Common Fund (currently £16,941) is paid up to date.

We have an envelope scheme in addition to 'on the plate' giving and claim Gift Aid. (Gift Aid recovered in 2023 amounted to £2032).

We greatly welcome the support of being part of a proactive Benefice, but we also enjoy our own independence.

For more information regarding High Offley Parish, please see the website [here](#). For historical reasons, Knightley falls within the Gnosall Parish Council area.

#### Websites:

High Offley: <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/4319/>

Knightley: <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/4320/>

## ST MARY'S CHURCH, MORETON

Lying within the boundary of the civil parish of Gnosall are the scattered settlements of Moreton, Outwoods, Bromstead, Wilbrihton and Great Chatwell which make up our parish. The shops, local public houses and the school are long gone from this picturesque rural landscape but sitting on its high 'tump' overlooking the village settlement of Moreton is St Mary's, a little gem of a church, even more gem-like when it is flood-lit at Christmas. Housing in the





parish consists of cottages and more modern homes with barn conversions and farms, with a total population of around 450.

Complementing St Mary's Church is the thriving, modern Millennium Community Centre where many and varied social activities take place to entertain and delight the local and wider populace. Those aspiring to more mental and physical stimuli are also catered for with the very varied groups that meet on a regular basis, for example Moreton Stitchers, Gardening Club, Karate, Badminton, Pickle Ball, Darts, Pool and Women's Institute. This Community Centre stands on land formally occupied by the old Church Hall and for this reason the Church is allowed an amount of free use of its facilities.

**Schools** - there are no schools in the parish but there are two excellent secondary schools in the adjacent town of Newport.

### OUR CHURCH AND WORSHIP

The monthly service pattern is as follows:

- one service of Holy Communion in church
- one service of Morning Worship in the Millennium Community Centre, enabling those with mobility issues to access worship
- one midweek service of Morning Worship, also in the Millennium Centre
- average Sunday attendance is 9 adults but sadly no children.
- we have 23 on our electoral roll.

**Additional support** - every week the church is cleaned and the church lawns are mown.

### Occasional offices

	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
2020	0	0	2
2021	0	0	2
2022	0	0	3
2023	0	1	3

**Life of the Church** - St Mary's PCC sees the mission of St Mary's Church as providing a welcome to all who wish to come and worship, to have children christened, partners married and loved ones buried. We realise that we face challenges in as much as we have a lack of younger people who will carry on the work in the future and we need to continue to develop our skills to reach out to the younger population. No longer having a school in the village has a negative impact on this development. Over recent years the bond between community and church has visibly grown to the point where villagers, who do not always come regularly to church, find ways of supporting our activities. For instance, the Mobstead

Stitchers have designed and created a large number of new kneelers for the altar and their chair has created magnificent altar cloths and runners, made possible by a generous legacy. In 2024 the Stitchers designed and created displays of knitted poppies to stand by the altar for Remembrance.

**The Church Building** - with a stunted 'Italianesque' tower and remarkably long chancel, St Mary's is a neo-Norman church built in 1838. During its life it has benefitted from gifts of a stained-glass East window, vestry screen and pulpit. We are fortunate to have an electronic organ in place of the original pipe organ. Our carillon of six bells peel out over the surrounding countryside when services are being held. The church and churchyard are open every day of the year.

Even though St Mary's is not by some standards a very old church we have had our fair share of maintenance issues, but six years ago we were able to fully carpet the floor by villagers sponsoring individual tiles. We raised £9,000 in 2021 to replace heaters and lighting turning the church into a warm, welcoming place of worship. Church congregation and villagers all pull together and get on with what needs to be done, although this is always a challenge financially. We are a very friendly group of worshippers, never happier than when someone new turns up to a church service.

**Churchyard and Eco Church** - we recently achieved the Eco Church Bronze Award. Even more recently the churchyard has been designated as a significant area of interest due to rare Wax Cap fungi being found there. A group of villagers meet twice a year to weed and tidy the cemetery which is on a steep incline. Recently the long paths had to be completely replaced to ensure the safety of visitors.

**Events** - with a relatively small congregation we rely on fund-raising events which are well-supported by the community. In recent years there have been four village Scarecrow Trails, three Arts Festivals, Harvest Suppers and a Burns Nights plus other events such as concerts, Bingo evening, quiz nights; we are continually striving to use more inspirational ideas. Of particular note this year was a very successful sponsored Cycle Ride undertaken by Roger who looks after the church lawns and is a keen cyclist: he rode from Moreton church to Shrewsbury Abbey and return raising over £1,020.

In recent years our Christmas Carol Service has grown to concert proportions, with a community choir and young people showcasing their vocal and musical talents. Before Christmas the Parish Council provides a Christmas tree for the village green and there is a ceremonial switch-on of the lights accompanied by carol singing. For the past few years, as part of the Christmas celebrations, we have installed the Three Kings in our redundant bus shelter and a stable with Mary & Joseph and the baby on the church lawn. All of which have been created by parishioners.

The church news and notices are displayed outside the church and on Facebook. Special services are promoted by large display boards by the church.

In 2021 we laid a memorial stone in honour of William Griffiths a soldier in the Coldstream Guards, a resident of Outwoods who fought and survived in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. The Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire attended the event along with many members of the community.

## ORGANISATION AND FINANCE

PCC currently meets four times per year.

**Giving and Money** - St Mary's had an income from all sources in 2023 of £10,131. It holds £7,808 the Current Account or on Deposit. Our current Common Fund (2024/25) is £5,875.

Several members of the congregation have signed up to Giving Direct, allowing us to reclaim £1,482 in Gift Aid.

**Website:** <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/4233/>

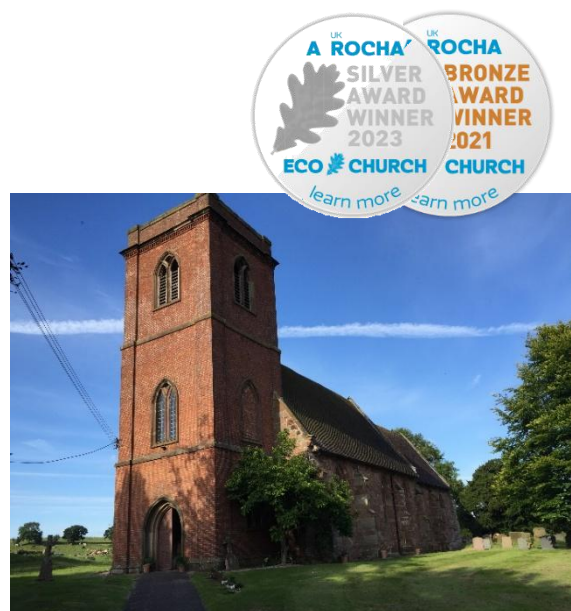
## ST. PETER'S CHURCH, NORBURY

*"Silver Eco Church Award Winner 2023"*

Sitting in picturesque countryside, Norbury is a popular and peaceful village with a mixture of old and newer homes with approximately 380 people. There are a number of working farms in the village and surrounding hamlets of Oulton, Weston Jones and Loynton (where there are also thriving fishing lakes and a café). Most of the working population commute to work outside the parish. Children attend school locally at Woodseaves or further afield in Newport and Stafford. The Village Hall is a modern popular venue for private parties and clubs, including a thriving W.I. group and Gardening Guild.

The idyllic Shropshire Union Canal runs through the parish, a short walk from the village. Here, at Norbury Junction, a small community live and work around the famous, colourful canal basin, which is very popular with visitors (day-trippers, cyclists and walkers); hire-boats are also available from the boatyard. On the canal side there is a shop/café and pub/restaurant. In May, there is usually a Canal Festival, which has grown considerably over the years.

'BIFOR'- Birmingham University Forestry Project is situated in the nearby woodland and undertakes pioneering studies on the effects of climate change on trees.



**Issues and Concerns** - sadly, the parish currently has no public transport, which can be isolating for both the young and elderly. House prices also tend to be high in the local area.

### **OUR CHURCH AND WORSHIP**

- morning service on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays, alternating between Holy Communion and Morning Worship
- we have a regular organist (also our Churchwarden)
- our congregation is small (2023 - ASA - 8), friendly and extremely supportive of the work of the Church.
- Easter and Christmas services are very popular (average attendance 30-40) with parishioners of all ages.
- we have 28 on our Electoral Roll.

**Church Building / Churchyard** - St. Peter's is an impressive 14th Century, Grade I listed building with many notable monuments and features, which sits in a large & beautiful churchyard, still having plenty of burial space. The church is open every weekend throughout the year and from March to the end of September it is open every day. Visitors from near and far regularly visit, writing comments in the Visitors' Book, not only about the historic building but also how they find it to be a quiet, peaceful space in which to spend time.

The church building has in the past been described as the 'Village Cathedral' with a long nave, equally long chancel and impressive medieval roof.

The last Quinquennial Report was completed in 2023: the nave & chancel are currently in a relatively satisfactory condition as a place of worship, but its Grade I status brings significant financial challenges relating to the issues of maintenance and restoration highlighted in the 2023 Report. A structural report on the church tower has highlighted issues that require further consideration.

As well as maintaining the history of our church we are continually aiming to improve it. In 2019, after receiving grants and donations from the local community, we were able to install a new heating system, which now means the church gives an instantly warm welcome all year round at the flick of a switch.

The churchyard is cared for by volunteers along with regular mowing courtesy of Parish Council funding.

**Eco Church** - as stewards of God's Creation, we are also seeking to ensure that every aspect of our Church and its life is managed in an Eco-friendly way. In March 2023 we were very pleased to be awarded a Silver Eco Church Award. In recognition of both our Bronze and Silver Awards, two fruit trees was planted. When they reach maturity, the fruit will be shared with the community. We are now working towards gaining our Gold Award.

### **Occasional Offices**



	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
2020	0	1	0
2021	0	1	0
2022	1	1	2
2023	0	0	2

**Additional support** - we employ a cleaner whose work is frequently complimented, not just by our regular worshippers but by visitors too.

**Events** - we regularly hold social and fundraising events which offer something for everyone. They are very popular with local residents, as well as parishioners from across the Benefice and the wider community. We host Harvest and Salmon Lunches which have a reputation for delicious menus, served with a friendly smile, as well as Quiz Nights and 'Bingo & Bangers', all held in the Village Hall. Cream Teas are served in the Churchyard in August and we have held two very successful Christmas Tree Festivals (2021 and 2023).

## ORGANISATION AND FINANCE

**PCC** usually meets four times a year with some extra informal meetings to organise social events.

**Giving and Money** - St. Peter's has a tight budget. Income generally comes 2:1 split from 'giving' and fundraising events. Income for 2023 - £11,826 and currently hold reserves of £4366.

Expenses - £13,939.00 (included restoration of West Doors). 2024 – It is anticipated that Expenses will exceed Income by up to £1000 due to costs relating to actions required by the Quinquennial Report. Further work in 2025 will probably deplete total reserves to under £10,000.

Common Fund – the 'Formula' amount due for 2024 was £8470. 'Special Arrangement Support' of £3421 was agreed, reducing the Request Minimum to £5049 which will be met, enabling the write off of the remaining deficit of £1500. The Request Minimum for 2025 will be £5301. Donations are given to Bishop's Lent Appeal, Royal British Legion and House of Bread (our local food bank).

**Skrymsher Derington Educational Trust** - the Rector and Wardens are trustees - annual grants are given to students (16-21yrs) of the parish in full time education. They are invited to make applications in the Autumn Term.

**Website:** [www.achurchnearyou.com/norbury-st-peters/](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/norbury-st-peters/)