

# Parish Profile for the United Benefice of Stone (St Michael & St Wulfad) with Aston (St Saviour)



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**THE BISHOP  
OF LICHFIELD*****A word of welcome to the Diocese of Lichfield***

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

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

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

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

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

*+ Michael Ipgrave*

# Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to read our profile. We have been praying for a new Rector, and we hope that God is calling you to lead us into this exciting new chapter. At St Michael & St Wulfad, the civic church for the town of Stone, along with St Saviour Aston, we are eager to embrace new leadership that will inspire us to grow in faith and make a lasting impact in our community.

We accept that change is essential to the development and growth of the churches. Already in the last year some exciting new initiatives have started: Collage Café, Jelly Tots and CU@4 which are outlined in the profile. We are seeking a Rector who can create new opportunities for Christian outreach and has the ability to drive change while understanding our heritage and traditions.

Like a lot of churches, we have found it difficult to regain the attendance numbers we achieved pre-covid. We hope to attract a younger age group to join our existing congregation. Together, we aim to strengthen our Christian stewardship, deepen our purpose, and share God's love in ways that transform lives and bring hope to our town.

## Stone Wardens



Nichola  
Abbott



Paul  
Evans

## Aston Wardens



Mary  
Babb



Kathleen  
Lanyon

## Person Specification

	<b>Rector</b>	<b>Essential / Desirable</b>
<b>Skills/Abilities</b>	1.To identify pastoral care needs and respond effectively to them both personally and as a church.	Essential
	2.Confident in dealing with conflict and finding resolution	Desirable
	3 Be able to engage in civic life and use our role as a civic church as an opportunity for growth	Essential
	4.. Relate effectively to people of all ages and backgrounds and seek opportunities to grow the congregation	Desirable
<b>Knowledge</b>	5.Safeguarding; how to apply policy effectively and build a healthy safeguarding culture	Essential
	6.Up-to-date with both the national and diocesan strategies for growth in order to take them forward	Desirable
<b>Experience</b>	7.Developing and maintaining good relationships with schools	Essential
	8. Financial governance and growing stewardship	Desirable
	9.Maximising the potential of people, resources and buildings	Essential
	10. Working collaboratively with ecumenical partners	Desirable

# Job Description

## 1. Details of Post

*Role Title:* Incumbent  
*Name of benefice(s):* United Benefice of Stone  
*Deanery:* Stone

*Initial point of contact on terms of service:* The Archdeacon of Stoke-upon-Trent

## 2. Role Purpose

### General

1. Work to advance the Kingdom of God through servant leadership, collaboration, and example.
2. Share in the wider work of the mission community, deanery, and diocese as appropriate, for the building up of the whole Body of Christ.

### Specific

1. Build up the faith of the church by leading in vision and strategy and discern the emergent shape of God's mission in the Parish
2. Build on and set the tone for pastoral care with the help of ordained and appropriately authorised lay personnel, nurture and develop the congregations, and support and develop lay ministry,
3. Be a prayerful person who will encourage the congregations to pray both individually and corporately, and to grow in faith.

4. Be sensitive to the worshipping needs of the different congregations, and comfortable in leading traditional forms of worship, as well as encouraging families and informal approaches for anyone unfamiliar with those traditions.

5. Be a lively, well-informed preacher and mission-minded priest.

6. Seek ecumenical cooperation, be committed to working with 'Churches Together;' and be open to emergent opportunities to work across the mission community.

7. Build on the good relationships with local schools, and engage in their life, including governorship in the church schools.

8. Encourage Christian stewardship of people's time, money, and abilities so that the ministry of the church is strengthened and enabled.

9. Be highly visible, make new positive links and develop existing ones with external organisations based in the parish, so that full use is made of opportunities for outreach and service to the community.

10. Lead the parish in developing and implementing a vision for growth in congregation size and diversity.

11. Develop the discipleship of congregations and the nurture of new Christians.

12. Engage with young families and encourage participation of children and young people in church.

13. Develop a healthy and safe culture of safeguarding.

14. Lead the Parish in addressing the issues raised in Quinquennial reports and the fabric of the church.

15. Engage in civic life in accordance with St Michael and St Wulfad's status as the civic church.

## Vision for the future

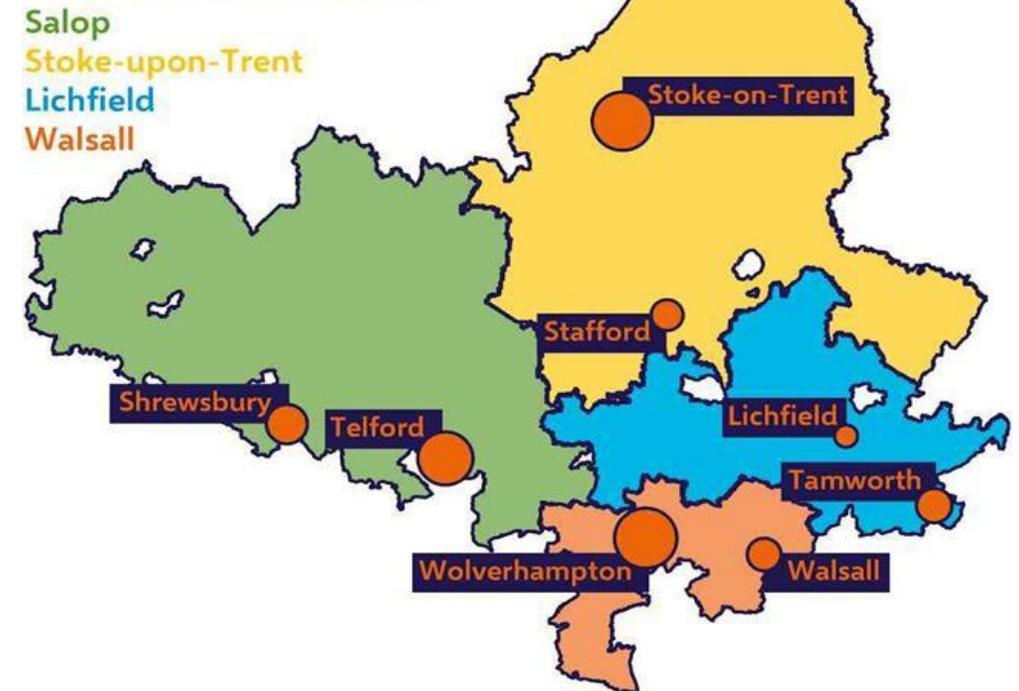
St Michael and St Wulfad's Church with St Saviour's Aston look to continue to build on the strong Christian foundation that has already been established within our benefice.

We aim to be Spirit led not only within our worship but also within our daily lives as we take our discipleship into the community using the teaching of Jesus and the Bible as our guide.

We welcome new thoughts, ideas and enthusiasm, as we jointly rise to the challenges facing us. Our vision is to reach out with the word of the Lord as we share his good news story with people in our community.

We pray that as we regroup and rebuild following the Covid epidemic, with your help and guidance, we aim; to grow and develop to work together, to reach out and flourish as a Church family and to work towards Diocese strategic goals, particularly increasing the congregation..

### The Four Archdeaconries of Lichfield Diocese



### Benefice within the Diocese of Lichfield

# Stone and Aston Staffordshire: A Glimpse into the Heart of England

Nestled in the scenic countryside of Staffordshire, Stone and Aston are two charming locations with a rich history and a unique blend of rural and industrial heritage. Located just a short distance from Stoke-on-Trent and Stafford, both are often seen as gateways to the picturesque landscapes of the Staffordshire Moorlands and the historic cities of the Midlands.

## **Stone: The “Gateway to the Peaks”**

Stone, a market town on the banks of the River Trent, has long been a hub for trade and industry. Its history can be traced back to the Anglo-Saxon period. One of Stone’s most notable landmarks is the Stone Railway Station, which has been a key part of the town’s development since the early 19th century. Today, Stone is known for its picturesque canal, the Trent and Mersey Canal, and its thriving local economy, which includes a mix of retail, agriculture, and small manufacturing. The town is also home to the Stone Food and Drink Festival, a popular annual event that celebrates local produce and attracts visitors from all over the region.

## **Aston: A Smaller but Historic Gem**

Aston-by-Stone is a small village to the south of Stone which has the River Trent and the Trent & Mersey Canal running through it. Aston Marina, which has mooring for canal boats and has a restaurant, is situated on the Canal. There are few amenities in the village, people travelling to Stone, Stafford or Stoke-on-Trent for these. There is a Village Hall in Aston which faces on to the A34, just beyond the Aston roundabout if approaching from the north. Church Lane is on the left immediately after the Hall and leads down to the Church. The Village Hall is used by the local Scout and Guide units, the Women’s Institute and other organisations. It is also used for private parties, and the church uses it for social and fund-raising events. There is a hockey and rugby club in the village and the local Fire Brigade Headquarters is on the A34 when travelling south towards Stafford. Currently it is surrounded by fields but there is the possibility of a planning application to extend the ever-enlarging business park into these fields; “Save Aston Green Fields” is a local organisation planning to fight any such application.



## Leisure and Pleasure

Stone and Aston, two picturesque locations in Staffordshire, offering good schools, a variety of leisure activities set against the backdrop of stunning countryside, rich history, and local charm. Whether you're looking for outdoor adventures, cultural exploration, or simply a relaxing day out, these towns provide a perfect setting for all types of leisure.

For nature lovers, Stone and Aston are ideal bases for exploring the surrounding landscapes. The nearby *Staffordshire Moorlands* and *Peak District National Park* offer a wealth of walking and hiking opportunities, with trails along the *Trent and Mersey Canal* and through scenic woodlands and hills. Cycling is also popular, with quiet country lanes and canal paths perfect for leisurely bike rides.

History and culture are also key attractions in the area. Stone's historic *Market Square*, with its bustling monthly markets and independent shops, is a great place to spend a few hours.

The Stone Canoe Club has strong ties to Olympic success, having produced athletes who have gone on to represent Great Britain at the highest levels of competitive canoeing.

Stone boasts a vibrant cultural scene with its amateur dramatic, musical, and choral societies. Located in the town is a new theatre at the Crown Wharf with nearby, Stafford's Gatehouse Theatre, the New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme, and the Regent and Repertory theatres in Stoke-on-Trent. These, along with the region's renowned pottery heritage, including Josiah Wedgwood's legacy and museums like Gladstone and the Potteries Museum highlight the area's rich cultural history.

For a deeper dive into local heritage, the *Shugborough Estate* combines Georgian architecture, art, and nature, making it a perfect spot for a leisurely day of exploration.

For a more relaxed experience, visitors can enjoy traditional pubs, cozy cafes, restaurants and tea rooms scattered throughout Stone and Aston, serving local produce and regional specialties.

Whether you're exploring the countryside, discovering history, or simply enjoying a quiet moment in a local café, Stone and Aston offer a welcoming escape for all.

A useful website is <https://alittlebitofstone.com/>



<https://alittlebitofstone.com/>



# United Benefice



St Michael and St Wulfad's & St Saviour's were brought together as a benefice in 1983

St Saviour's has an open burial ground, while

St Michael & St Wulfad's Church grounds have been adopted by the Borough council.

Both churches feature family-owned mausoleums of historical significance, and St Michael's also houses additional historical items within its grounds.

The two churches, while maintaining their independence and operating as separate Parochial Church Councils (PCCs), come together to share a variety of events and services throughout the year, including special services for Easter and Christmas.

Both PCCs are actively involved in fundraising efforts, concerts, and community events.

A joint parish magazine is published ten times a year, keeping the congregations connected and informed.

The two parishes share a common boundary and are less than 10 minutes apart by car, making shared activities convenient and accessible for all involved.

Both churches embrace a traditional yet broad approach to faith, welcoming a diversity of views. While the age profile of both congregations tends to be older, both churches are deeply committed to encouraging children, young people, and their families in their spiritual growth.

St. Michael & St. Wulfad's Church serves as the civic church, hosting major events such as the Town Mayor Making Service, the Remembrance Day service, and the Christmas Carol Concert, which attract large congregations and highlight its role in the community.

St. Saviour's has consistently paid its Diocesan Common Fund in full, while St. Michael & St. Wulfad's Church has faced challenges this year. With support from the Diocesan Finance Board, a solution has been reached to pay a reduced share over the next five years.

St Michael's has heating issues, and there is approximately £50,000 worth of work to be done, based on the latest quinquennial report.

By managing expenses carefully, we are confident this will strengthen our financial position in the future. We are grateful to the Diocese for their understanding and continued support during this time.

A full financial report is available upon request.

## Our Buildings



### St Michael & St Wulfad's Church

St Michael & St Wulfad Church serves as the civic church for the town of Stone and stands as a prominent landmark, its tower rising gracefully above the town. The tower is home to ten bells, which are rung regularly for services, weddings, and special events, adding to the church's vibrant role in the community.

A quinquennial report was completed in 2024, identifying some necessary repairs, including heating issues, with an estimated cost of £50k.

The churchyard to the east is home to the Jarvis family mausoleum, a striking structure designed by William Robinson, the same architect who designed the church itself.



### St Saviour's Church

St Saviour's church is a beautiful little country church consecrated in 1846, with the spire being added in 1879 thus making it a local landmark. The well kept churchyard attracts walkers and the benches provided are much appreciated.

Inside the church the alabaster reredos, featuring the central cross and the Alpha (A) and Omega (Ω) symbols, is a very distinctive feature, and the stained glass windows are often admired. The reredos and the windows are dedicated to the memory of members of the Parker-Jervis family who built the church. Looking upwards you will notice the ceiling with its star-studded panels, and in 2013 a major reordering of the church was undertaken to provide more modern facilities.

## Rectory

11 Farrier Close is a charming and well-presented home located in a quiet, sought-after area of Stone. This delightful property offers a perfect balance of modern living and comfort, with spacious rooms, a well-maintained interior, and a private garden perfect for relaxation.

Situated in a friendly and peaceful neighborhood, it is conveniently close to local amenities, schools, and transport links.



Located at:  
11 Farrier Close, Stone, ST15 8XP

### Features:

- 2 reception rooms
- cloakroom
- kitchen
- utility room
- 4 bedrooms (one en-suite)
- study with separate entrance.

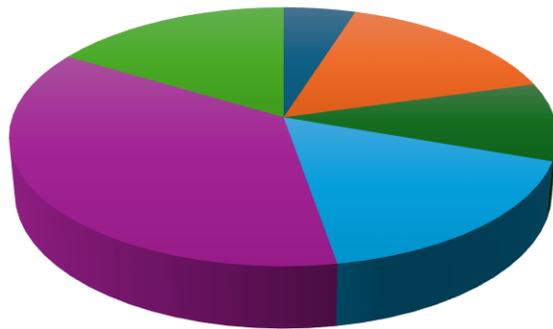


# Benefice Statistics

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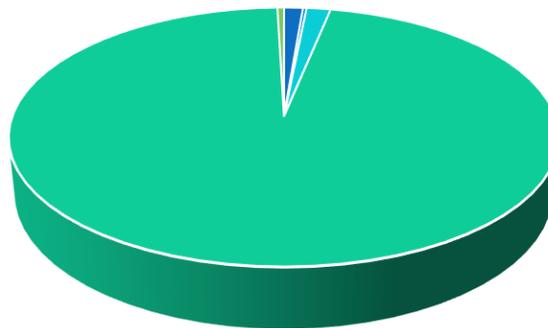
	Stone: St Michael & St Wulfad	Aston: St Saviour
Deprivation rank (1=most deprived, 12,239=least deprived)	6,349	11,623
Parish population (2021 census)	10,077	2,716
Parish number of occupied households	4,565	1,133
Area (square miles)	3	4.5

Benefice: Age profile



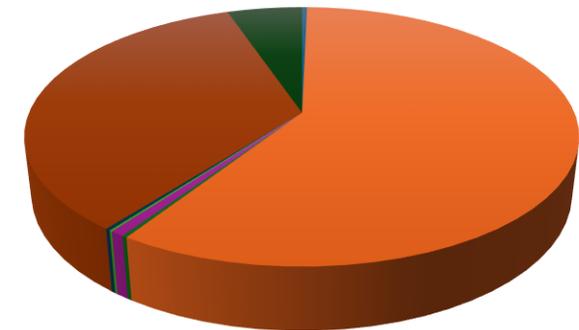
- % aged 0-4
- % aged 5-19
- % aged 20-29
- % aged 30-44
- % aged 45-69
- % aged 70 and over

Benefice: Ethnicity



- % Asian ethnicity
- % Black ethnicity
- % Mixed ethnicity
- % White ethnicity
- % Other ethnicity

Benefice: Religion



- % Buddhist
- % Christian
- % Hindu
- % Jewish
- % Muslim
- % Sikh
- % Other religion
- % No religion
- % Religion not stated

## Worship Pattern

<u>Stone, St Michael &amp; St Wulfad</u>		<u>Aston, St Saviour</u>
8.00 am Traditional Holy Communion (BCP) 10.45 am Family Communion (Common Worship)	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday	9.15 am Morning Prayer (Book of Common Prayer 1662)
8.00 am Traditional Holy Communion (BCP) 10.45 am Family Communion (Common Worship)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday	9.15 am Traditional Holy Communion (BCP)
8.00 am Traditional Holy Communion (BCP) 10.45 am Family Communion (Common Worship) 4:00 pm CU@4 All age family Worship	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday	9.15 am Holy Communion (Common Worship)
8.00 am Traditional Holy Communion (BCP) 10.45 am Family Communion (Common Worship)	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	9.15 am Traditional Holy Communion (BCP)
8.00 am Traditional Holy Communion (BCP) 10.45 am Family Communion (Common Worship)	5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	9.15 am Holy Communion (Common Worship)
<b><u>Additional services:</u></b>  Thursdays 10.30 am Traditional Holy Communion (BCP)		<b><u>Additional services:</u></b>  During the summer months a number of evening services are held, either Evensong or Songs of Praise, which are usually preceded by an Afternoon Tea.

It is important to highlight that discussions are underway regarding the introduction of more lay-led services, including the possibility of reducing the number of Eucharistic services on Sundays and replacing some with Morning Prayer.

## Ministry Team



Mrs Lin Davies  
(Lay Reader)



Mr Dennis Abbott  
(Lay Reader)



Mrs Chris Connolly  
(Home Visitor)

### *Ministry Team shared across the benefice*

Two readers with PtO

One reader emeritus

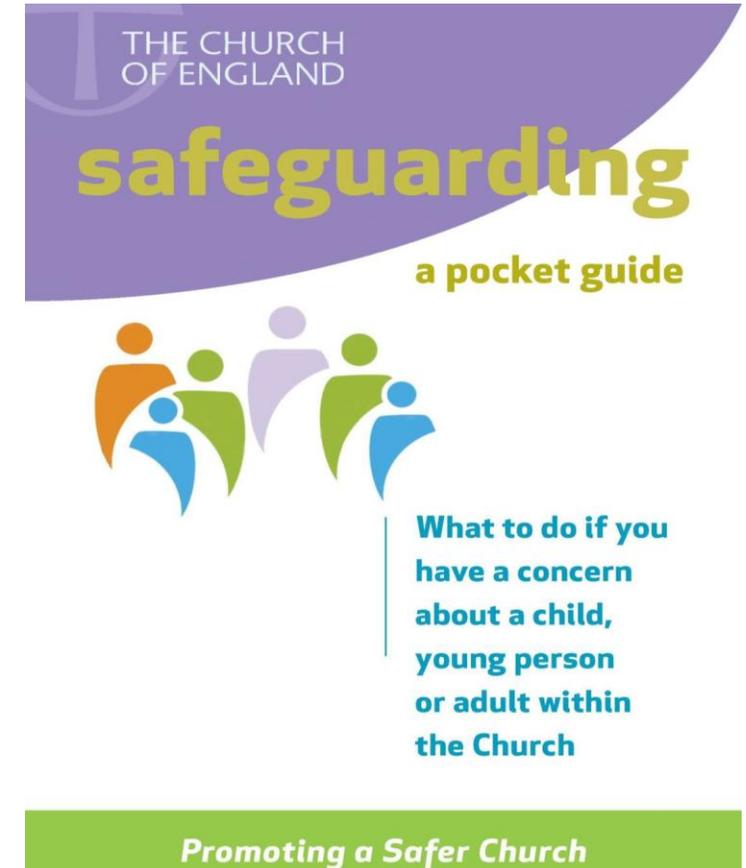
Care home visitor

Lay led intercessions

Four representatives at Deanery Synod

## Safeguarding

- ❖ Ensuring that our churches are safe places is so important to us as we aim to offer God's love to all those in the community who come seeking acceptance, healing and love.
- ❖ We are committed to safe pastoral care for all adults and children to whom we . To enable this the Benefice has appointed two Safeguarding Coordinators, one at each church who work closely together. We have a joint safeguarding policy and procedures in place, and we aim to adhere to the guidance provided by the Diocese and the national Church of England.
- ❖ We undertake proper care in the appointment and selection of those within our churches who may work with children and vulnerable adults. All who work with vulnerable adults or children, or who are in positions of leadership in the churches have appropriate enhanced DBS checks.
- ❖ To promote safe practice, we have regular safeguarding training and discussions at the PCCs to consider inclusion and empowerment of people who may be vulnerable. We recognise that it is the responsibility of each of us to prevent abuse.
- ❖ Where needed, we will work positively with the Diocesan Safeguarding service, reporting all concerns factually and promptly.



## Schools

We have excellent links with St Michaels C.E (V.C.) First School. There is an expectation that the incumbent serves on the school governing body.

The benefice runs an after-school club, "Adventurers," in conjunction with the school. This has been in running since 2006 and provides Christian teaching using song, activities, and prayer. We also visit the school and lead worship on Wednesday mornings. One member of the ministry team volunteers on a weekly basis and so maintains a regular and strong link with staff and pupils.

The pupils walk to church (weather permitting) four times per term to share in our Thursday Eucharist. Parents, staff and pupils participate in services at Easter, Harvest, Advent and Christmas, Mothering Sunday and each May, year 3 classes spend a day in church as part of our "Open Door" project where they learn about various aspects of our church and its history.

Other schools in the benefice where we have varying levels of participation:

- Pirehill First School who visit St Michael & St Wulfad occasionally; we also have a presence from time to time.
- Manor Hill First School, a community school.
- Walton Priory Middle School, who visit church from time to time.

The three-tier school system in Stone, Staffordshire, divides education into three stages: primary (ages 4-9), middle (ages 9-13), and secondary (ages 13-16), providing a more specialized transition between each stage.

In addition to those within the benefice, the town is home to several other schools, including St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School, Christ Church First School, as well as a middle school, Christ Church Academy and a secondary school, Alleyne's Academy.

'Through God we love, laugh and learn' is our school motto that underpins all that we do at St Michael's CE (VC) First School. Our school sits at the heart of our local community and we are very proud of the close links that exist between our school and the church.

Our children enjoy visiting the church to take part in communion services throughout the year and have been warmly welcomed to help develop their learning of Christianity within the building. Those strong links between our children and staff and the parishioners is one that we want to continue and see grow from strength to strength.

Our last SIAMs Inspection 2022 stated that 'The school enjoys rich, collaborative and energising relationships with the diocese'. Currently members of the parish help lead our Adventurers club alongside school staff, support in special wow days throughout the year and help us celebrate events such as Christingle, Easter and Christmas.

We enjoy regular visits from the Rector to lead worship times in school. The partnership with the church is vital for our Church of England school and we look forward to working closely with the new Rector and welcoming them into our school family.

Julia Wass

Headteacher





Welcome to one of the most diverse diocese in the country. Rolling countryside and vibrant inner-city life nestle together in a region that takes in Staffordshire, the Potteries of Stoke-on-Trent, most of Shropshire and bustling Black Country centres including Walsall and Wolverhampton. The only thing we don't have is the sea!

We serve a population of over 2 million people - the fifth largest diocese in the country - and an area of 1,740 square miles. There are over 540 churches in 424 parishes with around 500 clergy - plus over 200 Church schools and academies.

Our vision is focused around the three priority areas of discipleship, vocation and evangelism (DVE).

Our outward facing departments come together under this banner in DVE teams. Our Central Administrative Support Teams work closely with the DVE teams to help equip people in discipleship, vocation and evangelism.

In terms of structural organisation, neighbouring *parishes* are organised in groups of about a dozen into 28 *deaneries* and groups of deaneries are collected into an *archdeaconry*, led by an *Area Bishop* and an *Archdeacon* under the care of the Diocesan Bishop.

The legal entity that performs the work of the Diocese and employs its staff is the *Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance*. It performs many functions on behalf of the Bishop of Lichfield and his team and also for many parishes. Its staff provide a great deal of support to the parishes, church schools, chaplaincies and fresh expressions (and other partners) on the basis of their expertise rather than location.

But each parish is a separate legal entity, a charity under civil law, that is managed by its legal trustees who are the elected members of its PCC (Parochial Church Council).

# Stone St Michael and St Wulfad

The Civic Church, situated above the historic canal town of Stone, is a landmark deeply rooted in history. Established in 1758, the church has long served the town, which played a pivotal role at the dawn of the canal boom that helped fuel the Midlands' Industrial Revolution.

With a legacy of spreading the Word of the Lord since 670 AD, the church continues to serve the local community today. Our electoral roll lists 135 dedicated members.

We offer two Sunday morning services, both followed by a warm fellowship opportunity, where tea, coffee, and biscuits are served.

In addition, we provide home communions and a nursing home communion service to ensure all members of our community are supported.

Our church has an active PCC (Parochial Church Council), with a well-structured subcommittee framework that ensures effective action and progress.

Over the past ten months, we have focused on developing new and innovative services to better serve our community. These include:

- Jelly Tots: A baby and toddler group offering a welcoming space for young families.
- CU@4: A service specifically designed to bring families back to church with a family-centered format.

We also run several outreach programmes, including the Collage Cafe` and collaborate with Stone Funeralcare's Circle of Friends group—a bereavement and loneliness support meeting held fortnightly in the town. Members of our congregation and clergy are actively involved, offering care and support to those in need.



Service type	Yearly average volume
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Funerals (at Church)	21
Funerals (Crematorium)	20
Weddings	2
Baptisms	30

Service time	Average attendance
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Sunday 8:00am	20
Sunday 10:45am	40
Thursday 10:30am	12

## Worship style St Michael and St Wulfad

St Michael and St Wulfad embraces a variety of worship styles so that people coming from any tradition or none, will find a service where they feel at home.

We have traditionally been more Anglo Catholic, with a robed choir and occasional use of incense. We have now become more central and less formal. The two traditional Holy Communion (BCP) services each week are usually spoken word only. The beauty of the traditional wording stands alone. Quite often at the Thursday service a PowerPoint presentation is employed to illustrate the sermon.

By contrast, Family Communion (Common Worship) is rich with organ music accompanying hymns, songs, and also anthems sung by the choir. On certain occasions throughout the year, the ministry team and St Michael's choir process round the church, followed by the burning of incense.

The CU@4 service offers a very different worship experience. About 15 minutes of the start and close is dedicated to seated, interactive PowerPoint presentations including a simple liturgy. For the remaining 45 minutes, individuals are free to participate in theme-based activities, talk and enjoy refreshments. The relatively informal style is particularly suited to families with young children or anyone for whom church attendance is unfamiliar territory.



## Aston St Saviour



*“At St Saviour’s we seek to offer the open hand of Christian Friendship to everyone who lives in or who visits the parish.”*

There are 59 people on the Electoral Roll of whom 24 are resident in the parish.

The majority of the congregation are aged over 60, although there are some younger couples who have been coming fairly regularly. There is one Reader and one Reader Emeritus on the electoral roll, though the Reader from St Michael’s regularly helps out. The two active Readers in the benefice usually take it in turns to conduct the monthly Matins service.

Churchmanship is considered to be central. There are 2 lay assistants at the Holy Communion, and the intercessions at the Matins service and the Common Worship services are usually led by members of the congregation; there are 9 members of the congregation who read the lessons and there are 5 PCC members. It is hoped to encourage more people to undertake these roles.

St Saviour’s is very fortunate to have an organist, John Hammersley, who leads the music for our worship. He and his wife, Lynn, have organised a number of concerts in church as they also run a recorder group and have contacts with other musical groups. There is no formal choir, but the congregation is enthusiastic in its singing.

### A Baptism and a Wedding at St Saviour’s



I Soffiatori Recorder Consort

A service is held in church on Remembrance Sunday when those from the parish whose names are on the War Memorial in the church are remembered. Both St Michael & St Wulfad's and St Saviour's support Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Appeal and on Remembrance Sunday the boxes are brought into St Saviour's where they receive a blessing before being taken to the drop off point.

The Candlelit Carol Service, usually held on Christmas Eve is one of the year's most popular services; we also host Carol Services for Aston & Little Stoke Scout Group and Aston Women's Institute.

## St Saviour's Parish

The ecclesiastical parish consists of the village of Aston-by-Stone and Little Stoke, the boundary between St Saviour's & St Michael & St Wulfad's being the brook which runs through the Aston Lodge Estate, goes under the Lichfield Road and through the Brassworks Farm Estate. Apart from the items mentioned under the information on Stone and Aston, at Little Stoke there is the Three Crowns public house, a day nursery, and a filling station, Fairway Service Station which currently has the only shop in the parish, although building work has commenced on what is planned to be another shop. There is a cricket club at Little Stoke where Stone Bowling Club also meets.

## Church Finances

St. Saviour's maintains a reasonably steady financial position, broadly balancing income from donations and fundraising with running costs and repairs. Requested payments to the Common Fund are met in full and reserves are maintained to cover any unforeseen repairs or essential works to the fabric of the building. A Christmas Fair is held each year to supplement regular income and donations are made annually to both local and national charities.

## Aston Educational Charity

Aston Educational Charity was set up following the sale of Aston School in 1972. It is aded by the Incumbent and the Churchwardens; the income of the trust is distributed by making funds available for certain educational purposes, such as grants to St Michael's School, and to Christ Church Middle School to fund Bibles for the school leavers, grants are also made for educational purposes to those from Aston under the age of 25.





St Saviour's Church was consecrated in 1846 and is a grade 2 listed building. It is brick built with sandstone facing. In 2013 a major reordering of the church was undertaken to provide a meeting area, with a gallery above, a tea bar and toilet facilities. At the same time the font was moved to the south east of the nave, appropriately under the stained glass window with the inscription "Suffer little children to come unto me".

The last Quinquennial Inspection in September 2022 highlighted areas that need attention, the Category 1 items include work on the roof and the tower and spire. Most of the Category 1 items have been attended to and consideration is being given to the rest of the report.

The churchyard is an open churchyard with about 4 or 5 burials a year and there is still space for about 36 more full burials. Cremated remains are buried either loose in a small plot adjacent to an Acer tree or in marked plots. Interment in the churchyard is however restricted to those who live in the parish, are on the Electoral Roll, are a regular worshipper or have a pre-existing family grave.

The private Mausoleum of the Parker-Jervis family, which is also a Grade 2 listed building, is situated to the east of the church. The last Quinquennial Inspection, conducted in September 2022, indicated that some fairly major repairs may be required. Since then the roof has been cleared of vegetation and treated with weed killer, and the coping stones have been re-aligned.

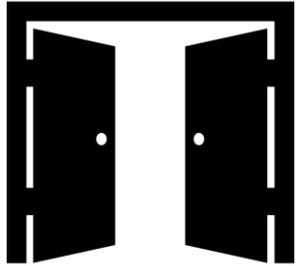
A Book of Remembrance recording the names of those who have had a funeral at St Saviour's or who are buried in the churchyard is kept in a memorial cabinet in the church.

### Care of the Church Building and Churchyard

Day to day care of the church and churchyard is in the hands of willing and dedicated volunteers. There are three people who currently attend to the mowing of the churchyard. Special mention must be made of Aston & Little Stoke Beavers who have created and maintain a garden opposite to the main entrance to the church. Other members of the congregation have planted a wild flower area and generally keep borders tidy and bird and bat boxes have been installed. St Saviour's enters the Churchyard Award Scheme and in 2024 won a Silver Award, with a special commendation mentioning the work of the Beavers.



# Outreach



## School Open Door

Each May children in Year 3 from St Michael's First School spend the day at St Michael and St Wulfad's to learn more about the church they visit regularly on Thursday mornings for a Holy Communion service.

Around fifty-five children plus teachers and helpers divide into groups for a carousel of activities. The busy programme involves a 'pilgrimage' to the locations of the original Stone Priory, family tombs and the Mausoleum; making 'stained glass windows', after observing the real ones; a tower visit to try bell ringing; producing a clay replica of the Priory Seal and finally learning about the votive candles and intercessions board, adding their own contributions to the 'prayer tree'. As a whole group the children hear about the different colour vestments worn during the church year. The visit ends with a short period of worship.

# Sunday School

## St Michael and St Wulfad's Sunday School

Our Sunday school started up in January 2020.

**Venue** - 'Pop-up' in nature in the vestry. Backdrop of two display boards created by children. We sit in a circle on cushions.

**Duration** – approximately 35 minutes from opening hymn to the Peace.

Attendance is sporadic and numbers are small.

Sessions are messy, noisy, purposeful and fun. Parents are welcome to stay. Wherever possible sessions link with lectionary readings or festivals.

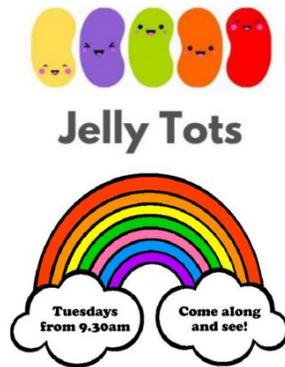
A Sunday school table in church displays a range of activities across the year.



## Faith Matters

This takes place at [Summerfield Court, Stone \(a residential care home\)](#) every Monday morning. Led by members of both churches and one of the residents. It is an ecumenical outreach service that normally comprises exploring a topic along with various hymns. Starting at around 10.30am, each session typically lasts anywhere between an hour to an hour and a half. We also regularly try to include a Eucharist service, as some attendees including on-site staff are unable to come to the church. Each December a group of residents attend a designated Holy Communion service at St Michael and St Wulfad's, visit the Christmas Tree Festival and enjoy refreshments.

## Outreach



Jelly Tots is a baby and toddler group at St Michael and St Wulfad's Church. It meets each Tuesday from 9.30am to around 10.45am, and provides a relaxed, welcoming space for parents, carers and children to enjoy some quality time together. There are lots of toys and activities to keep the little ones entertained whilst the adults have opportunity to chat and make new friends over a drink. The group's craft activities are on display in the church.



CU@4 is a model for all-age, family worship. It combines a short period of pew-based worship at the start and close of the service with free-ranging craft activities, conversation, and refreshments in between. The liturgy is as clear and straightforward as possible to be accessible to young children, including familiar elements such as the Lord's Prayer. National research has indicated that the optimum time slot for attracting families is 4.00pm till 5.00pm on Sundays. The unspoken agreement is that the service will not exceed one hour.

When CU@4 was launched on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2024 six children plus accompanying adults attended, including some new faces; a total congregation of nineteen. A PowerPoint presentation introduced the theme – 'Remembering-not forgetting' and opening prayers. An interactive memory game followed which culminated in the significance of bread, wine and candles in church services, closing with the words 'Remember Me'. The craft activities all involved a memory element. After refreshments we returned to the pews for a song and closing prayers. Attendance numbers held for the second CU@4 in December 2024.

# Outreach

## Collage Cafe`



This commenced in March 2024 as a direct result of a joint away-day by the Stone and Aston PCCs in January of that year. It is a Bible-themed art activity held at Stone Library on the second Thursday of each month from 10:00am till 12:00 noon.

Sessions are free and all materials provided. Hot drinks are available courtesy of Stone library, together with cake and biscuits. We use lots of recycled materials from packaging, old magazines, plastics and textiles.

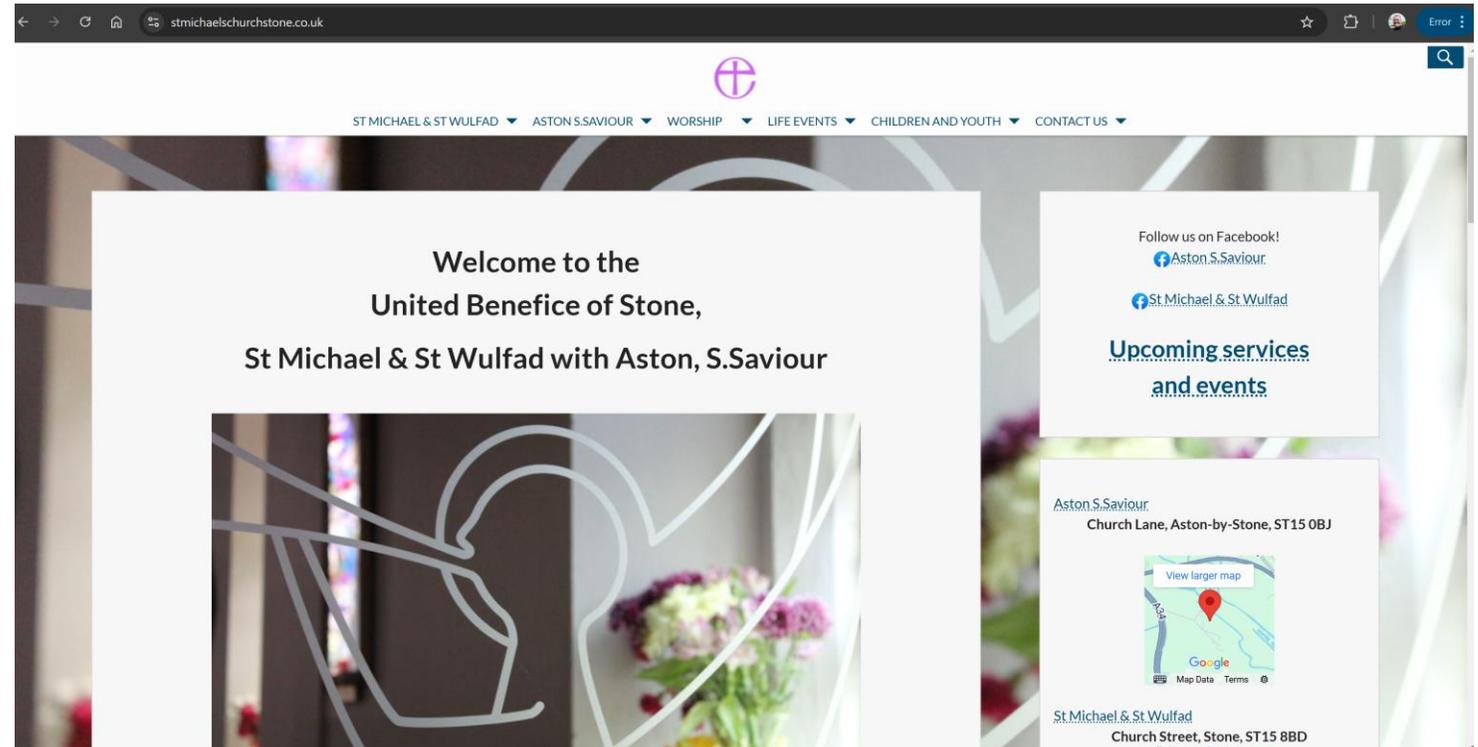
Collage Café is a low-key Christian presence in the high street; the artwork gives the message. As we are in a public area, curious passers-by like to see what we are doing, have a chat and even join in.

We enjoy an excellent relationship with the Library Service to the extent that in July 2024 we were invited to provide the focal-point display for the annual Summer Reading Challenge, 'Marvellous Makers,' which is a major event in their calendar nationally. Our collages represented all the main Christian festivals and were linked to a quiz produced by the library for the hundreds of children who visited across the school holidays. Samples of work are also on display in our church.

# Outreach

## Church Web Page

<https://stmichaelschurchstone.co.uk/>



## Groups



*The benefice has links to the Scout Association. The 60-year-old Aston and Little Stoke Scout Group hold their carol service at St Saviour's with the Beaver scout section having a small garden area that they tend.*

*5th Stone ( St Michael's) have had a link with the church since 1915 when the then curate was appointed as Scoutmaster. The current reader serves as Chaplain to Stone and District Scouts.*



*Stone has a set of 10 bells and a very active team of ringers. The band are members of the North Staffordshire Association of Change Ringers. Ringing takes place for services, practices, quarter peals and peals.*

