

Church Commissioners
Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee
Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011
Benefices of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer;
Biddulph; Bagnall with Endon; and Leek and Meerbrook
(Diocese of Lichfield)

Note by Joanna Chandler-Clarke

Case summary

The draft Pastoral Scheme provides for

- dissolving the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer;
- transferring the parsonage house of the benefice of that benefice to the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance for diocesan purposes;
- transferring the parish of Rushton Spencer to the benefice of Biddulph and for the consequential amendment of benefice name;
- transferring the parish of Horton to the benefice of Bagnall with Endon and for the consequential amendment of benefice name and patronage;
- transferring the two parishes of Cheddleton; and Longsdon to the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook, and for the consequential amendment of benefice name and patronage.

Number of parishes/benefices	Four benefices, with their 11 constituent parishes to remain distinct
Number of representations or comments received	The draft Scheme attracted 40 representations against and five in favour. ¹
Based on a deanery plan? If so, an approved one? Or also relying on s6/21 consultations due to any material changes?	Based on a deanery plan developed during a diocesan initiative called <i>Shaping for Mission</i> but not an approved deanery plan which carries a presumption in favour. Consultation on the draft proposals under s6 was carried out.
Diocesan rationale in brief	As part of the Diocesan “Shaping for Mission” the Leek Deanery has developed a plan for the structuring of benefices within the deanery which it believes will allow all parishes to have a sustainable future, both missionally and financially. Joining smaller parishes with a larger one with which they share a parochial border will allow the minister of the combined benefice to oversee and develop a largely lay-led worshipping community at one parish whilst offering a more traditional model of ministry and leadership at the other. It is hoped that the new

¹ Formally, 41 representations against were received. Since receiving the Bishop’s reply, Cheddleton PCC confirmed their representation was, in fact, in favour.

	arrangements will be of benefit to securing a missional future for all parishes involved, preventing any church closures within the deanery.
Main themes in the representations and any unusual factors	<p>There are six main areas of concern:</p> <p>(1) the consultation process (views not been heard, threat of church closures and no consideration of alternatives)</p> <p>(2) the dissolution of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer (works well as a unit and there are positive and supportive relationships)</p> <p>(3) linking the parish of Horton with the benefice of Bagnall with Endon (different traditions, geography and socio-economic contexts and lack of clergy time)</p> <p>(4) linking the parishes of Cheddleton and Longsdon with the Leek and Meerbrook Team (different traditions, geography and socio-economic contexts, lack of clergy time)</p> <p>(5) linking the parish of Rushton Spencer with the benefice of Biddulph (clergy workload, difficult access to Rushton Spencer, different traditions and geographic links)</p> <p>(6) lack of consideration of alternative reorganisation.</p>
Parish traditions	See Annex E – Parish Information Forms
Sifting decision	The Sifting panel decided at its meeting on 1 February 2024 that this case should be afforded a public hearing.
Possible decisions	<p>a) To allow the scheme to proceed as drafted;</p> <p>b) To decide that the scheme should not be made;</p> <p>c) To refer the scheme back to the Bishop;</p> <p>d) To exercise the Committee’s powers to allow the scheme to proceed subject to certain amendments being made to give effect to proposals made in representations, to which amendments the Bishop must agree. The Commissioners would be required to carry out such further consultation on the amended scheme as they considered appropriate.</p>
Technical/legal issues to be considered	Although the Commissioners does not accept that it is subject to any relevant duty, were such duties to apply there is some reference in representations which may suggest that the draft scheme might have an adverse effect on persons with relevant protected characteristics which might engage the duty under s. 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and questions of whether the scheme is discriminatory. Those representations have in view church traditions (link with Horton and Bagnall with Endon; link with Cheddleton and Longsdon and the Leek and Meerbrook Team; link with Rushton Spencer and Biddulph) and the possible impact on older or disabled people in the proposed new benefice of Bagnall with Endon and Horton because of poor transport links.

Attached are:

- Annex A: A copy of the draft Pastoral Scheme;
- Annex B: A scaled map of the area;
- Annex C: A copy of the letter referring the representations to the Bishop with a summary of the representations together with his response;
- Annex D: A copy of the documents supplied by the Bishop:
(i) Shaping for Mission – Leek Deanery
(ii) Shaping for Mission – Horton parish;
(iii) Letter from the Diocesan Secretary regarding the Diocese’s policy on Total Return
- Annex E: Parish Information Forms for all the parishes involved in the reorganisation;
- Annex R: A copy of the representations;
- Annex S: A copy of the supplementary representations plus comments received

Introduction

The Committee is invited to consider the draft Pastoral Scheme providing for:

- the dissolution of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer;
- the transfer of the parsonage house of that benefice to the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance for diocesan purposes;
- the transfer of the parish of Rushton Spencer to the benefice of Biddulph, where it shall continue distinct, and for the consequential amendment of the benefice name;
- the transfer of the parish of Horton to the benefice of Bagnall with Endon, where it shall continue distinct, and for the consequential amendment of the benefice name and patronage;
- the transfer of the two parishes of Cheddleton; and Longsdon to the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook, where they shall continue distinct, and for the consequential amendment of the benefice name and patronage.

The draft Scheme attracted **40 representations against** and **five in favour**.

Background

1. A Pastoral Scheme made in June 2014 created the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer by union of benefices, its area comprising the four distinct parishes of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer.
2. A Pastoral Scheme made in 2004 created the benefice of Bagnall with Endon by union of benefices, its area comprising the two distinct parishes of Endon and Stanley, and St Chad, Bagnall. The benefice had previously been held in plurality with the benefice of Brown Edge which, under the same deanery plan as these proposals, was united with the benefice of Milton and Norton in November 2023.
3. The Leek and Meerbrook Team Ministry was created by Pastoral Scheme made in 1979 and was amended by subsequent Schemes in 1983 and 2021. Its area comprises the four distinct parishes of All Saints, Leek; Saint Edward's, Leek; Saint Luke's and Saint Paul's, Leek; and Saint Matthew's, Meerbrook.
4. The Parish Information Forms supplied by the parishes (**Annex E**) show the populations, electoral rolls and church traditions of the parishes affected by these proposals (where supplied):

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Electoral Roll</u>	<u>Church tradition</u>
Cheddleton	5000+	105	Central
Horton	789	32	Central
Longsdon	500 (adults)	18	Central plus
Rushton Spencer	732	26	Traditional evangelical (middle churchmanship)
Bagnall	812	55	Low
Endon and Stanley	3163	68	Traditional liturgical

Biddulph	9000+	194	Charismatic evangelical
All Saints, Leek		83	Anglo-Catholic (high)
St Edward the Confessor, Leek	9000	114	Variety of styles
St Luke and St Paul, Leek	7500	117	Low evangelical
Meerbrook	350	60	Traditional

Summary of the themes in the Representations against the draft Scheme

5. The draft Scheme attracted 40 representations against it (in full in **Annex R** and summarised in Annex 1 to the letter to the Bishop at **Annex C**).
6. General objections to the draft Scheme as a whole are that the proposed reorganisation is not being advanced for a proper purpose under the enabling legislation, does not further mission under section 1 of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 (“MPM 2011”) and fails the tests under section 3(1)-(3) as it does not meet the needs of the parishioners or respect traditions and is likely to lead to parish church closures. It is also considered that the draft Scheme will not achieve the better cure of souls; and does not benefit worship, mission or community.
7. Representors raised concerns about the consultation process. They argued that the team put together to research, assess needs and produce draft proposals for the Leek Deanery Pastoral Scheme, the Shaping of Mission (“SfM”) Team was not properly constituted, and the process of consultation was not followed correctly. The laity, at various meetings, have been led to believe that there is no alternative to the current proposals, otherwise the future will result in church closures. They feel the proposals have been forced upon them and that their views have not been heard or listened to. They say that alternatives have not been considered.
8. Several representors object to the dissolution of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer (“Cheddleton etc”), saying that it works well, with similar like-minded churches, and it is completely undesirable to break this established bond which provides a positive and supportive relationship for all churches in the benefice.
9. A significant number of the representations (19) relate to concerns regarding the parish of Horton and the proposed link with the benefice of Bagnall and Endon. They say that Horton is a rural and farming parish which looks to Leek. St Chad, Bagnall, and Endon are suburban and look to Stoke-on-Trent. The proposed 15% of an incumbent’s time is not considered to be sufficient to allow proper engagement with the parish school and to allow the incumbent to provide the number of Holy Communion services needed to maintain Horton’s church tradition. St Chad, Bagnall, and Endon are said to be evangelical parishes and inclusion of their patron, the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS), is also likely to change the style of worship at Horton. A concern is also raised about the lack of direct public transport between Horton and Bagnall with Endon which it is said may discriminate against those older in years and the poor.

10. Several representations were received regarding the parishes of Cheddleton and Longsdon joining the Leek and Meerbrook Team. They say that the proposals will destroy Longsdon's rural worshipping community and that the number of services will fall because of their limited allocation of the incumbent's time and lack of lay volunteers to lead them. They also say that the proposals do not respect the parish's needs and traditions and are likely to lead to church closures.
11. There are 15 representations, from Biddulph parishioners, regarding the parish of Rushton Spencer joining the benefice of Biddulph. They say that adding Rushton Spencer to Biddulph will add too much to their new incumbent's workload and his time commitment to Rushton Spencer (which one says will need to be more than 15%) will undermine the implementation of his evangelistic vision for their parish and may lead to its long-term decline. Rushton Spencer church is difficult to access from Biddulph and has only a small congregation so it is suggested that it should be closed. The parishes have different traditions and Biddulph looks to Congleton and the Potteries while Rushton Spencer looks to Leek.
12. Many representors say that no alternative pastoral reorganisation has been considered and various alternative suggestions are made.

Summary of the themes in the Representations in favour

13. The draft Scheme attracted five representations in favour. The Associate Archdeacon says the proposals derive from a rigorous and transparent exploration, by a representative group in the deanery, of mission challenges, pastoral and financial sustainability, as part of a Diocesan-wide, mission initiative. He says the draft Scheme:
 - a. reduces the deployment across the deanery by one post, thus making it sustainable overall;
 - b. addresses the mismatches from geographical perspectives for better ministry effectiveness and pastoral care;
 - c. puts weaker parishes with stronger ones for support and should avert moves towards closures or changes of status;
 - d. makes for manageable parish groupings which are more likely to attract applicants for the vacant roles;
 - e. has already received the support of the Deanery Synod.
14. Three parishioners from Biddulph express support and one says the reluctance of some Biddulph parishioners to accept Rushton Spencer is selfish and unchristian. One from Rushton Spencer believes a link with Biddulph offers the parish greater support, a variety of services, as well as the opportunity to grow and attract children and their families.
15. Cheddleton PCC initially said the proposals would not meet its wish for the consistent and continual presence of a committed, vital and active priest but subsequently confirmed that it is now in favour of the draft Scheme.

Summary of the Bishop's response

16. Following normal practice, the correspondence received was sent to the Bishop of Lichfield to respond. The letter to him and his response are attached in **Annex C**.
17. The Bishop says that no change is not an option, and the proposals were developed as part of the diocesan wide SfM process to create a sustainable future. The proposals form part of a deanery plan developed by a deanery team, which included clergy and laity from the deanery (and was convened by a diocesan facilitator). The Bishop says that the deanery as a whole was considered – rather than just the benefice of Cheddleton etc., – and a reduction of one post is required to ensure financial sustainability. The Scheme for Brown Edge, completed November 2023, is part of the same deanery plan. There is also the desire to make posts more attractive because there were no applications for the post at Cheddleton etc. in 2019.
18. The Bishop says that it is not possible to reduce posts and keep things the same and that better financial sustainability will lead to better cure of souls. The SfM team thought that it was easier to maintain missional energy in larger congregations so felt that partnerships with smaller ones would share energy and resources to support mission better. Festival churches were considered for some of the smaller churches, but the Bishop wants Sunday worship in every parish although this may not be eucharistic. The Bishop says that the partnership model means clergy would have more of an oversight role, aiming to increase parishioners' confidence in mission and ministry and reduce dependency on clergy.
19. Under the proposals, the Bishop says that no one parish sees a significant reduction in ministry allocation, but all parishes benefit from reduced parish share, which has not been paid in full by Longsdon and Cheddleton for some time. The Bishop sees no reason to expect a decrease in attendance figures and hopes they will increase with the proposed benefice arrangements.
20. In terms of church tradition, the Bishop says that there is no attempt to alter the tradition of any church and new incumbents are expected to be sensitive and respectful to a range of traditions. The Bishop provides an example of the last incumbent of Cheddleton etc. who describes herself as 'eclectic' in her spirituality. The Bishop notes that there has not been a Sunday eucharist in every parish for some time within the Cheddleton etc. benefice. and says that requiring a eucharist every week means clergy focus is on maintaining services, rather than mission and ministering to those in the parish outside the worshipping community. The proposed benefices provide greater geographical continuity and there would be a communion service in every benefice once a week, while retired clergy in the deanery would also support eucharistic worship.
21. The Bishop argues that the proposals will avoid church closures because of the increased financial sustainability across the deanery. He accepts that Rushton Spencer is fairly remote but says that the church is important for mission and the church itself wants to grow, as demonstrated by increased lay leadership. In the current arrangements, he says that Longsdon is at risk of closing and the proposed

link with Leek should enable it to thrive, but denies that there was any threat of closure in the consultation.

22. The Bishop refers to the high level of support expressed throughout the consultation process. The parishes completed a questionnaire about church life early in the SfM process and the proposals were developed based on these responses. Initial proposals were discussed with the Area Bishop and Archdeacon before consultation at Deanery Synod (where 90% supported the proposals) and with PCCs. The Bishop sets out the timeline of the consultation, noting initial support across the parishes with a few specific queries, such as the allocation of clergy time.
23. The Bishop notes that Biddulph PCC initially voted in favour of the proposed link with Rushton Spencer but thought that this was only on an informal basis. Biddulph PCC was unhappy with the proposed joint patronage arrangements because it wanted to retain CPAS as sole patron, so the Incumbent of Leek and Meerbrook (who had a patronage interest at Rushton Spencer) consented to CPAS being sole patron of the proposed new benefice. Concerns from Longsdon, Rushton Spencer and Horton were addressed in a meeting with the PCCs, Area Bishop and Archdeacon; subsequently, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer confirmed support for the proposals. Horton remained concerned about the involvement of CPAS as patron, in relation to the maintenance of their church tradition. The Bishop says that they have tried to reassure the PCC, and that the Patronage Secretary of CPAS has given assurances about future appointment processes. The Bishop says that Horton PCC did not respond to a request for another meeting about ministry.
24. The Bishop says that no alternative has been put forward which works for the whole deanery while achieving post reduction. There would not be enough clergy capacity for Horton to be linked with Leek and this suggestion would also leave Bagnall with Endon with a less than full-time post. The Bishop also says that Biddulph PCC was aware that the proposed link with Rushton Spencer was a formal one when the incumbent was appointed because they were included in the conversations about presentation.
25. He says that a lack of cohesion in the benefice of Cheddleton etc. is demonstrated, by poor attendance at united services and a breakdown of relationships over the employment of a benefice administrator. In addition, attendance and worshipping communities within the benefice have been decreasing. The Bishop notes that Cheddleton PCC is now content with the link with Leek and has been building relationships.
26. The Bishop says that the use of £5.85 million of Unapplied Return from a change to Total Return Accounting (TRA) cannot be used to support a post at the Cheddleton etc. benefice. He says that the money is not cash income and does not generate anything which can be spent. Even if the money could be spent in this way, the Bishop notes that the fund would be spent in a year if 1% was allocated to every benefice in the diocese. (See also paragraph 33 below).

27. Regarding concerns relating specifically to the proposed link of the parish of Horton with the benefice of Bagnall with Endon:
- a. The Bishop does not believe that different sociological make-up and amenities and lack of public transport would hamper the partnership between the parishes. He agrees that Horton is rural and has its own distinct character but notes that Bagnall is also rural with a significant farming community. He also says that Horton has no public transport to anywhere; the bus stop to Leek is 1.5 miles away and the bus runs on weekdays only.
 - b. The Bishop thinks that the change in patronage would be unlikely to impact the worship style and the tradition of Horton. He describes the style at Horton as informal and that at Endon as mixed but with some services which are virtually identical in tradition to Horton. Neither of the two parishes is conservative evangelical. The Bishop says that the previous plurality of Bagnall with Endon and Brown Edge, which is of the same/higher tradition to Horton, demonstrates that there should not be an issue with the patron nor with sharing a vicar.
 - c. The proposed allocation of clergy time at Horton is only slightly less than existing (currently 17%, proposed 15%). The Bishop says that there would be less dependence on eucharistic services in all parishes and notes that traditional worship does not have to be eucharistic.
 - d. In terms of time to devote to local schools, the Bishop reiterates that the allocation of clergy time is only slightly reduced at Horton but notes that there are fewer schools in the new benefice, so there would be more availability for this ministry.
28. Responding to concerns relating specifically to the transfer of Cheddleton and Longsdon to the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook:
- a. The Bishop says that Longsdon would be allocated 15% of clergy time (reduced from 17%) and Cheddleton 40% (reduced from 50%). He sets out other changes to ministry allocation across the affected benefices in a table.
 - b. He says that the capacity of Longsdon to hold lay-led services would be developed by a new oversight minister who would establish a new sustainable model of services. He notes that there is already a lay reader and a lay person who has led services at Longsdon and repeats that his hope is for Sunday worship in every church.
 - c. The Bishop notes Cheddleton's wish to have a full-time vicar but says that the proposals only involve a small reduction in clergy allocation for Cheddleton which would only be split between two parishes, rather than four as existing. The Bishop understands that the vicarage is important and notes that it may be used if a new house between Cheddleton and All Saints, Leek could not be found.
29. The Bishop's responds to concerns relating specifically to the transfer of Rushton Spencer to the benefice of Biddulph as follows:

- a. Regarding increased workload and burnout of clergy, he says that clergy well-being is taken seriously. The priest appointed to Biddulph knew of the potential oversight role at Rushton Spencer when appointed and there is a strong lay team at Biddulph, and a growing one at Rushton Spencer. The priest is now also acting as curate-in-charge of Rushton Spencer and is not worried about the workload.
 - b. The Bishop considers Biddulph to have enough capacity and be strong enough to sustain the proposals and does not want the parish to be overly dependent on its vicar. He says Rushton Spencer has the potential to thrive and Biddulph has the potential to have a confident and outward-looking vision.
 - c. Rushton Spencer church is Grade II* listed and in good condition; the average Sunday attendance is 11 adults and one child but that new opportunities are arising, and it is relatively strong for the size of the community, which justifies it staying open. He says Biddulph and Rushton Spencer share a border and are just a 10-minute drive apart and that Rushton Spencer is happy with this link because it is geographically remote from everywhere, despite the suggestion that it has closer links to Leek and Macclesfield. Biddulph has stronger connections to the Biddulph Valley but the Bishop notes that the parish is not pursuing other links at the moment and that Rushton Spencer would not hinder building relationships with others in the Biddulph Valley.
 - d. The Bishop describes Rushton Spencer as 'Rural CofE' with a central tradition. As the only local church, it has members with a variety of traditions, so the Bishop does not think it would be difficult for them to work together.
 - e. He sets out the process for appointments, noting both PCCs would have two parish representatives who would collaborate over profile writing and consensus would be sought over any appointment.
30. The alternative suggestions for reorganisation put forward in the representations have not been considered by the AMPC or DMPC because they had not been raised earlier. The Bishop says they would be considered if they were financially sustainable, but he does not think this the case. The Bishop notes that the process has been long (over two years) and there is a high degree of consensus, so he does not want to go back to the drawing board as it has become detrimental to the parishes in vacancy.

Summary of the Representors' supplementary views

31. Supplementary comments were received by four representors (**Annex S**). One (13) makes some factual corrections/comments on the Bishop's timeline in relation to Biddulph and Rushton Spencer, particularly emphasising that a formal benefice change was not understood until March 2022 but that there is a willingness to work with the church at Rushton Spencer. Another (24) makes further comments about financing posts using funds released from Total Return Accounting, using examples of other dioceses which use TRA funds to support additional ministry posts. He suggests an additional 45 clergy posts could be funded in the Diocese which could include supporting a half-time or full-time post for a rural benefice of Meerbrook,

Rushton Spencer, Horton and Longsdon (an alternative he puts forward). He makes an historical and theological argument for Holy Communion constituting a tradition and provides figures he says demonstrate the tradition in recent years at Horton. Another representor (26) feels that mission should be the key driver behind the proposals, rather than financial reasons and asks if thought has been given to combining Rushton Spencer with Bosley.

32. Cheddleton PCC (37) has confirmed that it now has no objection to the Pastoral Scheme as proposed, is happy to join the Leek Team Ministry and looks forward to a shared ministry with All Saints Church. It says that its original response to the consultation was purely concerned with the extremely protracted amount of time being taken to resolve the situation and the somewhat obscure nature of the language used.

Summary of additional comments received

33. In addition to the further comments from representors, comments were received from thirteen people who did not originally submit a written representation. Ten are from the parish of Bagnall who are keen to continue with their relationship with Endon and also happy with the proposal for Horton to join the benefice. They express a sense of disappointment about the comments made in the representations from Horton and they say that there has been no response to their approaches. The benefice has been in a long vacancy, and they are keen to make an appointment to ease the pressure on the lay leaders. Many note the differences in tradition but say that they are willing to work together, look for similarities and learn from each other.
34. Three are from the parish of Horton who are concerned about the significant changes proposed to the parish of Horton by merging it with Bagnall and Endon. In particular, they say Horton has a small local farming community versus the more urban areas of Endon and Bagnall. They say that Horton depends and thrives on its Church community and it is vital to retain a locally-based vicar for the benefit of local people who need to congregate together as a rural community with all the local activities centred around their church and vicar.

Summary of the Diocese's supplementary views

35. The Diocesan Secretary has written in response to Father Anderson's supplementary comments about Unapplied Total Return (**Annex D iii**). She explains that the Diocese has taken a conservative approach to UTR and that most of the £500,000 annual allocation it is making will be required to be applied to avoid a deficit on its annual budget, which itself is based on a reduction in clergy posts. She says only 2% of this figure is available for stipends support (with a further 2% for Mission initiatives) which is not sufficient to provide support on the scale Fr Anderson advocates. She says his comparison with the Diocese of Oxford does not reflect their different contexts.

36. Following the comment received that “Nigel Irons has already been installed as our “Curate” and Cheddleton are interviewing vicars” the position has been clarified by the Diocese. The Diocese has confirmed that the Reverend Nigel Irons, Team Rector for the Leek and Meerbrook team, has been installed as curate-in-charge for Longsdon parish. The Diocese has also confirmed that the Leek and Meerbrook Team have recently interviewed for one of the vacant team vicar posts. The Team Vicar will also be licensed as curate-in-charge for the parish of Cheddleton. Should the Committee decide that the draft Scheme should not proceed it is the diocesan intention that these appointments would continue, for the time being, whilst further considerations for patterns of ministry are under discussion to ensure the parishes have appropriate pastoral care. However, they are not intended to prejudge such decision as the Committee may reach.
37. Diocesan representatives will respond to other points in the supplementary comments at the Hearing.

Information for the Committee

38. The Commissioners do not consider that they are exercising public functions for the purposes of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010. However, in the event that it may be determined that this is not correct, and without prejudice to their primary contention, the Commissioners have considered the application of the public sector equality duty (“PSED”) which is set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 along with the application of equalities duties which would apply as a result of the Human Rights Act. In this case, officers have identified elements of the proposed scheme which might have an impact on people with a protected characteristic, namely religion and belief and age (arising from the lack of public transport).
39. The Committee must consider whether it is sufficiently informed in order to discharge its duties. The Committee should consider whether on all the evidence available to it considers that the obligations under s. 149 would apply.
40. The Committee should consider whether – were it to apply – they have discharged the Commissioners’ duty under s. 149 of the Equality Act 2010. If the Committee concluded that were there any adverse impact to persons with the protected characteristics which it had identified, it would need to weigh countervailing considerations in the balance such as the conclusion which they reach as to whether the draft scheme would further the mission of the Church of England if made.
41. For the reasons set out above although the Commissioners do not consider that they are under any obligation to do so, the Committee should consider whether the draft scheme would be directly or indirectly discriminatory in its effect or impact. If the Committee concludes that there is any discrimination should the proposed scheme proceed, the Committee should consider whether any discrimination would be justified on the basis that it pursues legitimate aims, and that the means employed would be proportionate to the aims pursued.

The Issues

The main issues to be considered are as follows:

- Has the draft scheme been brought forward for a proper purpose under the requirements of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011?
- Has the diocesan team fulfilled the requirements of the consultation process?
- Does the draft Scheme have sufficient regard to the “traditions, needs and characteristics” of the individual parishes? In particular:
 - Are there significant differences in church traditions and in the rural and suburban cultures between Horton and the parishes of Bagnall and Endon which would affect their ability to work effectively together?
 - Are there significant differences in church traditions between the parishes of Biddulph and Rushton Spencer which would affect their ability to work effectively together?
 - Are there significant differences in Church traditions between Longsdon and the parishes in the Leek and Meerbrook Team which would affect their ability to work effectively together?
- Will the workload for clergy in the new arrangement be sustainable and reasonable?
- Were there any alternative suggestions made in the representations which should be considered further?
- Will the draft Scheme further the mission of the Church of England and make better provision for the cure of souls?
- Without making any concession that the Commissioners are subject equalities duties under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010:
 - Has the Committee identified any representation which argues that, if made, the draft Scheme would have an adverse impact on provision in the diocese for those holding a relevant protected characteristic, such as religion or belief, or age?
 - Is the Committee satisfied that it has obtained sufficient information to make an assessment of the impact based on a combination of the information supplied to it from the diocese and parishes, including data gathered during the representations process?

- Is the Committee satisfied that it has paid due regard to the obligations of the Public Sector Equality Duty?
- Does the Committee consider the draft Scheme is directly or indirectly discriminatory in its effect or impact?
- If so, does the Committee consider that any discrimination would be justified on the basis that it pursues legitimate aims?

For decision:

The Committee is invited to consider the representations and the issues set out in this report and decide whether:

- (a) the draft Scheme should proceed as drafted;
- (b) the draft scheme should not proceed;
- (c) the draft Scheme should be referred back to the Bishop for further consideration;
- (d) to exercise the Commissioners' powers to allow the scheme to proceed subject to certain amendments being made to give effect to proposals made in representations, to which amendments the Bishop must agree. The Committee must decide whether it considers that it would be appropriate to carry out such further consultation on the amended scheme and, if so, what.



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26th April 2024

SUMMARY OF MAIN PROVISIONS OF DRAFT SCHEME (NOT PART OF THE DRAFT SCHEME)

This draft Scheme provides for:

- *the dissolution of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer;*
 - *the transfer of the parsonage house of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer to the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance for diocesan purposes;*
 - *the transfer of the parish of Rushton Spencer in the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer to the benefice of Biddulph, where it shall continue distinct, and for the consequential amendment of benefice name;*
 - *the transfer of the parish of Horton in the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer to the benefice of Bagnall with Endon, where it shall continue distinct, and for the consequential amendment of benefice name and patronage;*
 - *the transfer of the two parishes of Cheddleton; and Longsdon in the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer to the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook, where they shall continue distinct, and for the consequential amendment of benefice name and patronage;*
- all within the diocese of Lichfield.*

DRAFT

PASTORAL SCHEME

This Scheme is made by the Church Commissioners (“the Commissioners”) this day of 202 in pursuance of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 (“the 2011 Measure”), the Right Reverend Michael, Bishop of Lichfield, having consented thereto.

WHEREAS

1. by virtue of a Scheme made by the Commissioners in pursuance of the Pastoral Measure 1968 (“the 1968 Measure”) on the 9th day of March 1979 (“the 1979 Scheme”) a team ministry was established for the area of the new benefice of Leek;
2. by virtue of a further Scheme made by the Commissioners in pursuance of the 1968 Measure on the 3rd day of March 1983 (“the 1983 Scheme”) the name of the benefice of Leek was altered to the benefice of “Leek and Meerbrook”;
3. by virtue of a further Scheme made by the Commissioners in pursuance of the 2011 Measure on the 26th day of October 2021 (“the 2021 Scheme”) further amendments were made to the said team ministry and its patronage board;

4. the said Bishop has approved proposals providing for, amongst other things, making further amendments to the patronage board established for the said team ministry;

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby provided as follows:-

Dissolution of benefice and transfer of parsonage house

1. (1) The benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer in the diocese of Lichfield shall be dissolved.

(2) The parsonage house of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer (known as The Vicarage, Hollow Lane, Cheddleton, Leek, ST13 7HP), together with the site and appurtenances thereof and the grounds usually occupied and enjoyed therewith, shall without any conveyance or other assurance be transferred to the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance for diocesan purposes.

(3) If immediately before this Scheme comes into operation any person holds an office of assistant curate (however described) in the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer he, she or they shall as consequence of the dissolution of the said benefice effected by the Scheme hold such office or offices subject to the same terms of service in the benefice renamed Biddulph with Rushton pursuant to clause 2 hereof and/or the benefice renamed Bagnall with Endon and Horton pursuant to clause 3(1) hereof and/or the benefice renamed Leek Area Team pursuant to clause 4 hereof as the Bishop shall direct.

Transfer of parish of Rushton Spencer to the benefice of Biddulph and alteration of benefice name

2. The parish of Rushton Spencer, being one of the constituent parishes of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer in the diocese of Lichfield, shall be transferred to the benefice of Biddulph (the name of which shall be altered to "The Benefice of Biddulph with Rushton") in the same diocese and shall continue distinct as one of the parishes which comprise the area of that benefice.

Transfer of parish of Horton to the benefice of Bagnall with Endon, alteration of benefice name and alteration of patronage arrangements

3. (1) The parish of Horton, being one of the constituent parishes of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer in the diocese of Lichfield, shall be transferred to the benefice of Bagnall with Endon (the name of which shall be altered to "The Benefice of Bagnall with Endon and Horton") in the same diocese and shall continue distinct as one of the parishes which comprise the area of that benefice.

(2) With the consent of the Bishop of Lichfield (in testimony whereof he has executed this Scheme) and of the incumbent of the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook ("the Leek incumbent") and the Church Pastoral Aid Society

Patronage Trust, whose registered office is at Sovereign Court One (Unit 3), Sir William Lyons Road, University of Warwick Science Park, Coventry, CV4 7EZ ("CPAS") (which consents have been given in writing), a share of the patronage of the benefice of Bagnall with Endon, which patronage is now exercisable jointly by the Leek incumbent and CPAS, shall hereby be transferred to and vested in the Bishop of Lichfield in his corporate capacity ("the Bishop") to the end that the right of presentation to the benefice renamed Bagnall with Endon and Horton pursuant to clause 3(1) hereof shall henceforth be exercisable jointly by the incumbent of the benefice renamed the Leek Area Team pursuant to clause 4 hereof in his corporate capacity, CPAS and the Bishop.

Transfer of parishes of Longsdon; and Cheddleton to the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook and alteration of benefice name

4. The parish of Longsdon and the parish of Cheddleton, being two of the constituent parishes of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer in the diocese of Lichfield, shall be transferred to the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook (the name of which shall be altered to "The Benefice of the Leek Area Team") in the same diocese and shall continue distinct as two of the parishes which comprise the area of that benefice.

Amendment to the Leek and Meerbrook team ministry patronage board

5. The 1979 Scheme as amended by the 1983 Scheme and the 2021 Scheme shall be further amended as follows:

The Schedule to the 2021 Scheme shall be deleted and the following shall be substituted:-

**“SCHEDULE
Constitution of the Patronage Board**

The patronage board referred to in clauses 6 and 7 of this Scheme shall consist of:-

- (1) the following in right of their respective offices:-
 - (a) the Bishop of Lichfield, who shall be chairman of the board and shall have one vote as a member of the board and a casting vote as chairman;
 - (b) the archdeacon of the archdeaconry to which the new benefice shall for the time being belong, who shall have one vote;
 - (c) any vicar in the team ministry, any deacon authorised to serve in the team ministry, and any person having special responsibility for pastoral care under section 34(8) of the 2011 Measure who shall jointly have one vote which shall be exercised by such one or more of them (acting alone, unanimously or by a majority) as may be present at the meeting in question;
 - (d) for the purpose only of meetings at which the person to be appointed a vicar in the team ministry is considered and chosen, the rector of the team ministry who shall have one vote;

- (2) the parochial church councils of the parishes of Saint Edward’s, Leek; Saint Luke’s and Saint Paul’s, Leek; All Saints, Leek; Saint Matthew’s, Meerbrook; Longsdon; and Cheddleton, which shall each have one vote and shall be represented at any meeting of the board by one member of each of the councils authorised to act and vote on behalf of that council;
- (3) additionally where a team vicar is to be appointed and the Bishop proposes to assign a special cure of souls to that team vicar in accordance with the provisions of clause 7 of the 2021 Scheme hereof the parochial church council (or councils) of any parish or parishes to which (or to part of which) such special cure of souls would relate each of which shall be represented at any meeting of the Board to which this sub-clause applies by one lay member of the said council (or councils) authorised to act and vote on behalf of such council each of whom shall have one vote.”.

Coming into operation of this Scheme

6. This Scheme shall come into operation upon the first day of the month following the date of it being made by the Commissioners.

In witness of which this Scheme has been duly executed as a deed by the Church Commissioners.

SIGNED by the)
)
 Right Reverend Michael,)
)
 Bishop of Lichfield.)

Executed as a Deed by the Church Commissioners for England acting by two authorised signatories:

 Signature of Authorised Signatory

 Signature of Authorised Signatory

Notes by the Diocesan office (not forming part of the draft Scheme)

The rationale behind the diocesan proposals is as follows:

As part of the Diocesan “Shaping for Mission” the Leek Deanery has developed a plan for the structuring of benefices within the deanery which it believes will allow all parishes to have a sustainable future, both missionally and financially. Joining smaller parishes with a larger one with which they share a parochial border will allow the minister of the combined benefice to oversee and develop a largely lay-led worshipping community at one parish whilst offering a more traditional model of ministry and leadership at the other. It is hoped that the new arrangements will be of benefit to securing a missional future for all parishes involved, preventing any church closures within the deanery.

Publication of this draft Scheme has been approved by the Church Commissioners but does not mean that they have taken a view on the merits of the diocesan case.

If they receive representations against the draft Scheme, the Commissioners will send all representations, both for and against, to the Bishop whose views will be sought. Individual representors will then receive copies of the Commissioners’ correspondence with the Bishop (including copies of all the representations) and they may comment further in writing to the Commissioners in light of the diocesan response if they so wish.

If there are no representations against the draft Scheme, the Commissioners will make the Scheme and arrange for it to be brought into effect.

Patronage

1. The Bishop of Lichfield has a historical connection as patron of the former benefice of Horton in his corporate capacity. Therefore, by proposing to bring the parish of Horton into the benefice of Bagnall with Endon it is proposed that the patronage of the benefice will be exercised jointly by CPAS, the incumbent of the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook (renamed the Leek Area Team) in his corporate capacity and the Bishop of Lichfield in his corporate capacity.
2. The benefice of Biddulph currently has the Martyrs Memorial and Church of England Trust as its sole patron. The incumbent of the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook in his corporate capacity has a historical connection as patron of the former benefice of Rushton Spencer. However, subject to the consultation process, the incumbent

of the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook has agreed to relinquish this patronage interest. The net result of this being that if a pastoral scheme is made to move the parish of Rushton Spencer into the benefice of Biddulph (and renamed Biddulph with Rushton) the sole patron of the new benefice will be the Martyrs Memorial and Church of England Trust.

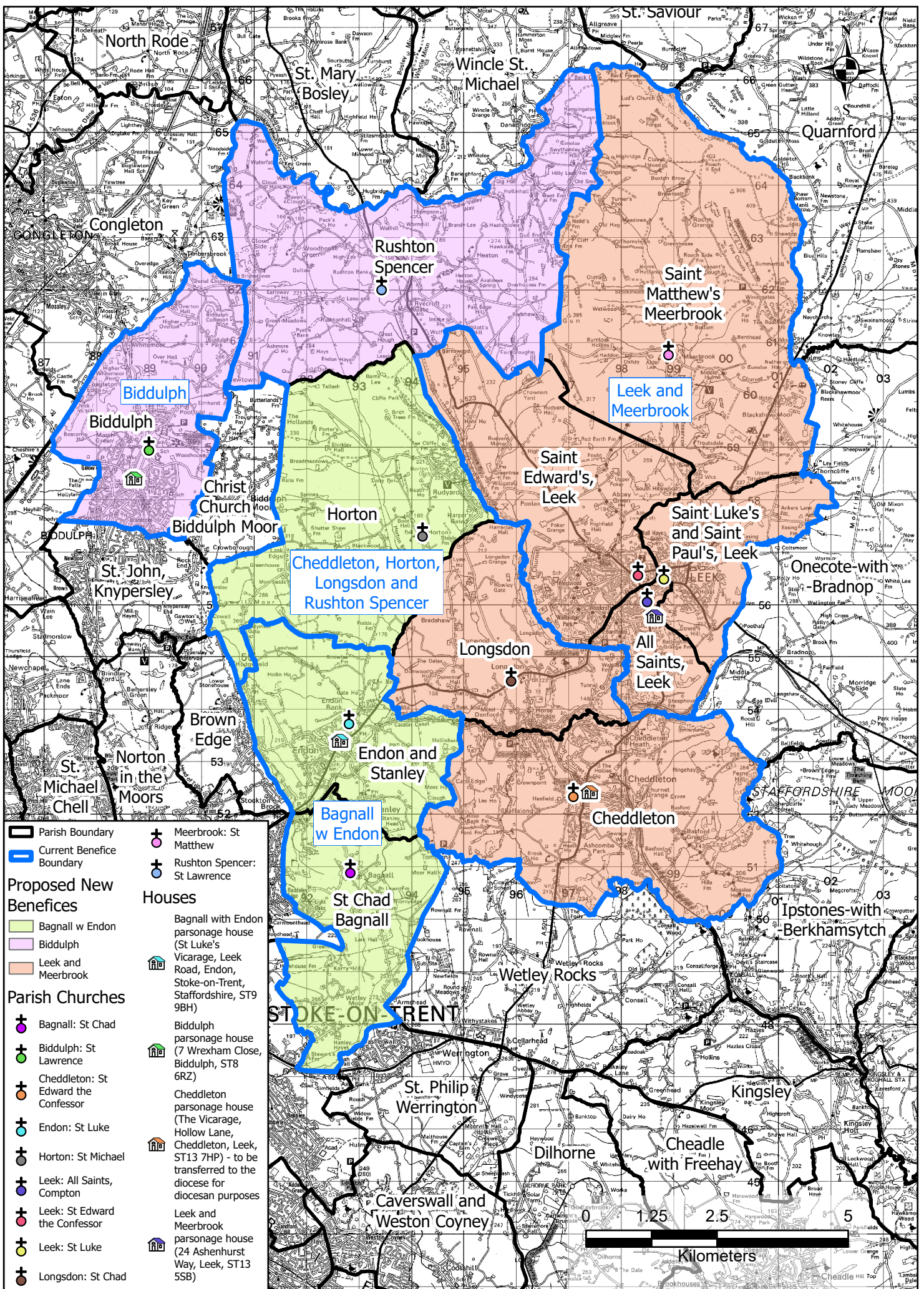
3. As a result of moving the parish of Longsdon and the parish of Cheddleton into the area of the renamed benefice of the Leek Area Team, provision is being made to reflect this by altering the membership of its patronage board.

The parsonage house of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer – clause 1(2)

4. Provision is made for this property to be transferred to the diocese for diocesan purposes i.e. to house clergy.

Deployment

5. As a result of this proposed pastoral reorganisation the revised deployment figures would be as follows:
 - a) Biddulph with Rushton 1.0
 - a. Biddulph – 0.85
 - b. Rushton Spencer – 0.15
 - b) Bagnall with Endon and Horton – 1.0
 - a. Bagnall – 0.3
 - b. Endon – 0.55
 - c. Horton – 0.15
 - c) Leek Area Team – 3.0
 - a. All Saints, Leek – 0.6
 - b. St Edward's, Leek – 0.85
 - c. St Luke's and St Paul's, Leek – 0.75
 - d. St Matthew's, Meerbrook – 0.25
 - e. Longsdon – 0.15
 - f. Cheddleton – 0.4



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By email only

Bishop of Shrewsbury

Katie Lowe

Pastoral

NB20/81BM/kl

3 November 2023

Dear Bishop

**Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011
Benefices of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer; Biddulph;
Bagnall with Endon; and Leek and Meerbrook
Proposed Pastoral Scheme**

Following the publication of the draft Pastoral Scheme providing for:

- dissolving the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer;
- transferring the parsonage house of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer to the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance for diocesan purposes;
- transferring the parish of Rushton Spencer to the benefice of Biddulph and for the amendment of benefice name;
- transferring the parish of Horton and for the consequential amendment of benefice name and patronage;
- transferring the two parishes of Cheddleton; and Longsdon to the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook, and for the consequential amendment of benefice name and patronage;

we received forty-five representations (41 against the draft Scheme and 4 in favour). I attach a summary of the representations (Annex 1) and a list of the representors together with the (redacted) representations received (Annex R).

The draft Scheme carried the following footnote as part of the 'diocesan rationale':

As part of the Diocesan “Shaping for Mission” the Leek Deanery has developed a plan for the structuring of benefices within the deanery which it believes will allow all parishes to have a sustainable future, both missionally and financially. Joining smaller parishes with a larger one with which they share a parochial border will allow the minister of the combined benefice to oversee and develop a largely lay-led worshipping

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community at one parish whilst offering a more traditional model of ministry and leadership at the other. It is hoped that the new arrangements will be of benefit to securing a missional future for all parishes involved, preventing any church closures within the deanery.

Overview of the representations

A fuller summary of the representations is attached as **Annex 1** and the (redacted) representations in full as **Annex R**.

Objections to the draft Scheme as a whole

The proposed reorganisation is not being advanced for a proper purpose under the enabling legislation, does not further mission under section 1 of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 (“MPM 2011”) and fails the tests under section 3(1)-(3) as it does not meet the needs of the parishioners or respect traditions and is likely to lead to parish church closures. It will not achieve the better cure of souls as the legislation requires and does not benefit worship, mission or community.

Consultation process

The team put together to research, assess needs and produce draft proposals for the Leek Deanery Pastoral Scheme, the Shaping of Mission Team (SfM Team) was not properly constituted and the process of consultation was not followed correctly. The laity, at various meetings, have been led to believe that there is no alternative to the current proposals, otherwise the future will result in church closures. They feel the proposals have been forced upon them and that their views have not been heard or listened to. Alternatives have not been considered.

Concerns regarding the dissolution of the benefice of Cheddleton etc

The current benefice of Cheddleton, Longsdon, Horton and Rushton Spencer (“Cheddleton etc”) works well, with similar like-minded churches, and it is completely undesirable to break this established bond which provides a positive and supportive relationship for all churches in the benefice.

Concerns regarding linking the parish of Horton with the benefice of Bagnall with Endon

Horton is a rural and farming parish which looks to Leek. Saint Chad, Bagnall, and Endon are suburban and look to Stoke-on-Trent. 15% of an incumbent’s time is not sufficient to allow proper engagement with the parish school. It will also not allow the incumbent to provide the number of Holy Communion services needed to maintain Horton’s church tradition. Saint Chad, Bagnall, and Endon are evangelical parishes and inclusion of their patron, the CPAS, is also likely to change the style of worship at Horton.

Concerns regarding the parishes of Cheddleton and Longsdon joining the Leek and Meerbrook Team

The proposals will destroy Longsdon's rural worshipping community. The number of services will fall because of their limited allocation of the incumbent's time and lack of lay volunteers to lead them. They do not respect the parish's needs and traditions and are likely to lead to church closures. Cheddleton PCC says it will not meet its wish for the consistent and continual presence of a committed, vital and active priest.

Concerns regarding the parish of Rushton Spencer joining the benefice of Biddulph

Adding Rushton Spencer to Biddulph will add too much to their new incumbent's workload and his time commitment to Rushton Spencer (which one says will need to be more than 15%) will undermine the implementation of his evangelistic vision for their parish and may lead to its long-term decline. Rushton Spencer church is difficult to access from Biddulph and has only a small congregation and should be closed. The parishes have different traditions and Biddulph looks to Congleton and the Potteries while Rushton Spencer looks to Leek.

Alternative reorganisation

There has been no consideration of alternative reorganisation, and a variety of suggestions are made.

Representations in favour of the draft Scheme

The assistant Archdeacon says the proposals derive from a rigorous and transparent exploration, by a representative group in the deanery, of mission challenges, pastoral and financial sustainability, as part of a Diocesan-wide, mission initiative. He says the draft Scheme:-

- a. reduces the deployment across the deanery by one post, thus making it sustainable overall;
- b. addresses mismatches from geographical perspectives for better ministry effectiveness and pastoral care;
- c. puts weaker parishes with stronger ones for support and should avert moves towards closures or changes of status;
- d. makes for manageable parish groupings more likely to attract applicants for the vacant roles;
- e. has already received the support of the Deanery Synod.

Three parishioners from Biddulph express support and one says the reluctance of some Biddulph parishioners to accept Rushton Spencer is selfish and unchristian. One from Rushton Spencer believes a link with Biddulph offers the parish greater support, a variety of services, as well as the opportunity to grow and attract children and their families.

If you wish the Scheme to proceed as drafted notwithstanding the representation against it, it will be necessary for our Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee to consider the matter. In that case, I should be grateful for your comments on the representations in general and on the following points:-

1. What were the main considerations behind the proposal to dissolve the benefice of Cheddleton *etc.* and transfer its parishes to the neighbouring three benefices?

Does this proposal derive from a deanery plan or diocesan initiative or was it put forward locally?

2. Please explain how you think the proposed reorganisation will further the mission of the Church and lead to the better cure of souls. Please also explain how it will meet the needs of the parishioners, respect the traditions of the parishes, benefit worship, mission or community and take account of financial considerations.
3. Please provide attendance and parish share contribution figures for the affected parishes in recent years. Do you share the concern that these may be reduced by the proposed reorganisation?
4. Why do you think the draft Scheme makes it less likely that there will be any church closures in the deanery (especially given the view expressed from Biddulph that the church at Rushton Spencer should close)?
5. Please set out the consultation process (both informal and formal) followed, including that by the Shaping for Mission Team, and any meetings held with the PCCs and/or the current incumbents/priests-in-charge. Please confirm the level of support, or otherwise, for what is being proposed, during the local consultation process. In particular, were there any objections from the PCCs?
6. How do you respond to the concern that diocesan representatives were not prepared to listen to any alternative suggested pastoral reorganisation and misled those at Biddulph that the proposed link with Rushton Spencer would be an informal one?
7. Why is it considered necessary to break up the Cheddleton *etc.* benefice? Please comment on the views that it has been a successful and cohesive unit, contributes sufficient parish share to cover the cost of an incumbent, and should be retained (or have the parish of Meerbrook added to it).
8. Please also comment on the suggestion by several representors that the diocese could use some of the £5.85m of Unapplied Return with the DSF to fund a stipendiary priest for the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer and that this would be just 1% of this figure on an annual basis.
9. Regarding the transfer of Horton to the benefice of Bagnall with Endon:
 - a. Please comment on the views that Horton does not identify with Bagnall with Endon, has a different sociological make-up, looks in a different direction for amenities and services and there are no direct transport links between them. Do you think these factors are likely to hamper them working together?
 - b. How do you respond to the concern that linking Horton with two evangelical parishes, and their patron (CPAS), is likely to change its style of worship and church tradition? Please elaborate on the evangelical stance taken in the parishes of Saint Chad, Bagnall, and Endon. For example, are they conservative evangelical etc?
 - c. In particular, will the priest's 15% time-allocation to Horton enable him to offer enough services of Holy Communion to maintain its worship tradition?

- Is it your expectation that in this grouping lay-led worship would mainly take place in Bagnall with Endon and traditional services in Horton?
- d. Please comment on the view that the priest will not have sufficient time to devote to the local schools at Horton.
10. In respect of the transfer of Cheddleton and Longsdon parishes to the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook:
- Would Longsdon and Cheddleton receive 15% of the ministerial time between them or would they receive 15% each? If the latter how would this affect Leek and Meerbrook?
 - Does Longsdon have the capacity for lay-led services? If not, is there likely to be a big reduction in the number of services there and how would that affect mission in the parish?
 - Please comment on the concern of Cheddleton PCC that there will not be a sufficient clergy presence in the parish.
11. Regarding the transfer of Rushton Spencer to the benefice of Biddulph:
- Please comment on the assertion that bringing Rushton Spencer into the benefice of Biddulph will give the new priest at Biddulph too much workload and could lead to “burn out”.
 - Are you concerned that taking on Rushton Spencer will lessen the priest’s capacity for the work at Biddulph, weaken outreach, pastoral care, strategic management, and planning there and undermine its own long-term sustainability?
 - Please comment on the concern that Rushton Spencer is geographically remote from Biddulph and its church is difficult to access and the view that its small number of active worshippers does not justify it remaining open for worship. Please can you let us know the headline condition of the Rushton Spencer Church and if it is a listed building.
 - Would the different church traditions at Rushton Spencer and at Biddulph make it difficult for them to work together?
 - Do you agree that Rushton Spencer has much closer links with Leek and, to a lesser extent, Macclesfield and, if so, would it be better grouped with other parishes which look in that direction? Are you concerned that joining Rushton Spencer to Biddulph will make it more difficult for Biddulph to pursue a more natural linkage with other the churches in the Biddulph valley such as St Lawrence’s Biddulph; St John’s Knypersley; and Christ Church, Biddulph Moor;
 - Some parishioners express concern about the future appointment process for clergy – please can you explain how the PCCs will be involved?
12. Were the various alternative suggestions for pastoral reorganisation put forward in the representations considered by the DMPC? If so, why were they rejected and, if not, would you be prepared to give them further consideration now?
13. Are there any other factors which the Commissioners should be aware of in their consideration of these representations?

In considering what information to include in your reply, I should be grateful if you would bear in mind that the Commissioners are now required to consider the representation under the quasi-judicial process laid down by the 2011 Measure. A

legal challenge may arise from the Commissioners' decision if, among other things, it is based materially on incorrect information. In some cases, this might necessitate the withdrawal of the Scheme. Of necessity, the Commissioners rely on others to provide the information to assist their deliberations and to this end I should be grateful for your help.

I am hoping that this matter can be considered at the 13 December meeting of our Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee. If the matter is to be considered at that meeting, we will need to receive your response by 23 November please. This is to allow time for this letter and your reply to be considered by our Sifting Panel to determine whether a public hearing will be held and for them to be sent to the representors, for them to make any further comments and, if necessary, for you to respond. As you know we also ask representors if they wish to speak to their representations at the Committee.

If oral representations were to be heard, there would also be an opportunity for you or a diocesan representative to speak in favour of the proposals. The diocesan representative may be any appropriate person (e.g. the Chairman or a member or the Secretary of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee or an Archdeacon) but should not be the Diocesan Registrar or other legal representative. We do not wish the Mission and Pastoral Measure process to take on the characteristics of an adversarial tribunal and have advised the representors that they too should not be legally represented.

Our normal practice is, as you probably know for oral representations to be made at a public hearing. It may also be possible for representors and diocesan representatives to make presentations and answer questions by video conferencing. That would depend in each case on the practicability of whether all those concerned were contactable online and able to participate in a video conference. It would be helpful therefore if you would confirm whether you or your representative(s) would be able to participate in this way. Otherwise, if a hearing is not to be held, the case will be considered in private and you will be informed accordingly.

We would normally expect the representations to be considered at the earliest opportunity but please let me know if you are unable to meet the timetable for the 13 December meeting or wish to give the matter further consideration or undertake further local consultations before replying. Once we have informed the representors of the meeting date (which we will do when sending them a copy of your reply) we would hope not to have to defer it. However, all parties will have the right to ask us to defer the matter to a subsequent meeting if justifiable reasons arise. The two following meeting dates for the Committee are 21 March, and 24 April for which I would need your response by 27 February and 28 March respectively.

I am copying this email to the Bishop of Stafford, the Archdeacon of Stoke-upon-Trent and Clare Beavon, Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Secretary.

Yours sincerely



Katie Lowe

Encs

Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

**Benefices of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer; Biddulph; Bagnall with Endon; and Leek and Meerbrook
Proposed Pastoral Scheme**

Summary of the representations

Objection to the draft Scheme as a whole

1. The Revd Stephen Anderson, (see representation 24) says his interest in the Scheme is as priest, parishioner and PCC member. He retired to Horton in 2021, having been a parish priest in Cambridge until October that year, has been granted permission to officiate by the Bishop and during the current vacancy in the benefice of Cheddleton, Longsdon, Horton and Rushton Spencer (“Cheddleton *etc*”) has been called upon regularly to officiate both at Horton and elsewhere in the benefice.
2. He and other representors (for example 23 and 38) say the proposed pastoral reorganisation scheme is not being advanced for a proper purpose under the enabling legislation, does not further mission under section 1 of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 (“MPM 2011”) and fails the tests under section 3(1)-(3). They say it has been voted down unanimously by Horton PCC as it does not meet the needs of the parishioners, does not respect their needs and traditions and is likely to lead to parish church closures. They say the proposal will not achieve the better cure of souls as the legislation requires and does not benefit worship, mission or community.
3. He and other representors (particularly 38) say the DMPC has failed to consider the traditions, needs and characteristics of particular parishes. They believe with the right appointment, the recruitment of a parish priest could well herald a new era of growth and development of the congregation with increased giving. They say it is difficult to see how the mission of the church is furthered, or how there will be fewer church closures as a result, when the Church of England’s own research shows that church attendance is correlated with the presence of stipendiary clergy in an area. They say the neglect of, and discrimination against the needs and wishes of, rural parishes like Horton in leaving them without a parish priest for long periods and then trying to force them into groups with urban parishes in disregard of their geography, tradition and way of living, on the basis of a spurious claim that this will “better” serve the cure of souls, is a distortion of the true picture.
4. Fr Anderson gives examples under the headings of Mission; Financial; and Likelihood of church closures; as to why the proposed reorganisation should not proceed.

Consultation process

5. Several representors (including 15, 22, 24 and 35) say the consultation process has not been conducted properly as time and again in various meetings at parish level, the laity have been led to believe that there is no alternative to the current proposals, otherwise the future will result in church closures. They feel the proposals have been forced upon them and that their views have not been heard or listened to.
6. One representor (10) believes that Biddulph PCC was misled into thinking that it was being asked to support an informal arrangement rather than a formal change in the benefice. He says neither the Rural Dean or Archdeacon came to a PCC meeting to give an explanation of what was proposed and this fed into the timing of their vacancy and became an issue that he would consider blackmail to their prospective candidates for the vicar's post, that for full agreement for their candidates to accept the terms of taking on the two parishes as a joint benefice.
7. Another representor (13), whilst understanding the need for some reorganisation in the Leek Deanery, particularly in regard to missional aspirations and deployment of resources is against the proposed scheme for a number of reasons including concern that the team put together to research, assess needs and produce draft proposals for the Leek Deanery Pastoral Scheme, the Shaping of Mission Team (SfM Team) was not properly constituted and that the process of consultation was not followed correctly; he details his reasons. He also states that at the point where St Lawrence's was about to advertise for a new incumbent, a statement from the Bishop of Stafford was issued which included a sentence about possible changes "it is likely that St Lawrence's will be asked to take on an additional small parish in the deanery". He says that the statement does not mention any change to the benefice of Biddulph.
8. Cheddleton PCC (37) asks why were the laity not involved in the discussions at a much earlier stage? Why the papers are written in arcane, ecclesiastical, legalistic jargon? Will the views of the laity be given sufficient consideration? Why has the process taken such an inordinately protracted time, given that several churches, including their own, have been in interregnum for a number of years, much to their detriment?

Concerns regarding the dissolution of the benefice of Cheddleton etc.

9. Several representors (including 1 and 40) believe the current benefice of Cheddleton etc. works well, with similar like-minded churches, and it is completely undesirable to break this established bond which provides a positive and supportive relationship for all churches in the benefice. Others (including 15, 24, 38) say that the current benefice of Cheddleton etc. has been without an incumbent for over 6 years and during that time has managed to hold weekly Holy Communion services taken by retired vicars, continue to maintain an active church, conduct many weddings, baptisms and

funerals and paid their parish share. In addition, the church (*at Horton*) remains in a good state of repair.

10. Other representors (23, 24 and 27) suggest that any financial case for disbanding benefices and reducing clergy numbers falls away with the adoption of Total Return Accounting for the DSF. They say this will release £5.85m of Unapplied Return within the DSF and the cost of engaging a stipendiary priest, for the current Cheddleton *etc.* benefice would be just 1% of this figure on an annual basis.

Concerns regarding linking the parish of Horton with the benefice of Bagnall with Endon

11. The PCC of Horton (see 24 and 30) has voted unanimously to reject the proposals. Concern is expressed (see 1, 14, 18, 25 and 28) about the geographical differences - Horton is a rural and largely farming community and this deep connection can be seen at weddings, funerals and baptisms when the farming families turn out in large numbers and can be depended on when the church organises community events with every seat taken. In contrast, the churches of Bagnall and Endon are essentially suburban parishes with professional workers. Within Cheddleton *etc.* Horton and the other three churches are all rural. Other representors (including 14) say they tend to have much more in common with other rural churches such as Rushton and Meerbrook which have a similar congregation background and Church tradition. They add that Horton is a parish within the Leek postal area, the population regularly travel to Leek for education, health care and amenities and should stay within the Leek Area Benefices. Bagnall and Endon have Stoke on Trent postcodes and have their own amenities. Another representor (24) emphasises that Horton just does not “identify” with Bagnall with Endon and so sociological factors will work against the proposed amalgamation.
12. One representor (24) says that mobility will be severely restricted in the proposed Benefice because there are no direct public transport links at all between Horton and Bagnall with Endon which discriminates against the elderly and the poor.
13. A worshipper at Horton and also at Endon (36) says that to anyone who has been actively and intimately involved in the church life of both these churches it soon becomes clear that there is a wide difference between the style of worship and the parish profiles. He wonders whether the combination of the proposed benefice of Bagnall with Endon and Horton might be detrimental to all three parties.
14. Many representors from Horton would like to see a priest with a visible presence in the community, taking an active role within the two schools and the farming community. One (14) says that they have suffered from the lack of a central figurehead since the last vicar left and under the new proposal they would only be awarded 15% of a new vicar’s time, which is insufficient for a parish which has been without a vicar for so long and requires a central

pastoral leader to support growth and consistency for the parishioners. Another representor (18) says that with just 15% of a priest's time means that some important events in the religious calendar would not be marked with a proper service and the provision available for family events would be severely affected.

15. Some (14, 16 and 17) are concerned that a priest devoting this percentage of time to Horton will not be able to have sufficient involvement with Horton St Michael's CE First School and Nursery which the children of the parish attend and which has always had close links with the Church with previous vicars taking on the roles of school governor and holding regular assemblies. One adds that it is a feeder school to the Leek Middle and High Schools and these links into Leek are very important for when these rural children move into the bigger Leek schools. The schools at Bagnall and Endon are feeder schools to Endon High School and the city colleges and there is no common link for the pupils at Horton.
16. Some have financial concerns with one representor (14) saying that this reorganisation has been identified as needed for financial reasons but the cost to Horton is more than financial. She says they would lose their identity and be a small fraction of a benefice in which they would not fit.
17. Another representor (24) says the Cheddleton *etc.* benefice has been selected for dissolution on financial grounds when the combined parish share is £65,000 and says it is well able to pay for an incumbent directly. He says the options for a full-time priest, a half-time priest or a house for duty priest do not appear to have been considered, which is a clear breach of the DMPC's obligation to consider alternative proposals under the MPM Code of Practice.
18. Many representors (including 1, 5, 11, 12, 21 and 25) are concerned about church traditions. They say Horton lies within the central tradition with the congregation made up of largely more elderly individuals whose families have been involved in the life of their local church for many generations. The proposed changes would place Horton with an Evangelical incumbent at Bagnall with Endon, whose congregations are mainly from a much more youth-orientated, urbanised culture and that Horton church gets people in the congregation from Endon and Bagnall who dislike the evangelical services there.
19. There is concern that this would result in Horton having lay-led ministry with only occasional Holy Communion, and an undesirable change to service style and very different patterns of service. One (number 6) suggests in the proposed arrangements the incumbent would only take a service at Horton every two months. Another (24) says that for the year ending June 2023 forty-four out of fifty services at Horton have held a celebration of Holy Communion. He says there are 60 occasions when worship would ordinarily be offered during the year and on the model provided by the Diocese, 15% of an incumbent's time would cover only 9 services during the year. He says the presumption must be that Holy Communion is likely to be replaced by lay volunteer led services of the Word and Horton will therefore be deprived of the

regular reception of the Sacrament, amounting to a fundamental change of church tradition.

20. There is also concern from some parishioners (17, 24, 32) of Horton that the benefice of Bagnall with Endon has CPAS as one of their patrons. They believe that it is likely that not only the format of worship will change but the way it is conducted too, resulting in a dramatic change to their style of worship, again a failure to respect its tradition as the MPM requires.

Concerns regarding the parishes of Cheddleton and Longsdon joining the Leek and Meerbrook Team

21. Some representors (3 and 38) say that Longsdon receiving only 15% of an incumbent's time would mean a big reduction in the number of services. One (3) asks how they would afford to pay for clergy to take services, as they do not have church members who would wish to or be able to take services that would encourage new members. She feels that money is wrongly being directed to new projects rather than grass roots Christianity.
22. Another representor (38), Treasurer of St Chads Church, Longsdon is concerned that the scheme does not respect their needs and traditions and therefore more likely to lead to parish church closures. He says that the stated objectives of the draft proposal can be tested and found wanting under the headings of Financial (including the overall diocesan position, total return accounting, selection for dissolution without considering financial alternatives), Missional (including recruiting a parish priest, characteristics of the parish community, natural centres, public transport links, form of worship, patronage and the character of worship, occasional offices) and the Likelihood of Church Closures (including there are alternatives and creating a new rural benefice). Many of the concerns of Longsdon PCC echo those of Horton PCC.
23. Another (23) states that when St Chad's parishioners and PCC members met the Archdeacon of Stoke and the Bishop of Stafford to discuss the reorganisation of their church communities, they were given no alternative than to accept the proposal – joining their rural church of St Chad's to St Edward's church in Leek along with 5 other churches under one vicar and selling their parsonage. She believes the proposal equates to the destruction of their strong rural community of worshippers. She says that St Chads Longsdon is open every Sunday, is used greatly to welcome children by baptism, couples to marry and laying their fellow villagers to rest; and supporting their rural community through their lives. She says that five years ago they lost their vicar through ill health which left the benefice adrift with no shepherd. Although an advertisement was placed for a new vicar she understands there were no applicants and no efforts were made in those five years to advertise vigorously for a vicar to lead the benefice.
24. The PCC of Cheddleton (37) considers that the proposal is, at best, the least-worst option. It cannot provide what the residents of the parish so deeply desire - the consistent and continual presence of a committed, vital and active priest, who will lead in their efforts to draw and welcome members of their

community into the church. They have some hope in the light shone by the statement that their vicarage will be used “to house clergy”.

Concerns regarding the parish of Rushton Spencer joining the benefice of Biddulph

25. Representors from Biddulph are mainly concerned that adding Rushton Spencer to their benefice will detrimentally affect mission in their own parish and be too great a burden on their incumbent.
26. A number of representors (including 8, 10, 20, 29) detail Biddulph’s activities stating it holds 3 Sunday services and 1 Wednesday service each week. It also conducts many funeral services and is always popular for baptisms. There are several children’s groups and the church also provides the opportunity to go into the local primary schools, where they provide Open The Book. They run a children’s holiday club; have home groups, alpha courses, Kintsugi Hope, REVS, involvement in the Biddulph Festival, and Nibble and Natter sessions.
27. One representor (8) says that Biddulph is a sustainable church, paying its parish share and actively contributing to ministries outside of the immediate parish, including local food banks, overseas mission and poverty alleviation. This sustainability is challenged due to a protracted vacancy and the impacts of lack of attendance during C19 lockdowns, however, the church remains well supported by its members and continues to find ways to serve the community as well as worship. However, this relies on a huge amount of proactive work from the leadership, not least the vicar. The representor says the priest’s role is not just full-time but requires the sustained and challenging expectation of the vocation to work beyond normal expectations in the service of God and the community. Another (number 2) says that Biddulph’s congregation is aging and if the church does not grow it could see a very fast decline financially and with volunteers. Biddulph was in vacancy for a long time and the church relied on volunteers, many of whom struggled with burn-out, trying to keep the church for that interim period and some families moved churches.
28. Several state that their new vicar, the Reverend Will Drain, is a breath of fresh air who has set out a clear evangelistic vision for Biddulph. They are concerned that if Rushton Spencer joins with Biddulph, his plan and enthusiasm would be curtailed by having to administer to Rushton Spencer, which some suggest would need more than 15% of his time. He will have less time to focus on Biddulph and, as the previous priest found, growing the church with more families in regular attendance adds a lot of extra demand. Taking on another parish will also have a weakening effect on the outreach, pastoral care, strategic management, planning and in the end the sustainable future of the core worshipper levels of the church. This risks making the church unsustainable and another burden on the diocese’s strategic and financial management.

29. Whilst the parishioners at Biddulph will support Mr Drain if he takes on Rushton Spencer many (see 8, 26, 31, 34) express their concern that with two parishes to look after there is a high probability of “burn-out”. One (7) says that if Mr Drain, who is in his first parish, has to take on another parish it would overwhelm him. One representor (2) thinks that if Mr Drain does not have the time to build the church, he and his young family will need to move as they believe it is important that their children have church friends of their own age group for their Christian journey. Another representor (8) says that the church community, and the Church of England as an employer, has a duty of care to the vicar and his family to ensure that they are not pulled in too many different directions that makes the vocation become less of a blessing, and more of a problem that leads to personal difficulties and for this reason Rushton Spencer should not be joined with Biddulph.
30. Several representors (including 8, 9, 10 and 19) say the issue of the church at Rushton Spencer with its extremely small numbers of active worshippers (about 7-12) needs to be addressed and that joining with Biddulph will only delay the inevitable closure of the church whilst leading to a degradation of the church congregation at Biddulph. One suggests that although the Rushton Spencer congregation will want to keep their church going as long as possible if they were to become part of a bigger congregation, which might be at Biddulph, this could be an amazing way forward for them if they grasped hold of the possibilities that could come out of such a decision. One suggests the utilization of laity as opposed to full time clergy in the support of Rushton Spencer. She says that it has become common practice for the stronger churches to support the weaker, which at first sight seems a true Christian principle, however, in practice this rarely if ever saves or strengthens the weaker but rather weakens the strong.
31. One representor (10) says that taking Holy Communion to Rushton Spencer will be required at key events in the Christian calendar and there is no escaping the fact that this will take the vicar away from a church that is already very busy at these times. He also states that GDPR, Health and Safety and other legal requirements of this modern age all impact on workload, and he accepts that some responsibility lies with the PCC but clergy are frequently in the centre of it. He is also concerned about the access to Rushton Church along a very narrow 2 mile-long single-track road signed “unsuitable for vehicles” which is mostly embanked and has few passing places. He adds that the church itself is then difficult to find being situated across a field part way along this lane and he believes it has no toilet facilities. He attaches to his representation some photographs showing the access. Several other say this will be a 50-minute round trip for the incumbent.
32. Other representors (13, 31 and 41) are concerned regarding the tradition and geography of the proposed transfer of the parish of Rushton Spencer to the benefice of Biddulph. They say Biddulph defines itself as “open evangelical” whereas Rushton Spencer holds a more central church tradition. Both parishes are part of the Staffordshire Moorlands District, but the town of Biddulph has close links with Congleton to the north and the Potteries to the South and with its neighbours within the town. The parish of Rushton has

much closer links with Leek and, to a lesser extent, Macclesfield. They say there is no major road connecting Biddulph with Rushton Spencer.

33. A couple of representors (including 26) are unclear about their input to future appointments of minister for the benefice and ask if this is in proportion to the congregations.

Alternative reorganisation

34. Many representors (including 15, 22, 23, 24) say that no alternative pastoral reorganisation was considered. Various alternative suggestions are made as follows:
- a. Horton as a stand-alone benefice: the parish is well able to pay for an incumbent directly, if not for a full-time parish priest then either a proportion of a priest's time, or at the very least a house for duty priest;
 - b. keep St Chad's Longsdon together with St Michael's Horton; two churches that hold the same values and worship the same way (*not clear whether this should be as a separate benefice or within a wider arrangement*);
 - c. keep Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer together and incorporate Meerbrook which is a neighbouring rural parish;
 - d. create a new rural benefice by swapping Cheddleton with Meerbrook thus creating a benefice with parishes that have a natural affinity;
 - e. create a benefice consisting of the parishes of Horton, Rushton Spencer and Meerbrook; three parishes which have a great deal in common, both as communities and in church style;
 - f. include Horton with the proposed Leek Team ministry to ensure the continuation of sacramental worship, and allow the existing strong relationship with Longsdon and Rushton Spencer to be retained; it should also have an equal share of any future incumbent's time, rather than what is proposed by the present proposals;
 - g. Rushton Spencer would be better under the care of one of the Leek parishes;
 - h. link the Anglican churches in the Biddulph valley together – St Lawrence's Biddulph, St John's Knypersley, and Christ Church, Biddulph Moor, which have the same patron, are of similar church traditions, work well together and with other denominations through Christians Together in ST8 (Biddulph Churches Together). If the current proposals proceed it would be more difficult to make another change to the benefice in the near future.

Summary of the representations in favour of the draft Scheme

35. The associate archdeacon (number 42) writes in emphatic support of the draft pastoral scheme. He says that he has knowledge concerning the development of this comprehensive plan having, in part, facilitated a representative group which derived it, prior to its adoption by the Deanery of Leek at one of its Synods. He stresses that its proposed effect on the benefices included (and those of the deanery which remain unaffected) came via a most rigorous and transparent exploration of mission challenges,

pastoral and financial sustainability, as well as necessary governance, as part of a Diocesan-wide, mission initiative.

36. He says that the reconfiguration of the parishes concerned is admittedly ambitious, but long over-due and for those who have worked and/or worshipped within the Deanery of Leek for some time would concur that the current configuration has evolved over years through many individual, pastoral reorganisations as expedient measures to solve local problems, without any coherent and missional objective shared by the whole deanery. Furthermore, despite numerous historic interventions by the Diocesan Board of Finance, the current configuration is financially unsustainable.
37. He points out that the Scheme as proposed:-
 - a. reduces the deployment across the deanery by one post, thus making it sustainable overall;
 - b. addresses mismatches from geographical perspectives for better ministry effectiveness and pastoral care;
 - c. puts weaker parishes with stronger ones for support and should avert moves towards closures or changes of status;
 - d. makes for manageable parish groupings more likely to attract applicants for the vacant roles;
 - e. has already received the support of the Deanery Synod.
38. He continues by saying that the proposals have also been presented to the Bishop's Staff by whom they have been thoroughly interrogated, as part of its current procedure before permitting any role to move to the appointment stage. He says there is no plan B which would be deemed acceptable and that the Diocese will not appoint to benefices which are clearly financially unsustainable and show no signs of being able to become so, nor allocate stipendiary resources where neither mission opportunities nor objectively assessed pastoral needs are present.
39. One representor in his 70s (44) who has lived in Biddulph for most of his life and attends church on a regular occasion says that he is also familiar with St Lawrence's church in Rushton. He says it is a small rural church that's quite isolated in the countryside and attended by local parishioners, most of whom live and work in the farming communities and rely on the church for their social "well-being". He believes that members of the congregation at Biddulph St Lawrence seem generally against any possible "joint" with Rushton St Lawrence on the grounds that they don't want "their" vicar to share his time/effort with another church. He considers this line of thought selfish, inconsiderate and a very unchristian attitude and begs that the Scheme should go ahead.
40. Two other representors in favour (43) say they have been members of St Lawrences, Biddulph congregation since 2012 and are in favour of the proposals.
41. One representor (number 45), from Rushton Spencer writes in support believing that the merge with Biddulph would offer greater support, a variety of

services, as well as the opportunity to grow and attract children and their families which is at present a challenge, as well as ensuring that they are working for God's families in the local community in which they serve.

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THE BISHOP OF LICHFIELD

29th January 2024

Dear Church Commissioners,

Please find enclosed a document responding to the various questions raised in the latest consultations over pastoral reorganisation in the Leek Deanery; the details of this response have been compiled by the Archdeacon of Stoke-upon-Trent. As you will see, the Deanery as a whole is strongly supportive of the proposals formulated by the Stafford Episcopal Area Team as part of the diocesan 'Shaping for Mission' process, and I believe that all the concerns raised have been addressed in the Archdeacon's paper. I warmly commend the proposals to you.

Yours sincerely,

+ Michael Lichfield



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C17

38/415

Response to the Church Commissioners January 2024 re:

Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

Benefices of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer; Biddulph; Bagnall with Endon; and Leek and Meerbrook

Proposed Pastoral Scheme

Having considered the representations put forward in response to the consultation about the proposed pastoral reorganization in the Leek Deanery, we still believe that proposals as they have been put forward offer the best structure for a sustainable and missional future for all the parishes in Leek deanery.

Some of the representations raise concerns which will need to be attended to, such as supporting clergy who will need to adapt their work-patterns to accommodate new responsibilities, but this is a natural part of our concerns for all clergy.

Other representations argue a preference for no change at all, or that changes happen elsewhere in the deanery but not in a way which will affect their particular parish. No change is not an option. The proposals for reorganization have come out of the Diocesan-wide, deanery-based, *Shaping for Mission* process in which the reality of the current situation in parishes was named and then plans for a sustainable future, both missionally and financially, made. For Leek Deanery it became clear that a reduction in clergy posts from 8.0 to 7.0wte was needed, that there needed to be more emphasis on supporting and developing of lay ministry, and that clergy would need to share gifts across the deanery.

1. What were the main considerations behind the proposal to dissolve the benefice of Cheddleton etc. and transfer its parishes to the neighbouring three benefices?

Does this proposal derive from a deanery plan or diocesan initiative or was it put forward locally?

The proposal came out of a deanery plan developed by the deanery team during a diocesan initiative called *Shaping for Mission* which commenced in autumn 2020. *Shaping for Mission* is an ongoing process across Lichfield Diocese to strengthen discipleship, vocation and evangelism (the diocesan priorities) while facing a significant reduction in financial income. Deaneries formed *Shaping for Mission* teams and began the work of reviewing their deanery, before discerning a vision for the deanery going forwards which was sustainable both missionally and financially.

Leek Deanery needed to reduce stipendiary clergy deployment from 8.0 to 7.0wte across the deanery to ensure financial sustainability. There were 4 clergy vacancies in the deanery at that time so it seemed the apposite time to consider the missional structure of the deanery. The decision was not just to “break up” the benefice of Cheddleton but to look at the deanery as a whole, to see what would be a sustainable structure. The process also identified the need to create clergy posts that would be attractive to potential applicants. This led to agreement that a new approach was required, rather than spreading one person ever more thinly across the smaller parishes. The Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer post had already been advertised once in 2019 but there were no applicants. Another key principle followed by the deanery team was to maintain equity of responsibility for Deanery clergy, recognising the physical, emotional and spiritual limitations within which full time clergy can be missionally effective.

This proposed reorganization sits alongside the recent Brown Edge scheme, where the plurality with Bagnall with Endon has been dissolved with the parish instead joining the benefice of Milton and Norton. The overall plan also involves a change in clergy responsibilities amongst the current Leek Team ministry (shown in maps provided for question 2)

The only benefice in the deanery not directly affected by plan is Biddulph Moor and Knypersley.

Although this has always in essence been a deanery plan it has been taken forward as two separate schemes on the advice of the Church Commissioners.

2. Please explain how you think the proposed reorganisation will further the mission of the Church and lead to the better cure of souls. Please also explain how it will meet the needs of the parishioners, respect the traditions of the parishes, benefit worship, mission or community and take account of financial considerations.

We believe we have created a good plan which serves the whole deanery. We can't reduce posts - as is needed for financial sustainability - *and* keep things the same.

The proposed reorganisation comes directly from deanery discussions to embed missional and financial sustainability in all parishes in the deanery, as outlined in response to question 1, thereby bettering the cure of souls in both church congregations and for their surrounding parishes.

With the current configuration congregation numbers have been falling and average age rising. The *Shaping for Mission* discussions recognized that it can be easier to maintain missional energy in a larger congregation. If partnerships could be built with smaller congregations who naturally have fewer people-resources, then this energy could be shared and mission better supported.

The reorganization will allow for a ministry plan with attractive/"doable" jobs and is shaped to enable clergy to actively lead in mission. Attracting clergy to the area is not easy, so all moves to make posts more attractive and recruitment easier will benefit mission and ministry across all the parishes.

Originally the deanery plan was to consider the smaller churches becoming festival churches, but we have a vision that there should be worship every Sunday in every parish church/community. To this end a missional model has been developed whereby partnerships can be developed between larger churches and smaller ones, potentially sharing ministry resources. The stipendiary clergy would develop more of an oversight role focussed on enabling parishioners to develop their own confidence in mission and ministry, so that there is less dependence on the presence of clergy for thriving church life. Key elements of the oversight role will be ensuring that a sustainable pattern of regular worship is in place alongside appropriate governance; developing occasional offices as well as other points of community contact as missional opportunities; and building up connections where there are church schools. We already seeing some blessing and encouragement in the relationship between Biddulph and Rushton who are now sharing cross-benefice clergy ministry. With time it may be possible to simplify governance arrangements across the parishes in each benefice, thereby reducing the burdens on smaller churches. This would be up to individual benefices to consider.

The financial benefit is that it allows for a decrease of one stipend across deanery. Each parish benefits from a small reduction in Common Fund (parish share) payments but with no single benefice/parish having a significant reduction in ministry allocation. We believe that the proposed new configuration will make the ministry allocation affordable to each benefice. In the current configuration both Longsdon and Cheddleton parishes have been building up significant arrears in common fund payments until special arrangements have been made with them this year.

What we believe we have come up with is a plan which assures sustainable cure of souls across the deanery, being particularly beneficial to the Cheddleton *et al* benefice and Brown Edge.

There is no attempt to alter any church traditions and new incumbents would be expected to be sensitive and respectful towards the range of traditions. Traditions do change and evolve over time, as has been seen in these parishes in the past. The last vicar of the Cheddleton Benefice would describe herself as eclectic in her spirituality. Her predecessor in the then Longsdon, Horton and Rushton benefice, was a

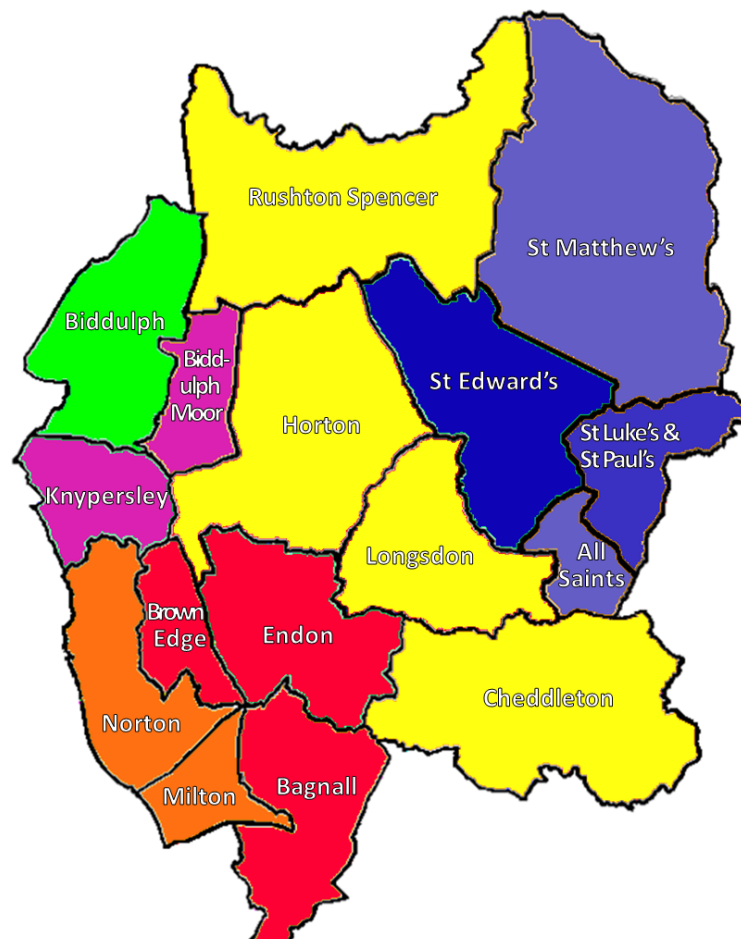
traditionalist Anglo Catholic. It is common practice for parish clergy everywhere to lead worship in different styles in different churches (for example a traditional or BCP communion and then a family service).

What we can't provide any more is a Eucharist each Sunday in each parish, which seems to be the issue behind some of the concerns raised by representors about tradition. The Cheddleton Benefice has not had a eucharist every Sunday in every parish for a very long time. They enjoy a mix of eucharists and Morning Prayer. Guaranteeing a eucharist every week decreases the missional opportunity for an incumbent as their focus is on maintenance of services rather than mission. There is a long tradition historically in the Church of England of Mattins or Morning Prayer as a primary act of worship on a Sunday. All benefices will have a communion service every week, which will be more accessible with benefices with greater geographical contiguity (see maps below). There are a good number of retired clergy within the deanery who also support eucharistic worship. A key missional consideration must also be that the church is there for the *whole* parish, not just the current congregation members and so it is right that, from time-to-time, parishes should review whether their offer of worship is connecting well with those who do not regularly attend.

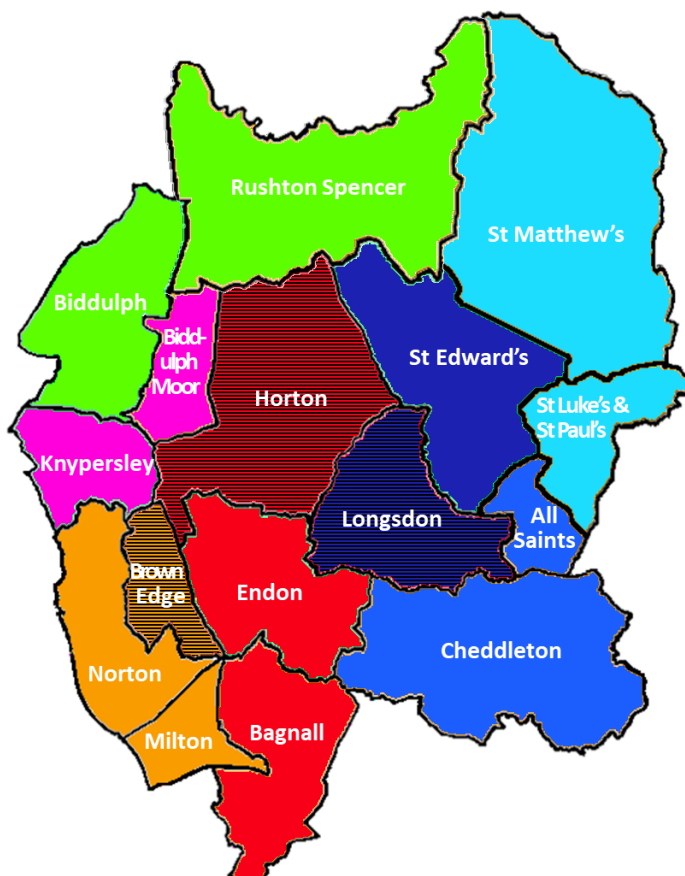
We also hope to enhance the confidence of smaller parishes that they are the worshipping, missional, community in the parish, and can gather as such without being dependent on the presence of the Vicar.

Further consideration of worship traditions is given in answer to question 9(b).

Configuration of Leek Deanery at start of Shaping for Mission process:



Proposed configuration of Leek Deanery:



3. Please provide attendance and parish share contribution figures for the affected parishes in recent years. Do you share the concern that these may be reduced by the proposed reorganisation?

The current average Sunday morning attendances, taken from the service registers, in the Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer Benefice are:

St Edward's Cheddleton	16 (no children)
St Michael's Horton	11 (no children)
St Chad's Longsdon	16 (2 children)
St Lawrence Rushton Spencer	10 (1 child)

The only significant change since the Covid pandemic is Cheddleton, who used to average 24 adults and 5 children.

Other parishes affected by the proposals:

All Saints Leek	33 (1 child)
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St Lawrence Biddulph	120 (10 children)
St Chad's Bagnall	20 (1 child)
St Luke's Endon	38 (2 children)
St Edward's Leek	70 (4 children)
St Luke's & St Paul's Leek	85 (10 children)
St Matthew's Meerbrook	16 (2 children)

The hope behind the proposals is that, with a fresh approach to ministry and mission, these figures will increase. There is certainly nothing that would suggest the proposed changes will lead to a decrease.

Common Fund (parish share contributions):

	2021			2022			2023			2024	
	Formula	Request	Paid	Formula	Request	Paid	Formula	Request	Paid	Formula	Request
Cheddleton	39,618	36,316	12,00	32,482	32,482	32,48	32,482	32,482	32,48	26,505	26,50
Horton	11,695	10,720	5,844	9,415	9,415	4,704	9,415	9,415	4,713	8,643	8,643
Longsdon	12,860	11,788	7,000	10,563	10,563	10,56	10,563	10,563	10,56	9,507	9,507
Rushton Spencer	12,780	11,715	11,71	8,643	8,643	8,643	8,474	8,474	8,474	7,779	7,779
All Saints Leek	40,261	36,906	36,90	36,198	36,198	36,19	50,841	28,245	28,24	31,115	28,81
Biddulph	64,769	59,372	59,37	62,139	62,139	62,13	60,586	60,586	60,58	53,875	53,875
Bagnall	16,768	15,371	15,37	13,275	13,275	13,27	13,275	13,275	13,27	20,311	13,541
Endon	42,441	32,364	32,36	33,894	33,894	30,00	33,894	33,894	15,00	38,029	34,572
St Edward's Leek	53,832	49,346	49,34	48,400	48,400	48,40	56,490	48,400	48,40	48,977	40,887
St Luke's & Paul's Leek	45,991	42,158	22,49	41,351	31,351	31,35	30,717	30,717	29,76	31,331	31,331
Meerbrook	10,706	9,814	9,814	9,626	9,626	9,626	10,239	10,239	-	10,444	10,444

The narrative behind these figures is complex. There are parishes which struggle to pay and others who have chosen to reduce payments due to frustrations at being in lengthy vacancies. The Diocese also changed the way requests was calculated in 2022, when we moved from Parish Share to a Common Fund formula.

4. Why do you think the draft Scheme makes it less likely that there will be any church closures in the deanery (especially given the view expressed from Biddulph that the church at Rushton Spencer should close)?

Our response to question 2, and the vision for mission and sustainability which has been behind the proposals, largely addresses this question. The purpose of the reorganization is not to close churches but to provide the framework that is required for this sustainability to be possible.

We are not aware of the basis for, and cannot account for, a personal view expressed by one person in Biddulph that Rushton Spencer should close. Rushton is a fairly remote community and so having a local church is important for mission. There is clear evidence of a desire amongst church members to reach the local community and grow. Young families have joined and have started stepping into roles of leadership. There is a plan for chaplaincy in the local church primary school by a congregation member.

We can never guarantee that churches won't close but there are no plans to do so. In the current arrangements, Brown Edge was at risk of closing, as probably is Longsdon. Following the introduction of

the recent pastoral scheme, Brown Edge has already taken steps to form a PCC, which has been lacking for several years, and started taking responsibility for governance again. Longsdon has less of a village identity than the other parishes in the Cheddleton *et al* benefice and functions more as a suburb of Leek. Our belief is that by building on its connections with Leek it can be enabled to build missionally on its particular strengths and opportunities, particularly the high demand for weddings and baptisms there, giving it the opportunity to thrive and grow, rather than decline further and close.

5. Please set out the consultation process (both informal and formal) followed, including that by the Shaping for Mission Team, and any meetings held with the PCCs and/or the current incumbents/priests-in-charge. Please confirm the level of support, or otherwise, for what is being proposed, during the local consultation process. In particular, were there any objections from the PCCs?

There has been a high degree of support throughout for the proposals. Details of specific consultation and meetings are given below. The objections that have now been raised to the scheme are largely from Horton. Horton had been in favour of the proposals until a retired priest who had not been party to all the original extensive discussions joined the church and was coopted onto the PCC. Other concerns which have been raised have been addressed along the way.

Shaping for Mission

The *Shaping for Mission* deanery team included clergy and laity from across the deanery. Convened by a diocesan facilitator it included the Associate Archdeacon who was also Acting Rural Dean for Leek at the time, a retired SSM from Biddulph, the vicar of Kypersley and Biddulph Moor, the Team Rector of Leek and the Team Vicar with responsibility for St Luke's and St Paul's, the Lay Chair of the Deanery Synod (member of Milton church), a diocesan education adviser and member of a Fresh Expression BMO in Brown Edge. Latterly a retired priest closely involved with the Benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer joined the team. Consultation with the parishes was firstly through a detailed questionnaire about church life. A copy of the responses is appended. The Shaping for Mission team developed their proposals based on these responses. The response from the parish of Horton was received quite some time after those from other parishes, hence that is appended as a separate document, but was considered in the same way by the Shaping for Mission team.

Once the initial proposals had been formed and discussed with the Area Bishop and Archdeacon further consultation took place via the Deanery Synod and conversations with PCCs.

Deanery Synod

19 October 2021 - The process and conclusions of the Shaping for Mission team were presented to the Deanery Synod. Questions were invited and answered.

18 January 2022 – a further deanery synod meeting was held, attended by the Archdeacon of Stoke, to which churchwardens were also invited (22 wardens attended). Deanery representatives and churchwardens were asked to discuss the proposed changes with their PCCs. The Rural Dean committed to contacting any PCCs not represented at the meeting and also to meet with PCCs in vacancy.

18 January 2022 – the Rural Dean wrote to all members of Deanery Synod saying:

Following our Deanery Synod meeting tonight I attach a copy of the proposed Leek Deanery Plan 2022 put forward by Bishop Matthew and Archdeacon Megan following their consideration of the presentation made to them by the Leek Deanery Shaping for Mission Team last October.

The Diocese is now entering into consultation with the Deanery Synod about the plan and the following process needs to take place:

i) every PCC needs to discuss the proposed plan and formulate any questions and comments on it

ii) all questions will either be answered by me or forwarded to Archdeacon Megan for her response
iii) a meeting of the Deanery Synod will take place after Easter in late April to discuss the proposal in the light of all the issues raised and see if we can reach a common mind about our response
iv) if we can agree together we can then advise the Diocese of what we believe would be best way forward and if they accept our recommendations they will then begin the process of getting the approval of the Area Mission and Pastoral Committee, the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee and the Church Commissioners, in that order.
v) once the final Deanery Plan is approved the Diocese can then implement it, but will seek to find ways of making appointments to vacancies in the Deanery before then if that becomes feasible once the shape of the plan has been agreed in principle by the Deanery Synod.

There are two main area that I believe we need to consider:

The Principle: are we happy that the proposed new alignment of parishes within the Deanery is the right one, and if not how else would we draw the map?

The Proportionality: do we believe that the indicative allocations of priests' time to each parish is right? This is an important question and two things need to be born in mind and held in tension.

The first is whether each parish has the resources to pay their parish share to cover the proportion of priests' time they have been allocated, the second is whether the allocation itself is a fair reflection of the amount of time the priest will need to give to the parish. We have the opportunity to suggest changes to these figures if we believe that they are necessary and we need to consider this matter carefully.

I need therefore to ask you all to take this information back to your

Incumbent/Vicar/Wardens/PCC Chair and ask them to arrange a meeting of your PCC in the next two months to discuss this. For those of you without an Incumbent/Vicar please liaise with me about the timing of your meeting so that I can arrange for a member of the Shaping for Mission Team to attend and help to facilitate the discussion. The sooner these meetings can take place the quicker we will get answers to any questions we may want to raise, which will be of benefit to everyone.

If any of you as individuals have questions at any stage please feel free to email them to me and I will ensure that they are answered either by myself or Archdeacon Megan.

On **19 Jan 2022**, following the Deanery Synod presentation the Team Vicar responsible for St Luke's and St Paul's Leek, and St Matthew's Meerbrook, emailed the AD Stoke to ask if the split in ministry allocation could be 0.75/0.25 instead of the proposed 0.8/0.2 as this fitted better with the pattern of ministry he had already begun to establish in Meerbrook. This was agreed.

On **3 Feb 2022** some questions from Longsdon PCC were forwarded to the Associate Archdeacon. Subsequently the archdeacon attended a PCC meeting where the main concerns were around maintaining regular worship and engaging with the significant wedding ministry of the church. Both of these fit well within the proposals.

On **23 February 2022** the Vice-Chair of Biddulph PCC wrote:

The PCC of St. Lawrence's, Biddulph, met last evening to discuss the Shaping for Mission proposals. Rev. Lindsay Clowes, who was part of the Shaping for Mission team and our Deanery Synod representatives were able to facilitate the discussion and answer questions.

The PCC had a very positive discussion and fully understands the need for the proposed changes. It sees them as potential opportunities rather than problems.

Our PCC passed 2 motions:

The PCC is willing to accept the proposed link with St. Lawrence's, Rushton Spencer. (Passed with one abstention)

The PCC agreed unanimously that it was willing to accept the 0.85/0.15 allocation subject to regular review.

Following his conversations with PCCs in vacancy the Rural Dean reported that:

St Luke's Endon are happy in principle with the proposed framework. They would ideally like more than 0.50 and would like to put in a bid for the 'missing' 0.05 in the allocation figures.

St Edward's Leek are happy in principle with the proposed framework. They feel that 0.85 is not enough bearing in mind that St Edward's has a large number of funerals and is the civic church of Leek. They indicated that they would prefer 0.90 or 0.95.

St Chad's Longsdon are happy in principle with the proposed framework. They felt that an allocation of 0.10 rather than 0.15 would enable them to have confidence in their ability to pay the Common Fund request and also to make a regular contribution to their current significant arrears as well as being able to continue to pay retired priests to take regular services.

St Edward's Cheddleton are happy in principle with the proposed framework. They feel that they could manage to pay at the level of 0.50 although they have struggled to do this during the pandemic because of serious loss of revenue as a result of the cancellation of many church fundraising events on which they relied.

All Saints Leek (open PCC meeting 28 Feb. 2022) requested that the division of time between them and Cheddleton be adjusted to a 0.6/0.4 split as I had previously indicated might be the case. This makes sense bearing in mind that the current allocation is 0.7/0.5 and also on the basis that Cheddleton have struggled to pay 0.5 in recent years but All Saints have been reliable in paying their requested contribution.

Following the meeting with the Rural Dean, All Saints' PCC sent some written questions to the Associate Archdeacon. Following his responses their Standing Committee subsequently requested a meeting with the Archdeacon of Stoke which was held on **25 April 2022** via Zoom. Most questions were about practical details and their desire to avoid further delay in appointment of a parish priest. The proposed 0.6/0.4 allocation was agreed subject to discussion with Cheddleton

The Rural Dean reported a positive meeting with Rushton Spencer PCC on **9 March 2022**.

On **13 April** the PCC Secretary for St Chad's Longsdon emailed the Archdeacon to say they no longer supported the proposals. There was no time available for a meeting before the next Deanery Synod meeting, but one was held on 18 May 2022. Whilst the PCC would prefer a greater allocation of priestly time, they reaffirmed their support for the proposals.

26 April 2022 – Deanery Synod meeting, with further time for questions. This included a representative from St Michael's Horton saying 'We are supportive of the plan but concerned about the amount of the Vicar's time we would get. What about the Parish Share?'

The Synod minutes record:

The following motion was then put to the Synod:

That subject to the future processes of consultation:

i) the formation of the new benefices on the Final Vision Plan (see Appendix A) accompanied by the creation of a new and different shape of ministry in the parishes of Brown Edge, Horton, Longsdon and Ruston Spencer be approved
and
ii) the synod request that the Bishop and Archdeacon work with the Shaping for Mission Team to provide clarity about the nomenclature to be given to the new form of ministry in the shaded parishes and to define the parameters on which the distinctive shape of that ministry will be based
and
iii) the Shaping for Mission Team be asked to review the effectiveness and impact of the new arrangements (in terms of both missional growth and contributions to the Common Fund) two years after they are implemented
and
iv) once these changes come into effect all incumbents in the Deanery be asked to share a specialised skill (to be agreed between each of them and the Deanery Synod) which they will be responsible for giving help and advice on across the Deanery

Members present were then invited to fill in the voting slips and to indicate the name of the representative they were attending on behalf of if they were casting a proxy vote. The result of the vote was 33 in favour, 3 against, 0 abstentions. (This includes a vote from Revd Darren Fraser who was unable to attend due to the meeting coinciding with an APCM but who had indicated in advance his support for the proposal). All parishes in the Deanery were represented at the meeting.

The 'no' votes were from the 3 representatives from All Saint's Leek.

PCCs

Most of the discussions with PCCs before the Deanery Synod vote are covered in the paragraphs above.

Following consultation with patrons on 22 March 2022 about changes in patronage which would be part of the proposed scheme Biddulph PCC said that they had understood the plan to involve an informal relationship with Rushton Spencer, rather than pastoral reorganization and had not realised that patronage might be affected. CPAS (for The Martyrs Memorial and Church of England Trust) are their sole patrons and they did not want this to change. The initial proposal was that patronage of the potential new benefice of Biddulph and Rushton Spencer should be held jointly by the current patrons (CPAS and the Incumbent of Leek and Meerbrook). They informed the CPAS patronage secretary that 'if it were necessary to think in terms combining the two parishes into one benefice, they would only be willing to do so if there was only one PCC and that CPAS remained as their sole patron'. The Archdeacon of Stoke met with the churchwardens of Biddulph on 1 May 2022 to discuss the proposed reorganisation, including patronage arrangements. Discussions were then had with the Incumbent of Leek and Meerbrook who consented to CPAS holding sole patronage of the new combined benefice, thus allaying Biddulph's concerns.

The Rural Dean and Archdeacon met with Cheddleton PCC on 30 August 2022 to discuss the proposed reorganization, alongside other matters. The PCC were in favour of the proposals but concerned about the length of time the process was taking. They also attended a subsequent joint meeting with the PCC of All Saints' Leek, with the Archdeacon and Rural Dean. The main concern there was again the duration of the process and prolonged vacancy.

Following publication of the draft scheme and the first round of diocesan consultations the Bishop of Stafford and Archdeacon of Stoke met with the PCCs of Longsdon, Rushton Spencer, and Horton. Longsdon and Rushton Spencer PCCs had initially voted in favour of supporting the proposals but then wrote again saying they objected following input from the retired priest in Horton. The Bishop and

Archdeacon had open discussions with all 3 PCCs, following which Longsdon and Rushton Spencer confirmed their support for the proposals.

Horton PCC expressed concerns that being in a benefice with Bagnall and Endon and having CPAS as a joint patron would change their style of worship. We tried hard to reassure them this was not the case, as evidenced by the practice of the previous incumbent, as well as discussing the nature of patronage and the ongoing involvement of their current patron. Horton have not responded to a recent offer from the Archdeacon of another meeting about ministry in the parish.

By this stage a new vicar had been licensed in Biddulph who was fully aware on appointment that they would be asked to take on responsibility for an additional smaller parish. They chose to lead ongoing discussions with Biddulph PCC, with offer of input from the Archdeacon if needed (which not asked for).

The Archdeacon met with the PCC of St Edward's Leek during the 2nd round of consultation to discuss some concerns they had about the practicalities of sharing ministry with Longsdon. They were content with proposals following this discussion.

6. How do you respond to the concern that diocesan representatives were not prepared to listen to any alternative suggested pastoral reorganisation and misled those at Biddulph that the proposed link with Rushton Spencer would be an informal one?

In October 2020 the Archdeacon wrote to all deaneries setting out need for review. The job was to come up with a sustainable plan. No one has yet suggested an alternative plan which works for the whole deanery and achieves the required reduction in stipendiary posts.

There was initially a plan from the *Shaping for Mission* team to make Rushton Spencer, Longsdon and Horton into Festival Churches but we rejected that as we strongly believe in their future as parish churches.

No substantial alternative proposals have been put to the diocesan representatives. A suggestion was briefly made of Horton joining the Leek Team, along with Longsdon, but there would not be capacity within the Leek Team clergy team to offer ministry time to Horton, and such an arrangement would leave an untenable less-than-full-time post in Bagnall with Endon.

None of the alternatives put forward in the representations address the global complexities of the situation across the deanery nor provide a sustainable way forward.

Correspondence with CPAS show that the proposed pastoral arrangements were well-known before the appointment of the present incumbent of Biddulph. Extensive discussion had taken place around patronage of the proposed new benefice. Initially Biddulph PCC objected as the proposal was for joint patronage of the new benefice. Discussions with the parishes and CPAS changed the plan to joint patronage. It was therefore have been very clear at the point of appointment that pastoral reorganization was intended, not just an informal link. All deanery representatives from Biddulph voted in favour of the reorganization on 26 April 2022.

7. Why is it considered necessary to break up the Cheddleton etc. benefice? Please comment on the views that it has been a successful and cohesive unit, contributes sufficient parish share to cover the cost of an incumbent, and should be retained (or have the parish of Meerbrook added to it).

The Cheddleton *et al* benefice was formed in 2014 and has only had one incumbent under this arrangement. It has not been paying its parish share, with big write offs of accumulated arrears needed at Cheddleton (£70, 886) and Longsdon (£76,299). Inability overall to pay parish share has been behind the need reduce a post in the deanery.

The lack of cohesion in the benefice has been seen in poor attendance at united services and the breakdown of relationships around the employment of a benefice administrator. Statistics show attendance and worshipping communities have been reducing.

Cheddleton parish are content that relating to All Saints Leek makes more sense for them and have actively been building that relationship.

Meerbrook is settled within the Leek Team.

8. Please also comment on the suggestion by several representors that the diocese could use some of the £5.85m of Unapplied Return with the DSF to fund a stipendiary priest for the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer and that this would be just 1% of this figure on an annual basis.

It is a big diocese – if this was applied everywhere the money would be used up very quickly!

The diocese has 238 Benefices, 424 Parishes and 545 Churches.

The decision by the DBF to adopt Total Return Accounting (TRA) principles within its accounting practices is specifically to provide a contribution to its otherwise deficit budget and help tend towards achieving balance. A total of £0.5m of unapplied returns have been allocated in this way for 2024. Under TRA principles, the utilisation of such unapplied returns does not in itself represent cash income and therefore does not generate anything available to be spent. Any real expenditure equating to the figure, in total or in part, must be realised by the sale of tangible assets. This would not represent a sustainable situation which, along with missional engagement, is the other main aim of any pastoral reorganisation through the Shaping for Mission project.

If 1% were spent on all benefices in the diocese the TRA would be used in under a year – thus not contributing to sustainability.

9. Regarding the transfer of Horton to the benefice of Bagnall with Endon: a. Please comment on the views that Horton does not identify with Bagnall with Endon, has a different sociological make-up, looks in a different direction for amenities and services and there are no direct transport links between them. Do you think these factors are likely to hamper them working together?

No, these factors will not hamper working together. As with many rural communities Horton has its own distinct character but Bagnall, already in a benefice with Endon, is not that different to Horton – it is rural with a significant farming community. Endon is a larger village with a secondary school.

The issues will be no more complex than the current ones.

There are no direct public transport links from Horton to anywhere. The bus stop to Leek is 1.5 miles walk from Horton, with weekday services only, so would not be accessible for those with mobility issues anyway. There are no Sunday morning bus services to Leek. There is no public transport at all from Horton to Cheddleton or Meerbrook. Travelling by bus from Horton to Longsdon would require a journey into Leek and then a second bus out again.

b. How do you respond to the concern that linking Horton with two evangelical parishes, and their patron (CPAS), is likely to change its style of worship and church tradition? Please elaborate on the evangelical stance taken in the parishes of Saint Chad, Bagnall, and Endon. For example, are they conservative evangelical etc?

The change in patronage is unlikely to have any effect at all on the style of worship and church tradition of Horton. Bagnall does have a more informal worship style. Endon has mixed services, one of which is virtually identical in tradition to Horton. Neither are conservative evangelical.

The last vicar of Cheddleton benefice had evangelical roots and trained for ordination at an evangelical college

The benefice of Bagnall with Endon has joint patronage shared by CPAS and the incumbent of Leek and Meerbrook (who is also joint patron of the current Cheddleton etc benefice).

Bagnall and Endon were previously held in plurality with St Anne's Brown Edge, which is of the same tradition, if not higher, than Horton. There were no problems from the perspective of tradition of the same vicar serving both.

The Patronage Secretary of CPAS gives assurance that :

'together with the other patrons and the diocese CPAS would be seeking the best incumbent for the needs of the whole benefice.

The main commitments of CPAS are not towards a specific style of worship, but rather to sharing the gospel of Jesus and growing the congregation as well as preaching and teaching from the bible in the appropriate style for that particular congregation and community. It would be for the PCC of an individual parish to work out with their incumbent what the best style of worship would be for them to enable the good news of Jesus to be more accessible to the community around them. There are many CPAS churches, especially rural ones, which treasure more traditional worship and find it an effective base for mission to their community.'

c. In particular, will the priest's 15% time-allocation to Horton enable him to offer enough services of Holy Communion to maintain its worship tradition?

Horton is currently allocated 17% of the priest's time, so the alteration in ministry allocation is not significant.

Is it your expectation that in this grouping lay-led worship would mainly take place in Bagnall with Endon and traditional services in Horton?

No, we will expect less dependence on eucharistic services in all parishes. This is no more the tradition in Horton than anywhere else. Horton would retain its traditional style of worship, but "traditional" does not have to always be eucharistic. There would of course be eucharistic worship every week within the benefice and regular eucharists in each parish.

d. Please comment on the view that the priest will not have sufficient time to devote to the local schools at Horton.

See response to c. Schools engagement will be a significant expectation of the priest's time. There are 3 schools in current benefice. This will reduce to 2 church schools in the new benefice for the full-time priest to cover, hopefully giving more availability.

10. In respect of the transfer of Cheddleton and Longsdon parishes to the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook:

a. Would Longsdon and Cheddleton receive 15% of the ministerial time between them or would they receive 15% each? If the latter how would this affect Leek and Meerbrook?

Longsdon 15% ministerial time (reduction from 17%), Cheddleton 40% This comes through a reduction in ministerial time (0.5 to 0.4) at Cheddleton, and All Saints Leek (0.7-0.6) at All Saints. All Saints previously shared ministry with Meerbrook (0.7 and 0.3 respectively) even though they were not adjacent. Since

2021 Meerbrook have shared ministry with St Luke's and St Paul's (0.25 and 0.75 respectively). This will not be changed in this reorganization.

For the all affected parishes in the deanery the current and proposed deployment numbers are:

	original	proposed
Bagnall	0.2	0.25
Endon	0.5	0.6
Horton	0.17	0.15
St Edward's Leek *	1.0	0.85
Longsdon *	0.17	0.15
Biddulph	1.0	0.85
Rushton Spencer	0.17	0.15
Milton	0.5	0.45
Norton	0.5	0.4
Brown Edge	0.3	0.15
Cheddleton	0.5	0.4
All Saints' Leek	0.75	0.6
St Luke's & St Paul's Leek	1.0	0.75
Meerbrook	0.25	0.25

**this may be altered to 0.9 and 0.1 to make it more affordable for Longsdon, and as they don't have a church school.*

b. Does Longsdon have the capacity for lay-led services? If not, is there likely to be a big reduction in the number of services there and how would that affect mission in the parish?

A key part of the work of the new oversight minister will be to establish a new sustainable model of services. There is a lay reader in the benefice and one lay person at Longsdon who has regularly led services in the past. Our hope is for worship every Sunday in every church. The new relationship with St Edward's Leek and the whole Leek Team will open up new opportunities for lay leadership which hopefully may be shared across parishes.

c. Please comment on the concern of Cheddleton PCC that there will not be a sufficient clergy presence in the parish.

This is a general comment that they would like a full-time vicar resident in the parish. They are also concerned that Cheddleton vicarage is occupied, which it may well be if new housing between Cheddleton and All Saints cannot be found.

There will be very little difference in clergy presence in the parish from the previous arrangements (0.5 is becoming 0.4). They will probably have more of a clergy presence as the new team vicar would be looking after 2 parishes not 4.

11. Regarding the transfer of Rushton Spencer to the benefice of Biddulph:

a. Please comment on the assertion that bringing Rushton Spencer into the benefice of Biddulph will give the new priest at Biddulph too much workload and could lead to "burn out".

We take the well-being of all our clergy very seriously, as we also expect the parishes to. The priest at Biddulph knew he would need to take on oversight of another small parish when applying for the job. Biddulph has a strong lay team and one is also growing at Rushton Spencer. The workload at Biddulph will need to be adjusted to allow time for some work at Rushton Spencer. The vicar of Biddulph

is now curate-in-charge of Rushton, mirroring the proposed ministry plan, and is enjoying the role and new challenge. He is not worried about the workload or burnout.

b. Are you concerned that taking on Rushton Spencer will lessen the priest's capacity for the work at Biddulph, weaken outreach, pastoral care, strategic management, and planning there and undermine its own long-term sustainability?

No.

The focus needs to be on 'setting God's people free'. Biddulph is strong enough to sustain this and should not be encouraged to be overly dependent on its vicar. The new relationship with Rushton has the potential to support developing a bigger and more confident outward-looking vision at Biddulph, enabling it to thrive and flourish and resource others to do the same.

c. Please comment on the concern that Rushton Spencer is geographically remote from Biddulph and its church is difficult to access and the view that its small number of active worshippers does not justify it remaining open for worship. Please can you let us know the headline condition of the Rushton Spencer Church and if it is a listed building.

Rushton Spencer is geographically remote from everywhere. The parishes share a parish border, though nature of the Staffordshire Moorlands means the buildings are a short drive away from each other (the vicar of Biddulph reports a 10 minute drive).

Rushton Spencer's building is grade 2* listed. It is generally in good condition with no major works required in the last quinquennial inspection.

The current ASA is 11 adults and 1 child, but numbers do vary significantly behind this. To some extent this represents the nature of working patterns in the farming community. Newer families have started attending recently, with lay people offering to start a monthly Family Service. Opportunities are opening up at local primary school for more engagement and chaplaincy – an initiative of CEO of the Talentum Multi Academy Trust. A lay member of congregation is hopefully going to undertake paid chaplaincy role at school which will increase links.

For the size of the community it is a relatively strong congregation.

d. Would the different church traditions at Rushton Spencer and at Biddulph make it difficult for them to work together?

There is no reason it will be difficult for them to work together.

Rushton Spencer could be described as 'Rural CofE' – services tend to have a central tradition but as it is the only locally available church option it has members from a variety of church traditions (including members who previously attended Biddulph).

e. Do you agree that Rushton Spencer has much closer links with Leek and, to a lesser extent, Macclesfield and, if so, would it be better grouped with other parishes which look in that direction? Are you concerned that joining Rushton Spencer to Biddulph will make it more difficult for Biddulph to pursue a more natural linkage with other the churches in the Biddulph valley such as St Lawrence's Biddulph; St John's Knypersley; and Christ Church, Biddulph Moor;

Rushton Spencer PCC is happy with the grouping with Biddulph. It is remote from all other communities. Biddulph are not trying to pursue any other linkages at the moment. Joining with Rushton Spencer will not hinder relationships with the neighbouring benefice of Knypersley and Biddulph Moor (who are already a combined benefice). They can still work together with other churches in Biddulph.

f. Some parishioners express concern about the future appointment process for clergy – please can you explain how the PCCs will be involved?

The usual processes will be followed. At the request of Biddulph PCC the proposals will make CPAS sole patrons of the new benefice, as they currently are of Biddulph. Both PCCs will have 2 parish representatives, in the usual manner. As always, consensus will be sought over appointments. There will need to be collaboration over profile writing. We would expect the person specification to reflect the ministry allocation.

12. Were the various alternative suggestions for pastoral reorganisation put forward in the representations considered by the DMPC? If so, why were they rejected and, if not, would you be prepared to give them further consideration now?

The suggestions in the representations have not been put forward until now and so have not been directly considered by AMPC or DMPC.

Alternatives could be considered if financially sustainable (a requirement across the diocese), but none of these are.

Needing to go back to the drawing board would be to the detriment of parishes which have been in a vacancy for a long time. This process has taken over 2 years already. A high degree of consensus has been obtained and people are now getting frustrated at the length of time the process is taking.

13. Are there any other factors which the Commissioners should be aware of in their consideration of these representations?

The development of these proposals has been a deanery process after much consideration of current realities and future possibilities and with a high degree of consultation. Whilst we understand that people in individual parishes will have a view about how their parish will be best served the diocese has responsibility for the wider picture. Plans were agreed by 90% of reps at deanery synod, including those for the parishes who are now objecting, and we have moved forward on that basis. We have to find something which works in reality and provides the best potential for moving all parishes forward in mission.

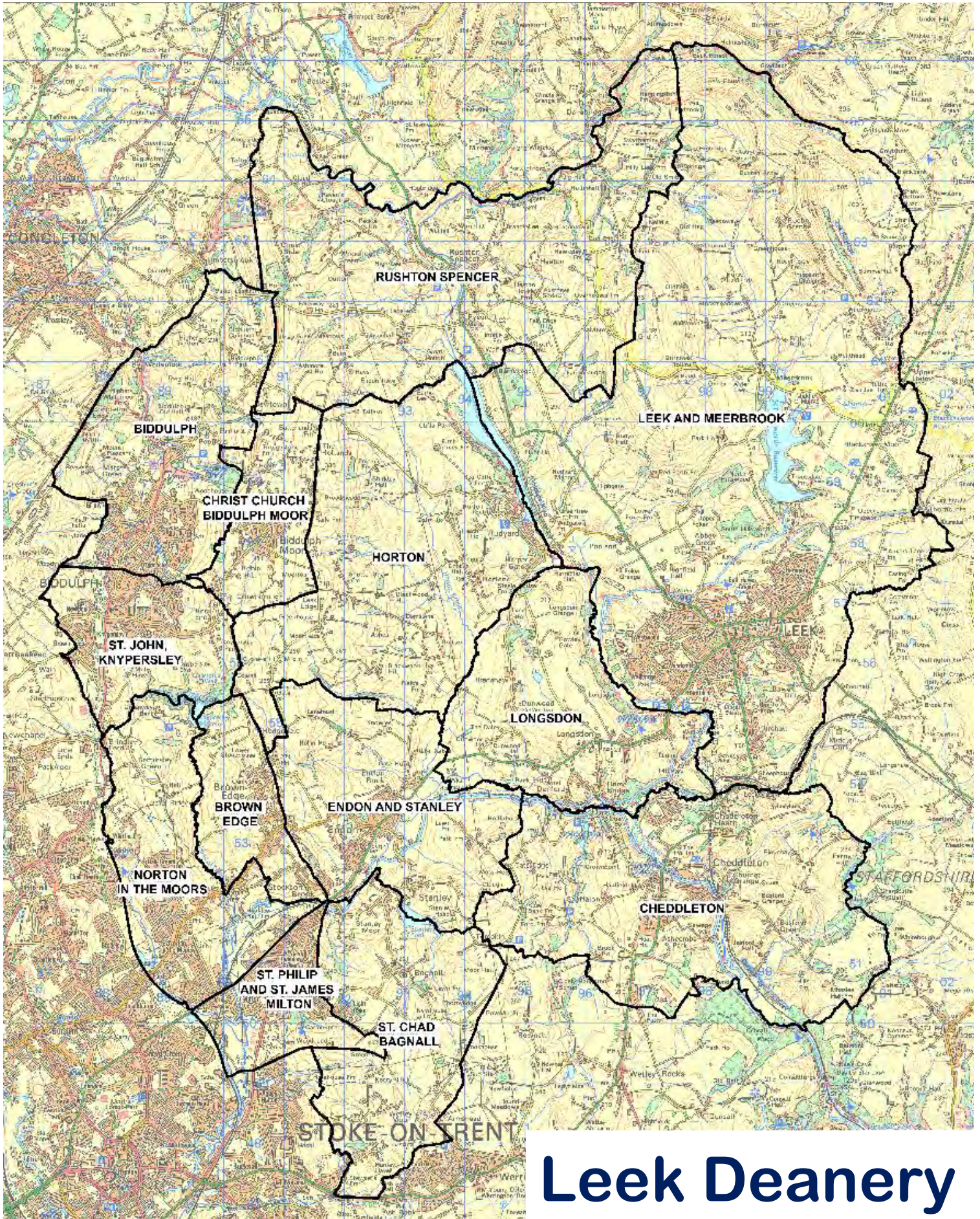
Views have been carefully listened to. There was no threat of closure given to any parishes but there was discussion of some of the harsh realities of financial sustainability and the intention that the reorganization will increase sustainability.

Cheddleton *et al* benefice has felt much better since Cheddleton parish moved to build relationship with All Saints Leek, rather than the other parishes in the benefice.

The time the reorganisation process has taken so far has become detrimental to the parishes in vacancy. Whilst we have recently been able to put in some temporary ministry arrangements in some of the parishes it will be to the benefit of all if this process can be concluded enabling permanent ministry appointments to be made.

Shaping for Mission

Summary of Parish Reviews May 2021



Leek Deanery

Shaping for Mission - Leek Deanery

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Shaping for Mission - Bagnall

Reviewing Our Benefice

There are five sections to this review: the place, the people, information and resources, Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism, and conclusions. Some parts will be completed by Lichfield, but you may want to add in any additional financial and building information that you may find helpful.

Our Benefice – The Place

This section focuses on the geographical area of the benefice; what it includes in terms of Church of England presence, other Christian activity, other organisations and institutions, key gathering places etc.

1.Church of England presence in our benefice.

Church Schools	None
Fresh Expressions	None
Chaplaincies	None
Other Anglican presence	None

2. Ecumenical partners in the benefice.

What formal ecumenical partnerships or Churches Together groups are there in the benefice? None

Where are there good informal ecumenical relationships? Not Applicable

Where are other denominations or Christian organisations doing work that we could support rather than repeat? There is a small Baptist Chapel in Light Oaks, the Methodist Chapel in Baddeley Edge and Tomkin Chapel.

Where are the bits of our benefice with no, very little, or no effective Christian presence? *(For example new housing estates)*

Not Applicable

3. Partnerships and networks

What organisations operate in this benefice with whom we have shared values? Not Applicable

What resources are there in this area whose work overlaps with our mission and ministry? Not Applicable

4. Institutions and organisations

What major institutions and organisations are there in this benefice? What connections do we have with them? *(Hospitals, prisons, universities etc)*

Initiated by St Chad's, a weekly study group was set up at Bagnall Heights which is a small residential village for the over 55's, this also included a monthly Holy Communion Service. The involvement here also included personal home communion for residents who may have been unwell.

Bagnall Village Hall – the only large community space in the village. Used by the church for several social events. There are church members on the committee to encourage links between to the two venues.

The Stafford Arms public house, we use it for social events and collaborate with them at Christmas for carol singing and other national events e.g. the jubilee

What schools (other than church schools) do we already have relationships with? There are none in the local area but the village children go to Endon High School and

Endon Primary school and where possible we try and include them e.g. the primary school choir sings in church at the summer fete.

Are there any big employers in this benefice and / or big centres of employment?
What connections do we have with them?

Jacksons Nursery is the biggest employer in the area. Family members attend church and the Nursery is very supportive of events we have at church.

5. Gathering places and Centres

Where are the main centres or gathering places in this benefice? (*town centres, larger villages, community halls, etc*)

In the village there is the Hall, The Stafford Arms public house and Jacksons Nursery all of which bring visitors to the area. There is a garage in Light Oaks and a pub in Stanley Moss, both within the parish.

What are the distinctive geographical features of the benefice and / or places of particular interest?

Bagnall is a small rural village with outlying properties of farmland and several Nurseries. The village has historical interest because of the connections with the Salt Road and the English Civil War which makes it highly popular for ramblers/walkers etc.

All other facilities are outside the parish making a car essential as the transport links are poor with an infrequent bus service into the Potteries via Milton. In Milton there are local shops, a GP surgery and a pharmacy. Endon is a similar distance but not linked by public transport, though it also has shops, GP surgery and a pharmacy.

Beyond this most people do their main shopping either in the Potteries or Leek.

6. What else is useful to note about the geographical area of the benefice?

Bagnall village is in a very rural hill top setting approximately 5 miles from the City of Stoke-on-Trent and 7 miles from the busy market town of Leek and is nestled in the beautiful Staffordshire Moorlands which is extremely popular with tourists.

The village centre consists mainly of stone buildings (including the church) surrounding a small village green. There is the edge of the Stockton Brook golf course and the Bagnall and Norton Cricket Club.

The parish also includes the nearby residential area of Light Oaks.

Our Benefice – The People

This section is looking at the make up of your benefice in terms of both the general population and the Anglican population. Some of this section will be completed for you.

1. Population

Approximate population of your deanery (number of people who live in the geographical area?)	Lichfield to complete
Number of people who attend the 2 churches in your benefice	Lichfield to complete

2. Formal Roles

Number of Authorised or Licensed Lay Ministers in your Benefice	We currently have two Authorised Lay Worship Leaders (one of whom is the Church Warden)
Number of people with formal lay roles (<i>Church wardens, treasurers, PCC secretary</i>)	We have two Church Wardens (one of whom is also the Treasurer). A PCC Secretary and three assistant Wardens
Number of Clergy, Stipend and NSM	We currently have one NSM in training, no Clergy or Stipend.
Any other paid roles (<i>church administrators, youth workers etc</i>)	Not Applicable

3. Volunteers

Are people in your benefice involved in any of the following on a voluntary basis? The table has been filled out using the Diocesan mission stats and information from the Dementia-Friendly Church network, Eco Church and Places of Welcome.

- Do add in any further categories you think are important here

Places of Welcome	We have no official places of welcome in the village however the Church provides a place of welcome to all visitors who wish to come along, offering Wednesday coffee mornings with the opportunity for prayer and/or a chat. All newcomers to the church receive a welcome bag which includes a holding cross, prayer pamphlet, scripture booklet and other small gifts.
Dementia-Friendly Church	Though not classed as a Dementia-Friendly church we do have members of the congregation who live with Dementia who form an integral part of the daily life of the church
Eco Church	We offer Fair trade refreshments and are classed as a Fair Trade church. We are working towards reducing our carbon footprint by installing a ceiling in the tower to reduce the loss of heat.
Sunday school / Sunday kids work	We have no Sunday School, although Children and Young People who attend St Chad's currently have a Family Service in which they are actively involved.
Parent/ carer and toddler group or play group	N/A
Youth work	As with the Sunday School – very few youngsters in the village at this time.
Community Café	We open the church on a Wednesday morning for complimentary coffee and biscuits
Foodbank	We collect and do a weekly delivery to a local foodbank in Leek but do not run one from the Church. This is well supported by the local community as well as the congregation
Pastoral provision	We have a team of coordinated volunteers who carry out regular home visits and/or telephone calls to those who are unable to come to church or have been identified as having a need for support. We send out emails: texts; cards to parents of children who have been baptised; sympathy cards; invites to memorial services; have a weekly newsheet; get well cards and prayer cards, etc., and also openly invite people to approach the worship team for advice or prayer if/when required.

Night shelter or other homeless provision	Provide financial support for one of the city's homeless charities.
Money matters and debt advice	None
Breakfast / after school clubs	N/A
Mental Health support connected with the church	This has been something we have considered for the future ministry of the church, although people are currently supported through the Pastoral Team. Where feasible we would like to expand this into the wider community and possibly extend beyond the boundaries of the church. This is something our NSM would like to explore following her curacy.
Support / activities for older and disabled people	There is a monthly communion service at Bagnall Heights that was initiated by St Chads. Although we have pews in the church, we do have a number of chairs that can be used if needed. We have large print handouts and hymn books for the visually impaired. We have a fully equipped disabled toilet. We have a deaf loop and sound system for the hearing impaired.
Other community activity	Fundraising and social activities/events include: Christmas Fayre and Summer Fete Beetle Drive/Quiz Night/Meals out Harvest Lunch Regular coffee mornings Annual BBQ Carol Singing around the Village Pet Service Churchyard and village clean up Flower Arranging Demonstrations A weekly newsletter that is widely distributed and put up onto the website. Church website with lots of information Church noticeboard

Our Benefice – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism.

Consider the following headings. Think about the mission and ministry in your benefice in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the benefice to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the benefice, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, thing that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

Discipleship.

How does your benefice support people and communities to grow more like Christ? Think about the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the benefice. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality.)*

All our services are based upon the liturgy of the word, preaching the gospel and bringing people to Christ. We have a variety of services so as to be inclusive to all, these include Family Service, Praise and Prayer, Holy Communion, Morning Prayer and a 5th Sunday joint service with St Luke's, Endon. We also hold weddings, baptisms, funerals, service of Thanksgiving, Remembrance service, Memorial Service, Easter and Christmas services and we hold mid-week, monthly Holy Communion, Home Communions and the monthly Bagnall Heights Holy Communion. Services follow the lectionary readings unless it is to celebrate a specific occasion e.g. Leprosy Mission Sunday, Carol service at Bagnall Heights.

Since lockdown in March 2020, all services have been produced and uploaded to YouTube whether churches were open or not.

We have several prayer triplet groups in church who share regular prayer on a daily basis covering both personal and corporate prayer. We also have a prayer chain whereby anyone who has any concerns, needs support or asks for personal prayer will be prayed for or with through whatever difficulties they're experiencing. Pre-lockdown we had produced prayer cards which were left in the pews for people to take home with them and we also had a monthly mid-week communion service which was centred around meditation, prayer and healing.

Prayers are said at the beginning and end of all church council and other meetings. There are daily prayers on the St Chads WhatsApp group and Facebook page and weekly prayers on the Newsletter.

There is encouragement through Bible based teaching and opportunity offered for prayer following the service.



2. Study and theological reflection *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*

We had a weekly bible study group who met in private homes but since lockdown these have continued to be held on zoom. During the study sessions everyone is actively encouraged to challenge the biblical text and explore the context and meaning of same. The group also joined in the online study sessions run by Phillip Swan and Terry Bloor during autumn 2020.

We will hold a Lent course on zoom this year rather than in person as is usual.

Since lockdown we have posted daily meditations/verse and reflection on our WhatsApp group chat and also copied these onto our church Facebook page.

Preparation for Confirmation classes are held when we have a suitable number of candidates.

3. Nurturing new disciples *(2nd Mark of mission) (This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples.)*

We have Welcome bags for new people that come through the door.

Pre-baptism we have a thanksgiving service for the family to be introduced to the congregation and for them to get a feel for the type of services we hold.

Personal invitations for family services are sent to young families who have had their child baptised at the Church, and as alluded to earlier, cards are sent to the family on the anniversary of the baptism for the first 5 years.

A copy of the gospel is given to the families at Baptism or Thanksgiving.

We often congratulate all givers to the church, allowing the most menial of tasks completed to be celebrated alongside the most arduous, this we believe boosts morale and shows full appreciation for everything done by all people as a service to God.

At Christmas we distribute cards throughout the Parish letting people know the times of our services.

We encourage people to approach the worship team if they are in need of any individual support, through this we are nurturing their desire for their personal/spiritual growth.

4. Spiritual direction and mentoring *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life.)*

We have two members of the congregation who have followed their call into ministry and have been supported and mentored by the incumbent and the worship leaders, they have also received the support and love of the congregation resulting in one Ordained Deacon and the other due to be Ordained this coming summer. We have bible-based teaching and the church is alive with the Holy Spirit and the people are passionate about their faith. It is truly inspiring to worship here and be led into the greater work of God.

5. Stewardship *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities.)*

The majority of the congregation give monetary contributions by standing order and those who can, gift aid these contributions.

We have a yearly service about stewardship reminding everyone of not only money, but time and talents, great or small and how much it means to serve the Lord through whatever we do.

Annual service for the Leprosy Mission

Annual Harvest – all donations going to a local or international charity of whom a guest speaker is invited to do the talk after the Lunch.

Each year the congregation vote for a local, national and/or international charity they wish to support from a choice of three/four that have been nominated by the congregation.

We encourage members to engage personally with Christian Charities e.g. Christian Aid, Tearfund or a Missionary Society and also to think about sponsoring a child in need.

The church has purchased several toilets in the toilet twinning campaign and also responds to any emergency appeals which occur.

Church members take part in many varied sponsored events and are encouraged and supported in them.

6. Diversity, inclusivity and community *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly.)*

The church is inclusive and disability friendly and our services are adapted to suit all age groups.

We offer a choice of Baptism and / or Thanksgiving services. There is a toy corner at the back of the church and we have a deaf loop.

We encourage young people to be involved in the services and become members on the PCC. When lockdown came and the incumbent retired, we were able to continue with online services due to the experience of one of our young adults.

The locality is predominantly Caucasian and this is reflected in the make-up of the congregation however the Church itself is accepting of all ethnicities. We are diverse in our thinking and accepting of all God's children.

7. Relating to the wider church *(This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach.)*

We have had links with the South American Missionary Society, OMF Missionaries in Cambodia and other overseas missions.

We annually help with the Chernobyl Children's Project

Annual support of the Leprosy Mission

Involvement in the ecumenical world day of prayer.

Joint services with St Luke's and regular visiting ministers and lay readers.

8. Other *(Anything else that you support discipleship in the benefice)*

We have visiting speakers at the annual Harvest Lunch e.g. Lou Macari, Help the Heroes, Water Aid, Leprosy Mission to name but a few.

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your benefice. How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the benefice. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation** *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls.)*

See point 3 - in Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism section.

Mentoring members who have undertaken OLM

- 2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study** *(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups.)*

We have a leadership team which works well with the incumbent and encourage a wide number of people to help lead the services - from the youngest to the oldest.

Most services are inclusive, lay members are encouraged to lead intercessions, read the bible lesson, other readings, reflections and help lead worship. We also have a family service team. All are supported by the Worship Leaders

- 3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers** *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles.)*

See point 3 - in Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism section – we have started to get younger members involved in the running of the church which alleviates pressure on the longstanding volunteers.

We show appreciation for all who volunteer: - the cleaners, coffee makers, cake bakers, the Newsletter editor, flower arrangers, pastoral helpers to name but a few!

4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations.)*

This time tomorrow

Prayer triplets

Daily Bible readings/reflections

meditations via apps on differing devices

Encouraging all to “be church” outside of the services, whether at school, work or leisure

5. Care and loving service in the wider community (3rd Mark of Mission) *(This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, E.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)*

We have two members who volunteer for the Samaritans

Patient Volunteer – enabling medical students to enhance their learning

Creative Corner – a group made up of community and church people who work together and support others.

Pastoral work – visiting, telephoning, offering transport for hospital or other appointments

Supporting the Leprosy Mission and the Leek foodbank

Volunteering on the village hall committee

6. Working for justice and peace (4th Mark of Mission) *(This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics.)*

We have a member of the British Legion

Women’s Institute

RSPCA sympathisers

We are a Fair-Trade church

- 7. Care for creation (5th Mark of Mission)** *(This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups.)*

The churchyard is well cared for and maintained, we get involved in the Village clean up and recycle.

We participate in Toilet Twinning

- 8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries** *(This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad.)*

Points already made previously

We have others who are growing Spiritually and who are seeking and searching at this time having already had two members working towards a life in the ministry of the church.

- 9. Other** *(any other ways in which vocation is supported)*

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enable in your benefice? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the benefice. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Understanding of God's holistic mission** *(May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives.)*

We provide a variety of worship, pastoral care, prayer and social activities to provide spiritual, physical and mental well-being for all ages and backgrounds.

We provide encouragement and teaching that is bible based.

- 2. Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society.** *(This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships.)*

Opportunities to explore these approaches may arise during small group meetings.

All of our worship services are gospel based and encourage people to find the Lord in their own time and space. We preach in words and action God's love using material from different creeds and cultures as appropriate. We also use lots of visual as well as audio during worship. The congregation are invited to actively take part in a serious but light hearted introduction to the service.

We encourage people to ask questions and comment on what they have heard.

3. A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church *(This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite.)*

Thanksgiving services are offered to those who enquire about Baptism. This gives the immediate family including grandparents and future God parents an opportunity to meet the church family because Baptism services are separate due to the size of the church. Following the Baptism families receive anniversary cards made by one of our congregation for 5 years and personal invitations to special family services.

Invitations are distributed to every property in the parish during the Christmas season with information about services and other events.

Members are regularly encouraged to bring family, friends and colleagues to special services such as Mothering Sunday, Easter, family service and BCP Holy communion, pet service, harvest, Remembrance Sunday and Christmas. At such services we often give out a small card or gift.

People who have lost loved ones during the year are personally invited to our annual memorial service.

4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith *(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting.)*

A number of our members serve on the Village Hall Committee which enables constant church/community interaction. There are normally (pre covid) a number of community groups e.g. Lunches, craft groups, walking etc to which many members attend. We have links with Bagnall Heights and the Stafford Arms.

There is the annual village summer fete at which the church provides the refreshments and the Christmas Fayre which is attended by the local community.

In December 2020, due to COVID-19 rather than the usual crib service and carol service (always well attended) we held an outdoor carol service that was very popular (all within the guidelines), and the Stafford Arms, which was closed, opened its doors to provide mince pies and mulled wine. It was a very welcome event for the village at that time.

During normal times the church is open weekly for personal prayer, coffee and a chat with a church member if needed.



- 5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith** *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this E.g. talking Jesus.)*

Explored during services

- 6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media** *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media.)*

Weekly services uploaded to YouTube, WhatsApp communication for support, Facebook Church page with regular prayers and info, web page with weekly newsletter and info, zoom Bible study.

Exploring the possibility of social events e.g. quiz using digital media

- 7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith** *(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)*

We have shared meals at the Stafford Arms, coffee mornings, various social activities e.g. Harvest lunch, Beetle Drive, Concerts, etc

- 8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists.** *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith.)*

As stated before we have two members that have gone onto OLM training

- 9. Sharing good practice across the deanery** *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Deanery Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration.)*

Deanery synod representatives share what they have heard and learnt at their meetings

- 10. Planting fresh expressions of Church** *(This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the benefice and have appropriate involvement.)*

- 11. Other** *(Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the benefice)*

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

Gospel based worship, welcoming, openness and diversity, importance of prayer and the increase in people asking for prayer since lockdown. Importance of connecting with each other and community.

2. What are some of the main strengths of the benefice?

Growth in spirituality
Nurturing and encouragement of people to pursue their calling
Open expression of God's love
Good communication, pastorally and following up baptisms, etc, showing support of each other
Creating a place of safety and belonging

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

Ageing congregation
Limited outreach

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

Church and community links with village hall, pub and Bagnall Heights

5. Where is energy being wasted?

6. What are some of the key challenges the benefice faces?

Engaging with young people when there is no school in the vicinity.
Having no incumbent for the foreseeable future

7. What is unique about this benefice?

It is a commuter village

8. Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this benefice? *This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.*

To grow Gods Kingdom, increase spirituality in the community and be a living active, and welcoming Christian presence in the village.

Shaping for Mission - Biddulph

Reviewing Our Parish

There are five sections to this review: the place, the people, information and resources, Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism, and conclusions. Some parts of sections one and two and all of section three has already been completed for you, but you may want to add in any additional financial and building information that you may find helpful.

Our Parish – The Place

This section focuses on the geographical area of the deanery; what it includes in terms of Church of England presence, other Christian activity, other organisations and institutions, key gathering places etc.

1.Church of England presence in our Parish.

This section will be completed for deaneries

Church Schools	N/A
Fresh Expressions	Friendship Club—meal for the elderly in the community once a month. Prayers and short services at Christmas, Easter, and Harvest.
Chaplaincies	NSM acts as a chaplain to the above group
Parishes and Benefices	St Lawrence, Biddulph

Other Anglican presence	
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2. Ecumenical partners in the Parish.

What formal ecumenical partnerships or Churches Together groups are there in the parish?

Christians together in ST8 (formally CT) Working together for the Biddulph Festival and Easter & Christmas events. The ministers also meet together regularly for support.

Where are there good informal ecumenical relationships?

- At Christmas this year members of the Methodist church, Life Stream (Pentecostal church) and Oasis (Methodist church affiliated to Swan Bank) and ourselves put together a service to be streamed to the community.
- The Methodist church and ourselves take it in turns to host a Maundy Thursday service.
- We share with other churches to visit with a short service in the care homes
- The foodbank is a joint venture with the catholic church
- Biddulph festival includes a café run for 4 weeks in July by the churches. There are also events together during the festival.

Where are other denominations or Christian organisations doing work that we could support rather than repeat?

Not known

Where are the bits of our deanery with no, very little, or no effective Christian presence? (For example new housing estates)

There is a new estate on the site of the old Selectus factory which has very little Christian presence.

There is also an area around Lawton Street and Moorland Road where there is little Christian presence.



3. Partnerships and networks

What organisations operate in this Parish with whom we have shared values?

Green Tree Café which is run by volunteers who support people in the community with providing craft, discussions and support.

What resources are there in this area whose work overlaps with our mission and ministry?

Not Known

4. Institutions and organisations

What major institutions and organisations are there in this Parish? What connections do we have with them? (*Hospitals, prisons, universities etc*)

- We have care homes both in our parish and Knypersley parish.
- We also a complex where the doctors are housed with other NHS offices.
- There is also a library.

What schools (other than church schools) do we already have relationships with?

We have good relationship with 3 Schools (Oxhey, Kingsfield first schools and Woodhouse middle school) We have also had some links with Squirrel Hayes and Knypersley schools.

Are there any big employers in this parish, and / or big centres of employment? (*Factories, shopping centres, etc*) What connections do we have with them?

Sainsburys is probably the main employer in the town who are very happy to support church and community events where they can.

5. Gathering places and Centres

Where are the main centres or gathering places in this parish? (town centres, larger villages, community halls, etc)

Gathering places include the Town Hall, the town itself, Sainsburys, the bowling club, Biddulph country park and the playing fields known as the Sandhole. Biddulph Leisure Centre

What are the distinctive geographical features of the deanery and / or places of particular interest?

- Biddulph Grange
- Biddulph Country Park
- Walks along Biddulph Valley Way

What are the geographical opportunities and challenges of the deanery, in terms of thinking of collaborating and joining together across the deanery?

The ridge between Leek and Biddulph acts as a barrier both with the roads and communication with the other parts of the deanery which acts as a challenge.

6. What else is useful to note about the geographical area of the parish?

We are on the far northern edge of the deanery, diocese and county which makes us geographically and physically disconnected. There are new houses being built as in many areas. Our nearest larger shopping areas tend to be Congleton and Macclesfield. We could be described as a small town on the edge of rural areas with a large area of what was known as a miner's estate (social housing) shared with the next parish of Knypersley.

Our Parish – The People

This section is looking at the make up of your deanery in terms of both the general population and the Anglican population. Some of this section has already been completed for you.

1. Population

Approximate population of your parish. Number of people who live in the geographical area.	Approx. 9-10 thousand people
Number of people who attend your church.	Approx. 150 people

2. Formal Roles

Number of Authorised or Licensed Lay Ministers in your Parish	1 licensed Lay Reader 1 ALM
Number of people with formal lay roles (<i>Church wardens, treasurers, PCC secretary</i>)	2 Wardens, Treasurer, PCC secretary, Lay chair of PCC, Electoral Roll Secretary
Number of Clergy, Stipend and NSM	NSM 2 retired Stipendiary clergy both active
Any other paid roles (<i>church administrators, youth workers etc</i>)	Parish assistant, Children's and family worker, cleaner, verger

3. Volunteers

Are people in your deanery involved in any of the following on a voluntary basis? The table has been filled out using the Diocesan mission stats and information from the Dementia- Friendly Church network, Eco Church and Places of Welcome.

- Do add in any further categories you think are important here
- Do amend anything you think is out of date or inaccurate

Places of Welcome	An area we are working on but are not an official 'place of welcome'.
Dementia-Friendly Church	We have 'a mind to sing group' which is for people with dementia and their carer's. Again, we are not an official Dementia- friendly church.
Eco Church	This an area we have engaged with through a church member but again we are not an official eco-church. We are a Fairtrade town and church
Sunday school / Sunday kids work	We have separate teaching and activities for the children during our services and we have 2 midweek groups, one for first school pupils and one for middle school pupils which has Bible stories, teaching, crafts etc
Parent/ carer and toddler group or play group	We have a toddler group who meet one afternoon a week where babies, toddlers, parents and grandparents are welcome. The children have stories and singing.
Youth work	Our youthwork is very limited as we only engage with middle school age children.
Community Café	We welcome people from both the church and community once a month where any money raised is given to a different charity each time.
Foodbank	We support the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank which is held locally in the Catholic church
Pastoral provision	Limited but works well for our church members through our prayer diary with someone on each page of it having responsibility for ringing the other folks on their page.
Night shelter or other homeless provision	No
Money matters and debt advice	At the present there is no provision but one of the retired clergy is looking at retraining in this area with CAP.
Breakfast / after school clubs	No
Mental Health support connected with the church	At the present we have no provision but one of our members is looking into Kintsugi Hope training.
Support / activities for older people	Friendship club-Mentioned earlier. Mind to sing-also mentioned earlier. Ladies fellowship. Chatter and Craft.

Other community activity	Monthly men's breakfast and a car show during the festival
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Our Parish – Buildings and Financial Information

This section will be filled in before the template is given to the deanery team.

What buildings do we have?	<p>A multi-functional church</p> <p>A church hall made up of 3 small halls as well as a large one and including other smaller rooms.</p> <p>A house attached to the hall which houses the offices and hires out 2 of the rooms.</p> <p>An old choir vestry in the church grounds- only used for storage at the moment.</p> <p>A hall in the town which is rented out to a tyre company</p>
Share payment history (over last 5 years)	
Subsidies available from either low income community funding or mutual support	
Summary statement about affordability based on points 1-3	
Churches in the Deanery that are on the buildings at risk register	

Our Deanery – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism.

Consider the following headings. Make notes on the mission and ministry in your parish in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the parish to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the parish, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions as well as parishes. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, things that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

You do not have to use every heading, they are there as indicators of things to look for. If you want to see some examples of what might be included under each heading go to:

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/about-us/our-vision/shaping-for-mission/vision-of-a-healthy-deanery.php>

Discipleship.

How does your deanery support people and communities to grow more like Christ? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the deanery. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality.)*

Our normal services—9.15 Service using mainly hymns and CW liturgy (communion every other week) 11am service using informal liturgy and modern songs with provision for children (communion once a month. Thanksgiving for a child once a month and baptism every other month)

There are also a 6.30 service and a Wednesday service which have smaller numbers.

During Covid we have zoomed, had a small group in church and streamed online at 10.30 for anyone.

The prayer meeting was once a month with a small group meeting. During Covid it has moved to twice a week (once in the day and once in the evening) on zoom with more participating.

We also have a prayer chain which is both by telephone and WhatsApp when there is a particular need.

2. Study and theological reflection *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*

Before Covid 7 groups met in homegroups for bible study during covid 2 have met on zoom.

We also have Lent course each year.



3. Nurturing new disciples (2nd Mark of mission) *(This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples.)*

We have had Alpha and similar courses and hope to do further (not so good at following this up). It is part of our vision to introduce some kind of nurture courses.

We have baptism and wedding preparation both in groups and individually. We need to follow this up too. We do confirmation courses when needed.

4. Spiritual direction and mentoring *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life.)*

Most of our teaching in this area is through sermons and has been on the Lent course.

We have also started to do the course 'Stepping into the Supernatural' which is helpful in this area. Hope to finish after Covid.

5. Stewardship *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities.)*

We have an annual review of both financial and nonfinancial stewardship.

We give a percentage of our churches income charity which includes Tearfund, a missionary, a partner church in Kenya and Sanctus.

6. Diversity, inclusivity and community *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly.)*

We have made sure that our buildings are wheel-chair friendly as much as possible, with disabled toilets, access to buildings and hearing loops.

All are welcome

7. Relating to the wider church *(This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach.)*

We have a strong Link with a church in Kenya. We support them financially.

Groups have visit them and members from there have visited us. We support a

missionary, Alison, in a different part of Kenya. Again we have both supported

financially and met up with her and some members of the church have visited

the hospital where she works as well as her visiting us. We also support CSW

sending cards at Christmas to support the imprisoned Christians. Lastly we

support Sanctus and the work they do, with one of our members being strongly involved

8. Other *(Anything else that you supports discipleship in the deanery)*

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your Parish? How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation** *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls.)*

There needs to be encouragement to listen to God's leading and the needs of the church. The communication of this is probably one of our weak areas.

- 2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study** *(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups.)*

There is very good collaboration between both lay and ordained which makes for good team of people to be involved in services and group leading therefore working well as a team together.

- 3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers** *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles.)*

People are encouraged informally but again there is a need for good communication so that people know what is expected of them. Again a weak area.

- 4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday** *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations.)*

A few years ago in our Lent course we thought about our frontlines and what that meant using LICC materials. This needs to be revisited.

5. Care and loving service in the wider community (3rd Mark of Mission) *(This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, E.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)*

We are involved in the foodbank and have involved ourselves in the local schools through RE lessons and the Christian Union which our children's worker was involved in. St Lawrence also set up a group of people who we called Angels who do shopping for people during Lockdown.

We also have a thanksgiving service approximately 3 or 4 times a year where we invite people who have had funerals during the last few months, to come along to an evening service. We pray for the bereaved and have refreshments and the congregation spend time talking to them.

6. Working for justice and peace (4th Mark of Mission) *(This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics.)*

As stated before we are involved with CSW and we hear about and support the work of Sanctus.

We are a Fairtrade town

We have individuals in the church who have a strong interest in these things and share them with the church.

7. Care for creation (5th Mark of Mission) *(This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups.)*

We have solar panels on the church hall. A member of the church who has kept our small garden and grown fruit and vegetables to share with the church family.

8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries *(This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad.)*

In the past we have encouraged people into pathways to ministry and other training as well as 3 members being ordained into Stipendiary ministry. Unfortunately, in recent year this has not happened and has become one of our weaker areas.

9. **Other** (any other ways in which vocation is supported)

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enable in your parish? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. **Understanding of God's holistic mission** (May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives.)

Much of this comes through our teaching and preaching in our weekly services. This year we are going to use the Church of England Lent booklet which talks about our personal story and how we can share it.

2. **Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society.** (This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships.)

Much of our teaching is about loving and caring for others even when they are different and showing God's love for them. Again this comes mainly in our preaching at services.

3. **A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church** (This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite.)

This is done mainly by our services for the bereaved mentioned earlier. We also encourage families who want a baptism to attend church as they both have a thanksgiving service and baptism in the hope that they will return. This probably is an area we need to look at and see ways of inviting them back.

4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith *(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting.)*

We share the town council prayers with the other churches in the town. There is a Christian Union in Woodhouse middle school run by our Children's worker.

Biddulph festival is another way of building relationships with the community. The event includes a café run by the churches for 4 Saturdays, a car show and a songs of praise service.

The church building welcomes community events such as local folk club and poetry and art exhibitions, throughout the year.

5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this E.g. talking Jesus.)*

This been a weak area but we are hoping that the use of the Church of England Lent booklets will help with this.

6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media.)*

We have a web page, Facebook page and a YouTube account. During Covid we have used these to communicate as well having services and meetings on zoom and streaming. Also during Covid we have used WhatsApp to support and encourage people through bible verses songs and thoughts.

7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith *(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)*

We have had Alpha courses and similar courses over the years, and we are looking at whether we could do an online course.

We also have had a monthly men's breakfast held in a local pub where there have been speakers on occasions.

8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists. *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith.)*

This is at the moment one of our weak areas in that we have not set in a way of discovering gifts or utilising any training.

9. Sharing good practice across the deanery *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Deanery Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration.)*

10. Planting fresh expressions of Church *(This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the parish and have appropriate involvement.)*

Drawing on the success of the car show during the festival, we are looking at the 'Revs' groups in the diocese and how we can do something similar here.

11. Other *(Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the deanery)*

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

Need for training, prayer, desire to move on with new initiatives and a variety of willing volunteers

2. What are some of the main strengths of the Parish?

Working together of both lay and ordained people to bring a variety of worship styles to the congregations. A team of Technical workers. A large number of prayerful people who support informally other members of the church

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

Recognising the gifts of people and encouraging their use and also encouraging training.

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

Page pastors who are people ringing and supporting a small group of people on the same page as them in the Prayer Diary (a list of the church members so we can pray for each other) Prayer chain.

Worship opportunities through Covid

5. Where is energy being wasted?

6. What are some of the key challenges the parish faces?

Need for a new vicar as well as a new Children and family's worker. Possibly a youth worker as we have a gap in the congregations of people between 16-35. To reach all areas of the parish especially the new estates. Encourage all to play their part.

7. What is unique about this parish?

Small town on the northern edge of the diocese close to the Cheshire border surrounded by rural areas. Able to offer diverse styles of worship.

8. Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this parish? *This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.*

To formulate a parish profile to attract a mature vicar, who recognises the needs of the parish and would work well with a reformed leadership team.

To work towards the aims set out in the vision statement---Love Jesus--- Make disciples--- Grow the church---serve Biddulph and the world.

Shaping for Mission - Biddulph Moor

Reviewing Our Parish

There are five sections to this review: the place, the people, information and resources, Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism, and conclusions. Some parts of sections one and two and all of section three has already been completed for you, but you may want to add in any additional financial and building information that you may find helpful.

Our Parish – The Place

This section focuses on the geographical area of the deanery; what it includes in terms of Church of England presence, other Christian activity, other organisations and institutions, key gathering places etc.

1.Church of England presence in our Parish.

This section will be completed for deaneries

Church Schools	N/A
Fresh Expressions	N/A
Chaplaincies	Informal, pastoral support from Reader and Vicar to local school.
Parishes and Benefices	Christ Church-Biddulph Moor, part of a Benefice with St John's, Knypersley
Other Anglican presence	Not within the Parish, but within the area, I have a second parish which is St John's Knypersley , and there is another Anglican Parish which I am not responsible for which is St Lawrence in Biddulph. So 3 parishes in total covering approx. 25k people.

2. Ecumenical partners in the Parish.

What formal ecumenical partnerships or Churches Together groups are there in the parish?

- Christians Together in ST8 (formally Biddulph Churches Together)
- There is a Christians Together in ST8 group that meets together to discuss 4 missions each year, as well as many other things. These missions are a working together from all Churches within the area, and therefore will include a number of mission initiatives across the area. This is thinking beyond a parish boundary, and would incorporate 3 parish boundaries from an Anglican point of view. The 3 parishes are, St Lawrence, Biddulph, **St John's, Knypersley, and Christ Church, Biddulph Moor.**
- The missions are around Easter, summer, this is a summer café held in the town over 4 Saturdays. Alternative Halloween, and Christmas. These missions seek to operate across the whole area.
- Evenings of Worship & Prayer take place, and move around from Church to Church to support the 4 missions each year.
- Church Ministers also meet together on a regular basis to pray. Denominations included are, Pentecostal, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Anglican. A total of 9 Churches are represented, and form one partnership together.

Where are there good informal ecumenical relationships?

- Ministers from Churches across the area open each Councillor's Town meeting at the Town Hall with Prayer.
- There is an Ecumenical Foodbank; this takes place in the Roman Catholic Church.
- Short services are held in the residential care homes within the area.

Where are other denominations or Christian organisations doing work that we could support rather than repeat?

The idea of Ecumenical partnership is around Worship, Prayer, and Mission. However, each Church will have its own life, and mission strategies. This is not a repeat of mission, but each Church reaching out into its local community/area with a variety of initiatives.



St Lawrence CofE has had a **family's** worker, both the Pentecostal Church, and one of the Methodist Churches also have a healthy and fruitful work with Children/young people and families.

Where are the bits of our deanery with no, very little, or no effective Christian presence? (For example new housing estates)

With 3 Churches within Biddulph Moor Parish, 3 Churches in Knypersley Parish, and 3 Churches within Biddulph Parish, this means there are 9 Churches across different denominations seeking to work together, and provide a variety of Worship and Mission that is seeking to connect with people across the area.

Our Deanery covers not only urban areas, but a number of semi-rural and rural areas. The map suggests there is a large area to cover. I would be very interested in knowing what parts of the Deanery that would benefit from a Christian Presence or a new form of Worshipping Community **where there isn't currently** one from any Christian denomination.

3. Partnerships and networks

What organisations operate in this Parish with whom we have shared values?

We share values with Biddulph Moor Community Association. Working with residents and working together for the best for the village of Biddulph Moor.

What resources are there in this area whose work overlaps with our mission and ministry?

None

4. Institutions and organisations

What major institutions and organisations are there in this Parish? What connections do we have with them? (Hospitals, prisons, universities etc)

- Although outside of the parish boundary, but within the area, there is a NHS complex that includes Doctors and other various health practitioners. There are no direct connections, but the ecumenical dimension connects us to this.

What schools (other than church schools) do we already have relationships with?



Moor First School is next to the Church, and we have had a good relationship with the school for many years.

The school comes into the Church building for Harvest & Christmas.

Are there any big employers in this parish, and / or big centres of employment? (Factories, shopping centres, etc) What connections do we have with them?

Biddulph Moor is a semi-rural village but does have a local manufacturing company within the parish. There is a small amount of employment from the village hall, shops, and pubs within the area.

5. Gathering places and Centres

Where are the main centres or gathering places in this parish? (town centres, larger villages, community halls, etc)

Village Hall

Local pubs

Within the Town outside of the village, there is a leisure centre, library, all providing leisure opportunities for the local people and beyond. A small Town with pubs and wine bars, restaurants, take away food etc.

What are the distinctive geographical features of the deanery and / or places of particular interest?

- Biddulph Grange (Area)
- Biddulph Country Park (Area)
- Walks along Biddulph Valley Way (Area)
- Knypersley Cricket Club (Area)
- Knypersley reservoir (Area)

What are the geographical opportunities and challenges of the deanery, in terms of thinking of collaborating and joining together across the deanery?

This was mentioned by St Lawrence, Biddulph, and St John's, Knypersley and would be the same for Christ Church, Biddulph Moor. The ridge between Leek and Biddulph acts as a barrier both with the roads and communication with the other parts of the Deanery which can be a challenge, especially when thinking about cross boundary mission.

6. What else is useful to note about the geographical area of the parish?



Like St Lawrence, **Biddulph, and St John's, Knypersley**, we are on the far northern edge of the Deanery, Diocese and County. Our nearest larger shopping areas tend to be Leek, Congleton and Macclesfield. We could be described as a semi-rural village, next to a small town of Biddulph, on the edge of rural areas and larger shopping areas and Towns.

Our Parish – The People

This section is looking at the make up of your deanery in terms of both the general population and the Anglican population. Some of this section has already been completed for you.

1. Population

Approximate population of your parish. Number of people who live in the geographical area.	Approx. 2.5-3k people
Number of people who attend your church.	Worshiping Community 30+ people with an average ASA of 17-20.

2. Formal Roles

Number of Authorised or Licensed Lay Ministers in your Parish	Older and very faithful Licensed Reader
Number of people with formal lay roles (<i>Church wardens, treasurers, PCC secretary</i>)	2x Church Wardens, Treasurer, PCC Secretary, Electoral Roll Secretary.
Number of Clergy, Stipend and NSM	1x stipendiary person operating with 1/3rd of a post The other 2/3 rd is St John's, Knypersley .
Any other paid roles (<i>church administrators, youth workers etc</i>)	Cleaner, Verger as and when funerals/Weddings come in.

3. Volunteers

Are people in your deanery involved in any of the following on a voluntary basis? The table has been filled out using the Diocesan mission stats and information from the Dementia- Friendly Church network, Eco Church and Places of Welcome.

- Do add in any further categories you think are important here
- Do amend anything you think is out of date or inaccurate

Places of Welcome	Not an official 'place of welcome'.
Dementia-Friendly Church	We are not an official Dementia- friendly church.
Eco Church	Not an official eco-church. We are a Fairtrade Church
Sunday school / Sunday kids work	No
Parent/ carer and toddler group or play group	No
Youth work	No
Community Café	No
Foodbank	No
Pastoral provision	Vicar and Church Wardens & Licensed Reader support as much as possible with Pastoral Provision.
Night shelter or other homeless provision	No
Money matters and debt advice	No
Breakfast / after school clubs	No
Mental Health support connected with the church	No
Support / activities for older people	This has stopped after several years. However, the hall is hired to a small group of older people once a month.
Other community activity	Members of the Church are involved in the Biddulph Moor Community Association, and serve the village well, please see question 3 partnership and networks.

Our Parish – Buildings and Financial Information

This section will be filled in before the template is given to the deanery team.

What buildings do we have?	Grade 2 listed building in good order. A parish hall and rooms that has recently been upgraded with a new heating
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	system, and is currently looking for funding for full refurbishment.
Share payment history (over last 5 years)	We are paying 1/3 rd of a parish share approx. £20k.
Subsidies available from either low income community funding or mutual support	No subsidy at present, and because of council tax banding pay approx. 12% above normal parish share. This is something we need to discuss with Lay Assessors.
Summary statement about affordability based on points 1-3	This will be a big challenge in 2021, but like a number of previous years, the parish does it's best to meet the Parish Share, with a small but faithful congregation.
Churches in the Deanery that are on the buildings at risk register	We are not at present.

Our Deanery – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism.

Consider the following headings. Make notes on the mission and ministry in your parish in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the parish to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the parish, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions as well as parishes. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, things that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

You do not have to use every heading, they are there as indicators of things to look for. If you want to see some examples of what might be included under each heading go to:

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/about-us/our-vision/shaping-for-mission/vision-of-a-healthy-deanery.php>

Discipleship.

How does your deanery support people and communities to grow more like Christ? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the deanery. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality.)*

9.00am service each Sunday. Style is Informal yet Traditional, and offers a mixture of Common Worship with BCP once a month.

During lockdown when Church buildings were closed, a weekly Benefice online service was available each Sunday via YouTube.

Service Sheets & Bible reading have been available during lockdown.

2. Study and theological reflection *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*

This is an area of weakness, and although we have limited numbers in Church, we need to look and see if Fellowship/Support Groups can be formed.

3. Nurturing new disciples (2nd Mark of mission) *(This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples.)*

Alpha Courses have been advertised through the local village news booklet, but never had any response. We will continue to persevere with this.

We encourage people to get involved in various ministries and serving roles within the Church. This not only helps people to belong, but also is part of discipleship and exploring gifts/talents they may have.

Baptism/Wedding Prep is offered for enquirers.

4. Spiritual direction and mentoring *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life.)*

At the moment this will come mainly through the teaching of a Sunday, but no specific teaching material used.

5. Stewardship *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities.)*

We have regular teaching and discussion **on Stewardship, and cover the 3 T's** Treasures, Time, and Talents as part of our Stewardship programme.

We aim to give up to 10% mission giving away each year.

6. Diversity, inclusivity and community *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly.)*

The removal of some pews or part pews for wheelchair access is something that was explored, but finances unfortunately paused that process. We do have portable ramps that make access into the Church building easier, and there is easy access from the bottom gate all the way up to Church.

The large font/wording on the screen and in booklets helps those who have difficulty with sight and small print.

We do everything possible to welcome all people.

7. Relating to the wider church *(This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach.)*



Our Ecumenical link is strong locally.

We also give financially to worldwide mission partners.

8. Other *(Anything else that you supports discipleship in the deanery)*

No

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your Parish? How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls.)*

Under the question in Discipleship question 2. We recognised that this was an area that we needed to work at. And if these group/s are developed, this will give opportunity for people to take on leadership/facilitating roles within groups. We pray that more people may be raised up for various forms of licensed ministry.

We already encourage as many people as possible to be involved in the life of Christ Church. We are a small but faithful **congregation that does it's best to maintain** building/churchyard, and continue to reach out well with limited resources/finance.

2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study *(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups.)*

We only have 1 Ordained stipendiary Minister 1/3rd of a post, and 1x older Licensed but very faithful Reader, we encourage as many people as possible to be involved on a regular basis in prayer and Bible Readings. Refreshments after the service were offered before COVID 19.

3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles.)*



We do our best to be aware of what people are involved in. We also do our best to balance the workload for all, but this is difficult when the life of the parish needs to be maintained with limited people resources. We do remarkably well for the size of our congregation.

- 4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday** *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations.)*

None

- 5. Care and loving service in the wider community** (3rd Mark of Mission) *(This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, E.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)*

Members of the Church are involved in community events, from Well Dressing to Christmas, to the Community Association, the congregation really cares for the place it lives in, and works well in partnership with the Village.

- 6. Working for justice and peace** (4th Mark of Mission) *(This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics.)*

We collect on a weekly basis for foodbank, and also provide Finance and Prayer to support worldwide mission.

- 7. Care for creation** (5th Mark of Mission) *(This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups.)*

Our small Churchyard team do an incredible job keeping the Churchyard in an excellent condition.

A new more ECO friendly heating system has been installed in the Parish Hall, and the Church boiler was also updated.

- 8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries** *(This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad.)*

Please see question 1 under vocation, I have included this in that question.

9. Other (any other ways in which vocation is supported)

No

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enable in your parish? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. **Understanding of God's holistic mission** (May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives.)

Whilst many of our congregation are retired, we still have a small number of people in paid employment. The teaching of a Sunday focusses very much on living out our faith in day to day life. With this in mind, not only will those in the workplace be living out their faith, they will also recognise that God works beyond the four walls of the Church, and beyond Christ's people as well in the world.

2. **Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society.** (This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships.)

We have Church members that are active in community life. This represents an incarnational presence within community life. We also have a well-kept Church and Churchyard and parish hall building. Christ Church continues to offer the incarnational ministry and gospel in the village. The Churchyard team have been there when people have visited the Churchyard. The Church building has been open for people to go into also.

3. **A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church** (This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite.)

We have held Memorial services; this has been an opportunity to invite people/families that the Church has had contact with through bereavement.

We advertise each quarter through the Village magazine. This is an opportunity to offer a short message and continued invitation to the village about service times and events.

On Good Friday we have walked around parts of the village knocking on doors and blessing people with Chocolate Eggs.

We have had Benefice weekends away; this has also been an opportunity for people to come away and connect with people and faith.

4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith *(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting.)*

We have a good relationship with the local school; events that are held in Church are always full with visiting parents/carers. Invitations are always given to special Christmas and Harvest services.

As previously mentioned we work well with Biddulph Moor Community Association, and relationships in the village are healthy.

5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this E.g. talking Jesus.)*

Sharing personal faith is never easy; however, people often look at our lives before they listen to what we say. Confidence to share our story maybe something we take a look at further in Sunday teaching.

6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media.)*

Facebook page,
Website.

7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith *(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community)*



venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)

Alpha courses have been offered through advertisement, but very little response.

Vicar does pop in the pub from time to time for a pint and chat with the locals.

- 8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists.** *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith.)*

We have a Team of people from Knypersley Church that came up to Biddulph Moor, and together with people from Biddulph Moor went around the village to pray around the streets. If an evangelistic opportunity arises, faith would be shared in a gentle way.

- 9. Sharing good practice across the deanery** *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Deanery Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration.)*

The heart is there to share, but one of the biggest challenges of this Deanery conversation, is how do already busy Churches that are finding it difficult to sustain life, spread themselves more thinly in order to resource Deanery Mission initiatives?

- 10. Planting fresh expressions of Church** *(This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the parish and have appropriate involvement.)*

This will need further people resources and finance.

- 11. Other** *(Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the deanery)*
No

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

- 1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?**

People and finance resources are limited and continue to be a challenge.

- 2. What are some of the main strengths of the Parish?**



The small but faithful congregation care about the place they live and for the future of the Church.

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

Raising up individuals in a small but faithful congregation to licensed ministry.

Developing Home/Support groups for discipleship and nurturing vocation.

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

Christians Together ST8 (Ecumenically) across the area is a great example of resourcing mission.

Working in partnership with the village association.

5. Where is energy being wasted?

I would say that energy is not being wasted, but seeing more fruit for labouring for the gospel will renew and reenergise some tired people. When we see fruit from labour it gives us more enthusiasm to carry on.

6. What are some of the key challenges the parish faces?

- To maintain a 1/3 stipend post.
- To recognise that Churches do grow young and die old. Planting new forms of Church to reach new generations.
- We have to continue to pray for the provision of God in sending people to continue and further the mission to the village and beyond.

7. What is unique about this parish?

Each parish Church is unique, because it was the missionary Spirit who moved and birthed such places of Worship. **On our website it says** "An Anglican Church for the moor had been vigorously promoted by James Bateman of Biddulph Grange as early as 1850, and he spent a great deal of time in correspondence with local landowners able to subscribe to the project. Bateman, together with his friend Edward Cooke eventually had to tailor their ambitions for a grandiose building to the amount of subscriptions received, and the unusual and attractive building which was eventually completed and **consecrated in 1863**" This sounds like a great big struggle, but it eventually birthed



something very special. Although there continues to be a great struggle, we pray that something special may continue to be birthed on Biddulph Moor.

8. Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this parish? *This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.*

We have a Vision statement that clearly spells out **God's mission**,
Jesus saves all. Christ Church welcomes all to follow Him

As part of being healthy Christians and a healthy Church, we continue to focus on building 7 SHIPS.

Relationship
Worship
Fellowship
Discipleship
Stewardship
Leadership
Membership

Shaping for Mission – Brown Edge Connect2

Please note that due to the unconventional nature of Connect2 it was hard to use the original data gathering form. In the following I have attempted to give you all the information that I believe you will need for the SFM process. If there is anything missing that you need to know please feel free to contact me.

Background to Connect2

A Fresh expressions church coming under a Bishop's Missional Order.

The origin, motivation, and purpose of the initiative.

A calling by God to set up a missional community within Brown Edge to serve the local community in the main, but not solely, by establishing links with the local school

The core objectives and values of the initiative.

(c) **The Objectives of the Mission Initiative**
To provide for mission in the Area through a new worshipping community primarily for the benefit of people who do not currently go to any church.

To develop further the activities of the Connect 2 initiative already established in the Area by leadership provided by members of local churches including Brown Edge St Anns.

This community is intended to develop independently of the congregation of Brown Edge St Anne's parish church as part of a mixed economy of churches in the Area to allow mutual flourishing and with a mutually supportive ethos.

To continue to minister to and work alongside local school(s) to fulfil the objectives of the mission initiative; including St Annes CofE (VC) Primary School, engaging with the children, parents and carers and staff of these schools.

The aim is to create a flourishing community that is:
Missional; i.e. by prioritising mission to and involvement of people in the Area who currently do not go to church and through evangelism in culturally appropriate ways.
Contextual; i.e. by recognising and identifying the needs of the local community and responding to these needs with the love of Jesus Christ.

1 of 8

Connect 2 BMO v1 15/07/19

Formational; i.e. by placing hospitality and the building of community at the heart of its activities; by meeting to share life together, actively making disciples of Jesus Christ, encouraging Christian commitment through Life Events including baptism.
Ecclesial; i.e. through a variety of provision as the initiative develops; e.g. occasional family services, messy churches etc and through the appropriate development of a sacramental life of the initiative.

How the initiative fulfills its vision and purposes.

1a) The core worshipping community of Connect2 are made up mainly of people who have either never been to church or who have stopped going for a significant period.

b) Out of the above group – one lady has recently become a Christian and with support has begun to lead the occasional discussion group on Sundays.

2) The leaders do come from the local churches, however since Revd Alan's retirement there is no leadership from St Anne's although there is a member of St Anne's who does attend Connect2

3) We have developed independently but due to ongoing issues at St Anne's it has been hard to establish a mutually beneficial relationship. We do pray for the church and we have maintained contact with the local Methodist Church. Contact has been made with the new minister but due to lockdown restrictions it has been difficult to follow this up.

4) Up to the pandemic we had regular contact with the local school – this included through leading collective worship, role on the governing body, holiday clubs and messy church. Since the pandemic, we have created recorded worship and worship packs for the school. AW is also now the ex-officio governor for the school and is supporting the school through this as well. Over Christmas Connect2 provided food hampers and presents for the most vulnerable of the school families. For Easter, the plan is to buy the Bob Hartman Easter books for every child in the school, provide Easter gifts for the vulnerable pupils and well-being gifts for all the staff.

5) We are missional and have tried hard to connect with the local community through the supporting of village events, fund raising for local first responders and then hosting family events around the main Christian festivals. There have been limited opportunities to do this since the pandemic however once a month we hold an online quiz night and recently this has been open to the wider community. Challenge is to make such events intentionally evangelical as well as social.

6) Hospitality remains at the heart of our call although the outworking of this has had to change during the pandemic.

The unfolding of the mission and whether there is evolution.

We have established a small but consistent group that sits at the core of Connect2 – this has continued to meet every Sunday all through lockdown and every other Wednesday for prayer.

- The relationship with the school has evolved in a very positive way – we have taken on the ex-officio governor role and are considered the main church link for the school.
- Personal links with the head and staff are very strong.

- We have taken time over the summer to pray and search out God's calling for the next phase of Connect2 – there is a sense for a need to be more intentional in our outreach and evangelism.

Progress and development and future trajectory.

- We are making greater use of the Parish News to be in touch with the village.
- We have set up a website and a Facebook page and are now linked with the Brown Edge Facebook community.
- We are beginning to advertise our Zoom meetings to those outside of our core group- including the Friday evenings.

Strategic direction, management, and oversight.

- Alex Wolvers (stated as the main leader in the BMO)
- Anne Collins, Mark Hatcher, Ian Wolvers are also named.
- Member of the Stoke Greenhouse Network
- External accountability is to the Bishop of Lichfield or his representative.
- Links with Connections at Endon.

Make-up of the Connect2 Community

- Before Covid19 restrictions Sunday meetings were made up on average of:
 - 3 between the ages of 15-20years
 - 13 others and 2 occasional
- Since Covid19 we have a regular live meeting on Zoom:
 - 1 under 20years
 - 11 others and 2 occasional
- Messy Church and family events can bring anywhere from 30 – 60 extra people from the wider community who are mainly families with primary age children.

Resources, finance, and governance

Zero costing but we self-fund if or when needed

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

- Rooted in biblical teaching
- Regular biblical teaching and study
- School
- Mission
- Hospitality

- Community

2. What are some of the main strengths of Connect2?

- Focused leadership and a clear vision
- Accountability
- Community and school connections
- Leadership from within the groups encourages people to step up to their vocation
- Having no overheads have been very beneficial especially at this time of Covid19

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

- With no full-time leader there is a lot of pressure on the leaders who are all in full-time jobs too. This also limits at times what can be done.
- No building as well as a benefit can also be a disadvantage as you are not so visible within the community.

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

- School
- Diocese
- Greenhouse

5. Where is energy being wasted?

- With all things involving humans - negative relationships can sometimes be a drain on your time and emotional reserves. Thankfully, this isn't often the case within Connect2.

6. What are some of the key challenges Connect2 faces?

- Time pressure on leadership team
- Being intentional and clearly holding tight to God's calling.
- Enabling people to have vision and ideas but being careful to test these against God's calling
- Keeping connected to all members during the pandemic
- Knowing what we will look like as a community going forward

Alex Wolvers 27/02/2021



Shaping for Mission - Brown Edge St Anne's

Some thoughts on St Anne's Church Building, Brown Edge

These are ideas that I feel could be achieved with the right team with the right heart to do it. My real hope would be for a team that would come together from all the churches in Brown Edge – Connect2, St Anne's and the Methodist Church – working together on mission but as yet that has not proven possible. We keep hoping and praying for that.

Possible outreach opportunities for the building:

- Links with the school. St Anne's school are very keen to make more use of the church building for regular worships, festivals and RE lessons. Ed Hobson, the headteacher, has spoken many times about his desire to have closer links with a church – this is where Connect2 has come in at the moment.
- There is no café or meeting place in Brown Edge for the older community, mums/dads before and after school or those who just want to talk – there could be a real ministry around bereavement and loneliness and the church (if fitted out more appropriately) would be an ideal venue for this
- Prayer meetings and Bible studies – seeker meetings. Again, if fitted out correctly the church would be ideal.
- Community cupboard / foodbank – this is a real need within the community for something along these lines. As well as a place for clothes and toy swaps.
- After school Christian clubs and Messy Church – when we have done anything with Connect2 there has been a great response by the community. These do work well in the school and there are benefits of doing that but at the same time they could be run also in a well set out church building.
- Joint worship services and seeker services are also needed within the village. When we are allowed back into school these are something that we would like to start thinking about running but again they could easily be run from a church if fitted out properly.

Closing thoughts.

Connect2 could not take on a building that would cost money – we do not have any income at all, we do not take collections in any form and so we simply do not have the resources to do that.

If we had a vicar / leader at St Anne's who would be up for working with us on Mission and outreach I would not hesitate to join forces. There is definitely room in Brown Edge for Connect2 and something running alongside us at the Church.

Alex Wolvers

Lead CDA for Mission Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education 25/2/2021

Shaping for Mission - Cheddleton

Reviewing Our Parish

There are five sections to this review: the place, the people, information and resources, Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism, and conclusions. Some parts of sections one and two and all of section three has already been completed for you, but you may want to add in any additional financial and building information that you may find helpful.

Our Parish – The Place

This section focuses on the geographical area of the Parish; what it includes in terms of Church of England presence, other Christian activity, other organisations and institutions, key gathering places etc.

1. Church of England presence in our Parish.

This section will be completed for deaneries

Church Schools	<i>St Edward's CE Academy. OFSTED – outstanding. SIAMS – excellent.</i>
Fresh Expressions	<i>Friendship Club – pre Covid met weekly. Catering for the elderly, providing transport and lunch. Family Fun Day – free activities situated in the churchyard. Bouncy castle and slide, church open, activities for all, refreshments. Mothers' Union – worldwide outreach. Christmas Cards to prisoners. Baptism Anniversary cards sent out for 5 years. Bi monthly activities on Saturday mornings in the style of Messy Church. (Lack of resources have meant that these have been 'on hold' for a couple of years.) Open air service at Cheddleton Flint Mill. Open air service at Bridge Eye well dressing. Choir occasionally sing in the local pub.</i>
Chaplaincies	<i>None allied to St Edward's but the retired OLM (with PtO) spent several years as part time chaplain at the Douglas Macmillan Hospice.</i>
Parishes and Benefices	<i>United Benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer</i>
Other Anglican presence	<i>Quiz nights. Cheddleton Carnival.</i>

2. Ecumenical partners in the Parish.

What formal ecumenical partnerships or Churches Together groups are there in the Parish?

There is no formal LEP within the parish. An attempt to form an LEP with St Andrew's Methodist Church has been tried but failed on two occasions. As a result an informal covenant was drawn up between the two churches and signed by both parties.

Where are there good informal ecumenical relationships?

Ecumenical Lent and Advent Groups are held (prior to Covid). Friendship Club is an ecumenical outreach. Prayer chain. Joint services are held for the Covenant Service, Good Friday, Remembrance Sunday, Memorial Service and Crib Service.

Where are other denominations or Christian organisations doing work that we could support rather than repeat?

Street Pastors – there are two members of our congregation who have recently retired from being Street Pastors.

Foodbank – there are two members who are still active in the local Foodbank, one of whom maintains their website. Church sends regular donations of supplies.

The Methodist Church has a paid Youth worker whom we are happy to support.

Where are the bits of our Parish with no, very little, or no effective Christian presence?
(For example new housing estates)

Members of our congregation are spread widely throughout the village. However, there is no one resident in the new houses on the former hospital site but, at the request of the residents association our church choir hold an annual outdoor Carol Service.

3. Partnerships and networks

What organisations operate in this Parish with whom we have shared values?

St Andrew's Methodist Church.

St Edward's CE Academy.

Cheddleton Carnival Committee.

WI

The Royal British Legion.

What resources are there in this area whose work overlaps with our mission and ministry?

Cheddleton Carnival Committee – in the past we have organised a 'float' and had a stall at the carnival where free Christian resources are given out.

4. Institutions and organisations

What major institutions and organisations are there in this Parish? What connections do we have with them? (Hospitals, prisons, universities etc)

Ernvale Care Home – (pre Covid) weekly services were held there.

Baden-Powell Groups – they meet in the local school and attend the Remembrance Service in church. In the past, as part of their annual giving the PCC have supported them.

What schools (other than church schools) do we already have relationships with?

The retired OLM (pre Covid) takes services at Horton Lodge Special School.

Are there any big employers in this Parish, and/or big centres of employment? (Factories, shopping centres, etc) What connections do we have with them?

There are two industrial estates, one housing Cottage Delight. There are no formal connections but local businesses do support the church by entering a decorated Christmas Tree in the Christmas Tree festival in church. They also support us by placing advertisements in the Parish Magazine.

The main industry is farming. In the past we held annual Harvest Thanksgiving services on Thursday evening as a preliminary to the main Harvest Festival weekend. These services were specifically attended by members of the farming community. Unfortunately these no longer takes place but when resources allow we are happy for them to be reinstated.

5. Gathering places and Centres

Where are the main centres or gathering places in this Parish? (town centres, larger villages, community halls, etc)

Cheddleton Community Centre. The church has extremely good links with the Parish Council. The Community Centre car park is always available on Sundays for members of the congregation and for those attending weekday meetings for wedding and baptism bookings/ PCC/Choir etc.

What are the distinctive geographical features of the Parish and/or places of particular interest?

Cheddleton is situated in the beautiful Staffordshire Moorlands, on the borders of the Peak District, and is increasingly developing its tourism status. Nearby attractions include Alton Towers, Cheddleton Steam Railway, Rudyard Lake, Glencote Caravan Park, several sailing clubs, rock climbing at the Roaches, canal and cycle routes and many more opportunities for outdoor activities.

What are the geographical opportunities and challenges of the Parish, in terms of thinking of collaborating and joining together across the Parish?

On the fifth Sunday in the months throughout the year a United Service of Holy Communion is held. This can be challenging for those who do not have their own transport or who rely on the services of the local bus company (there are no buses in operation on Sundays) as the distance between the two furthest parishes within the benefice is 9.5 miles – a 19 mile round trip. Attendance is often poor.

6. What else is useful to note about the geographical area of the Parish?

Cheddleton is close to the market town of Leek which has a good variety of independent retailers as well as supermarkets, a swimming pool and sports centre, library and arts centre and

community hospital with minor injuries department. The University Hospital of Stoke is a recognised major trauma centre and Macclesfield also has a large general hospital.

Our Parish – The People

This section is looking at the make up of your Parish in terms of both the general population and the Anglican population. Some of this section has already been completed for you.

1. Population

Approximate population of your Parish (number of people who live in the geographical area?)	Lichfield to complete
Number of people who attend Anglican churches in your Parish	Lichfield to complete

2. Formal Roles

Number of Authorised or Licensed Lay Ministers in your Parish	<i>Two Licensed local ministers (One with PtO) One licensed Community Minister Pastoral Team</i>
Number of people with formal lay roles (<i>Church wardens, treasurers, PCC secretary</i>)	<i>One Churchwarden One PCC secretary</i>
Number of Clergy, Stipend and NSM	<i>One retired OLM (with PtO)</i>
Any other paid roles (<i>church administrators, youth workers etc</i>)	<i>Previous Incumbent off sick from 30.10.17 – 26.9.19. Since then the parish has been in vacancy. Benefice Administrator (12 hours per week). Cheddleton PCC pay 50% of the BA's wages and 100% of the office costs which (including building maintenance) amount to between £6,000 - £8,000 per annum. Two vergers - one for weddings, one for funerals (paid for from funeral fees).</i>

Our Parish – Buildings and Financial Information - This section will be filled in by the Diocese so you don't need to complete it

What buildings do we have?	
Share payment history (over last 5 years)	
Subsidies available from either low income community funding or mutual support	
Summary statement about affordability based on points 1-3	
Churches in the Parish that are on the buildings at risk register	
Important addition to section on buildings	<i>For the purpose of providing a Parish and Benefice Office the Choir House at Cheddleton has recently been refurbished. The initial quote was for £70,000. Unfortunately costs escalated to approximately £130,000. This has drained all reserves and put huge pressure on finances. For the first time in Cheddleton's history we are struggling to pay the Parish Share. This is a major concern.</i>

3. Volunteers

Are people in your Parish involved in any of the following on a voluntary basis? The table has been filled out using the Diocesan mission stats and information from the Dementia- Friendly Church network, Eco Church and Places of Welcome.

- Do add in any further categories you think are important here
- Do amend anything you think is out of date or inaccurate

Places of Welcome	<i>Sidespeople welcome people as they enter church.</i>
Dementia-Friendly Church	<i>We have received formal training from the Transforming Communities Team and are pleased to be a Dementia Friendly Church.</i>
Eco Church	<i>None</i>
Sunday school / Sunday kids work	<i>None but Family Services are held on the first Sunday of each month.</i>
Parent/ carer and toddler group or play group	<i>None</i>
Youth work	<i>None</i>

Community Café	<i>We hold a monthly community coffee morning. This takes place after a service of Holy Communion.</i>
Foodbank	<i>Two volunteers</i>
Pastoral provision	<i>There is an active Pastoral Team</i>
Night shelter or other homeless provision	<i>None but Friendship Group have provided over 1000 knitted blankets for OXFAM, many items of knitted clothing for the premature baby unit at the Royal Stoke Hospital and a variety of warm hats/scarves to help local and international appeals.</i> <i>An annual Gift Service is held to provide Christmas presents for the residents at the local Womens' Refuge.</i>
Money matters and debt advice	<i>None</i>
Breakfast / after school clubs	<i>None</i>
Mental Health support connected with the church	<i>None – apart from bereavement support provided by the Bereavement Support Team.</i>
Support/activities for older people	<i>Weekly Friendship Group</i>
Other community activity	<i>(Some of these activities have been suspended due to Covid 19, some have come about because of Covid 19): -</i> <i>Home Communion</i> <i>Weekly services at Care Home</i> <i>Outdoor Carol Services</i> <i>Distribution of 260 copies of the Parish Magazine</i> <i>Volunteers at Vaccination Centres</i> <i>One member is a volunteer First Responder</i> <i>Involvement in Cheddleton Carnival (for Cancer Research)</i> <i>Volunteers work local in Charity shops</i> <i>Foodbank support</i> <i>School services in church</i> <i>Collective worship in schools</i> <i>Remembrance Day Service – close links with Royal British Legion</i> <i>Prayer chain</i> <i>Cheddleton Railway Society – annual Carol Service held in church</i> <i>Two volunteers regularly tidy the (closed) churchyard removing dying/decayed wreaths etc.</i> <i>Annual Plant Sale held in the school hall - organised by a member of the congregation. The sale is really well</i>

	<i>attended and another excellent fund raiser – proceeds are divided between school, church and Cancer Research.</i>
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Our Parish – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism.

Consider the following headings. Make notes on the mission and ministry in your Parish in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the Parish to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the Parish, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions as well as parishes. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, things that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

You do not have to use every heading, they are there as indicators of things to look for. If you want to see some examples of what might be included under each heading go to:
<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/about-us/our-vision/shaping-for-mission/vision-of-a-healthy-Parish.php>

Discipleship.

How does your Parish support people and communities to grow more like Christ? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality.)*

There is regular preaching on discipleship (through the Common Worship Lectionary).

Regular prayer meetings (pre-Covid).

Pre Covid - church was open from dawn to dusk and well frequented by villagers.

Ecumenical Prayer chain.

At the beginning of lockdown the retired OLM produced two publications for use at home – Morning Worship at Home and Prayers for use at Home. These were distributed to members of the congregation and appreciated by all.

On-line services - since lockdown services have been broadcast weekly (and on special occasions) attracting many viewers. At the time of completing this form 42 services have been broadcast with a total of 2,595 views. Some services have included contributions by pupils at our church school.

Quiet Day held in the choir house.

2. Study and theological reflection *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*

Lent and Advent Groups – usually ecumenical are held each year. However, due to Covid 19 this year an email was sent out to invite our congregation to join in with the on-line groups

launched by Leek Methodist Circuit. As an alternative, links to Lent study groups and #LiveLent provided by the national and diocesan CofE were included.

Weekly ecumenical Bible Study house group is held (suspended due to Covid).

Bible Study notes are distributed quarterly (e.g. Every Day With Jesus)

3. Nurturing new disciples (2nd Mark of mission) *(This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples.)*

Confirmation courses are held as and when required. The most recent was in 2018 when six adults and six young people (three from Horton) were confirmed.

Pre-Covid we held a weekly service of (said) Holy Communion. People who would not normally come to church on Sundays became regular attendees at this service. The service was followed by informal fellowship and coffee in the Choir House and was an excellent opportunity for nurture and learning.

There is a keen appetite within the congregation for provision in church of regular closer contact within the community for charitable and supportive welfare in the form of a charity/community centre on a weekly/fortnightly drop-in. Covid 19 has shown us that people still believe and are willing to support the Christian ideals of giving and supporting both locally and elsewhere and we should be exploiting this side of relationships in our mission.

4. Spiritual direction and mentoring *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life.)*

There is regular preaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life (through the Common Worship Lectionary).

5. Stewardship *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities.)*

People are encouraged to give of their time as well as financially. Hence there are many volunteers and opportunities to support 'in house' activities* as well as other charities. A permanent item on the agenda for the APCM is how much and to whom do we give each year. It is has been the custom to choose one local charity, one national charity and one international charity.

**intercessors, readers, sidespeople, flower rota, choir, coffee rota, coffee morning rota, bell ringers etc.*

6. Diversity, inclusivity and community *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly.)*

Several years ago we became a dementia friendly church. At the same time it was also decided to remove several pews to improve accessibility.

There is regular preaching on inclusivity and God's love for all (through the Common Worship Lectionary).

7. Relating to the wider church (This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach.)

Close links with St Andrew's Methodist Church and regular ecumenical activities (as mentioned previously in this document).

Individual members of our congregation support worldwide mission and outreach – e.g. a child in S America is sponsored, regular donations are made to TEAR Fund's child immunisation project etc.

As a congregation we regularly support Christian Aid through special services and sponsored walks.

Mothers' Union has a worldwide outreach. Cheddleton Branch also supports AFIA (away from it all holidays for the underprivileged).

Unfortunately we don't have any direct links with the church overseas.

8. Other (Anything else that supports discipleship in the Parish)

At this point it might be helpful to record the more recent history of Incumbency in Cheddleton Parish.

For many years there was a period of stability in the parish. However, since 1992 that has not been the case.

1992. Both the Vicar and Curate moved to other parishes. On the closure of Cheddleton hospital the Curacy was removed. Interregnum began.

1993. Appointment of new Vicar. After six months and without any notification he left his wife and family in the Vicarage. This caused shock waves throughout the village – gossip was widespread.

1994. Interregnum began.

1996. New Vicar appointed. After a year or so he had a heart attack which led to a period of sick leave, eventually followed by early retirement.

1998. Interregnum began.

1999. New Vicar appointed.

2001. NSM Curate appointed. This was a period of stability and growth.

2005. Curate left to take up a House for Duty post at Tean.

2006. Vicar diagnosed with a very aggressive form of cancer and told that he had only two weeks to live. He died in post. His family and the parish were devastated. Interregnum began.

2008. House for Duty Priest appointed 0.5.

2013. Priest retired. (Short) Interregnum began.

2013. United Benefice formed. Vicar appointed (0.5). Unfortunately the Vicar had long term health issues which meant that there were many periods of prolonged sick leave which, on occasions, lasted for several weeks/months.

2014. Appointment of OLM.

2017. An extended period of sick leave by the Vicar began. It lasted for two years.

2019. Interregnum began.

2020. Archdeacon advised that the vicarage is to be sold.

2021. *Shaping for Mission – please help!*

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your Parish? How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls.)*

Our retired OLM is also a Vocations Advisor for Lichfield Diocese therefore we are fortunate to have up to date vocational guidance.

The Pathways to Ministry Courses run by the Diocese are of great value and available for all but, as is the case with numerous churches these days, many of our congregation are in the senior age bracket and so fall outside of the age restrictions for lay/ordained training. However, every opportunity is taken to encourage the use of all gifts within the church.

During the pandemic and the season of 'on-line' worship weekly emails are sent to members of the congregation directing them to the YouTube link. Each email offers opportunities for volunteers to help with future services.

2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study *(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups.)*

St Edward's is blessed with lay members who lead and participate in services. On many occasions Services of the Word have been led by a team of Lay Leaders. Unfortunately (due to ill health and bereavement) the team has dwindled somewhat. Post Covid this will be an area for development. Each week Bible readings and intercessions are led by members of the laity.

Choir – (a full four part harmony choir) have, on many occasions, led Evensong. They have also, liaised with the minister and organised the Carol Service and Good Friday Evensong/meditations. They choose all hymns for the evening services, practice every week and are one of the largest church choirs in the area. They have also undertaken CPR training.

A weekly bible study (pre-Covid) house group is held which is led by the laity. Often they listen to pre-recorded teaching sermons followed by discussion. Sometimes they follow specific course booklets. Members of the clergy will occasionally lead a 'one off' short course.

3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles.)*

For the past three and a half years we have been without an Incumbent (sick leave and vacancy) but there have been others in leadership roles who are available to support and train volunteers

in any way required. Volunteers are always welcomed and supported in all that they do. St Edward's has a supportive community and values all gifts and abilities.

- 4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday** *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations.)*

There is regular preaching (through the Common Worship Lectionary) on Christian living for every day of the week which supports whole life vocations. Christianity is not just for Sundays and church.

- 5. Care and loving service in the wider community** (3rd Mark of Mission) *(This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, E.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)*

Lay members of the Pastoral Team (some licensed to take Home Communion) are invaluable. Prior to Covid they regularly 'took the Church' into the homes of many parishioners. During the pandemic they have spent many hours ringing folks to check that all is well. They have been a 'listening ear' and their conversations have shown that the Church cares.

The Bereavement Team are also a huge asset. Prior to Covid they ensured that every bereaved family received either a follow up phone call or visit post funeral.

One of our parishioners is a school governor.

As mentioned earlier – two members assist with the local Foodbank and some work in charity shops.

- 6. Working for justice and peace** (4th Mark of Mission) *(This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics.)*

Members of our church are very aware of the issues regarding disability and access, and are proud to be registered as a Dementia Friendly church.

We are also a Fair Trade Church, and encourage the congregation to be aware of the way others are treated, and what a fair price is. They are also encouraged to buy fair trade goods wherever possible.

We have links with Christian Aid and the Children's Society, and as a church support them whenever possible.

The Chair of the District Council is a very dedicated member of our congregation.

- 7. Care for creation** (5th Mark of Mission) *(This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups.)*

The churchyard is a great asset and we have a couple of keen volunteers who regularly keep the churchyard tidy and care for the environment.

The gas central heating system in church is now 28 years old and will soon need replacing. In anticipation of this the Churchwarden is researching other more eco-friendly systems.

- 8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries** *(This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad.)*

Our retired OLM (Vocations Advisor) has much information available for those seeking ministry and vocation and is happy to help as and when required. The Diocesan led Pathways to Ministry Course is the next recommended 'port of call.'

9. Other (any other ways in which vocation is supported)

We are delighted at the amount of people who take part in our services and pastoral care within the community. We are thrilled to offer any amount of support needed and to direct people towards further help and training if required.

Some people find fulfilment in making church a more beautiful place to be. To that end Cheddleton has a very good Flower Team. They display arrangements for all festivals. Flowers are paid for by the team who are instrumental in fund raising. On request they prepare flowers for funerals and weddings (including for the bridal party). Profits raised are used to purchase flowers used in festivals. Flower arranging classes have been arranged and presented to the team which has boosted their confidence and knowledge. The team have produced a flower festival – open to the public and had planned another one - postponed due to Covid 19.

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enabled in your Parish? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Understanding of God's holistic mission (May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives.)

It has been said that 'mission is finding out what God is doing and joining in.' Evangelism is sharing/telling the story of Jesus with those whom we meet. These are often addressed in regular preaching (through the Common Worship Lectionary). In our work within the community and beyond, St Edward's works very hard to achieve these aims.

2. Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society. (This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships.)

Prior to Covid 19 there were three Sunday services each week at St Edward's: –

8am alternating between Holy Communion BCP and Morning Prayer BCP,

10am alternating between Holy Communion CW and Family Services,

6.30pm – alternating between Evensong BCP and Holy Communion CW (both with full choir).

Holding three types of service seems to meet the needs and requirements of all three congregations. The downside to this is that the three congregations rarely worship together.

Social events e.g. Christmas Fare, bring everyone together but rarely are we together for worship.

Over the years this is something that we have come to accept – after all God loves the 'happy clappy' worshipper as much as He loves the contemplative worshipper and meeting the needs of all is appreciated.

There is little interaction with those of other faiths. Perhaps this is because of the location and characteristics of the parish.

3. A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church *(This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite.)*

Probably the most successful invitation and relationship building initiative is that of Cheddleton Open Gardens. This involves activities in church for children and parents and raises between £4,000 - £6,500 for church funds. For the past 25 years this has been our main fund raiser. Gardens are opened by churchgoers and local residents. The event attracts hundreds of people to the village and the church. Refreshments are provided at church and other venues but the occasion also provides increased revenue for local establishments. Over the last few years Open Gardens has been broadened to revive the well dressing. The open air Blessing of the Well Service on Friday evening signals the beginning of the weekend when 20+ gardens open for the following 2 days. Scarecrows were recently added keeping the weekend alive during the pandemic enabling us to have a 'socially distanced' scarecrow celebration.

For several years we used Candlemas as an opportunity to invite the families of all those who had been baptised in the past year. Unfortunately there was little response. Mothers' Union still send baptism anniversary cards up to the fifth anniversary of the child's baptism.

On another occasion when 14th February fell on a Sunday, cards were sent to couples who had been married at St Edward's inviting them to come to a service celebrating love. Unfortunately there was little response.

The annual memorial service on All Souls' is exceptionally well attended and (Covid permitting) will resume in November this year.

On two occasions recently we have held an outdoor nativity service (including a donkey!!). On both occasions more than 150 villagers were in attendance.

In spite of all that we accept that a 'culture of invitation' is an area where we fall short. In previous years we have joined with the national Season of Invitation initiative (Back to Church Sunday) but for some reason people are reluctant to invite relatives/friends/neighbours to come to church. The most successful occasion was when we linked the Season of Invitation to our harvest festival. When resources allow, a 'culture of invitation' is an area which needs further development.

4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith *(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting.)*

At St Edward's there is an active Pastoral Team. Throughout Covid the pastoral team have been very busy either phoning people for a chat or casually knocking on the door for a (socially distanced) chat as they walk around the village. Unfortunately, due to ill health and increasing age, members are now quite few in number. This is an area which needs additional resources and is something to be worked on.

Similar work is done by the active bereavement team although this has been mainly through phone calls.

Much work in school is done by the retired OLM. Throughout the year she leads many services of Collective Worship in school. Children also come to church for services at harvest, Christmas, Easter and end of year when bibles are presented to school leavers. Since Covid 19 began services of Collective Worship have been recorded and sent into school.

Prior to Covid the retired OLM also spent half a day each week in school helping children with their reading. This was a wonderful opportunity to build relationships with the children. Often, after noticing that their reading books had been signed by the priest, parents would stop for a chat in the street.

A recent initiative is to provide a uniform swap - the intention being that parents who have items of good condition uniform (which their children have outgrown) are invited to bring those items to church. These can be then be swapped with other items more suited to their child's size. This would be a free facility hosted by church twice a term. Unfortunately Covid 19 arrived before the scheme had begun.

Regular Quiz nights are held in the village – some hosted by the church – some hosted by other organisations. Church now has an 'official' team who attend the sessions hosted by other organisations.

5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this E.g. talking Jesus.)*

Monthly coffee mornings are held in our Choir House which give ample opportunity to chat about anything and everything – including our faith.

In reality 'creating confidence in sharing personal faith' is probably an area which needs further development.

6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media.)*

As mentioned earlier in this questionnaire – On line services have been held during lockdown. Services have been broadcast weekly (and on special occasions) attracting many viewers. At the time of completing this form 42 services have been broadcast with a total of 2,595 views. Some services have included contributions by pupils at our church school.

The Benefice has a website which is regularly maintained and updated by a volunteer church member. Details and links to all services together with much more information can be accessed there.

7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith *(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)*

There is an active but small Men's Society which meets in the local pub on alternate Tuesdays. There is also an active Book Club, hosted by our Methodist friends but open to all. Unfortunately we have not held any bible study courses for quite a while. Perhaps one can be launched after Covid.

Prior to Covid there were regular Curry and Casserole evenings held in the Choir House - another opportunity to talk and share about anything and everything.

Lent and Advent courses held each year are special places and wonderful opportunities to discuss, learn and share.

- 8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists.** *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith.)*

This is linked to vocations. Support and help is assured for anyone who feels called to evangelism and who wishes to explore this calling further.

- 9. Sharing good practice across the Parish** *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Parish Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration.)*

We at St Edward's are more than willing to share good practice throughout the Benefice and beyond. We are also willing to learn from others. Once Covid restrictions are lifted it will be good to resume Churchwarden's meetings which are a great opportunity to share.

- 10. Planting fresh expressions of Church** *(This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the Parish and have appropriate involvement.)*

Planting Fresh Expressions of Church is something which needs our urgent attention. In reality we acknowledge that our resources (particularly people) are extremely limited. Being without an Incumbent for three and a half years has taken its' toll in many areas of ministry and much now needs to be addressed.

Once Covid restrictions are relaxed it might be appropriate to reintroduce Messy Church.

- 11. Other** *(Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the Parish)*

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

The people of Cheddleton church are very active within the community. We need help and guidance to channel this into more opportunities for evangelism and growth.

2. What are some of the main strengths of the Parish?

Cheddleton is a huge parish with much potential and many opportunities for outreach and growth. The church school has approximately 240 pupils and the links with church are strong. There are close links with St Andrew's Methodist Church, Cheddleton Carnival Committee, WI, The Royal British Legion, Cheddleton Steam Railway.

There are many Spirit-filled people who long for growth.

There are many well established groups i.e. pastoral group, bereavement group, choir etc.

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

Resources – people and finance. Ageing congregation. Despite the many interregna they've experienced, the parishioners of St Edward's have worked long and hard to maintain a Christian presence in the village. They are now exhausted and longing for a period of stability in Incumbency leadership.

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

With our friends at St Andrew's Methodist Church, Cheddleton Carnival Committee, WI, The Royal British Legion and Cheddleton Steam Railway.

5. Where is energy being wasted?

Not exactly wasted but maintaining a 13th Century building absorbs a huge amount of our resources.

6. What are some of the key challenges the Parish faces?

Resources and leadership to help us connect with the wider community sharing the good news that each of us are known, loved, forgiven and set free by Jesus.

Finances.

7. What is unique about this Parish?

Since 1215 Cheddleton church has been central to the life of this parish. Even though many of its parishioners do not attend church they have a strong sense of belonging and for them the church's presence is very reassuring. This is reflected in the amount of weddings, funerals and baptism which take place. It is also reflected in the amount of people who take advantage of the fact that (pre-Covid 19) church is open each day from dawn to dusk. Villagers appreciate being able to sit quietly to reflect or pray in this special, holy place.

8. Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this Parish? This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.

The vocation of this parish is to reach out locally, nationally and internationally sharing the good news of Jesus Christ so that others will come to know Him, believe in Him and be assured that they are special, loved and cherished by God.

Shaping for Mission - Endon

Reviewing Our Benefice

There are five sections to this review: the place, the people, information and resources, Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism, and conclusions. Some parts will be completed by Lichfield, but you may want to add in any additional financial and building information that you may find helpful.

Our Benefice – The Place

This section focuses on the geographical area of the benefice; what it includes in terms of Church of England presence, other Christian activity, other organisations and institutions, key gathering places etc.

1. Church of England presence in our benefice.

Church Schools	<p>St. Luke's CE Academy, Leek Road, Endon. The school is a member of Staffordshire University Academies Trust. It is a 5 -11 years primary school with just over 200 pupils. A new head teacher, Mrs Nicky Danylyk, took up her post in September 2020. She is keen to lead the school to 'Outstanding' status with Ofsted and to maintain the 'Outstanding' grade with SIAMS. The Chair and Vice Chair of Governors are both Foundation Governors and members of St. Luke's PCC. In the Autumn term 2020, before the 2nd Lockdown, several visits were made to the church by pupils of St. Luke's Academy. The Year 2 Harvest Celebration was filmed in church and sent out to families to watch at home. Year 5 and 6 visited the church to celebrate St. Luke's Day in October. Members of the church prepared a short presentation about St. Luke and also a guided tour of the church where many children had been baptised. It was planned to hold Christingle services for Year 3 and 4 and a carol service for Reception and Year 1 but these had to be cancelled due to lockdown. It is the intention of both school and church to welcome all pupils to church once a term. The Chair of Governors has a weekly meeting with the head teacher as well as all the other meetings related to governance. The church contributed to a film showing of 'The Selfish Giant' at Christmas. Regular invitations to our online Zoom services are included in the school newsletter. The previous incumbent led worship at the school each week and also made himself available for staff to talk to. We are unable to offer this at present due to Covid restrictions but there are church members who would be happy to lead worship in school.</p>
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Fresh Expressions	Connections is a joint Clergy and lay run “missional community - family and all age service” delivered via a church plant within the local St. Luke’s school hall. The approach is to engage with the local community by building upon the already present links the School has with St. Luke’s Church. We reach out to the unchurched, the de-churched and Christians through a familiar school setting and in a welcoming and safe environment. The 45-minute service is short enough to encourage families and those new to church to attend and enjoy their time as it does not make too much of an impact on their normal Sunday routine. However, as it is so short, most people are happy to stay after the 45 minutes for tea, coffee and cakes or biscuits (our time of fellowship). This approach has been successful at bringing new families and individuals to join with us and engage in Christian worship and to explore the Christian faith. We are extremely pleased to have 5+ young families and several individuals joining our church plant most Sundays. Since Covid we have moved online by using a WhatsApp group to stay in touch and started a weekly Zoom Service. More recently we have changed the first Sunday zoom service in the month to be a specifically “Young People” focussed service. This was to encourage young families to join with us and includes specific activities that would appeal to them.
Chaplaincies	There are no chaplaincies allied to the parish of St. Luke’s, Endon.
Other Anglican presence	St. Chad’s Bagnall St. Anne’s Brown Edge Connect 2 Brown Edge

2. Ecumenical partners in the benefice.

What formal ecumenical partnerships or Churches Together groups are there in the benefice?

There are no formal ecumenical partnerships in the benefice.

Where are there good informal ecumenical relationships?

There are good informal relationships with Endon Methodist Church which is situated on the main road in the village. A new Minister took up her role in 2019 and, since then, there have been regular meetings from Minister level and at all levels. The Minister has become a valued member of the Local Academy Council of St. Luke's CE Academy. Pre – Covid there was a weekly ecumenical Communion Service held in each church by turn. The Methodist Minister has led these services since the retirement of the previous incumbent and has also offered Home Communion to those who were unable to come to services during the earlier stages of restriction. Lent Courses have been held annually involving members of both congregations and there has always been shared ministry at Memorial and Remembrance Day services. Starting in the first lockdown, a joint enterprise between the Methodist Church, St. Luke's Church and Endon Parish Council was inaugurated. This enterprise was named 'Help and Hope for Endon' and offered help with shopping and prescription collection as well as contact numbers for people to call if they felt isolated. In association with Haregate Community Centre fruit and vegetable bags are delivered to a number of households on a weekly basis. The two churches also worked together to deliver a Christmas message to every household in Endon; these included a card with handwritten greeting, a coloured ribbon to tie on the Methodist Church railings in memory of loved ones and a letter from Year 6 children at the school. A similar contact is planned for Easter 2021. There is a Methodist Youth worker named Mark Hatcher who lives in Endon and is part of Connect2 Brown Edge. Nathan O'Neill is a YFC youth worker working with Connections

Where are other denominations or Christian organisations doing work that we could support rather than repeat?

The Methodist Church runs a Community Café once a week serving reasonably priced meals; we could possibly support this as our church building is unsuitable for such events. They also host regular Dementia Support groups.

The Methodist youth worker runs an after school Christian club in St. Luke's CE Academy.

Where are the bits of our benefice with no, very little, or no effective Christian presence? (*For example new housing estates*)

There is a large area of quite new housing in the village where many families live. The Connections Fresh Expression was set up to reach these families.

3. Partnerships and networks

What organisations operate in this benefice with whom we have shared values?

Endon Methodist Church

St. Luke's CE Academy

Endon Well Dressing Committee

What resources are there in this area whose work overlaps with our mission and ministry?

Help and Hope for Endon

Fruit and Vegetable Bag Scheme

Methodist Church Youth and children's work (Youth Worker Mark Hatcher)

St. Chad's Bagnall (5th Sunday in the Month Churches Together) Youth and children's work

4. Institutions and organisations

What major institutions and organisations are there in this benefice? What connections do we have with them? (*Hospitals, prisons, universities etc*)

There are no major organisations in this benefice.

What schools (other than church schools) do we already have relationships with?

Endon Hall Primary School is the replacement for Bagnall Primary School and is located on the housing estate. We have welcomed pupils from this school on visits to the church and sent all the staff members knitted angels with a blessing attached at Christmas. Pupils from St. Luke's CE Academy move on to Endon High School at age 11. Endon High is a community high school. All schools in the area are highly regarded and families move into the area specifically in order to live in the catchment areas. The previous incumbent used to visit St. Anne's CE School in Brown Edge to lead worship.

Are there any big employers in this benefice, and / or big centres of employment? (*Factories, shopping centres, etc*) What connections do we have with them?

There are no large employers in this benefice but there are a number of small businesses including a garage, chemist, village store, 2 pubs/ restaurants, physio, children's day nursery,

audiology centre. Many of these local businesses sponsored the purchase of flowers for the annual Flower Festival. There are also a number of working farms.

5. Gathering places and Centres

Where are the main centres or gathering places in this benefice? (*town centres, larger villages, community halls, etc*)

We have a village hall that used to be the Parish Room. It is centrally located in the village and is the main venue for exercise classes, children's groups and the local amateur dramatic society. There are tennis, golf, cricket and bowls clubs within the benefice and also a children's playground which has a major refurbishment planned. The Methodist Church has flexible accommodation and is often the venue for concerts and films. The Endon Community choir meets weekly and performs regularly in non Covid times. Endon lies between Hanley in Stoke on Trent and the market town of Leek in the Staffordshire Moorlands and both of these towns have amenities. Hanley has a theatre and cinemas while Leek is famous for its pubs, cattle market, Leek Show and annual Arts Festival.

What are the distinctive geographical features of the benefice and / or places of particular interest?

The benefice is situated on the edge of the Staffordshire Moorlands and close to the Peak District National Park. It is a semi-rural area surrounded by fields and stands close to the Caldon Canal with its walks and cycle paths. The area is hilly – Endon means the 'end of the dun' (hill) and the church is situated at the top of a hill. Church Lane was originally the main road to Leek but this now runs along the valley floor. There is an old well in the village which is the focus of the annual well dressing celebration. The Ashes is an ancient farm building which is currently used for weddings. In the last 10 - 15 years many local farms have ceased operating as farms and the farmhouses and land are being purchased by professional commuters from the Macclesfield area. These newcomers are often employed by Astra Zeneca and are attracted by the reasonable price of houses and land in this area. For the future there are plans for the re-opening of the railway line through Endon and into The Potteries. The MP for Stoke Central is working on central Government plans to revive the area and encourage dormitory development through transport links. The Potteries, in one direction, is in the process of regenerating following the loss of traditional industries such as steel making and mining and the reduction in ceramic production. The market town of Leek has a 12th Century Market Charter and still has a weekly livestock market. It is home to a wide variety of independent shops and restaurants. Within twenty minutes of leaving the town one can be climbing on The Roaches or walking round Tittesworth Reservoir. Rudyard Lake – Rudyard Kipling was named after this area – is a very popular visitor location. Just over the hill is the elegant town of Buxton with its Opera House and newly



refurbished Spa Hotel. For family entertainment Alton Towers is within easy reach as is the heritage railway at Cheddleton.

6. What else is useful to note about the geographical area of the benefice?

Endon is located in the middle of England with easy access to the M6 towards Birmingham and Manchester. There are airports close to both cities. There is a West Coast Mainline station in Stoke on Trent and London can be reached by rail in under an hour and a half. There are plans for the reopening of the railway line through Endon into The Potteries as part of Central Government plans to revive the area and encourage dormitory development via transport links. The high quality of educational provision in Endon is also very attractive to families.

Our Benefice – The People

This section is looking at the makeup of your benefice in terms of both the general population and the Anglican population. Some of this section will be completed for you.

1. Population

Approximate population of your benefice (number of people who live in the geographical area?)	Lichfield to complete
Number of people who attend the 2 churches in your benefice	Lichfield to complete

2. Formal Roles

Number of Authorised or Licensed Lay Ministers in your benefice	One who is also a Church Warden
Number of people with formal lay roles (<i>Church wardens, treasurers, PCC secretary</i>)	Two Church Wardens Treasurer PCC Secretary Church Administrator
Number of Clergy, Stipend and NSM	None. The benefice is in a period of Interregnum from July 2020.
Any other paid roles (<i>church administrators, youth workers etc</i>)	None

3. Volunteers

Are people in your benefice involved in any of the following on a voluntary basis? The table has been filled out using the Diocesan mission stats and information from the Dementia- Friendly Church network, Eco Church and Places of Welcome.

- Do add in any further categories you think are important here
- Do amend anything you think is out of date or inaccurate

Places of Welcome	
Dementia-Friendly Church	Members of the congregation attended initial meetings but Covid restrictions have called a halt at present.

Eco Church	A member of the PCC is a, Parish Councillor and Climate Change Cabinet Member for Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and is our link with Eco Church planning.
Sunday school / Sunday kids work	Lay team of 7 who meet weekly to pray, plan and deliver all age worship as part of Connections.
Parent/ carer and toddler group or play group	None
Youth work	We have a Christian Youth Worker leading monthly Family Services on Zoom.
Community Café	None – Methodist Church
Foodbank	The church supports the local Foodbank through collecting goods and delivering them to the centre. The annual Harvest Festival collected a large amount of gifts for the Foodbank.
Pastoral provision	We have a Pastoral Team of 9 people who visit older members of the congregation at home or in care homes or hospital. We shop for some people, drive others to appointments and help wherever we can. We take part in a monthly service at local care home Hillswood Lodge talking to residents. Since the Pandemic started we have organised community walks to address loneliness and have attracted people who do not usually attend church. One Pastoral Team member walks through the village every day and makes contact with those who live alone by standing at their gates and having a conversation. During the summer we were able to meet in groups of 6 in gardens or sit outside at a cafe and this also addressed loneliness.
Night shelter or other homeless provision	Collection of warm clothing for rough sleepers and support for the Macari Centre in Hanley.
Money matters and debt advice	A member of the congregation trained as a volunteer Community Money Advice with Saltbox. Local church based food banks were visited to provide financial advice to low income families. This continued until Lockdown meant the service had to close down for the time being.
Breakfast / after school clubs	No
Mental Health support connected with the church	Bereavement conversations with recently bereaved families in advance of leading funerals are held by our Lay Reader. A member of the PCC is a serving Samaritan.

	A member of the congregation has made enquiries about volunteering with Farm Community Network, who specialise in supporting farmers with their mental health issues.
Support / activities for older people	<p>Knit and Natter Club</p> <p>Home and/or care home visits</p> <p>St. Luke's Flower Club</p> <p>Regular phone calls</p> <p>Delivery of fruit and vegetable bags</p> <p>Delivery of hard copies of weekly reflections and lectionary sheets to those members of the congregation who have no internet access.</p> <p>Exercise classes for older adults run by a member of the Connections team</p> <p>Coffee meet ups</p> <p>Lunches</p>
Other community activity	<p>Endon Well Dressing Annual Flower Festival</p> <p>St. Luke's Flower Club – this came about after members of the congregation made tea for flower arrangers setting up the annual Flower Festival. A flower club was set up with the support of local flower arrangers and meets/met every 2 weeks in the Chapter House. Flower arranging is only a small part of the project, the main objective being a social one. However, the church now has flowers to enhance its services and a flourishing social group which includes members who are not church goers.</p> <p>Home Communion</p> <p>Community walks – many local residents who are not church goers attend these walks</p> <p>Fund Raising Activities eg Fashion Show, Table Top Sale, Outdoor Carol Service</p> <p>Crib service</p> <p>Art in the Landscape</p> <p>Phoenix Choir concert</p> <p>Lent lunches</p>

	<p>Charity events</p> <p>Visits from local schools</p> <p>Prayer chain</p> <p>Family Tree phone contacts – at the beginning of the first lockdown, members of the congregation made a commitment to ‘phone a number of people each week just to chat. This has continued until the present time.</p> <p>Halloween Greet and Treat Bags – contacts made with local children on Halloween and invitations to the church for hot chocolate and sweets</p> <p>Local businesses sponsored the purchase of flowers for the annual Flower Festival</p> <p>Planned Easter Activity for Easter 2021. Children from the local community will be invited to take part in an Easter Trail around the churchyard with Free Trade eggs as prizes</p> <p>Community litter picks</p>
Charity Stall volunteering	<p>CCCP ran a charity stall on Stoke Market to raise funds for their work. A member of the congregation regularly volunteered there before the Covid Pandemic.</p>

Our Benefice – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism.

Consider the following headings. Make notes on the mission and ministry in your benefice in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the benefice to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the benefice, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions as well as parishes. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, things that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

Discipleship.

How does your benefice support people and communities to grow more like Christ? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the benefice. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality.)*

There is a weekly Service in church at 9.15 a.m. on Sundays. Before the Interregnum there were 2 services of Holy Communion per month and 2 services of Morning Prayer per month. On the 5th Sunday of a month there is a joint service with St. Chad's Bagnall. At the present time each service at 9.15 am is a service of Morning Worship with occasional services of Holy Communion led by various ordained but retired priests. Before the previous incumbent retired and while Lockdown closed the church, services were filmed and uploaded to YouTube. Members of the congregation took part via recordings. Currently, the text of reflections from Morning Worship is emailed to those who cannot attend, or hard copies are distributed to those who are unable to attend in person and have no internet access.

Prior to the first Covid Lockdown there was a weekly Connections Fresh Expressions Service held in the school at 11 a.m. Apart from a couple of 'live' services in church when restrictions were less strict, this service has been held online via Zoom at the same time each week.

Members of the main church congregation also attend Connections.

In normal times there is an Ecumenical service, (usually Holy Communion) each Wednesday morning at 9.15am

Following the decision to reopen churches we have found that numbers recovered very quickly despite some anxiety about mixing. We have remained open throughout the current lockdown. The church is open for private prayer when the Parish Administrator is working in the church office. This would be between 10 am and 1pm on weekdays, other engagements permitting. Funerals have continued to be held during 'Lockdowns' although with much smaller numbers. Baptisms and weddings are usually popular events at St. Luke's but have only one baptism has been held during the past year.

During periods of preparation for festivals, such as Lent and Advent, booklets of readings and reflections are offered to members of the congregation. Signposts are also given to Church of England online resources such as Live Lent.

The Connections Lay team of 7 meet weekly to pray, plan and deliver all age worship each Sunday at 11am.

2. Study and theological reflection *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*

Prior to the first Lockdown in March 2020 there were 2 small groups meeting for Bible Study in homes. (There was also a group running in a local care home)

At the present time one group is running via Zoom and involves about 8 members. It is led by a Connections Worship Leader and attended by members of Connections and the more traditional section of St. Luke's Church.

In the recent past regular Alpha courses have been run as well as Start groups. The initial meeting took place in conjunction with Endon Methodist Church where a meal was offered. The Methodist Minister and members of St. Luke's are keen to explore running Alpha online. A course for older people was led by our lay reader in two retirement settings and was intended to recover some 'lost sheep'. It was also intended to bring a basic understanding of faith to older people using the 20 minute Express Alpha DVDs.

3. Nurturing new disciples *(2nd Mark of mission) (This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples.)*

Newly confirmed members of the congregation are invited to attend small group Bible Studies. The Connections weekly Sunday service provides the environment for Baptism/Dedication requests to be delivered in a warm and welcoming way.

4. Spiritual direction and mentoring *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life.)*

Due to the retirement of local clergy there is no current availability of spiritual direction.

5. Stewardship *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities.)*

St. Luke's congregation is a very generous one when it comes to giving to charities. Collections of food and money are made for the local Foodbank at Harvest Festival time. At Christmas, gifts for women and children are collected for a local women's refuge. A 10% proportion of any fundraising income is given to an annually nominated charity. Last year we gave to Parkinson's UK as one of our church members suffers from this condition. Receipts from Lent Lunches go to the Bishop's Lent Appeal. St. Luke's is Toilet Twinned. We were part of the 'Water Gives Life' project. Members of the congregation give money towards flowers for the Flower Festival and for Christingles made at the school. Donations for Christmas Greetings in the Newsletter go to the Christian Blind Mission. Mother's Union Members donate funds for the work of the society. Members of the congregation have taken part in the local Christian Aid walk for several years. We collect stamps for a leprosy charity and gifts for the Elizabeth Trust Women's Refuge at Christmas. The church supports the work of CCCP which brings children from Belarus to England each summer. Members of the church help with washing and cooking for the children and people give cleaning products and donations for ice cream as well as food for picnics. Others volunteer as drivers, so that the visitors can go to places such as the seaside.

There is an envelope based Stewardship Scheme in place and regular worshippers are encouraged to join this scheme or to put a standing order in place for direct payments to the church.

Many members of the congregation give freely of their time. Activities undertaken include:- gardening, brass cleaning, vergers' duties at weddings, baptisms and funerals, spring cleaning, flower arranging, tea and coffee after services, welcoming duties, readings during services, treasurer's duties, basic maintenance, Safeguarding, leading the pastoral team, collecting members of the Knit and Natter and Flower Club to bring them to meetings, fund raising team to name but a few.

6. Diversity, inclusivity and community *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly.)*

We are a welcoming church whose doors are open to all. We have a wheelchair, ramps, a stair lift and disabled lavatory facilities for those with physical challenges and a hearing loop supports those with hearing impairment. The monthly newsletter has large print versions. We have members of the congregation whose home country is far away as well as those who were born locally. We have resources for children in church and at Connections. Some members of the Pastoral Team have completed basic training in becoming a Dementia Friendly church. The Connections weekly Sunday service reaches out to all ages, the unchurched, the de-churched and Christians through a familiar school setting and in a welcoming and safe environment. There is an annual carol service at Bagnall Heights retirement community which is church led and is always popular and very well attended.

7. Relating to the wider church *(This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach.)*

There are good relationships between St. Luke's and St. Chad's in Bagnall and the Methodist Church. There are increasing links with the local Methodist Church and we would like these to continue and expand. The previous incumbent of St. Luke's was also Priest in Charge at St. Anne's, Brown Edge. Our lay reader used to lead Morning worship there once every month and also continues to conduct funerals at the church. Brown Edge is a large parish with strong village ties and it hosts many weddings and baptisms at which our Lay Reader often performs Verger's duties.

8. Other *(Anything else that you supports discipleship in the benefice)*

Coaching and mentoring young people and adults to take part in the Connections weekly Service and a YFC youth worker to lead all aspects of our Family Services.

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your benefice? How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the deanery. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls.)*

The main encouragement for vocations is for those lay people who take responsibility for areas of church life. These people have a passion for the areas in which they volunteer and include; leading the Pastoral Team, leading services, leading Youth Work, Bible Study Leaders, Fund raisers, maintaining the website and Facebook page, setting up Zoom meetings. Sometimes it's just a question of asking and sometimes encouragement is needed to help people feel confident to take up a role.

Our Lay Reader was encouraged to come forward for training and is an invaluable current leader of the team along with our Church Wardens, who were also encouraged to volunteer for their roles.

2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study *(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups.)*

St. Luke's relies on lay members to lead and participate in services. This was the case even before the retirement of the last vicar. Now the Covid crisis has made it more difficult to get retired clergy to take services which means that arranging Communion services is especially challenging. At present the 9.15 service is usually taken by our Reader and the other churchwarden, with invaluable support from other members of the congregation in such roles as Bible readers, welcomers and organising the music. Connections is a joint Clergy and lay run "missional community - family and all age service" delivered via a church plant within the local St. Luke's school hall.

3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles.)*

Back up support is available for those who visit the elderly and lonely in case of difficult visits. Members of the Pastoral Team have had some Dementia Friendly training and have completed online of Level 1 Safeguarding training. There are regular meetings either online or in person, WhatsApp groups and 'phone calls.

4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations.)*

LICC courses in Home Groups emphasised that being a Christian is not only for Sundays and that the Christian life needs to be lived out in the places we find ourselves every day whether at work or on the bus! A churches together LICC course was run between St. Luke's Endon, St. Chad's Bagnall and St. Anne's Brown Edge supporting whole-life vocation as well as individual leaders attending courses.

As part of Connections, LICC resources have been used as part of the Service talks to encourage whole life Christian vocation

5. Care and loving service in the wider community (3rd Mark of Mission) *(This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, E.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)*

As previously stated both the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors at St. Luke's CE Academy are members of St. Luke's PCC and are very active in school matters. A member of our congregation is an active Samaritan, while another member is a local politician with a passion for tackling Climate Change. He is also a major part of the Help and Hope for Endon group. The Pastoral Team serves all those in need of company, travel assistance, shopping and prayer.

The Connections services actively encourages loving service by acting as a foodbank connection hub, support for the CCP Chernobyl charity that bring Belorussian children with cancer to the UK, and a special service each year set aside for the donation of toys for Christmas to the Elizabeth Trust that cares for families escaping from abuse.

6. Working for justice and peace (4th Mark of Mission) *(This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics.)*

St. Luke's church plays an active part in the community and local politics and we have built links through our District councillor who is a member of the PCC. The 'Help and Hope' for Endon scheme is a joint enterprise between the local council and the two Endon churches. Our district councillor has been involved in raising funds for the refurbishment of the local children's playground. He has also been able to donate funds to community projects and donated money for the repair and maintenance of our wheelchair lift.

7. Care for creation (5th Mark of Mission) *(This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups.)*

The issue of Climate Change is a top priority for our church as all of our congregation care deeply about the environment and God's Creation. One of our PCC members is also our District Councillor and Cabinet member for Climate Change and Biodiversity at Staffordshire Moorlands

District Council. We look forward to continuing to work with the District Council and Endon with Stanley Parish Council on local environmental projects. The churchyard is a great asset and we will be working with the District Council, who manage the green spaces, to re-naturalise the churchyard and establish wildflower meadow planting to help create a wildlife corridor. In the past we have put up bird boxes around the church yard and will look to replace these over the next few years. We are looking at holding a Climate Service later on in the year. Church members are also involved in community litter picks. The church's energy use and insulation are also important and we will always seek to use the most sustainable and low carbon energy supplier for the building. As a church community we will encourage our congregation to lead environmentally friendly and ethical lifestyles.

8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries *(This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad.)*

The leadership team for Connections were led to develop a culture of being God's family as we explore our faith together. We are actively seeking a leader who would be excited and inspired by what God is doing as well as helping us to grow and follow Him. We are a keen and experienced lay team, open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and fully support anyone who feels God is calling them be part of our church family in this great commission.

9. Other *(any other ways in which vocation is supported)*

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enabled in your benefice? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the benefice. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Understanding of God's holistic mission** *(May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives.)*

Building bridges between the Scriptures and our everyday lives is a recurrent theme in addresses at our services. Every time we pray, we pray with the expectation that God will answer our prayers. We actively welcome prayer requests and have both a prayer chain and facility for prayer requests in our services whether online or physical. We offer personal prayer too. We have received prayer requests via our Facebook page and were able to acknowledge the requests online. There have been regular Prayer Walks around the village with stops at particular points to pray for people and places.

- 2. Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society.** *(This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships.)*

In our own church we hold two different types of services; one is more traditional and uses traditional prayers and hymns and is supportive of older church members. The Connections service is much more informal and may use Table Talk along with modern worship songs and video presentations. One of our current worship leaders has experience of the Pentecostal way of worship. Several members of our church are recently retired teachers who have a great deal of knowledge relating to different faiths although there are no mosques, temples or synagogues in the locality.

- 3. A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church** *(This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite.*

For the last four years we have held an annual Samaritans Day service on the first Sunday in February. This commemorates the day when the first trained Samaritan took their first telephone call. Normally, we invite Samaritans from Leek and Stoke to join us, though this is not possible at present. This occasion provides opportunities for describing the interaction between faith and the aims of the Samaritan movement. It is also a witness to the existence of a Christian presence within our local branch.

We hold an annual Memorial Service to which relatives of those whose funeral services have been held during that year are invited. Remembrance Day sees the local community coming to St. Luke's for the annual service. Back to Church Sunday, gave an opportunity to reach out to those who may have drifted away from attending church.

Special services such as a Carol Service, Crib Service, Midnight Communion on Christmas Eve and Ash Wednesday reflection attract many visitors. Messy Church ran for a length of time and one

off sessions are still offered. The Well dressing Service, Harvest service and Toy Service also provide opportunities to invite others to come to church. An Easter activity to take place in the churchyard (Covid permitting) is planned this year for children in the community to come and discover the Easter story.

4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith *(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting.)*

The Fruit and Vegetable bags that are delivered by a church member each week, also contain a prayer card which many recipients keep to read again and again. As previously stated, there is a great deal of work going on between church and school and both parties are keen to see this expand. The Help and Hope for Endon project reached many non-church goers in the community. The Pastoral Team work hard to meet local needs such as visiting, shopping and transport. The Well Dressing Weekend and Flower Festival give us major opportunities to make contact with the community. We hold events such as a Fashion Show and Table Top Sale that members of the community attend. A church member has been closely involved with fund raising to refurbish the local children's playground. Other community events such as Harvest Auctions, School Fairs and Christian Aid walks are attended by many members of our congregation. Connections is part of the team that creates a Christmas Crib service each year that many of the village families attend and includes an appropriate gospel message to challenge those attending to consider asking Christ into their lives.

Connections delivers a Saturday Messy Easter craft morning that takes the Easter story out into the community via the St. Luke's school hall to encourage children and families to get involved. This year, due to Covid restrictions an outdoor Easter activity is planned and is being organised to attract families from the local community.

5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this E.g. talking Jesus.)*

Opportunities for discussing faith journeys are given in small groups. In the recent past there were meals organised in local pubs where testimonies were given as part of the event. During the period of Together at 11 services there were sections of the service set aside for worship leaders to share their faith stories. Connections family service includes a number of Café church Sundays with table talks structured to allow members of the congregation to share a "This is my story" with the wider congregation as a means of sharing their faith and talking Jesus.

6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media.)*



St. Luke's has an increasing presence on social media. There are daily posts on our Facebook page which are reaching ever increasing numbers and are used to advertise services, post photos of the church and local locations, share prayers and videos from the Church of England and other churches and seek to give comfort to all who are reached. Numbers of Page Likes are growing every day. Services earlier in the year were uploaded to YouTube. Currently copies of the weekly address and lectionary sheet are emailed to those who cannot attend services; sometimes an audio version is also disseminated. We don't want people to feel left out. The website is regularly updated and gives information about services and events and gives links to a Just Giving page. The Connections All Age Service runs weekly on Zoom at 11 am. Joining links are on the website and also on several WhatsApp groups set up for a variety of participants. Bi weekly Bible Studies also run on Zoom. There is a weekly Coffee Morning on a Friday at 11am via Zoom. During Covid times we ran an online Crib Service and there is now a monthly dedicated Zoom Family Service. The Connections Service has a section advertising its services on the Church website as well as a Facebook and Twitter presence along with an active WhatsApp group. Church members are encouraged to be active on these forums. Also, when we set up the school for the church service each Sunday two massive banners (3m by 2m) with a picture our all-age congregation and service times are placed at either side of the entrance from the busy A53 to ensure as many people as possible know about us each Sunday.



7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith *(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)*

Our aim as part of Connections is to help newcomers feel they belong first before being encouraged to understand the Gospel and believe. We also try to nurture the next generation of lay team and leaders as a natural part of delivering our service. For example, we have young

people and adults actively involved in delivering the service through activities like prayers, bible readings or operating the computer, audio, and projection equipment. We encourage the talk time to be as interactive and modern as possible using technology to enhance teaching with films, sketches, web resources (such as The Bible Project), games, and quizzes; helping to make it an enjoyable and relevant experience. Every service has an A5 takeaway which includes key points to think about through the week as well as including upcoming themes and events. In more normal times there are regular lunches and evening meals which, although mainly social, give opportunities to develop relationships and open the way for future discussion.

8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists. *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith.)*

There are pathways to discovering those called to be evangelists and on church member was supported through Alpha, the Bishop's Certificate, the Diocesan Advisory Panel and into Readership training.

9. Sharing good practice across the benefice *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Deanery Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration.)*

Connections recently welcomed a guest, Rev Philip Swan, to their Zoom Family Service. He had requested joining details and said that he understood we ran a Zoom service. He gave very positive feedback saying that the service was engaging for all ages.

10. Planting fresh expressions of Church *(This may include Identifying communities where fresh expressions are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the benefice and have appropriate involvement.)*

Connections is a joint Clergy and lay run "missional community - family and all age service" delivered via a church plant within the local St. Luke's school hall. The approach is to engage with the local community by building upon the already present links the School has with St. Luke's church. We reach out to the unchurched, the de-churched and Christians through a familiar school setting and in a welcoming and safe environment. The 45-minute service is short enough to encourage families and those new to church to attend and enjoy their time as it does not feel too much of an impact on their normal Sunday routine. However, as it is so short, most people are happy to stay after the 45 minutes for tea, coffee and cakes or biscuits (our time of fellowship). This approach has been successful at bringing new families and individuals to join with us and engage in Christian worship and to explore the Christian faith. We are extremely pleased to have 5+ young families and several individuals joining our church plant most Sundays. Since Covid we have moved online by using a WhatsApp group to stay in touch and a weekly Zoom Service. More recently we have changed the first Sunday zoom service in the month to be a specifically "Young People" focussed service. This was to encourage young families to join with us and includes specific activities that would appeal to them. There have been a number of prayer and fasting days over the

past three years seeking to understand what God was doing with Connections and how he wanted us to follow him.

11. Other (*Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the benefice*)

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

Collaboration with the Methodist Church
Community
Support

2. What are some of the main strengths of the benefice?

Pastoral work
Community engagement
School engagement

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

Lack of youth and young family membership.

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

Keeping church functioning through Interregnum
School links
Links with Methodist Church

5. Where is energy being wasted?



There are no obvious area where energy is being wasted.

6. What are some of the key challenges the benefice faces?

Financial challenge
Reaching younger generations
Church building maintenance

7. What is unique about this benefice?

We are a friendly, welcoming church located in a village setting. The Annual Well Dressing weekend is unique in North Staffs and brings hundreds of visitors to the church. There are a good number of lay volunteers to assist any new incumbent and we have plans for new activities. We have plenty of enthusiasm and desire to move the church forward post Covid and well into the future.

8. Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this benefice? *This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.*

We feel our vocation is around pastoral care and community support. We have an ideal peaceful location with a good car park which could be used by support networks such as Mental Health and Counselling groups. We already host some community activities and events. We are a parish church which has served the community through all principal life markers of baptism, marriages and funerals for 300 years. We are the site of the local Cenotaph with a church building of historic value. We want to enhance links with our own CE Academy and extend these links to the other schools in our parish and to encourage young families to find relevance in our worship offerings.

Shaping for Mission - Knypersley

Reviewing Our Parish

There are five sections to this review: the place, the people, information and resources, Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism, and conclusions. Some parts of sections one and two and all of section three has already been completed for you, but you may want to add in any additional financial and building information that you may find helpful.

Our Parish – The Place

This section focuses on the geographical area of the deanery; what it includes in terms of Church of England presence, other Christian activity, other organisations and institutions, key gathering places etc.

1.Church of England presence in our Parish.

This section will be completed for deaneries

Church Schools	N/A
Fresh Expressions	JAM is a work with children & young people up to the age of 12-13. During the year of the pandemic it was not meeting on a Sunday morning with the main Church service, but met at other times. This may be something that may continue post lockdown.
Chaplaincies	Informally, pastoral support from Vicar to staff at James Bateman Middle School.
Parishes and Benefices	St John's Knypersley 2/3 rd of a post, part of a Benefice, other parish is Christ Church, Biddulph Moor 1/3 rd of a post.
Other Anglican presence	Not within the Parish, but within the area, I have a second parish which is Christ Church, Biddulph Moor, and there is another Anglican Parish which I am not responsible for which is St Lawrence in Biddulph. So 3 parishes in total covering approx. 25k people.

2. Ecumenical partners in the Parish.

What formal ecumenical partnerships or Churches Together groups are there in the parish?

- Christians Together in ST8 (formally Biddulph Churches Together)
- There is a Christians Together in ST8 postcode group that meets together to discuss 4 missions each year, as well as a number of other things. These missions are a working together from all Churches within the area, and therefore will include a number of mission initiatives across the area. This is thinking beyond a parish boundary, and would incorporate 3 parish boundaries from an Anglican point of view. The 3 parishes are, **St Lawrence, Biddulph, St John's, Knypersley, and Christ Church, Biddulph Moor.**
- The missions are around Easter, summer, this is a summer café held in the town over 4 Saturdays. Alternative Halloween, and Christmas.
- Evenings of Worship & Prayer take place, and moves around from Church to Church to support the 4 missions each year.
- Church Ministers also meet together on a regular basis to pray. Denominations included are, Pentecostal, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Anglican. A total of 9 Churches are represented, and form one partnership together.

Where are there good informal ecumenical relationships?

- Ministers from Churches across the area open each Councillor's meetings at the Town Hall with Prayer.
- There is an Ecumenical Foodbank; this takes place in the Roman Catholic Church.
- Short services are held in the residential care homes within the area.

Where are other denominations or Christian organisations doing work that we could support rather than repeat?

The idea of Ecumenical partnership is around Worship, Prayer, and Mission. However, each Church will have its own life, and mission strategies. This is not a repeat of mission, but each Church reaching out into its local community/area with a variety of initiatives.

St Lawrence CofE have had a families worker, both the Pentecostal Church, and one of the Methodist Churches also have a healthy and fruitful work with Children/young people and families.

Where are the bits of our deanery with no, very little, or no effective Christian presence? (For example new housing estates)

With 3 Churches within Knypersley Parish, and 3 Churches within Biddulph Moor parish, and 3 Churches within Biddulph Parish, this means there are 9 Churches seeking to work together, and provide a variety of Worship and Mission that is seeking to connect with people across the area.

Our Deanery covers not only urban areas, but a number of semi-rural and rural areas. The map suggests there is a large area to cover. I would be very interested in knowing what parts of the Deanery that would benefit from a Christian Presence or a new form of Worshipping Community **where there isn't** currently one from any denomination.

3. Partnerships and networks

What organisations operate in this Parish with whom we have shared values?

We have a weekly Monday AM term time Well-Come Café, this attracts parents & carers after dropping children off at school. Young people from the special education needs school come over with staff as part of community relations.

After the Well-Come café, a local Foodbank staffed from St **John's** is also run from the centre to further support the ecumenical Foodbank that is run on a Thursday night from the Roman Catholic Church.

What resources are there in this area whose work overlaps with our mission and ministry?

Not Aware.

4. Institutions and organisations

What major institutions and organisations are there in this Parish? What connections do we have with them? (Hospitals, prisons, universities etc)

- We have care homes both in Knypersley parish and the surrounding area. Church services are taken in these homes. Although outside of the parish boundary, but within the area, there is a NHS complex that includes Doctors and other various health practitioners.



What schools (other than church schools) do we already have relationships with?

James Bateman Middle School, this school is connected on the back of the Church building. A gate has been established for the young people to have access to the Church Building.

Easter Services, Christmas Services take place within the Church building.

Assemblies take place regular throughout the year within the school.

RE lessons are also taken from time to time.

The school also use the centre at the Church for meetings.

Good working relations are also with Knypersley First School, and Squirrel Hayes first School.

Are there any big employers in this parish, and / or big centres of employment? (Factories, shopping centres, etc) What connections do we have with them?

There are some industrial estates, with factories and commercial business operating within the parish. **There is Sainsbury's**, Home Bargains, B&M within the area, and soon to be Aldi within the parish.

5. Gathering places and Centres

Where are the main centres or gathering places in this parish? (town centres, larger villages, community halls, etc)

Knypersley Cricket Club (Parish)

Knypersley Reservoir. (Parish)

Within the area, there is a leisure centre, library, all providing leisure opportunities for the local people and beyond. A small Town with pubs and wine bars, restaurants, take away food etc.

What are the distinctive geographical features of the deanery and / or places of particular interest?

- Knypersley Reservoir (Parish)
- Knypersley Cricket & Football Club (Parish)
- Biddulph Grange (Area)
- Biddulph Country Park (Area)
- Walks along Biddulph Valley Way (Parish & Area)

What are the geographical opportunities and challenges of the deanery, in terms of thinking of collaborating and joining together across the deanery?

This was mentioned by St Lawrence and would be the same for Knypersley Parish. The ridge between Leek and Biddulph acts as a barrier both with the roads and communication with the other parts of the Deanery which can be a challenge.

6. What else is useful to note about the geographical area of the parish?

Like St Lawrence said, we are on the far northern edge of the Deanery, Diocese and County. Our nearest larger shopping areas tend to be Congleton and Macclesfield. We could be described as a small town on the edge of rural areas with a large area of what was known as a miner's estate (social housing) shared with the next parish of Biddulph.

Our Parish – The People

This section is looking at the make up of your deanery in terms of both the general population and the Anglican population. Some of this section has already been completed for you.

1. Population

Approximate population of your parish. Number of people who live in the geographical area.	Approx 10k people
Number of people who attend your church.	Worshiping Community including children 70+ ASA around 50+ before COVID

2. Formal Roles

Number of Authorised or Licensed Lay Ministers in your Parish	None at present, there is 1 person exploring SSM Ministry at present.
Number of people with formal lay roles (<i>Church wardens, treasurers, PCC secretary</i>)	2x Church Wardens, Treasurer, PCC Secretary, Lay Chair of PCC, Electoral Roll Secretary. 2 Assistant Church Wardens
Number of Clergy, Stipend and NSM	1x stipendiary person operating with 2/3rds of a post at Knypersley parish. The other 1/3 rd is Christ Church.
Any other paid roles (<i>church administrators, youth workers etc</i>)	Cleaner, Verger as and when funerals/Weddings come in

3. Volunteers

Are people in your deanery involved in any of the following on a voluntary basis? The table has been filled out using the Diocesan mission stats and information from the Dementia- Friendly Church network, Eco Church and Places of Welcome.

- Do add in any further categories you think are important here
- Do amend anything you think is out of date or inaccurate

Places of Welcome	Not an official 'place of welcome'.
Dementia-Friendly Church	We are not an official Dementia- friendly church.
Eco Church	Not an official eco-church. We are a Fairtrade Church
Sunday school / Sunday kids work	JAM (Jesus & Me)
Parent/ carer and toddler group or play group	Parents with toddlers tend to come to the informal Well-Come Café each Monday morning in term time.
Youth work	Not Currently for 13+
Community Café	Our Well-Come café is open every Monday term time.
Foodbank	We run a Foodbank each Monday between 11.00am-1.00pm. We are connected to Stoke-on-Trent Foodbank.
Pastoral provision	We have 5 congregation Pastors, including a Congregation Pastor lead. The 5 Pastors each have a number of people within the Church to keep in touch with, care for etc. They meet with Darren the Vicar for support and regular updates.
Night shelter or other homeless provision	No
Money matters and debt advice	These services are offered through our Foodbank
Breakfast / after school clubs	No
Mental Health support connected with the church	We do have a Mental Health specialist within the congregation; they are on a rota within the Foodbank Team.
Support / activities for older people	This has recently stopped after several years.
Other community activity	The men of the Church use the local pub for fellowship/ Mission and discipleship.

Our Parish – Buildings and Financial Information

This section will be filled in before the template is given to the deanery team.

What buildings do we have?	<p>A now fully re-ordered Grade 2 listed, warm, flexible, building that is now fit for a variety of purposes.</p> <p>A small Community building, next to the Church building, this includes a smaller and larger room fitted with kitchen and toilet facilities.</p>
Share payment history (over last 5 years)	We are paying 2/3 rd 's of a parish share approx. £30k.
Subsidies available from either low income community funding or mutual support	We are a B1 parish, and therefore share is slightly less, paying approx. 30k share.
Summary statement about affordability based on points 1-3	Based on current income the Parish Share should be met unless anything changes.
Churches in the Deanery that are on the buildings at risk register	We are not at present.

Our Deanery – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism.

Consider the following headings. Make notes on the mission and ministry in your parish in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the parish to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the parish, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions as well as parishes. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, things that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

You do not have to use every heading, they are there as indicators of things to look for. If you want to see some examples of what might be included under each heading go to:

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/about-us/our-vision/shaping-for-mission/vision-of-a-healthy-deanery.php>

Discipleship.

How does your deanery support people and communities to grow more like Christ? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the deanery. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality.)*

10.30am service each Sunday. Style is Informal/contemporary/lively. The focus is on Sung Worship/Bible Teaching/prayer & Testimony. We seek to aim much of our teaching focus on application and how we apply it to living a Christ centred life. This service has seen the most growth over the last few years.

A monthly 5.30pm evening Holy Communion service and Bible Study service was held pre COVID 19.

During lockdown when Church buildings were closed, a weekly online service was available each Sunday via YouTube.

We offer a live Stream of the Sunday morning service each week.

Fortnightly corporate prayer meetings mid-week.

Prayer days/21 days of prayer/24 hours of prayer & Fasting. Building open for 30 days of Prayer.



2. Study and theological reflection *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*

4x Fellowship Groups were formed before Lockdown, these groups are prayer & Bible study based. They are also support groups.

2X Large Fellowship groups have continued online during COVID 19,

A ChurchMe APP was available in the APP store, and we got people to download and sign up to that during COVID 19. This allows prayer requests, links, pastoral support and fellowship to continue through the ChurchMe APP. Available on Android & Apple phones & devices.

3. Nurturing new disciples *(2nd Mark of mission) (This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples.)*

Alpha Courses are advertised and offered regular for those interested in exploring faith.

When people come to faith, the Vicar spends further time meeting with the people before forming a new group or grafting them into an existing K Group for further fellowship/discipleship/support.

We encourage people to get involved in various ministries and serving roles within the Church. This not only helps people to belong, but also is part of discipleship and exploring gifts/talents they may have.

Baptism/Wedding Prep is offered for enquirers.

4. Spiritual direction and mentoring *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life.)*

At the moment this will come mainly through the teaching of a Sunday. But the K Groups are life groups, and they are about faith in everyday life.

5. Stewardship *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities.)*

We have regular teaching and discussion **on Stewardship, and cover the 3 T's** Treasures, Time, and Talents as part of our stewardship programme.

We aim to give up to 10% mission giving away each year. E.G Open Doors, GMI-UK, Tear Fund, CPAS, etc.

6. Diversity, inclusivity and community *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly.)*

We have made sure that our buildings are wheel-chair friendly. They include disabled toilets, access to buildings and hearing loops.

The large font/wording on the screen helps those who have difficulty with sight and small print.

We do everything possible to welcome all people.

7. Relating to the wider church *(This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach.)*

Our Ecumenical link is strong locally.

We offer prayer and financial support for persecuted Christians around the world through Open Doors & Barnabus Fund.

We have links with the Church and villages in Northern Uganda-Gulu. We provide financial support for Pastors and the building of schools for education.

8. Other *(Anything else that you supports discipleship in the deanery)*

No

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your Parish? How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls.)*

We currently have somebody exploring licensed Ministry in some form, and are doing a Diocesan course.

We have a handful of capable people now retired who have had senior roles within the workplace. They come with a great deal of maturity and knowledge. These people are very capable and have a deep faith in Christ. It is here where I would like to see licensed ministry/even the training changed and evolve into something very different for the future. Happy to talk about ideas.

2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study *(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups.)*

We only have 1 Ordained stipendiary Minister, we encourage as many people as possible to be involved on a regular basis.

3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles.)*

We do our best to be aware of what people are involved in. We try not to have a person at more than one meeting a week. We do our best to balance the workload for all. From Foodbank to the Well-Come café Team, to Prayer ministry, we do our best to get the balance right with the resources and people we have.

- 4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday** *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations.)*

We often ask people in their workplaces if there are certain prayer requests and if we can support in any way.

- 5. Care and loving service in the wider community** (3rd Mark of Mission) *(This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, E.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)*

We run a community café, this café gives us a chance to offer a listening ear to all who come in.

The Foodbank Team offers food, and emergency food parcels together with prayer support and care to all who come in

- 6. Working for justice and peace** (4th Mark of Mission) *(This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics.)*

Foodbank. Fairtrade. A focus on the persecuted Christians around the world.

- 7. Care for creation** (5th Mark of Mission) *(This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups.)*

Not aware of anything in particular. However, a new more ECO friendly heating system has been installed in the Church building which is 97% efficient

- 8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries** *(This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad.)*

One person is currently exploring licensed Ministry; however, as mentioned previously, I think licensed ministry/training and vocation needs to be a conversation I would like to be part of.

9. **Other** (any other ways in which vocation is supported)

No

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enable in your parish? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Understanding of God's holistic mission** (May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives.)

During lockdown and the last 11 months, the Holy Spirit has been working beyond the 4 walls of the Church, and beyond the people of God. As a result a few people have attended the Church when open. They move from what is being said in the online services, to seeing the lives of God's people when they enter the building. Two things can be explored further. 1. When people come, what sort of family will be there to meet-greet and care for them? 2. The world is looking for authenticity, so often people will look at our lives before they listen to what we say. God is at work beyond buildings and His people, the Church is being increasingly called to be Christ centred, because the world is watching with much interest.

- 2. Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society.** (This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships.)

See answer to question 1

3. A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church *(This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite.)*

We have held regular ALL Age, and special invitation services in the past where people have invited friends/family to events that involved food afterwards.

We have had service/food event in a hotel where this was an invitation event as well.

We have had weekends away; this has also been an opportunity for people to come away and connect with people and faith.

4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith *(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting.)*

From BBQ events, to going to the local pub as a Church, to a ladies Gin tasting evening in the local wine bar, Carol singing events in pubs, no stone has been left unturned to connect with the wider community and build relationships of trust.

We are also part of Town Council prayers, this is important for building closer relationship with the Town and area.

5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this E.g. talking Jesus.)*

We have found that if people are growing in their faith and confidence in their walk with Christ, sharing faith and inviting others becomes a natural response as people see the change in their lives. However, we are aware that continues to be a sensitive issue for many people.

6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media.)*

Facebook page,
YouTube with Church Services.
Live Streamed weekly services
Website.

- 7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith** *(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)*

Regular men's evening in local pub with food.

Carol Singing in local pubs. And Carol singing in the community with door-door contact.

All of the above provide great opportunities for faith conversations and building relationships.

Alpha courses held within Church building, but hoping in time to do an Alpha in the local pub.

- 8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists.** *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith.)*

We have a Team of people that go out during spring and summer and prayer walk the streets. Whilst doing this, they chat to people and share Christ if the opportunity arises. **Anybody interested comes along, and learns from experienced people. It's the best course without it being a course.** Watch and learn, and then put in to practice.

- 9. Sharing good practice across the deanery** *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Deanery Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration.)*

The heart is there to share, but one of the biggest challenges of this Deanery conversation, is how do already busy Churches that are finding it difficult to sustain life, spread themselves more thinly in order to resource Deanery Mission initiatives?

- 10. Planting fresh expressions of Church** *(This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the parish and have appropriate involvement.)*

Please see drawing conclusion question 1.

11. Other *(Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the deanery)*

No

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

The ongoing ministry and mission at St John's are excellent for the people/finance resources we have. In fact what is achieved is outstanding. Because the vision is a big vision, the themes and issues that often come up are more people and more finance resources. A full Time Minister to once again focus on the direction the Church is taking, instead of being pulled from one parish to the next. The more we grow in people and finance the more we can do. E.G. plant new Worshipping Communities, and resource them with people and finance properly.

2. What are some of the main strengths of the Parish?

People in St John's have a great love for Christ, and as a result are part of a family in Church that cares about people, they care about people knowing Christ, they also care about the place where they live. **We can't make the Church grow;** only God can do that.

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

It would appear that St John's **doesn't appear to** be fruitful in the last 20 years for raising up people for licensed ministry. I think this is a challenge for us, and one we are aware of and praying into.

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

Christians Together ST8 (Ecumenically) across the area is a great example of resourcing mission.

Working in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent Foodbank is also very positive.



5. Where is energy being wasted?

I would say that energy is not being wasted, but seeing more fruit for labouring for the gospel will renew and reenergise some tired people. When we see fruit from labour it gives us more enthusiasm to carry on.

6. What are some of the key challenges the parish faces?

- To move from a 2/3rds stipend, back to a full time minister. The area/workload warrants it. It is financially working towards this.
- The establishment of an office and administration.
- **A family's worker to focus on the age profile of the Church** becoming younger.
- The Church building has been fully reordered, now and extension on the centre next to the Church to accommodate more people. We are not focussing on declining, but have a clear pragmatic focus on growth.

7. What is unique about this parish?

Each parish Church is unique, because it was the missionary Spirit who moved and birthed such places of Worship. **St John's was initially built as a private place of Worship** for the Bateman Family. It quickly became the Church for the estate workers. Throughout the years from 1848 it has continued to serve its community and reach out to the people. It has remained there through good and bad times, through growth and decline, it has remained standing.

8. Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this parish? *This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.*

We have a Vision statement that clearly spells out **God's mission,**
"We want to see all people know Jesus Christ and their purpose in Him"

As part of being healthy Christians and a healthy Church, we continue to focus on building 7 SHIPS.

Relationship
Worship
Fellowship
Discipleship
Stewardship
Leadership
Membership



Shaping for Mission - Leek & Meerbrook

Reviewing Our Parish and District

There are five sections to this review: the place, the people, information and resources, Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism, and conclusions. Some parts of sections one and two and all of section three has already been completed for you, but you may want to add in any additional financial and building information that you may find helpful.

Our Parish – The Place

This section focuses on the geographical area of the parish; what it includes in terms of Church of England presence, other Christian activity, other organisations and institutions, key gathering places etc.

1.Church of England presence in our Parish and District.

Church Schools	Parish: All Saints CE(A) First School Beresford Memorial CE(A) First School Blackshaw Moor CE(VC) First School St Edward's CE Academy
	District: St Edward's CE Academy
Fresh Expressions	Parish: Messy Church (meets at All Saints Church)
	Districts: None at present.
Chaplaincies	Parish: The Team Rector is traditionally invited to be Chaplain to the Chair of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. This role includes being invited to lead prayers before each council meeting and at some other civic events.
Benefices	All Saints Compton St Edwards Leek St Luke's Leek & St Paul's Leek St Matthew's Meerbrook
Other Anglican presence	St Chad's Retreat House. This was originally bequeathed to All Saints Church and is now run by a board of Trustees from across the Team Parish. The Team Vicar of All Saints is Chair of Trustees and The Team Rector is the line manager of the Warden of St Chad's House.

2. Ecumenical partners in the Team Parish

What formal ecumenical partnerships or Churches Together groups are there in the Team Parish?

All Anglican Churches in the Team Parish are members of Churches Together in Leek & District.

Where are there good informal ecumenical relationships?

The leaders of all the churches in Leek including Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic and the Salvation Army meet every two months or so to talk and pray together.

Where are other denominations or Christian organisations doing work that we could support rather than repeat?

The Salvation Army has a ministry to the homeless and assists with some food, accommodation and a drop in shower and toilet facility.

Where are the bits of our parish with no, very little, or no effective Christian presence?

There are ten churches in the Team Parish which provide a Christian presence to every area of Leek & Meerbrook.

3. Partnerships and networks

What organisations operate in this parish with whom we have shared values?

Churches Together in Leek & District

Leek Foodbank

Leek Street Pastors

Leek Almshouses (three sites in the town where accommodation is made available at a basic cost for those on low incomes)

Carr Trust (a charity which provides a regular monthly pension for up to 80 pensioners resident in Leek and which is able to help provide white goods, furniture and beds for those in need)

Leek Town Dole (a charity able to provide financial help on a one-off basis to those in need)

The above are run by Trustees drawn from churches in the parish

Community Essentials (a charity providing second hand good to those on low incomes who are setting up home)

Survive Together Leek (a charity set up to help provide assistance, food and other items to those struggling due to the Covid pandemic).

@21 Youth Club (this is the only secular youth organisation in the parish and a number of churches have their own youth groups also).

What resources are there in this area whose work overlaps with our mission and ministry?
See above.

4. Institutions and organisations

What major institutions and organisations are there in this parish? What connections do we have with them?

Leek Moorlands District Hospital - the Team Vicar of St Luke's & St Paul's used to have a half day a week chaplaincy role to this hospital but the arrangement was ended by the NHS in 2015 due to a lack of funding.

Leek Arts Festival - an annual event after Easter which brings musicians and artists to the town over a period of two or three weeks. Some churches host one or two events for this festival.

Residential Care Homes - there are several care homes and sheltered accommodation provisions in Leek, many of which churches take services in on a monthly basis.

What schools (other than church schools) do we already have relationships with?

There is a Leek Educational Partnership to which all the schools in the parish (including church schools) belong but there are no direct links between churches and none church schools.

Are there any big employers in this parish, and / or big centres of employment? (*Factories, shopping centres, etc*) What connections do we have with them?

The biggest employers are the Co-Op Bank and Ornuu Foods (formerly Kerrygold). A number of their employees are members of some of the churches in the parish.

5. Gathering places and Centres

Where are the main centres or gathering places in this parish? (*town centres, larger villages, community halls, etc*)

Derby Street and The Smithfield Centre are the main shopping precincts. There are many coffee shops and there are around twenty pubs and restaurants in the parish. There are also three night-clubs.

In the absence of a Town Hall the main places for public gatherings are either churches and church halls, Haregate Community Centre or rooms which are available in Moorlands House and The Foxelowe.

A regular weekly market takes place in the Market Square and there is also a weekly livestock market at the cattle market on the edge of the town.

Leek also has its own football, hockey, cricket and bowling clubs.

Large outdoor events are sometimes held at Brough Park and Birchall Playing Fields, and Tittesworth Reservoir is a significant recreational space.

What are the distinctive geographical features of the parish and places of particular interest?

The parish consists of the town of Leek and the villages of Blackshaw Moor and Meerbrook. It contains an undulating landscape and sits on the edge of the Staffordshire Moorlands and the Peak District. Tittesworth Reservoir is well frequented by visitors to the area and St Edward's Church, All Saints Church and St Luke's Church are all buildings of significant architectural interest.

What are the geographical opportunities and challenges of the parish, in terms of thinking of collaborating and joining together across the parish?

The only significant geographical division is between the town of Leek and the villages of Blackshaw Moor and Meerbrook. However, St Matthew's Church and Blackshaw Moor School are fully included in the life of the Team.

6. What else is useful to note about the geographical area of the parish?

It's in a relatively far-flung location on the edge of the diocese which can sometimes engender a sense of ecclesial isolation.

To the east of the parish the Haregate estate is a much more deprived area than the rest of the town. There is a greater focus in the area on dealing with poverty and deprivation, with a large amount of social housing.

7. Other community engagement by the Parish engagement not falling under the above headings:

Leek Club Day is a significant annual gathering which goes back over 200 years and takes place on the second Saturday of July. This brings together all the churches in the Town for an open-air service in the market square followed by a march around the town for which roads are closed along the route. Each church carries its own banner and follows a marching band. On returning to the market square each congregation gathers in its own venue for tea, sandwiches and other refreshments. Hundreds of people from the town line the streets each year to watch this event. CTLD organises an annual Good Friday March of Witness from the Monument to the Market square with Christian hymns and songs, Bible readings and prayers to begin and conclude the event. The march itself is conducted in silence and hot cross buns are handed out to passers-by as we walk up Derby Street.

Each summer CTLD organises a refreshment marquee for the Leek Show which is manned by members of churches across the town. Within the marquee there is an area promoting the Food Bank and Street Pastors also have a presence. In addition to this there is an area where supervised children's activities are run, and these have a Christian theme. There is also the opportunity for visitors to take information about the Christian faith and material to encourage prayer.

During the Christmas season CTLD erects a large nativity scene in the market square as a witness to the town, and also organises carol singing in Derby Street on a Saturday afternoon.

Our Parish and District – The People

This section is looking at the makeup of your parish in terms of both the general population and the Anglican population. Some of this section has already been completed for you.

1. Population

Approximate population of your Parish and District (number of people who live in the geographical area?)	Parish: 22,000 St Edward's: 9,000 St Luke's & St Paul's: 7,000 All Saints: 5,350 St Matthew's: 650
Number of people who attend Anglican churches in your Parish and District	Worshipping Community: Parish: 390 Adults + 64 Children St Edward's: 142 Adults + 11 Children St Luke's: & St Paul's: 166 Adults + 42 Children

2. Formal Roles

Number of Authorised or Licensed Lay Ministers in your Parish and District	Parish: 2 St Edward's: 2 St Luke's & St Paul's: 0 All Saints: 0 St Matthew's: 0
Number of people with formal lay roles (<i>Church wardens, treasurers, PCC secretary</i>)	Parish: 16 St Edward's: 4 St Luke's & St Paul's: 4 All Saints: 4 St Matthew's: 3
Number of Clergy, Stipend and NSM	Parish: 3 stipendiary (when all posts occupied) 6 (retired PtO) St Edward's: 1 stipendiary + 1 retired St Luke's & St Paul's: 1 stipendiary + 2 retired All Saints: 0.7 stipendiary + 2 retired St Matthew's: 0.3 stipendiary + 1 retired
Any other paid roles (<i>church administrators, youth workers etc</i>)	Parish: 4 St Edward's: 2 St Luke's & St Paul's: 1 All Saints: 0.7 St Matthew's: 0.3

3. Volunteers

Are people in your District involved in any of the following on a voluntary basis? The table has been filled out using the Diocesan mission stats and information from the Dementia- Friendly Church network, Eco Church and Places of Welcome.

- Do add in any further categories you think are important here
- Do amend anything you think is out of date or inaccurate

Places of Welcome	SE	SL&SP	AS	SM
Dementia-Friendly Church			Yes	
Eco Church	WIP			
Sunday school / Sunday kids work	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parent/ carer and toddler group or play group	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Youth work		Yes		
Community Café	Yes	Yes		
Foodbank	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pastoral provision	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Night shelter or other homeless provision				
Money matters and debt advice				
Breakfast / after school clubs				
Mental Health support connected with the church	Yes			
Support / activities for older people	Yes		Yes	
Mothers Union	Yes	Yes		
Links with Community Centre		Yes		
Messy Church			Yes (monthly)	
Brownies/Rainbows/Scouts/Guides	Yes			

Our District – Buildings and Financial Information

This section will be filled in before the template is given to the parish team.

It hasn't been yet but we don't have to complete this!

What buildings do we have?	
Share payment history (over last 5 years)	
Subsidies available from either low income community funding or mutual support	
Summary statement about affordability based on points 1-3	
Churches in the Parish that are on the buildings at risk register	

The District of St Edward's – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism.

Consider the following headings. Make notes on the mission and ministry in your district in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the parish to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the Parish, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions as well as parishes. You may have examples of things that happened before Covid, things that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

You do not have to use every heading, they are there as indicators of things to look for. If you want to see some examples of what might be included under each heading go to:

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/about-us/our-vision/shaping-for-mission/vision-of-a-healthy-parish.php>

Discipleship.

How does your district support people and communities to grow more like Christ? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the district. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. **Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality** *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality.)*

St Edwards:

Three Sunday services and one midweek service

Weekly online service on YouTube

Monthly Healing Service

In addition the Team Parish is blessed with St Chad's Retreat House, which provides a programme of Quiet Days and other opportunities for those who want to take space apart for personal reflection, and a number of members of our congregation attend these.

Study and theological reflection *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*

Annual Lent Course

Two fortnightly Home Groups

A weekly men's group

Mothers Union

2. **Nurturing new disciples** *(2nd Mark of mission) (This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples.)*

Use of *Christianity Explored*, *Life Explored* and *Discipleship Explored* for seekers and new Christians.

Lending of relevant Christian books to help people grow in faith.

3. Spiritual direction and mentoring *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life.)*

There is no formal mentoring structure but significant relationships exist between younger and older Christians.

4. Stewardship *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non-financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities.)*

Annual Gift Day before which church finances are presented to the congregation
The DCC has a policy of giving 10% of its annual income to charitable causes.

5. Diversity, inclusivity and community *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly.)*

The church building is available for use by community groups and has been used by a local choir and a breastfeeding group.

Storyfinders is our weekly parents and toddlers group which takes place in the church during term time.

St Edward's Church hosts an annual Arts Festival service to mark the beginning of this event each year.

6. Relating to the wider church *(This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach.)*

St Edward's has close links with Trinity Church. We hold a joint service every month and go away for a weekend away together every three years.

Members of St Edward's are committed to Churches Together in Leek & District the Vicar Revd Nigel Irons is currently the Moderator of this organisation and one of our churchwardens, Lynne Ball, is the treasurer.

7. Other *(Anything else that supports discipleship in the parish)*

Every Holy Week the churches in the team along with Trinity Church take it in turns to hold a service every weekday evening and to provide a service of Reflection and Meditation on the Cross on Good Friday afternoon.

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your parish? How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls.)*

Members of the congregation are encouraged to engage in ministry and given the opportunity to do so where gifts are evident.

2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study

(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups.)

There is a good team of people engaged in doing Bible readings and leading prayers during Sunday worship, plus four others who assist with leading services and preaching.

Two fortnightly home groups and the weekly men's group are entirely lay led.

3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles.)*

Organising regular working parties in the church building and churchyard and encouraging all ages, abilities and those new to church to take part. These events have encouraged some people to DCC membership and leadership roles.

Opportunities are given on a regular basis for people to take on roles in the life of the church and training and ongoing encouragement is always provided.

4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, e.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations).*

The principle of being called to live out our Christian faith on a daily basis is embedded in the preaching that takes place in the church.

Resources and help are available to all who are on a journey of vocational exploration.

5. Care and loving service in the wider community (3rd Mark of Mission) *(This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, e.g. food bank, debt advice etc.).*

A number of church members are involved in the local Foodbank and Street Pastors and serve as Governors of local church schools.

Several church members are also Trustees of the charities listed in *Our Parish* paragraph 3 *Partnerships and Networks*.

Many church members are actively engaged in the pastoral care of others.

In partnership with Trinity Church, St Edward's runs a Christmas Day Meal each year for those who are either homeless or would otherwise be celebrating Christmas alone.

6. Working for justice and peace (4th Mark of Mission) *(This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics.)*

We have close links with Christian Solidarity Worldwide which works to advocate for the needs of suffering minorities around the globe. We invite a guest speaker each year and have a CSW Champion to keep members of the congregation updated with their work.

7. Care for creation (5th Mark of Mission) *(This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, e.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups.)*

We have begun the process of engagement with Eco Church.

8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries *(This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad.)*

One past member of our congregation is currently an Ordinand in training in the Diocese, and our Vicar was one of the people who spent time sharing this journey and encouraging him in his vocational exploration. We also have one member of the congregation who is considering training as a Reader.

We give both prayer and financial support to our link CMS Mission Worker in Lima, Peru, who keeps in touch with a regular newsletter and speaks to us when she is time back in the UK.

9. Other

We have an established choir and music group, both of which are always open to new members and which have attracted new people to the church over the past five years. All those with musical giftings are encouraged to use them in the context of worship. In addition there are a number of choirs in the area to which several church members belong, at least one of which has a specifically Christian repertoire.

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enabled in your parish? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Understanding of God's holistic mission *(May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives.)*

This is a regular theme of preaching in the church and of study groups.

We also seek to connect visitors to the church to Christian belief through plaques explaining the different areas of the church and what happens there, through the provision of information booklets about the church. During Holy Week we set up themed prayer stations around the church to encourage those who visit to engage in prayer.

We are also currently engaged in a reordering project to provide wheelchair access to the main entrance of the church and to enhance and improve the experience of visitors by redesigning the entrance to draw people more easily into the building. We are also creating a larger stage platform at the front of the church to enable the space to be better used for drama and music, which will also make the church building an improved venue for concerts and other events.

2. Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society. *(This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships.)*

The wider Team contains a variety of Christian traditions which approach evangelism in different ways. At St Edward's we seek to share the gospel message through Baptism Preparation and through pastoral care and preaching at all Occasional Offices. We have a

significant funeral ministry in the local area as many people choose to have their service with us. Adults wanting to be Baptised take part in the *Christianity Explored* course which focuses on looking at the identity of Jesus in the gospel of Mark.

3. A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church *(This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite.)*

Those who have lost loved ones are invited back to a memorial service at a later date at which candles are lit and grief and loss are set in the context of the Christian hope.

Baptism families receive invitations to our weekly parents and toddlers group and our annual Nativity Service.

Each year we hold a Lent Supper and Harvest Supper to which we invite family and friends. We hold quarterly church walks which are open to all, and also occasional cinema trips to watch films of note which are also open to all.

The mens group is open to anyone to join, and there is also a ladies group which goes out for meals on a quarterly basis and to which church members and any friends are welcome.

4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith *(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting.)*

During normal times the church is open every day for visitors.

Our Vicar is Chaplain to the Chair of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and is invited to lead the council in prayer at the beginning of each meeting as well as to lead prayers at other civic events during the year.

We also host an annual civic service for the new Mayor of Leek and the civic Remembrance Service and there are close and warm links with the civic community.

Revd Nigel has also developed close links with Moorlands Radio and is invited to share a Thought for the Day on Sunday morning every three weeks as well as having the opportunity to talk about Christian festivals during the year.

Having a Church School in the District also provides us with opportunities to engage with the young people in our local community. We run an activity day for Year 5 pupils every year in the church and the church also hosts end of term services every term where over 350 pupils attend each of the two services (we can't fit them all in at once!). Revd Nigel also leads assemblies at the school and supports the head of RE through conversation and prayer.

Our Lunch Club is open every Wednesday and is a place of food and conversation. One person who started helping as a volunteer has now started attending our Sunday services and has expressed an interest in Confirmation.

St Edward's Church holds a bi-annual Open Weekend when we invite visitors to come and look round the church and have guides available to show them round the building including giving them the opportunity to take them up the church tower and down into the basement where there is a tunnel leading to what was possibly once the entrance to a crypt which is now sealed off. These events have been very well attended.

Many members of the congregation are members of or have links with local organisations such as the Bowling Club, Rotary Club, Golf, Hockey and Cricket Clubs.

- 5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith** *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this e.g. talking Jesus.)*
The call to share our faith is regularly spoken about in the preaching and from time to time explored in Home Groups.

Every year or two one of our Sunday services will be taken by the Home Groups where they have the opportunity to share their faith with the congregation.

We are happy to give members of the congregation opportunity to share their testimony if they are willing to do so.

- 6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media** *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media.)*

The Team has a parish website within which each district has its own section and the St Edward's section is regularly updated.

We have our own YouTube channel on which we publish a weekly online service, and we also have pages on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram which are regularly monitored and used to promote our online presence and also special events courses and services at St Edward's Church.

We also have the capacity to livestream services which has been used mainly for funerals during recent months and which we aim to develop to include our main Sunday morning services.

- 7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith** *(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)*

The Men's Group meets in a pub and is open to anyone who wants to go along. there is no agenda and topics of conversation cover a wide range.

We hold quarterly Sunday lunches in the church to which those who are alone and their friends are welcome.

In the past we have worked with other churches in the team to run an Alpha course which is open to anyone in the Town.

- 8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists.** *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith.)*

Faith sharing takes place at the level of interpersonal relationships in many ways. We aim to provide a programme of social events to which church members can invite friends or family to enable them to explore connections with the church and Christian faith. From time to time we organise an evening at the local Bowling Club with some food and a Christian speaker where those on the fringes of faith can discover more, and before lockdown we had planned to arrange one of these events where one or possibly two members of the congregation would share their personal journeys of faith and their testimony of how coming to know Jesus has transformed their lives. This hasn't happened yet but it's still on the 'to do' list!

9. Sharing good practice across the parish *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Parish Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration.)*

Parish Synod is not a term I am familiar with, but regular staff meetings take place between the leaders of Churches in the Team and the Warden of St Chad's House, and also between church leaders across the town where we share things that are happening and support and encourage one another in conversation and in prayer.

10. Planting fresh expressions of Church *(This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the district and have appropriate involvement.)*

Leek has a population of around 20,000 people and there are eight churches in the town so the inhabitants are well served in terms of church buildings.

St Edward's used to hold a separate youth service on Sunday afternoons called *Faith at Five* which had been running for a number of years but in 2014 the DCC took the strategic decision to change the pattern of its morning services and create a monthly All Age Celebration Service in its place.

11. Other *(Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the district)*

Members of St Edward's took part in 2019 in carol singing in the town centre organised by Churches Together in Leek & District during which we gave away *Hope* magazines to members of the public. The intention was to make this a regular event but Covid prevented us from doing it again last year.

We are planning to produce an information video for visitors will run at intervals on the TV monitors in the church giving them information about the history of the building and about the Christian faith and how they can discover more.

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

There is a high level of engagement with the community which members of the congregation are engaged with at many levels.

2. What are some of the main strengths of the district?

St Edward's is the original parish church and we celebrated the 700th anniversary of our present building last year. As such many people look to St Edward's and we receive visitors from around the area.

The church has a strong links with the civic community which provide opportunities to minister and share the gospel on civic occasions.

We have a significant funeral ministry.

During the past year we have developed a well-received online presence which we plan to sustain and develop.

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

Historically St Edward's has had a largely elderly congregation. However, in the past few years over 40 new members have joined us and some of these have been younger than

the average. The use of technology has been a factor in helping to bring this about but we would like to develop our ministry more evenly across the age demographic.

On a larger scale the Deanery has become very disparate due to many clergy leaving their posts in 2020 due to retirements or resignations so there is some important reconstruction work to do at that level.

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

As members of a Team Parish (in the process of changing into a Team Benefice) we have very close relationships with the other Anglican Churches around us.

Through Churches Together we have very good relationships with those of other denominations and work in partnership with them when opportunities arise.

5. Where is energy being wasted?

Due to a number of circumstances the DCC was invited to review the future of St John's Mission Church at an Away Day in November 2019. The church had been declining in numbers and had not experienced growth during the last twenty years, despite some concerted attempts to encourage new people to attend.

The DCC concluded that although St John's had played a significant role in the parish in past generations it was no longer fulfilling its missional purpose, and that it was St Edward's that new people were coming to. We therefore took the sad but strategic decision to close St John's and held a final service of Thanksgiving for its historic contribution to the life of the area in March 2020.

6. What are some of the key challenges the parish faces?

In the immediate future the primary challenge will be to maintain and develop our newly established online presence whilst returning to relative normality over the coming months. One way we hope to achieve this by moving towards livestreaming Sunday services and recording the livestream rather than creating separate online videos as we do now.

In the longer term we face the challenge of balancing our income and expenditure so that we become less reliant on legacies and bequests as regular income increases.

7. What is unique about this Parish and District?

Parish: The Team Parish of Leek and Meerbrook has extremely good ecumenical links and contains a wide range of churchmanship within the Anglican churches including low, middle and high.

The market town of Leek contains many organisations and hostelries which enrich the social fabric and create opportunities for church members to engage with the community. Club Day, the Good Friday March of Witness, Leek Almshouses, the Carr Trust, Leek Town Dole and other charities are unique to the town and specifically focussed on the local area.

District: The site of St Edward's Church has been a place of Christian worship since around the 6th century and until the mid-19th century was the only Anglican church in the town. The district contains the market square and the main shopping street in Leek as well as the large green space of Brough Park which is a significant recreational area for many. The church has longstanding links with the civic community and also gives expression to a broad range of churchmanship through its pattern of Sunday services.

8. Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this parish? *This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.*

Ultimately this will be for the DCC to decide, but we believe St Edward's is called to:

maintain a pattern of Sunday services that reaches across traditions and makes God accessible in as many ways and to as many people and age groups as possible

proactively develop its online presence as a means of both encouraging faith, sharing the love of Jesus and declaring the gospel

sustain and strengthen its historic links with St Edward's Academy and play an ongoing role in infusing Christian teaching and values into the school

serve the local community through the occasional offices and explore new ways of carrying the good news of Jesus across these bridges

continue to serve and maintain good and fruitful relationships with the civic community of the town

promote cross denominational church unity in the area and be a significant team player in our joint endeavours to build the Kingdom of God.

Resolve the issue surrounding the future of St John's Church and the land it stands on.

The District of St Luke's & St Paul's – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism.

Consider the following headings. Make notes on the mission and ministry in your parish in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the parish to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the Parish, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions as well as parishes. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, things that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

You do not have to use every heading, they are there as indicators of things to look for. If you want to see some examples of what might be included under each heading go to:

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/about-us/our-vision/shaping-for-mission/vision-of-a-healthy-parish.php>

Discipleship.

How does your parish support people and communities to grow more like Christ? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality** *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality)*
 - 4 regular Sunday services between the two buildings.
 - Regular live streamed services online
 - Regular pre-recorded services online
- 2. Study and theological reflection** *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*
 - 4 Homegroups
- 3. Nurturing new disciples** (2nd Mark of mission) *(This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples)*
 - Training courses on service leading and preaching
 - Preaching support group
- 4. Spiritual direction and mentoring** *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life)*
- 5. Stewardship** *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non-financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities)*
 - Giving is encouraged and part of the district vision
 - Giving by the church is modelled for members to follow
- 6. Diversity, inclusivity and community** *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly)*
 - Lunch club for the elderly is popular and well attended
 - Leek does not have a wide racial diversity to engage with
 - Preaching topics encourage equality wherever possible

7. Relating to the wider church *(This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach)*

Members are encouraged to engage with PCC, Synod etc where possible

Members are also represented on local charity boards, school boards etc.

8. Other *(Anything else that you supports discipleship in the parish)*

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your parish? How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls)*

Regular sermon series exploring the calling of members and their own giftings and skills

Members are encouraged to engage in their faith beyond the church and into their working lives

2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study *(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups)*

Services are led by a wide range of lay members as well as the ordained

Preaching is also done by a diverse team of members

Prayer meetings are led by a team of members

3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles)*

All members are called to encourage and support one another

Training events for leaders and preachers

Preaching support group

4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations)*

Engaged with the LICC whole life resources

5. Care and loving service in the wider community *(3rd Mark of Mission) (This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, E.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)*

Members are involved in school governance

Members are involved in seedlings (mums and toddlers)

Members are involved in food bank

Members are involved in street pastors

Members are involved with Alms Houses and Carr Trust

Members are involved with seniors lunch club

Members are involved with café / craft café

Members are involved in holiday clubs

6. Working for justice and peace (4th Mark of Mission) *(This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics)*

7. Care for creation (5th Mark of Mission) *(This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups)*

8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries *(This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad)*

We have one member who is currently exploring ordination

Younger members are encouraged to engage with church activities and explore their own giftings

9. Other *(any other ways in which vocation is supported)*

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enabled in your parish? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Understanding of God's holistic mission *(May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives)*

Mission and evangelism are often topics covered in preaching and teaching

2. Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society. *(This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships)*

3. A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church *(This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite)*

A strong presence on Facebook

Using the internet as a means of reaching and engaging

Regular social events

12. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith

(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting)

All members are encouraged to have strong and effective lives beyond the church where they can demonstrate their faith to the community

13. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this E.g. talking Jesus)*

14. Creating a missionary presence through digital media *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media)*

See above

15. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith

(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)

We have run successful Alpha courses and will again when the opportunity arises

16. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists. *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith)*

17. Sharing good practice across the parish *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Parish Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration)*

Regular team meetings with the parish and sharing ideas and activities

PCC meetings where good news is shared

18. Planting fresh expressions of Church *(This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the parish and have appropriate involvement)*

19. Other *(Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the parish)*

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

Schools, online efforts, engaging with the elderly

2. What are some of the main strengths of the district?

A wide base of volunteers of all ages, with many skills. Many ways in which people are engaging with the wider world and sharing their faith in words and actions.

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

Finance! No historical money, assets or income. Church activities are purely financed by the giving and efforts of its members. The district is very hand to mouth with its resources.

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

St Luke's and St Paul's functions as one church with two buildings. That is the vision and practice of the district.

5. Where is energy being wasted?

6. What are some of the key challenges the parish faces?

The upcoming change from a district to a parish will bring some challenges to the future as the DCC learns to adopt to its new legal responsibilities etc. The other challenge like many others is that of finance balancing the books with assets to fall back on will always be a risk.

7. What is unique about this Parish and District?

Parish: The Team Parish of Leek and Meerbrook has extremely good ecumenical links and contains a wide range of churchmanship within the Anglican churches including low, middle and high.

The market town of Leek contains many organisations and hostelrys which enrich the social fabric and provide opportunities for church members to engage with their communities.

Club Day, the Good Friday March of Witness, Leek Almshouses, the Almshouses Trust, Leek Town Dole and other charities are all unique to the town and are specifically focussed on the local area.

District: St Luke's and St Paul's are busy evangelical churches with a good engagement with the communities around them. Working hard with very limited resources with both the young and old in the community. There is a strong focus on music and worship and a growing engagement with the digital world of church, community and worship.

8. Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this District? *This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.*

St Luke's and St Paul's have a very youthful and energetic approach to church life and ministry. St Luke's feels very called to its children's and youth ministry with good numbers attending on Sundays and during the week. St Paul's is very focused on the Hargate estate, where many people are struggling against poverty. Social opportunities and also time to listen are very effective tools for those who are in real need.

The District of All Saints – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism

Consider the following headings. Make notes on the mission and ministry in your parish in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the parish to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the Parish, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions as well as parishes. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, things that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

You do not have to use every heading, they are there as indicators of things to look for. If you want to see some examples of what might be included under each heading go to: <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/about-us/our-vision/shaping-for-mission/vision-of-a-healthy-parish.php>

Discipleship

How does your parish support people and communities to grow more like Christ? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality** *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality)*
Normal services pre-Covid:
Sunday: 8.00am Said Eucharist
9.30am sung Eucharist
6.00pm Benediction
Thursday: 9.30 said Eucharist
The current pattern is one 9.30am service each Sunday
- 2. Study and theological reflection** *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*
Bible study courses
Advent and Lent courses
- 3. Nurturing new disciples** (2nd Mark of mission) *(This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples)*
Baptism and wedding preparation Group or individual both work well
Confirmation course as needed even with single applicants
- 4. Spiritual direction and mentoring** *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life)*
Most is in the Sunday services but is also used in Advent and Lent courses
- 5. Stewardship** *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non-financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities)*
All Financial and non-financial stewardship is reviewed at the finance monthly group
We support the school financial with leaver bibles and food for Christmas and Easter holidays for free school meal families
Missionary we support MAF and also Siabhain and Ryan Cole in Papua New Guinea

6. Diversity, inclusivity and community *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly)*

To help with access for all wheel chair or disabled persons we have a ramp for wheelchairs , we have a stair lift at the rear of the church we have a vicars door with no steps for access into the church. All the pews and chairs have been placed to ensure wheel chairs can be seated with their families any ware in the church. We have hearing loops and disabled toilets. Service books are provided in two size A3 and A4 it is also available on line. Guide dogs for the blind are very welcome are as all dogs that help support their families.

7. Relating to the wider church *(This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach)*

We have strong links with MAF which we support financially and we also support the missionary work of Siabhain and Ryan Cole in Papua New Guinea.

8. Other *(Anything else that supports discipleship in the parish)*

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your parish? How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls)*

The church supports the development of promoting vocations for lay and ordained pathways.

We have 3 Eucharistic Ministers and a programme for the development of more servers and also one person in training as an LLM.

2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study *(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups)*

There is a very good collaboration between the lay and ordained. The congregation take part in the whole service. This has been a challenge to hold onto with past clergy.

Congregation: read the two readings, producing and reading the intercessions, bringing the gifts to the Lords Table for the Eucharist.

3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles)*

All congregation and some non congregation are members of all the committees (Finance/Worship/fellowship)

All volunteers include those who help with the church gardening keeping the church clean brass cleaning flower ladies all those who make up the funeral party.

Due to the ageing population we need to review how we can encourage more people who have retired who wish to have a little job.

- 4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday** *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations)*
?
- 5. Care and loving service in the wider community** (3rd Mark of Mission) *(This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, e.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)*
The church is a collection point for Food Bank and one member of the church is involved in running the Food Bank
The vicar is a regular visitor to the residential and nursing home
Attend school weekly assembly
Polling station during elections
Monthly news from the pews
- 6. Working for justice and peace** (4th Mark of Mission) *(This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics)*
We have leads for Christian aid the school also supports children's society
- 7. Care for creation** (5th Mark of Mission) *(This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups)*
We manage and keep the churchyard tidy and safe to walk through
- 8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries** *(This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad)*
Members of the congregation are supported in the pathways to ministry
Other courses are supported by the church
- 9. Other** *(any other ways in which vocation is supported)*

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enable in your parish? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Understanding of God's holistic mission** *(May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives)*

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom:

Regular Sunday services and contact with All Saints School

To teach baptise and nurture believers:

Pre COVID the church was holding a baptism course every month with the baptism of children normally 2 every month. We have a waiting list for the end of COVID, and due to COVID we have kept a 3 monthly contact with the families by email and telephone.

To respond to human needs by loving service:

All souls service for all those who have died that year and all those who are named by congregation

To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation:

Staff trained in safeguarding children and adults

Advice around domestic violence

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth:

Renewing of the lighting

New boiler system

Reviewing and planning a 5 year plan for the building to help keep the carbon footprint low

2. Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society. *(This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships)*

We are part of the monthly prayer group of the team across Leek which has a mix of different denominations and this is shared across the area

3. A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church *(This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite)*

Church is open in Leek arts month every day 10 to 4 for a week

Baptised families are invited back on the anniversary of the child's baptism re-lighting a new candle

School attends for a number of service across the school year

Close link with RE teacher in the school

4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith *(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting)*

School assembly weekly

Visits to residential and nursing homes

5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this e.g. Talking Jesus)*
Need to build on this with the new vicar

- 6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media** *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media)*
 We have a web page but due to the ageing congregation not all have access to a computer so we provide paper and on line services
- 7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith** *(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)*
 Lent and advent courses
 Church meals 3 or 4 times a year
- 8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists** *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith)*
 Enable those who have a calling not only for ordination but for tasks they feel enables them to speak to God e.g. flower arrangers. The church supports and encourages all God's children.
- 9. Sharing good practice across the parish** *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Parish Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration)*
 We have Deanery Synod representatives who attend regularly. We ensure the work and the word of God across the area is shared not only through the annual report but also the weekly *News from the Pews*.
- 10. Planting fresh expressions of Church** *(This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the parish and have appropriate involvement)*
 We have messy church once a month facilitated by helpers from across the parish. The attendance is very good but what we need to do is look at the bridge between messy church and the church. How do we retain and recall those who enjoy the learning and move into the church to use their skills given by God.
- 11. Other** *(Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the parish)*

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

The need for more people with skills to help the life of the church. The need for more biblical courses. A link with children music and singing.

2. What are some of the main strengths of the parish?

The support the congregation gives to one another. The central team solid and supportive. Special dedication for the communication booklets, *News from the Pews* weekly news items, birthday list .

3. **What are some of the areas of weakness?**

The breakdown and loss of some people due to past vicar's behaviours
Communication but this has been worked on is getting better 100%
Numbers of congregation and new people

4. **Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?**

Pastoral care for birthdays sickness and death
Prayer diary weekly
Ringing and emails between the congregation
The church meals: pie, peas and pancakes and two other meals out

5. **Where is energy being wasted?**

Nothing has been a waste of time

6. **What are some of the key challenges the parish faces?**

The appointment of a new vicar

7. **What is unique about this Parish and District?**

Parish: The Team Parish of Leek and Meerbrook has extremely good ecumenical links and contains a wide range of churchmanship within the Anglican churches including low, middle and high.

The market town of Leek contains many organisations and hostelrys which enrich the social fabric and provide opportunities for church members to engage with their communities.

Club Day, the Good Friday March of Witness, Leek Almshouses, the AlmshousesTrust, Leek Town Dole and other charities are all unique to the town and are specifically focussed on the local area.

District: A high degree of financial security thank most congregations due to an exceptionally generous legacy in the past.

8. **Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this parish?** *This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.*

The vision is to ensure the different arenas of churchmanship remain but that new ways to include others with in the church building or a pioneer church outside the church building

Those who wish to develop there journey with the Lord and encourage younger (children and there families) into the church. Targeting the under forties who have not explored church as children

It's about change and balance

The District of St Matthew's - Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism

Consider the following headings. Make notes on the mission and ministry in your parish in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the parish to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the Parish, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions as well as parishes. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, things that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

You do not have to use every heading, they are there as indicators of things to look for. If you want to see some examples of what might be included under each heading go to:

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/about-us/our-vision/shaping-for-mission/vision-of-a-healthy-parish.php>

Discipleship.

How does your parish support people and communities to grow more like Christ? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality.)*

St Matthew's has a regular service pattern, with use of countryside worship traditions. This includes Sunday morning services and Wednesday mid week service.

[1st, 2nd, 3rd, Sundays Holy Communion, 4th Sunday Family service, 5th Sunday special services (11.15am). Every Wednesday morning is a service of Morning Prayer.]

St Matthews utilises the Diocesan Prayer diary in the News sheet also with suggested daily bible readings on the news sheet, which are sourced from the Anglican cycle of prayer.

2. Study and theological reflection *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*

St Matthew's foster a sense of encouragement to talk and discuss the sermon following the services, which often results in further explanation and expanding of the word.

3. Nurturing new disciples (2nd Mark of mission) *(This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples.)*

St Matthew's, uses the new Sunday School to encourage children and families, as well as working on resourcing young people to take part in the eucharist. We work with families who would like baptism, all within covid guidelines.

4. Spiritual direction and mentoring *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life.)*

St Matthew's uses the Diocesan and wider church news to live weekly exemplars of faith in action, we encourage people to understand faith as part of people's life.

5. Stewardship *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities.)*

St Matthew's has a good rate of weekly and monthly giving, developing upon the understanding of the need for stewardship through teaching. We encourage people to use and offer their talents where possible in the community and the church.

6. Diversity, inclusivity and community *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly.)*

St Matthew's has established a regular family services (see above), with a Sunday school and Crèche facilities when needed. We provide a positive culture of welcome of all God's people. With adaptation of worship when children are present.

7. Relating to the wider church *(This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach.)*

St Matthews is a member of Churches Together in Leek, with representatives from St Matthews feeding ideas to CT and vice versa. We take church to the local school. The church warden is a foundation governor in the school. We also have good links with the local Methodist chapel.

8. Other *(Anything else that you supports discipleship in the parish)*

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your parish? How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls.)*

St Matthew's encourages people to test their vocations. Ensuring people can access online material where needed.

2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study *(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups.)*

St Matthew's has active lay participation on worship through readings, and prayer. We have lay led services. St Matthews also uses joint preparation of material for all age worship, linking together to deliver Sunday themes based upon the lectionary readings.

- 3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers** *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles.)*

St Matthews encourages the creation of teams with different leaders. Shearing ideas, gift and talents. supporting each other, whilst teaching one other in an inclusive environment.

- 4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday** *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations.)*

At St Matthews, people are encouraged to take their faith into their home and workplace. Teaching and resources are offered to support this as relevant.

- 5. Care and loving service in the wider community** (3rd Mark of Mission) *(This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, E.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)*

St Matthew's supports local groups, like the WI, mothers union and young farmers. We have active involvement in the local school. With church members listening to children reading, doing assemblies and teaching RE lessons. We provide a social contact through offering coffee mornings and regular social events. Fundraising is use as an evangelical opportunity, often connecting with the local community.

- 6. Working for justice and peace** (4th Mark of Mission) *(This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics.)*

Members of the congregation sit on the Parish Council. Local needs are often focused with harvest, lent, and lamas such as through food banks.

- 7. Care for creation** (5th Mark of Mission) *(This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups.)*

As a rural farming based community, this lies at the heart of what most people do.

- 8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries** *(This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad.)*

St Matthews encourages people to test their vocation and we support those who's feel called to formal ministries (and informal ministry!) as the opportunity arises.

- 9. Other** *(any other ways in which vocation is supported)*

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enable in your parish? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Understanding of God's holistic mission** *(May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives.)*
At St Matthew's we encourage discussion and talking about God's mission and to see our place within it.
- 2. Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society.** *(This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships.)*
St Matthew's encourage people to understand how to use their gifts and talents in order to develop their own unique evangelistic style.
- 3. A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church** *(This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite.)*
St Matthew's uses traditional rural services in order to encourage people to come into church, having a practising culture of welcoming to all, which includes annual baptismal prayers.
- 4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith** *(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting.)*
St Matthew's mission statement is "sharing the love of God with all". We working in all community groups possible and respond to local needs with prayer and active support. Promoting the Church as the heart of the community.
- 5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith** *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this E.g. talking Jesus.)*
At St Matthew's, everyone is encouraged to share their faith.

- 6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media** *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media.)*

At St Matthew's, this is work in progress, with some use of facebook to reach out, however, we are still looking for someone to edit web pages in the team website.

- 7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith** *(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)*

At St Matthews, we have little to no tradition of this being in a rural district, however there is much informal evidence of this happening.

- 8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists.** *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith.)*

At St Matthew's, this tends to be informal. Courses have been / are offered, but take up is very limited.

- 9. Sharing good practice across the parish** *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Parish Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration.)*

This tends to happen at PCC meetings.

- 10. Planting fresh expressions of Church** *(This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the parish and have appropriate involvement.)*

- 11. Other** *(Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the parish)*

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

Sharing community, inclusiveness.

2. What are some of the main strengths of the parish?

The sense of community, the practical working of faith within peoples everyday lives.

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

No real digital presence, either through lack of interest, but also in formal training.

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

Connection with the local school (Blackshaw Moor First).

5. Where is energy being wasted?

6. What are some of the key challenges the parish faces?

A very dispersed community with small population. Aging church congregation. The upcoming split of the parish from being a DCC to taking on PCC responsibilities. Our current interregnum.

7. What is unique about this Parish and District?

Parish: The Team Parish of Leek and Meerbrook has extremely good ecumenical links and contains a wide range of churchmanship within the Anglican churches including low, middle and high.

The market town of Leek contains many organisations and hostelries which enrich the social fabric and provide opportunities for church members to engage with their communities.

Club Day, the Good Friday March of Witness, Leek Almshouses, the Almshouses Trust, Leek Town Dole and other charities are all unique to the town and are specifically focussed on the local area.

District:

Despite being small, Meerbrook has a wonderful sense of community spirit. It has a diverse set of annual traditions, which keep the people together. The church has always been at the very centre of this and Whether it is the annual flower festival or the church fete, the community pull together to make the event a success. It gives the people a strong sense of ownership over their Parish church, even when they are not necessarily regular Sunday attendees.

8. Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this parish? *This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.*

Looking towards the future, St. Matthews has a real role to continue playing in the life of its community. It will be important as the interregnum continues to keep close contacts with the school and Village Hall alive. Ideally coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic it will be a chance to reflect on how worship can be diversified, with a view to exploring digital worship training. This could be used perhaps to stream services/assemblies to the school while it is still a risk to have visitors into the school buildings.

Engaging with the new, younger inhabitants of the community needs to be a priority, perhaps starting with more special events aimed at families, such as the Easter trail around the church yard this year. As a long term goal it would be good to see families from the school engaging with the church outside of the annual school Christmas and leavers service.

Shaping for Mission - Longsdon

Reviewing Our Parish

There are five sections to this review: the place, the people, information and resources, Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism, and conclusions. Some parts of sections one and two and all of section three has already been completed for you, but you may want to add in any additional financial and building information that you may find helpful.

Our Parish – The Place

This section focuses on the geographical area of the Parish; what it includes in terms of Church of England presence, other Christian activity, other organisations and institutions, key gathering places etc.

1. Church of England presence in our Parish.

This section will be completed for deaneries

Church Schools	None
Fresh Expressions	Mother's Union National/International organisation includes prayer + worship. Family Service - 1st Sunday of the month.
Chaplaincies	The Curate - Revd Diane Oliver Two licensed lay Ministers Mike Oliver and Alan Baldwin
Parishes and Benefices	United Benefice of Cheddleton, Longsdon, Horton and Rushton.
Other Anglican presence	Churchwarden a Friend of St. Chad and a Friend of St Aidan and St. Hilda.

2. Ecumenical partners in the Parish.

What formal ecumenical partnerships or Churches Together groups are there in the Parish? *None*

Where are there good informal ecumenical relationships?

None, except when we hold Advent and Lent Courses when the benefice is joined by some from St. Andrews Methodist Church and Leek Baptist Church.

Where are other denominations or Christian organisations doing work that we could support rather than repeat?

None

Where are the bits of our Parish with no, very little, or no effective Christian presence?
(For example new housing estates)

None

3. Partnerships and networks

What organisations operate in this Parish with whom we have shared values?

*~~None.~~ St Andrews Methodist Church.
The Scout Association*

What resources are there in this area whose work overlaps with our mission and ministry?

Not know.

3. Volunteers

Our Parish – Buildings and Financial Information

This section will be filled in by the Diocese so you don't need to complete it

What buildings do we have?	
Share payment history (over last 5 years)	
Subsidies available from either low income community funding or mutual support	
Summary statement about affordability based on points 1-3	
Churches in the Parish that are on the buildings at risk register	

Are people in your Parish involved in any of the following on a voluntary basis? The table has been filled out using the Diocesan mission stats and information from the Dementia- Friendly Church network, Eco Church and Places of Welcome.

- Do add in any further categories you think are important here
- Do amend anything you think is out of date or inaccurate

Places of Welcome	ST. CHADS CHURCH
Dementia-Friendly Church	YES
Eco Church	NO
Sunday school / Sunday kids work	NO
Parent/ carer and toddler group or play group	FAMILY SERVICE MONTHLY. CHILDREN WELCOME AT ALL SERVICES
Youth work	NO YES - THE SCOUT MOVEMENT
Community Café	NO
Foodbank	SUPPORT REGULARLY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR
Pastoral provision	CHURCHWARDEN VISITS
Night shelter or other homeless provision	NONE
Money matters and debt advice	NONE
Breakfast / after school clubs	NONE
Mental Health support connected with the church	NONE
Support / activities for older people	NONE
Other community activity	LONGSDON ROSE QUEEN

4. Institutions and organisations

What major institutions and organisations are there in this Parish? What connections do we have with them? (Hospitals, prisons, universities etc)

None, apart from Mother's Union who meet monthly in Church or in members home.
UPTO Covid lockdown Moorlands Garden Guild.

What schools (other than church schools) do we already have relationships with?

None

Are there any big employers in this Parish, and / or big centres of employment? (Factories, shopping centres, etc) What connections do we have with them?

None

5. Gathering places and Centres

Where are the main centres or gathering places in this Parish? (town centres, larger villages, community halls, etc)

The Wheel Public House
The Memorial Hall - Hired by many organisations
Ladderedge News and Shop

What are the distinctive geographical features of the Parish and / or places of particular interest?

Longdon is a commuter village with good access to Stoke-on-Trent and the Staffordshire and Derbyshire Moorlands. Good access to Cauldon Canal, Churnet Valley Railway, Titterworth Reservoir, Alton Towers and the Roaches, also to Rudyard Lake. Part of Staff' Way runs through parish.

What are the geographical opportunities and challenges of the Parish, in terms of thinking of collaborating and joining together across the Parish?

Parish is wide spread, partly farming community, partly commuter belt but mostly retired people.
On the main bus route between Stoke-on-Trent and Leek.



6. What else is useful to note about the geographical area of the Parish?

Our Parish – The People

This section is looking at the make up of your Parish in terms of both the general population and the Anglican population. Some of this section has already been completed for you.

1. Population

Approximate population of your Parish (number of people who live in the geographical area?)	800
Number of people who attend Anglican churches in your Parish	20-30

2. Formal Roles

Number of Authorised or Licensed Lay Ministers in your Parish	1 Licensed Minister with permission to officiate 2 Lay Ministers
Number of people with formal lay roles (Church wardens, treasurers, PCC secretary)	1 Church warden, 1 deputy. 1 treasurer and 1 PCC secretary
Number of Clergy, Stipend and NSM	In an Interregnum
Any other paid roles (church administrators, youth workers etc)	Benefice Office Secretary NONE

Our Parish – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism.

Consider the following headings. Make notes on the mission and ministry in your Parish in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the Parish to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the Parish, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions as well as parishes. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, things that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

You do not have to use every heading, they are there as indicators of things to look for. If you want to see some examples of what might be included under each heading go to:

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/about-us/our-vision/shaping-for-mission/vision-of-a-healthy-parish.php>

Discipleship.

How does your Parish support people and communities to grow more like Christ? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality (This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality.)

We receive regular preaching on discipleship. During covid restrictions we have held 42 services and 2595 zoom services.

2. Study and theological reflection (This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)

As a friend of St-Chad I was asked to form a small group of 3 for Bible study. This I had done and we were all ready to start when Covid struck. As not all of us are in touch electronically this has had to be postponed.

3. Nurturing new disciples (2nd Mark of mission) (This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples.)

We welcome baptisms with the M.V. giving them cards. The beauty of our church encourages wedding couples to use our church. They attend regularly for 6 months, and again M.V. give them a card. Bereaved people are invited to a memorial service and invited to light a candle in loved one's memory



4. **Spiritual direction and mentoring** (This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life.)

We have regular preaching on spiritual direction

5. **Stewardship** (This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities.)

We have a weekly Gift Aid scheme. For people that cannot Gift Aid we have a weekly giving scheme. We also encourage people to give of their time, i.e. arranging flowers, cleaning etc. The Mothers Union fund raised for projects both at home and abroad.

6. **Diversity, inclusivity and community** (This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly.)

We are a dementia friendly church. We also have a disabled ramp. We have a sound system for deaf people. When allowed we supply tea/coffee and biscuits after services and make wedding couples and visitors welcome.

7. **Relating to the wider church** (This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach.)

We collect good used clothes regularly for poorer people. Also we support the local food bank regularly. The M.U. supports Family Holidays for people in need. They knit clothes for premature babies, and overseas supports numeracy and literacy and encourages families to support their families in better ways.

8. **Other** (Anything else that you supports discipleship in the Parish) better ways.

I am a friend of St Chad and have attended a Quiet Day at Shallowford House. After which I have formed a small group of 3, but due to the Pandemic we have not been able to meet.

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your Parish? How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation** (This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls.)
We encourage exploring talents such as making tea etc, and making cakes. Reading lessons during services. Tidyng the grave-yard and around the church grounds. We also encourage new families and baptismal families and wedding couples.
- 2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study** (This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups.)
I, as Church Warden lead Morning Prayer when we have difficulty getting an ordained Minister. I also as a friend of St. Chad am hoping to lead a small group of 3 in Bible Study, when Covid restrictions ease.
- 3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers** (This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles.)
At each A.G.M. we appoint volunteers to be sides-persons and lesson readers. We also have a devoted couple who arrange flowers for services, and for weddings if required.
- 4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday** (This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations.)
Regular preaching includes teaching as do Advent and Lent courses. Before Covid met after services for light refreshments and a chat which we hope to continue after restrictions end.
- 5. Care and loving service in the wider community** (3rd Mark of Mission) (This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, E.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)
We have a regular commitment to the local food bank. We also regularly collect good used clothes which go to help the needy. A monthly benefice Parish Magazine reaches the wider local community. M.V. Fund Raising goes to both National and International Projects to support better Christian Family Life.



- 6. Working for justice and peace** (4th Mark of Mission) (This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics.)

Several members support the Children's Society. The M.U. has a representative at the United Nations to advise the Government on all women's issues. The M.U. also raises awareness of injustice and exploitation.

- 7. Care for creation** (5th Mark of Mission) (This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups.)

Our Churchwarden is a member of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. We have a group of volunteers who keep the Churchyard and grounds tidy. We also have a Gardener who regularly mows and strims the grass.

- 8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries** (This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad.)

Rev. Diane gives any advice on vocations and ministries. If we are unable to get anyone to take Morning Praise I as Churchwarden lead the service with the Rev. Diane's blessing. We have now been 3½ years with no incumbent.

- 9. Other** (any other ways in which vocation is supported)

The Diocese gives training for Treasurers, Secretaries and Gift Aid Secretary where needed.

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enabled in your Parish? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Understanding of God's holistic mission** (May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives.)

Holistic mission is carried out in the preaching during services and during advent and lent courses and study days, hoping that the congregation will go out and share what they have learnt in their daily lives.

- 2. Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society.** (This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships.)

We hold different types of worship and when there is a fifth Sunday in the month we hold a united service in one of our churches in the Benefice.

- 3. A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church** (This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite.)

We have held a Wedding Fayre in Church, also regular coffee mornings in Trinity Church, Leek. We hold memorial services when we encourage people to return and light a candle in memory of a loved one. Confirmation Classes are held as required and candidates encouraged to continue attending Church.

- 4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith** (This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting.)

The Church Warden does pastoral visiting. We have an annual Christmas Draw, and we hold concerts etc. in Church. We partake in Village events i.e. Longdon Rose Queen.

- 5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith** (This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this E.g. talking Jesus.)

When allowed due to Covid restrictions we have tea/coffee biscuits after each service encouraging people to talk about their personal faith.



- 6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media** (This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media.)

We have a bereavement website. Also on line services have been developed since lock-down due to Covid. People also keep in touch by telephone. We also had a Lent course on line.

- 7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith** (This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)

Advent and Lent courses encourage discussions and deeper relationships.

- 8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists.** (This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith.)

This is an area that needs to be explored and broadened.

- 9. Sharing good practice across the Parish** (This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Parish Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration.)

Not all worshippers have electronic devices. Members go to Deerness Synod. We do not have a Parish Synod but is something that could be looked at.

- 10. Planting fresh expressions of Church** (This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the Parish and have appropriate involvement.)

We have not had an incumbent for 3½ years and is beginning to take its toll.

- 11. Other** (Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the Parish)

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

Lack of an incumbent
Sermons,
Study groups.
Lack of younger people, although 2 new families have joined us.

2. What are some of the main strengths of the Parish?

A loyal group of 'church family members'.
Worship is dignified and visitors made welcome.

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

Too few younger people.
Leaderships.
Finances.

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

When we had an incumbent we had regular United Services within our benefice.

5. Where is energy being wasted?

A large church in a small parish

6. What are some of the key challenges the Parish faces?

Obtaining more younger congregations.
Finance

7. What is unique about this Parish?

It is a beautiful church in lovely surroundings, which attracts many couples to marry here.

8. **Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this Parish?** This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.

Our vocation is to work more closely as a Benefice, with an opportunity for quiet evangelism.

We need to attract a young family Priest male or female who will see all our needs and steer us to a brighter future and encourage us all in the development of our faith.

Shaping for Mission - Milton & Norton

Reviewing Our Benefice

There are five sections to this review: the place, the people, information and resources, Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism, and conclusions. Some parts will be completed by Lichfield, but you may want to add in any additional financial and building information that you may find helpful.

Our Benefice – The Place

This section focuses on the geographical area of the benefice; what it includes in terms of Church of England presence, other Christian activity, other organisations and institutions, key gathering places etc.

1.Church of England presence in our benefice.

Church Schools	None
Fresh Expressions	Messy Church 3rd Saturday of the Month Open To God. Little Fishes Mothers Union. These all cater for the community in general and include a period of worship and prayer
Chaplaincies	The Curate – Revd Jill Cooper is chaplain to the local charity 'Green Door' which provides activities for disabled and elderly people who are alone and disadvantaged
Other Anglican presence	None

2. Ecumenical partners in the benefice.

What formal ecumenical partnerships or Churches Together groups are there in the benefice?

We take it in turns to organise Women's World Day of Prayer between the Salvation Army, The Methodists, Catholics and Ourselves

Where are there good informal ecumenical relationships?

Leigh Memorial Methodist Church – we work together on Lent and Advent Courses and share Leadership. Occasionally we have had joint services.

We are striving to establish links with the local Baptist Church. The ministers of the Churches have some contact and discussion. This is a work in progress.

Where are other denominations or Christian organisations doing work that we could support rather than repeat?

Roman Catholic, Methodists, Methodist link with the local Care Homes. We have joined with them on this project on occasions. New Methodist Church in Norton have luncheons and everyone is welcome to go along.

Where are the bits of our benefice with no, very little, or no effective Christian presence? (For example new housing estates)

Norton Heights a relatively new housing estate off Bellerton Lane. We have in the past posted hundreds of leaflets to let them know we are here for them especially at Christmas. Diamond Estate. Royal Estate. Baker Crescent and Stockton Brook areas of the Benefice we barely touch. This used to be a 'Miners Estate' and relationships were not historically good with the Church. This needs to be addressed. Social housing estates – both parishes

What schools (other than church schools) do we already have relationships with?

Norton-le-Moors Primary, Ball green Primary

Are there any big employers in this benefice and / or big centres of employment? (Factories, shopping centres, etc) What connections do we have with them?



N/A

3. Partnerships and networks

What organisations operate in this benefice with whom we have shared values?

St. Mary's Roman Catholic. Norton and Ball Green Methodists. Ball Green Baptists.
No formal connections with any of them. 4 Schools and 2 Nursing Homes.

Scout Group.

Norton did have a residents association which was thriving but unfortunately due to the pandemic this has been disbanded

The Old Nortonian Society plays a big part in Norton and is still active after nearly 100 years and some of our congregation are members.

We have a Men's group who meet. The men are mainly on the fringe of our church but do have shared values. We have good relationships with local M.P.s

What resources are there in this area whose work overlaps with our mission and ministry?

Not known

4. Institutions and organisations

What major institutions and organisations are there in this benefice? What connections do we have with them? (*Hospitals, prisons, universities etc*)

We have an active Mother's Union at Norton meeting in the Lois Degg room and have had for many years. We support many causes both local and abroad. We send Christmas Cards into prisons from the Mother's Union Members.

Two G.P. Surgeries.

What schools (other than church schools) do we already have relationships with?

Milton Primary Academy, Hillside Primary School, Greenways Primary Academy. - We visit the schools for special occasions and the children often come to us for Christmas



and Easter Celebrations. The Clergy from Milton are asked to lead an outdoor service of Remembrance at the memorial garden in Carmountside Crematorium each year.

Norton Primary Academy & Ball Green Primary School. We no longer have any formal relationships with either of them. But both Schools support our Christmas Tree Festival and Christingle and are invited occasionally to look around the church. They are especially interested in the belfry and looking at the various vestments. A member of the congregation talks to the pupils and invites questions.

Excel Academy.

Are there any big employers in this benefice and / or big centres of employment? (Factories, shopping centres, etc) What connections do we have with them?

None

5. Gathering places and Centres

Where are the main centres or gathering places in this benefice? (town centres, larger villages, community halls, etc)

Parish Centre (Attached to Milton Church), Baddeley Green Working Mens Club & Milton Recreation and Bowling Club. Our community centre is now Norton Methodist Centre. There are well-used function rooms at Ball Green WMC and Norton Central WMC but neither club is on a sound financial footing. Neither of the schools have community use.

Milton village keeps its individuality in that it has shops (supermarkets, florists, hairdressers, a bookshop, optician, off-licence, travel agent, estate agents, and excellent laptop repair service, Post Office & several eating places).

Norton has various shops, a large co-op, charity shop hairdressers, small businesses ie. Potteries Die Company on Knypersley Road an oatcake shop fish and chip and two working men's clubs. All the shops support the church in various ways especially at our Christmas Market and Tree Festival

What are the distinctive geographical features of the benefice and / or places of particular interest?

Good links to Motorway network; rail etc.



Caldon Canal runs through the benefice, Holden Lane Pools, along with many footpaths and walks Ford Green Hall is of historical interest. Ford Green has tracks where wildlife is in abundance. Chatterley Whitfield situated in Ball Green is of particular interest

There are many cycle tracks running through our area

Geographically we are not too far from Greenway Country Park Tittesworth Reservoir the Roaches and Alton Towers.

Although the benefice is located in Stoke-on-Trent, known as The Potteries, the main centre is Hanley with the shopping centre and theatres. We are part of the Leek Deanery being situated close to the Staffordshire Moorlands, with extensive views and of particular interest to walkers. At first sight this is a rural parish but most people live on large housing estates. Much former industrial land has been reclaimed and is now parkland.

6. What else is useful to note about the geographical area of the benefice?

Easy access to City of Stoke on Trent; Leek; Newcastle under Lyme. The City of Stoke-on-Trent is in main surrounded by the Staffordshire Moorlands, where the benefice is situated it is approximately a 15 minute walk to the moorlands. Within easy reach of Peak District etc. The "green" nature of the area provides a better living environment than most areas of the city while being close to areas of employment. Milton and Norton are ideally placed for access to the centres of Hanley and Leek; also they are within easy reach of the Festival Park Retail Park, and local railways. Hanley Bus Station is used by local bus companies and National Express.

They are in a position to border on to Staffordshire Moorlands and Derbyshire, giving access to beautiful countryside not far away from home.

Norton is unique in that it lies neither in a rural or inner city area

Still prominently farming, some of which has been reclaimed. St. Bartholomew's has a wonderful view from the Lytch gate overlooking rolling fields the canal and in the distance one can just make out Brown Edge Church

The parish of Norton has a large Council Estate and an even larger Private Housing Estate but Norton still has that village feeling

Our Benefice – The People

This section is looking at the make up of your benefice in terms of both the general population and the Anglican population. Some of this section will be completed for you.

1. Population

Approximate population of your deanery (number of people who live in the geographical area?)	Lichfield to complete
Number of people who attend the 2 churches in your benefice	Lichfield to complete

2. Formal Roles

Number of Authorised or Licensed Lay Ministers in your Benefice	1 Licensed Lay Reader at Milton
Number of people with formal lay roles (<i>Church wardens, treasurers, PCC secretary</i>)	8 in all 2 wardens, 1 PCC secretary, 1 treasurer, for each parish in the Benefice.
Number of Clergy, Stipend and NSM	NSM Curate and Honorary Assistant Priest – both active and greatly valued.
Any other paid roles (<i>church administrators, youth workers etc</i>)	2 vergers

3. Volunteers

Are people in your benefice involved in any of the following on a voluntary basis? The table has been filled out using the Diocesan mission stats and information from the Dementia-Friendly Church network, Eco Church and Places of Welcome.

- Do add in any further categories you think are important here

Places of Welcome	We have 'sidespersons' who welcome the congregation into Church at each service, Church/Lois Degg Room.
Dementia-Friendly Church	Milton is a Dementia Friendly Church, this is yet to be taken on by Norton.
Eco Church	No
Sunday school / Sunday kids work	Not at the moment but keen to re-establish this area.
Parent/ carer and toddler group or play group	Some involved in local playgroup. Little Fishes preschool group at Milton
Youth work	None
Community Café	Other than tea coffee after every service and funerals and weddings
Foodbank	We do not hold a Food Bank but collect weekly contributions for the local established Food Bank.
Pastoral provision	In normal times we have a team of pastoral visitors who visit and take communion to those who are sick, housebound or in hospital. We also have a 'phone ministry' to the housebound in the area.
Night shelter or other homeless provision	No
Money matters and debt advice	No
Breakfast / after school clubs	No
Mental Health support connected with the church	No
Support / activities for older people	Knit and Natter Group (First Monday of the Month), With a mostly elderly congregation we have many activities that support and help older people.
Other community activity	Messy Church, Bowls Group (every Monday) run by church members, We have many activities for the Community. EG:- Angel Festival; Scarecrow Festival; Memorial evening for a murdered midwife; Remembrance Memorial Weekend

	<p>to commemorate 100 years –over 3000 knitted and crocheted poppies by Knit and Natter Group.</p> <p>Summer Fair & Christmas Fair each year.</p> <p>Mothers Union / Men's Group / Old Nortonians / Visiting Group</p>
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Our Benefice – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism.

Consider the following headings. Think about the mission and ministry in your benefice in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the benefice to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the benefice, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, thing that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

Discipleship.

How does your benefice support people and communities to grow more like Christ? Think about the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the benefice. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality.)*

During Coronavirus we have maintained a regular Sunday Eucharist at both churches, Eucharist 9am Milton, 11am Norton. mid-week Eucharist at Milton. We also have regular Zoom evening Prayer on a Sunday and normally a Thursday Open to God on 1st Thursday of the month.

Morning Prayer said in church on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Milton. St. Chads Prayer Group which met on Monday Mornings has carried on during Covid personally at the same time at home between those involved. Constant telephone conversations between the elderly congregation.

Encounter Services – more informal on Sunday afternoon.

Healing Services.

2. Study and theological reflection *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*

Usually Lent and Advent groups – in both churches that linked with the Methodist Church in Milton.

Bishop's Certificate & Open To God Group.

3. Nurturing new disciples (2nd Mark of mission) *(This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples.)*

Confirmation courses as required,

Baptism preparation and Follow-up , we keep in touch with Baptism families and send a Birthday card annually - needs developing more.

Wedding Preparation and Follow-up – Needs developing more.

Bereavement Counselling and follow-up - needs further development.

Cursillo - just started – needs development – hub for diocesan rekindling!!

4. Spiritual direction and mentoring *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life.)*

Ministers involved with Spiritual Directors for own personal development;- also offering Spiritual Direction to others as desired. We have a vibrant Ministry Team who are involved in Spiritual Support and Counselling as appropriate.

We at Norton have been lacking in spiritual leadership especially before the New Benefice. We as a church have had our faith questioned through the extremely hard times we've endured. At Norton we are now at the crossroads and need Spiritual direction and mentoring in order for us to go out into the community and show our faith and give out the message that Jesus Christ is their Saviour and ours.

5. Stewardship *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities.)*

At Milton, occasional short campaigns on Stewardship/ sermons focussed on giving etc. Occasional charitable causes highlighted, the Children's Society regularly supported by many in congregation. Gift Aid Envelope giving scheme is used in Milton,

Norton parish has not been financially viable for years. The Parish Share is rarely paid in full. Stewardship giving has stood up well during lockdown but our congregation has shrunk to third of what it was when I arrived 40 years ago. Giving to charities is no more than putting a plate out when there is an earthquake etc.

We have a good stewardship envelope scheme and various people give donations now and again. We have had during Covid a Gift Day where the congregation were informed, then given a letter asking them to donate whatever they would have spent at the Christmas Market and Tree Festival (Which is our main fundraiser). This went really well and the money raised is so much needed. People have given of their time in various ways cleaning the church, the

various rotas i.e. readers, intercessors, sides people. home visiting and we have always given to worldwide charities which is our Christian Duty. We support the Childrens Society and Christian Aid. Before the pandemic we took part in the shoe box appeal for U.S.P.G.

6. Diversity, inclusivity and community *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly.)*

Occasionally addressed by special services/invited speakers etc, all are made welcome at our churches. Milton is a registered Dementia Friendly Church. We have tried as far as is possible to ensure our building is wheelchair friendly with the provision of ramps and worship spaces, but more work needs to be done to ensure that wheelchair users feel more a part of the congregation and not that they 'are on show' or 'in the way' of what is happening – eg at a funeral. We have disabled toilets and access.

7. Relating to the wider church *(This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach.)*

Involvement in World Day of Prayer; Christian Aid Week; Mothers' Union group at Norton. Church members at Milton are also members of The Leigh Singers Choir which is based at the Methodist Church in Milton.

The Church actively prays for and supports Christian Aid; The Children's Society; Hands At Work; and Christian Solidarity Worldwide. Collects for the local Foodbank.

8. Other *(Anything else that you supports discipleship in the benefice)*

Informal Ministry to sick and housebound. We actively encourage buying Fair Trade goods both from stalls in the Churches, from catalogues acquired from the resident representatives, and from supermarkets.



Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your benefice. How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the benefice. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls.)*

This area is primarily addressed by the incumbent and may involve other ministers. It is supported by PCC and Diocese. Also addressed informally through sermons/ study courses. Bishop Certificate, Pathways to Ministry Courses run by the Diocese on various subjects, attended by clergy, lay reader and members of the congregation in some instances.

At Norton church we recognise each others gifts and talents and we try to encourage the use to their God Given Gifts even though they may not realise they have them. Whatever role the congregation play in our church which includes many, is a vocation, not everyone is going to become a priest...lay people play a massive part in the nurturing of others at grass roots

2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study *(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups.)*

The Parish Development Team comprises of Clergy, Lay Reader and members of the congregation with individual gifts and roles, all of whom partake in the leading of worship on occasions.

Teams of Readers, and leaders of Intercessions at both churches- new volunteers welcomed, and encouraged. Some lay led worship – e.g. HC by extension. Holy Week services etc.

Rota for Readings and Intercessions at the Sunday Eucharist and also some members of the church are Altar Servers at Milton.

Norton Treasurer leads evening prayer on a Sunday

3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles.)*

Members of the Parish Development Team use their many talents and gifts to help organise the workings of the Parish. We are fortunate to have so many gifted people in our congregation.

The Flower Team make the church look exceptionally beautiful each week, and are available for weddings.

The Knit and Natter Group are always turning their hand to any project the Church has on . EG. Over 3000 knitted and crocheted poppies for the Remembrance Celebration weekend; knitted and crocheted flowers for an Easter Day Cross to be on display in the church.

People who volunteer and train to become Servers. The gentleman who is responsible for this group is forever encouraging the young people who come to 'have a go', and there is always the opportunity for anyone who wishes to serve at the altar to come forward and join the team.

Volunteers are always welcomed and supported in all that they do. I think we are a supportive community which values all gifts and abilities.

At Norton ,only the other Day whilst opening the gates to church I chatted with a gentleman who lives adjacent to the church and he said that even though they do not come to the Church all his neighbours would volunteer for anything if they were approached. We would need resources to enable volunteers to feel supported and then perhaps this it the way forward go out into the community and ask for their help and in turn they may come to know the love of god also. If we do not ask we will not be given. "Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find."

4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations.)*

Preaching at Milton usually has an everyday-life theme, through sermons and discussion groups and informally between individuals



5. Care and loving service in the wider community (3rd Mark of Mission) *(This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, E.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)*

Milton have an ongoing Foodbank collection that is promoted 4 times a year, We feel that there is good will towards the Church in the community we serve. We are always very welcoming and are there in times of need . EG Memorial evening with Book of Condolence for the murdered midwife from our parish.

We hold memorial services for those bereaved within three months of the funeral, and visit/phone those we know are alone, ill or anxious.

We are involved with the schools as appropriate; support the work of the Foodbank etc.

The Parish Centre is in regular community use:-

Ladies Fellowship, Bowls Club, Badminton Group, Yoga Class,

Knit and Natter Group, Weekly Baby Clinic, Playgroup, Little Fishes (Toddler Group)

Polling Station during Elections & Monthly M.P.'s Surgery.

We also produce a monthly Parish Magazine which is delivered to many local homes and is funded mainly by local business advertisements, and 40p charge to buyers.

We know of church members active in nature conservation, volunteering in support roles in schools, volunteering for telephone befriending services etc.

At Norton, We have ladies who organise the distribution of food to our local food bank. Although we are an ageing congregation we have a committed small group of people who visit and pray with the lonely and sick in our community.

6. Working for justice and peace (4th Mark of Mission) *(This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics.)*

The Curate of the Benefice, as Chaplain to the charity Green Door, is very aware of the issues regarding disability and access, and works with others to ensure this is always regarded.

We are a Fair Trade Church, always looking at the production and distribution of goods, and ensuring the congregation are aware of the way others are treated, and what a fair price is. Also encouraging them to buy fair trade goods wherever possible.



We have links with Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Hands at Work, Christian Aid and the Children's Society, and as a church support them as appropriate.

Occasional raising of issues in sermons/ study groups;

Responding to issues – on all levels. E.g. Involvement in Christian Aid

At Norton, although not active in the sense of it we do pray/ discuss all these things at our Prayer meetings

7. Care for creation (5th Mark of Mission) *(This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups.)*

The Lay reader and his wife are members of the Staffordshire WildLife Trust and bring to our attention any aspects that need our attention. We have a group of keen volunteers who manage the upkeep of the Churchyard and grounds.

8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries *(This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad.)*

We are developing the gift of Prayer and Healing within the Benefice, and as soon as the pandemic is over, a group will be embarking on a course of training with the Diocesan Enabling Officer to facilitate this.

Several church members have taken the Pathways to Ministry course over the years

9. Other *(any other ways in which vocation is supported)*

Through the Bishop's Certificate Course, Pathways to Ministry and other Diocesan Courses and through the Cursillo Movement and its development in Lichfield, we will support any vocations as they arise. The encouragement of every person in church to



read do the intercessions or serve we here at Norton pride ourselves on the amount of people who take part in the service, whilst not actually leading.

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enable in your benefice? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the benefice. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Understanding of God's holistic mission *(May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives.)*

The vision for Open To God was a time once a month when people came together to be – open to God – to what he is to us as individuals, how we see him at work in the world and our lives, how to be expectant and sometimes excited at what Jesus has done and is doing in our lives and what difference this make to how we live and our attitudes. This is still a viable work in progress as soon as we can get back to it.

As Ministers we endeavour to make our preaching cultural, relevant, biblical and challenging each week, relating world events, biblical narrative, and personal experience and witness to challenge the way we see and relate to God and to each other.

We have no formal mission teachings other than that which is done each week within the service... with the intention that people listen digest and go out and spread the good news.

The general tenor of preaching in Milton Church is very much 'earthed' in the realities of modern life and its challenges.

2. Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society.

(This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships.)

Sometimes this aspect is difficult.

One of our Ministry Team members is a member of the city's 'All faiths Prayer Group' that meets together to pray together. In our ministry we try to teach God's love for all people, whatever colour or creed. In times past the church has visited other places of religion as a way to build bridges.

This is hopefully done in the service where intercessions sermons and the way we welcome and interact with one another is portrayed and again going out and interacting with others from other faiths encompassing and appreciating them

Some individual church members have had contacts with the Jewish and Sikh communities in the past. Preaching at Milton certainly does not focus on regarding people as 'conversion fodder'.

3. A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church

(This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite.)

We make it generally known in the community that the Church is open to all. We hold community events – Angel Festival – Scarecrow Festival where schools and shops joined in and made their own scarecrows. Scarecrows even appeared in gardens and in windows as residents joined in the fun!!

We have summer and Christmas Fairs each year Coffee Mornings, Film Nights etc.

We encourage people to join us when we meet them through Funerals – inviting them back for memorial services and sending a card on the first anniversary. Families we meet through Baptisms are invited to Little Fishes, and then to Playgroup and the family to Messy Church. When required we hold Confirmation Classes and the candidates are invited to continue attending Church subsequently.

4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith

(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting.)

Chaplaincy with Green Door.

Working with local schools – a ministry we would like to develop.



Pastoral Visiting. The team visit those who are housebound, sick or in hospital – taking communion where this is requested. The Clergy are available for prayer, confession and counselling where required.

We have built up good relationships with the wider community over the years.. but unfortunately getting them to come to church is the difficult one. But if they see something in us who do attend perhaps one day this may lead to their understanding of what it is like to have faith

Our good contacts with local schools fall under this heading; (opening church for end-of-year services, Nat. Curriculum visits etc)

5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this E.g. talking Jesus.)*

Open to God and the various learning groups that we hold give the opportunity for sharing faith, ours and others. Sometimes we have a visiting speaker who can share their faith – dramatic or otherwise.

We are an ageing congregation and have all been on courses and shared our faith on many many occasions, therefore we are in a position to talk about our life faith and in turn support and encourage new and eager members who may think they are of little importance...but they are.

Less formal services offer opportunities for sharing – Open to God & Encounter where personal involvement and contributions of individuals is actively encouraged.

6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media.)*

Each Parish currently have individual websites which are being combined to create one for the whole benefice. We also have a Facebook page for the benefice

It includes a link where people can contact us with any queries and questions. It has been used to book weddings, ask about the upkeep of the graveyard, and a burial of ashes query over the past few weeks.



Personally, I have found the fact that several members of the congregation are on Facebook proves to be very rewarding. I have got to know one particular person far better through Facebook than I have got to know them in Church!! Especially at the moment during the pandemic, it is another way of keeping in touch and caring for one another.

We have not achieved online worship as such, but a group have met together on Zoom for an evening service on Sunday – late afternoon. Another way we have used technology is by phoning people. On this medium we can talk, counsel, and pray together.

7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith *(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)*

We have a Men's Group that meets in our Parish Centre. They usually have a meal and then a time of fellowship where they may watch a film or have a discussion.

Open to God is a time to draw aside from a busy life to spend time with God and with others to explore our faith, hear the experience of others, and ask questions that trouble us. It is a time when we can pray together.

The courses we organise for Lent and Advent also provide a time of study and sharing our faith. To partake in these groups brings us closer together as a church community, builds up our common life and gives us confidence to be honest with each other in a way we perhaps couldn't before.

We have many social events meals out days out concerts etc. but not any real major big questions or discussions. These may be done on a personal level during these social events which may in turn deepen relationships which we are unaware of.

Several of our church members are active in Milton Book Club

8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists. *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith.)*

We are quite flexible in that anyone with a gift is free to arrange to develop and practise that gift as required. I have been allowed time to train for the Healing Ministry, and to go to speak at other churches about my life as a Christian. I have also led groups on Pilgrimage as required/requested. Others have found likewise.



9. Sharing good practice across the deanery *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Deanery Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration.)*

We have a group of representatives in the Deanery Synod who attend regularly and report back to the PCC. At Deanery Synod we often have a speaker who share good practice either from within the deanery or from beyond. We have to be more open and show everyone how wonderful it is to be a Christian and not hide ourselves under a bushel

10. Planting fresh expressions of Church *(This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the benefice and have appropriate involvement.)*

We need to think of Fresh Expressions to encourage the Young people and the children (acknowledging the fact that Messy Church is already there for families). Norton Parish do not have Messy Church – maybe they could be encouraged to join with Milton?!?

We also need to devise a Fresh Expression to reach the 'Miner's Estate' and the council estate in Norton. Don't know how to do this!!! Just see the need!

11. Other *(Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the benefice)*

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

Open To God seems to be ticking a lot of boxes! Maybe it is more important for our mission than we realised.

Community Schools; volunteers; sermons; study groups; less formal worship,



2. What are some of the main strengths of the benefice?

Opportunities to work together in order to move forward in faith. The work with the elderly – very abundant and fruitful. The Prayerfulness of the people. The way in which this new Benefice is already showing 'solidarity'. Any joint meetings are well attended and any social events in either church well supported. We have the good will of the communities in which we are situated.

We have many committed and dedicated Christians who have the experience to pass on the Love of Christ to all who seek it.

Worship is dignified but not 'stuffy'. Visitors are made welcome but not overwhelmed by fussy over-attentiveness.

Sense of commitment to each parish and to each other. Service to the community and congregation.

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

Older congregation who struggle to accept change, people. Work with young people and children. Enthusiasm to volunteer for positions. Many people think they're too old or too busy.

Because we are an ageing congregation it is not possible to do all the things we would like to do....but we can only encourage and support others

We have been slow to embrace the potential of Fresh Expressions. We rely too much on a small pool of activists and have not been good at growing new volunteers to take on key roles.

Outreach/ evangelism/ nurturing vocations of all sorts.

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?



Learning to accept change and move forward. The Ministry Teams work well together, and joint meetings are well attended. It was decided and accepted that service books would be the same in both churches under the 'United Benefice of Milton and Norton'. The two parishes up to now are beginning to work well together. With some schools.

5. Where is energy being wasted?

Nowhere, nothing is being done.

The maintenance of both buildings takes up a lot of meetings, money and time. Both are beautiful churches that are loved and cared for. The constant balancing of tension between finance and the need to maintain old buildings not ideally suited to modern needs

6. What are some of the key challenges the benefice faces?

We are a young benefice having been created for just over a year (created on Advent Sunday 2019) so are learning how to work together as a benefice and about our partner parishes. We have had the rector/vicar of the benefice retire at the end of September 2020. To engage with families who are on the fringe and non-believers.

My view is that local people are not lacking in spirituality, they are sheep in need of a shepherd.

Finding new vocations, establishing the relevant Fresh Expressions and finding younger volunteers.

As Christians we need to find ways of encouraging new families children and youth groups and also developing ways of showing the community that we are here for them and not only for ourselves. Also encouraging volunteers and finding resources in order for us to realize "Our Mission"

To become more open to Fresh Expressions. To prioritise growing vocations. To open up further to the wider community. Aging congregations Lack of children and young people/ young adults

7. What is unique about this benefice?

Location, a semi-rural parish and a suburban parish, it is a blank sheet of paper, full of potential. This Benefice is unique in that it is newly formed. It is partly a clean slate. It is exciting because it is not yet established as a Benefice, anything could happen, Where is God taking us? Watch this space!!

All individuals are unique and so are all churches, but equally loved by God. I dare to believe that Milton Church with all its foibles and frustrations is very close to God's heart

8. Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this benefice? *This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.*

Our vocation is to continue to work together as 1 benefice with 2 parishes whilst having a vicar/ rector to lead us including the ordained ministers, licenced lay reader and the rest of the leadership teams and congregations.

An opportunity for quiet evangelism.

At present our vocation as a Benefice is to formulate a Mission Statement and Benefice Profile that will attract an energetic hopefully younger Priest to become the new Rector and take on all the things mentioned in this paper!!!

After that we need to see what our vocation becomes as we work together in God's purpose for our Benefice and for our lives.

The vocation of our Benefice is to strengthen relationships to each and everyone in our communities and beyond..... realising their needs and spreading the Gospel (Good News) to each and every person by the way we live and work together in the COMMUNITY.

To live up to our strapline – 'Learning, Living and Loving as Disciples of Jesus'

To encourage all in development of faith and ministry. To widen our horizons and vision of what it means to be 'Church'. To help growth in confidence of all.- leading to wider activity. Confidence in sharing our faith with each other – before we take it to others.

Shaping for Mission - Rushton Spencer

Reviewing Our Parish

There are five sections to this review: the place, the people, information and resources, Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism, and conclusions. Some parts of sections one and two and all of section three has already been completed for you, but you may want to add in any additional financial and building information that you may find helpful.

Our Parish – The Place

This section focuses on the geographical area of the Parish; what it includes in terms of Church of England presence, other Christian activity, other organisations and institutions, key gathering places etc.

1.Church of England presence in our Parish.

This section will be completed for deaneries

Church Schools	<p>Rushton CE (VC) Primary School is a member of Talentum Learning Trust (TTLT). It is a First School catering for ages 5 - 9 with a flourishing Nursery. School averages 35 children under the capable leadership of Mrs S Cockersole. Pupils are grouped into 3 mixed year classes.</p> <p>In 2014 the OFSTED inspection awarded the school an 'outstanding' grade which we aim to maintain. The SIAMS inspection on 2017 noted the school as 'good'. We are working on achieving targets set and reinstating an outstanding award. With the absence of a Vicar there is only one Foundation Governor. Since 2018 we have made great progress integrating St Lawrence's Church and the school. School assemblies have been taken by various members of the clergy and laity, establishing a firm link to work on.</p> <p>Children have walked to school for Harvest Festivals, Christmas Services and bulb planting around the churchyard. During lockdown the link has strengthened with services in school (all arranged by children) being recorded and adding to YouTube for viewing by school, parents, governors and the local community. These include Remembrance Sunday, The Nativity, Mothering Sunday and Palm Sunday. A new school Christian Council has been set up by pupils and meets weekly. Areas for reflection and quietness are established in school and grounds. We aim to add more Christian symbols.</p> <p>The Governing Body have allocated a training session for SIAMS by the Diocese. The Foundation Governor has already</p>
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	had training. This will benefit the Governing Body with their Christian vision for the school.
Fresh Expressions	There are no Fresh Expressions in Rushton Parish but with guidance we are willing to reach out and try. For the past three and a half years we have been trying to manage without an Incumbent (2 years sick leave followed by vacancy). Unfortunately, this has taken its toll but recently three young families have joined our congregation – all taking active roles on the PCC. This gives us much hope for the future. We'd appreciate any help and guidance.
Chaplaincies	There are no chaplaincies allied to the parish of St. Lawrence, Rushton.
Parishes and Benefices	St Lawrence, Rushton forms part of the United Benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton. Rushton Village is on the A523. You could loosely say it is a linear village. The church is in the fields (as was the village in mediaeval times). Up until the 1970s it was mainly farming in Rushton. As trends have changed, a lot of the farms have diversified, some doing holiday accommodation. Others are using their farm buildings by renting them out to industrial units.
Other Anglican presence	There is no other Anglican presence in our rural village of Rushton.

2. Ecumenical partners in the Parish.

What formal ecumenical partnerships or Churches Together groups are there in the Parish?

There are no formal ecumenical partnerships in the Parish.

Where are there good informal ecumenical relationships?

We have good relationships with the Methodist Church in the village. They have occasional evening services interspersed with Songs of Praise. They too are struggling for clergy.

Where are other denominations or Christian organisations doing work that we could support rather than repeat?

We are happy to support work in our nearest main town of Leek.

Where are the bits of our Parish with no, very little, or no effective Christian presence? (For example new housing estates)

There are no new housing estates in Rushton. The few new houses there are will receive the local Link magazine which advertises church services and events.

3. Partnerships and networks

What organisations operate in this Parish with whom we have shared values?

Rushton CE Primary School.

What resources are there in this area whose work overlaps with our mission and ministry?

We have exceptionally good links with our school. One of our PCC members is a governor and our retired Reader was co-opted onto the governors to assist and (until a recent health scare) regularly lead Collective Worship. Hopefully this will resume after Covid. As mentioned elsewhere in this report children come to church for special services.

4. Institutions and organisations

What major institutions and organisations are there in this Parish? What connections do we have with them? (*Hospitals, prisons, universities etc*)

There are no major organisations in this benefice.

What schools (other than church schools) do we already have relationships with?

There are no other schools in this benefice.

Are there any big employers in this Parish, and/or big centres of employment? (*Factories, shopping centres, etc*) What connections do we have with them?

The main industry is farming. Other than that there are no large employers in this parish but there are a number of small businesses including a garage, pubs/restaurants. As Rushton is quite a small (but widespread) village we have connections with many residents/farmers.

5. Gathering places and Centres

Where are the main centres or gathering places in this Parish? (*town centres, larger villages, community halls, etc*)

The meeting room at the Methodist Chapel. Also the Knot Inn is happy to host meetings. Our last APCM was held there.

What are the distinctive geographical features of the Parish and/or places of particular interest?

Rushton Spencer lies where the Staffordshire Moorlands meets South East Cheshire and East Derbyshire. Sitting in the valley of the river Dane, the village is surrounded by many areas of outstanding beauty. Notable among these are Gun Hill, Lud's Church, The Roaches, Tegs Nose, The Cloud, Rudyard Lake and Tittesworth Water to name but a few. Macclesfield Forest is a few miles to the north with the Goyt valley close by.

What are the geographical opportunities and challenges of the Parish, in terms of thinking of collaborating and joining together across the Parish?

Opportunities: *Rushton is a ramblers and cyclists paradise. There is a public right of way which runs beside the church and attracts many visitors.*

We are situated on the edge of the Peak District. There are lots of interesting things to see and do. The Staffordshire Way, long distance footpath passes through the village along the old

railway line. There is walking and climbing on The Roaches with Tea Rooms! Tittesworth reservoir with wild life and walking also has Tea Rooms and a shop: also toilet facilities and plenty of parking. Rudyard Lake, also close by, is just a short distance from our church. There is boating, walking, bird watching and lots of opportunities for people who love the outdoors.

Challenges: the church is situated down a very narrow lane and is quite a distance from the village. Its remote location means that there are no facilities for running water. This presents many challenges when we wish to host social events.

We like to think that we have a good relationship with the other churches in our benefice and enjoy the occasional joint service. However, Rushton Church is situated 9.5 miles away from the main church in the benefice (Cheddleton) which means a round trip of 19 miles whenever joint activities are planned. This is quite daunting for some members and can prove to be a barrier for uniting together. There is no public transport available on Sundays.

6. What else is useful to note about the geographical area of the Parish?

Our church at Rushton is unique – many hundreds of years old. It is an oak formed structure and has had extensions to the north side. We have a minstrels' gallery with graffiti from the 1700s. To sit in quiet prayer here can be quite moving.

The approach to the church is approximately half a mile of narrow roads. The children enjoy walking up to church through the fields in their bright coloured willies. It all adds to the experience of coming to church!

Until about 10 years ago there was a haulage firm. There is a car repair garage, a corn merchant, two public houses and a wedding venue close by.

Our Parish – The People

This section is looking at the make up of your Parish in terms of both the general population and the Anglican population. Some of this section has already been completed for you.

Our Parish – Buildings and Financial Information

This section will be filled in by the Diocese so you don't need to complete it

1. Population

Approximate population of your Parish (number of people who live in the geographical area?)	
Number of people who attend Anglican churches in your Parish	

2. Formal Roles

Number of Authorised or Licensed Lay Ministers in your Parish	Two Licensed local ministers (One with PtO) One licensed Community Minister	
Number of people with formal lay roles (Church wardens,	Two Churchwardens	

<i>treasurers, PCC secretary)</i>	<i>One PCC Treasurer and one PCC Secretary</i>	
Number of Clergy, Stipend and NSM	<i>One retired OLM (with PtO)</i>	
Any other paid roles (<i>church administrators, youth workers etc</i>)	<i>Previous Incumbent off sick from 30.10.17 – 26.9.19. Since then the parish has been in vacancy.</i> <i>Benefice Administrator (12 hours per week). Rushton PCC pay 16.66% of the BA's wages.</i> <i>One verger – usually a Churchwarden.</i>	
What buildings do we have?		
Share payment history (over last 5 years)		
Subsidies available from either low income community funding or mutual support		
Summary statement about affordability based on points 1-3		
Churches in the Parish that are on the buildings at risk register		

3. Volunteers

Are people in your Parish involved in any of the following on a voluntary basis? The table has been filled out using the Diocesan mission stats and information from the Dementia- Friendly Church network, Eco Church and Places of Welcome.

- Do add in any further categories you think are important here
- Do amend anything you think is out of date or inaccurate

Places of Welcome	<i>Sidespeople welcome people as they enter church.</i>
Dementia-Friendly Church	<i>None</i>
Eco Church	<i>None</i>
Sunday school/Sunday kids work	<i>None but Family Services are held once each month.</i>
Parent/ carer and toddler group or play group	<i>None</i>
Youth work	<i>None</i>
Community Café	<i>None</i>

Foodbank	<i>None</i>
Pastoral provision	<i>None</i>
Night shelter or other homeless provision	<i>None</i>
Money matters and debt advice	<i>None</i>
Breakfast / after school clubs	<i>None</i>
Mental Health support connected with the church	<i>None</i>
Support / activities for older people	<i>None</i>
Other community activity	<i>None</i>

Our Parish – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism.

Consider the following headings. Make notes on the mission and ministry in your Parish in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the Parish to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the Parish, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions as well as parishes. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, things that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

You do not have to use every heading, they are there as indicators of things to look for. If you want to see some examples of what might be included under each heading go to:

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/about-us/our-vision/shaping-for-mission/vision-of-a-healthy-Parish.php>

Discipleship.

How does your Parish support people and communities to grow more like Christ? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality.)*

Rushton has a very dedicated congregation who are energised by regular participation in church based and online worship events. On-line services - since lockdown services have been broadcast weekly (and on special occasions) attracting many viewers. At the time of completing this form 42 services have been broadcast with a total of 2,595 views. Some services have included contributions by pupils at our church school.

There is regular preaching (from the Common Worship Lectionary) on prayer and spirituality.

Rushton church is a very special place and an asset to village life. It is set in such a tranquil spot overlooking the valley and lends itself to the peace and tranquillity that can be found in God alone. The challenge of being in such a remote location is that it is impossible to open daily for private prayer. In the past the church has been broken into and more recently the paving stones from the path have been stolen.

We have different clergy or lay ministers each week, presiding over Holy Communion or Morning Praise/Family Praise.

We were at a disadvantage during lockdown as we couldn't have the regular services. We are having some roof repairs which hampered services too. The repairs are ongoing but we hope they will be finished soon. Unfortunately (as with many ancient churches) the more roof tiles were removed, the more damage was found. Costs have escalated beyond our resources. For the first time in our history we have been unable to pay our Parish Share.

2. Study and theological reflection *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*

Annual Lent and Advent Groups are held within the benefice. However, due to Covid 19 they are currently suspended. As an alternative - an email was sent out to invite our congregation to join in with the on-line groups launched by Leek Methodist Circuit. Also, links to Lent study groups and #LiveLent provided by the national and diocesan CofE were included.

Clergy and lay ministers often preach about the church's ministry and ongoing discipleship.

3. Nurturing new disciples *(2nd Mark of mission) (This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples.)*

Confirmation courses are held as and when required. Hopefully, once Covid 19 is under control there will be an opportunity to hold a course and nurture new disciples within the new families who have recently joined.

4. Spiritual direction and mentoring *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life.)*

There is regular preaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life (through the Common Worship Lectionary).

5. Stewardship *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities.)*

Rushton church is full of very willing volunteers who are encouraged to give of their time as well as financially. There are people who regularly read the lessons and assist with Sidesperson's duties.

A Gift Day is planned for later in the year. Under normal circumstances we have a Harvest Supper in September, held in a local village hall. It raises between three and four thousand pounds. Gifts for the local Foodbank are received at the Harvest Service.

6. Diversity, inclusivity and community *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly.)*

There is regular preaching on inclusivity and God's love for all (through the Common Worship Lectionary).

Members of our congregation are very welcoming and church is open to all. We are hoping to install a sound system to help those who have experienced hearing loss. We are wheel-chair friendly.

7. Relating to the wider church *(This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach.)*

None known.

8. Other *(Anything else that supports discipleship in the Parish)*

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your Parish? How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God calls.)*

Our retired OLM is a Vocations Advisor for Lichfield Diocese therefore we are fortunate to have up to date vocational guidance.

The Pathways to Ministry Courses run by the Diocese are of great value and available for all.

Every opportunity is taken to encourage the use of all gifts within our congregation.

During the pandemic and the season of 'on-line' worship weekly emails are sent to members of the congregation directing them to the YouTube link. In each email volunteers are invited to help with future services.

2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study *(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups.)*

Each week Bible readings are led by members of the laity. It is hoped that with help and guidance some members may be encouraged to lead our intercessions.

3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles.)*

As mentioned earlier in this document, St Lawrence's have been without an Incumbent for three and a half years (sick leave and vacancy) and so some things have been a little neglected.

However, there have been others in leadership roles who have been available to support and train volunteers in any way required. Volunteers are always welcomed and supported in all that they do. St Lawrence's has a supportive community and values gifts and abilities in all people.

4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations.)*

Many of our congregation have retired from secular employment which leaves little opportunity for workplace ministry but there is regular preaching (through the Common Worship Lectionary) on Christian living which supports whole life vocations 24/7.

- 5. Care and loving service in the wider community** (3rd Mark of Mission) (This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, E.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)

There is a member of the congregation who is a school governor and so very active in school. As mentioned earlier – there are good links with the school and church is represented at Collective Worship.

The local Foodbank is supported with our harvest giving.

Regular financial support has been given to Age UK, The Local Link Magazine, Approach Staffordshire and Christian Aid.

- 6. Working for justice and peace** (4th Mark of Mission) (This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics.)

See section 5 above re regular financial support.

- 7. Care for creation** (5th Mark of Mission) (This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups.)

Our churchyard is a huge asset; in fact we hasten to add that it is in one of the best locations in the whole country. Our PCC employs a skilled gardener to take care of it and we have previously won several awards in the Best Kept Churchyard Competition.

- 8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries** (This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad.)

Our retired OLM (Vocations Advisor) has much information available for those seeking ministry and vocation and is happy to help as and when required. The Diocesan led Pathways to Ministry Course is the next recommended 'port of call.'

Everyone is encouraged to assist with leading worship. On many occasions Services of the Word have been lead by the previous Churchwarden.

- 9. Other** (any other ways in which vocation is supported)

We are more than willing to offer any amount of support needed to direct people towards further help and training if required.

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enable in your Parish? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Understanding of God's holistic mission** *(May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives.)*

God's holistic mission is often addressed in preaching (through the Common Worship Lectionary). It is important that we look beyond our own village and that we seek God's will for our lives.

- 2. Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society.** *(This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships.)*

Ministry in a rural village populated predominantly by white people gives little scope to interact with those of other faiths. There is an acceptance that we are all God's children and all equal in the sight of God.

- 3. A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church** *(This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite.)*

In previous years we have joined in with Back to Church Sunday, sadly without much success. Harvest Festival/Supper is one of the best opportunities we have to engage with those on the fringes of church. It is very popular and attended by many villagers.

Even though many villagers do not feel the need to come to church many of them care deeply that it is here. For example – several years ago villagers generously contributed to the purchase of a neighbouring field with the prospect of extending the churchyard.

During the autumn three of our new young members organised a scarecrow trail. That was very popular as it involved the school, the church and the village in general. It brought in many visitors. This Easter the same young members are organising an Easter Egg Trail – leading to church.

During Advent we had a memorial Christmas tree outside the church. That too was very popular and raised over £300.

Baptisms are regularly held at St Lawrence's but presently there are no structures in place to re-engage with families. With additional guidance, direction and leadership we are more than happy to develop a programme of outreach.

- 4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith** *(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting.)*

As an expression of God's love, bibles are presented annually to all school leavers. This is very much appreciated by pupils and their families and is an outreach from church.

Church news and details of forthcoming services and events are published monthly in The Link - the local community magazine.

On the occasions when Covid 19 has resulted in our church being closed we have held several outdoor services: Remembrance Sunday, Carol Service, Mothering Sunday. These have been very

well attended and appreciated by churchgoers and non churchgoers. People prefer the safety of being outside.

The churchyard has been revamped this last few months with all the years of brushwood cleared. Several of the stones have been straightened. The path in the lower part of the churchyard has been repaired too. The children were instrumental in planting 1500 daffodil bulbs which are now in bud. All this enhances our personal relationship with our villagers and shows that we care.

- 5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith** *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this E.g. talking Jesus.)*

This is probably an area which needs further development.

- 6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media** *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media.)*

As mentioned earlier in this questionnaire – On line services have been held during lockdown. Services have been broadcast weekly (and on special occasions) attracting many viewers. At the time of completing this form 42 services have been broadcast with a total of 2,595 views. Some services have included contributions by pupils at our church school.

Like all churches countrywide, Covid has affected our congregation but weekly services via YouTube have benefitted us greatly. That could be a way forward in the future as it could be extended to people who can no longer get to church.

The Benefice has a website which is regularly maintained and updated. Details and links to all services together with much more information can be accessed there.

- 7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith** *(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)*

Lent and Advent courses are held within the benefice every year. They are special times with wonderful opportunities to discuss, learn and share. Perhaps a little encouragement is needed to persuade more people to attend.

- 8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists.** *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith.)*

This is linked to vocations. Support and help is assured for anyone who feels called to evangelism and who wishes to explore this calling further.

- 9. Sharing good practice across the Parish** *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Parish Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration.)*

We are more than willing to share good practice throughout the Benefice and willing to learn from others. The creation of a Benefice Synod would be a good policy to adopt once Covid restrictions are eased.

10. Planting fresh expressions of Church (This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the Parish and have appropriate involvement.)

This is an area with which we need some help. As mentioned earlier - being without an Incumbent for three and a half years has taken its' toll in many areas of ministry and much now needs to be addressed.

11. Other (Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the Parish)

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

We are a small congregation who are working very hard to keep the presence of the church alive and active in our village. The geographical situation of the church - a most beautiful location – presents its own challenges.

2. What are some of the main strengths of the Parish?

Community support and the young families who have recently joined.

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

A small congregation with huge challenges ahead.

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

Within the community.

5. Where is energy being wasted?

We are very worried that we will not have enough money to pay for the repairs to the roof.

6. What are some of the key challenges the Parish faces?

Finances. As previously mentioned - the repairs on our church roof have totally drained our reserve funds. There is little or no money left for any outreach/mission initiatives.

The lack of an Incumbent for 3½ years has taken its toll. We would value some leadership, guidance and expertise in helping us to build on our links with school and young families.

7. What is unique about this Parish?

It's beautiful rural location.

8. Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this Parish?

This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.

To continue as a Christian presence within the community, building on our strong links with the school, sharing the love of Christ and providing support for all who need it.

Shaping for Mission

Leek Deanery Church School Response

Church schools within the Deanery	Support/provision currently received and
Blackshaw Moor CE(C) First School (Talentum MAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our main priority is a vicar, but we would like one that is approachable, good with children and keen to continue the links we had built with Fr David and St Matthew's church over the past 3 years. • A children and family worker is a beneficial post as previously the person covering this role would support the vicar with visiting school, delivering worship, sharing RE information with the children during lessons etc. • The church has always supported the school by paying for transport for the children to attend services and supplying bibles for the leavers and we would like this to continue if possible. • We had started having quite a few church services such as Christmas, Easter, Harvest, Christingle, Eucharist etc, but with the exception of Eucharist, these were always presented by the children, very similar to an in-school worship, so children weren't really getting the experience of a church service, it was purely a production for parents and parishioners in a different setting. A service delivered by the church representative with the children making a contribution during the service would give the children a more educational/informative experience. We would send the order of service to Fr David and he would follow it.
Leek All Saints CE(A) First School (Talentum MAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vicar to replace Fr David, someone who is a visible presence in school and known to the children and their families. • A 'children and families' worker, similar to the role that Mel carried out previously. • A strong relationship with the church community where mutual support is at the core.
Leek Beresford Memorial CE(A) First School (Talentum MAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciative of the support that they currently receive from Rev Matt. • Currently receive a lot of support from the Methodist church in the town (Abi Ratcliffe – Children and Families worker) through collective worship, RE (Godly Play) and clubs. • Previous support from Mel was very much appreciated. • Beresford is situated at the heart of the Haregate estate and there is significant need and deprivation. The school operates as a hub, signposting the families to help and support. Could some of that support come through the local church? Foodbank, CAP centre, support worker? • Chaplain or children's worker across the first schools would benefit all and help to create further links across the schools.

<p>Rushton CE Primary School (Talentum MAT)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very appreciative of the support they currently receive from Alan Baldwin. • Michael Oliver was a fantastic supporter of the school prior to stepping down through ill health. • Children are enjoying contributing elements of the YouTube services that Alan broadcasts. • Keen to have a vicar that can get to know and understand the school and be a real presence in the school community. • Support with collective worship and RE as well as a pastoral support would be appreciated. • A schools' worker or chaplain that can support the schools in the parish and be the common thread linking the schools together would also be fantastic.
<p>Leek St Edward's Church of England Academy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of RE appreciates regular conversation and prayer with Rev Nigel. • Rev Nigel has led collective worship in school. • Principal feels that there is a lack of outreach to young people (no YFC, Synapse no longer operates) and that the young people receive their faith experiences within school rather than from the churches. • Principal would like to see a ministry of 'action' within Leek, where the church is reaching out to meet the needs of the families, particularly those who are struggling (he referenced the pro-active nature of support that he has observed in Bucknall and the link between St John's Church and Kingsland School in reaching out and fulfilling the needs of the community). Principal feels that this is an area that is currently covered by the schools, rather than the churches. • Principal has concerns that some of the Leek churches are so 'high' that they do not appeal to the community, and particularly the young people. • Principal feels that pastoral support for the schools and staff is key and that someone to 'check in' and get alongside the school team would be valued. • Chaplain role would help to meet the pastoral needs of the staff and students.
<p>Brown Edge St Anne's CE(C) Primary School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alex Wolvers has taken the Ex-Officio role on the Governing Body. • Connect 2 support the school through Messy Church, Christmas hamper project and Collective Worship. • Alex Wolvers has provided a weekly collective worship video for the school during lockdown.
<p>Cheddleton St Edward's CE Academy (SUAT)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been no clergy presence here for some time, but the school are supported by Rev Diane (interim minister). • Children are enjoying contributing elements of the YouTube services that Alan Baldwin broadcasts. • Christian Council operates with support from Rev Diane and Rev Eleanor and Jonny Newbould (St Andrew's Methodist minister and children's worker), alongside foundation governor Pam Kinshott. • The school have two foundation governor vacancies.

Horton St Michael's CofE First School (SUAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been no clergy presence here for some time, but the school were previously supported by Michael Oliver through Collective Worship. • Children are enjoying contributing elements of the YouTube services that Alan Baldwin broadcasts. • Headteacher is incredibly keen to strike up links with the church and to have a visible clergy/children's worker presence for the children and families.
Endon St Luke's CofE Academy (SUAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciative of the support given by Rev Alan Betts and Connections. • Methodist Church also offers support to the school. • Foundation Governors from St Luke's Church are proactive. • Keen to ensure that relationships continue and strengthen between the school and church following Rev Alan's retirement.

Key points and common threads to consider:

- Clergy vacancies are a source of real concern for the schools as a whole.
- The key factor is about relationship and community. Schools don't want a link with their church to tick a SIAMS box, they are looking for authentic relationships where there is mutual support.
- The idea of a parish or even deanery wide post to support the schools and to be the link between them has been a constant thread in conversations. This could be explored through the role of a Children and Families Worker or a Chaplaincy role.
- Schools are understanding of the impact of COVID on clergy or lay presence in schools at the moment. However, now more than ever, there is a need to support schools in their response to the mental health and wellbeing of the children returning to school, and to their spiritual development.

This information reflects the views of the church schools in the Leek Deanery and, as we are all aware, there are also community schools that would benefit from the support of the Deanery. My next task, if the group are happy, is to reach out to the community schools and try to gauge their views/needs.

Shaping for Mission

Parish Share 2019

	2019 SHARE	2019 INVOICED SHARE	RECEIPTS	TOTAL	SO / DD
LEEK DEANERY				AREARS	
BAGNALL	16,460	16,460	(16,460)	0	DD
BIDDULPH	63,189	63,189	(63,189)	0	DD
BIDDULPH MOOR	20,359	20,359	(20,359)	0	DD
BROWN EDGE	18,976	18,976	0	43,297	
CHEDDLETON	39,129	39,129	(24,500)	22,025	SO
ENDON W STANLEY	41,660	41,660	(26,000)	15,660	DD
HORTON	11,272	11,272	(11,272)	0	DD
KNYPERSLEY	29,551	29,551	(27,089)	2,462	DD
LEEK - MEERBROOK ST MATTHEWS	10,445	10,445	(5,645)	5,579	SO
LEEK ALL SAINTS	39,279	39,279	(39,279)	0	
LEEK ST EDWARDS & S JOHNS	52,519	52,519	(52,519)	0	
LEEK ST LUKES AND ST PAULS	44,869	44,869	(44,869)	6,944	
LONGSDON	12,395	12,395	(3,000)	60,259	
MILTON	27,906	27,906	(27,906)	18,901	SO
NORTON LE MOORS	21,136	15,750	(15,750)	46,113	DD
RUSHTON SPENCER	12,172	12,172	(12,172)	0	
TOTAL	461,317	455,931	(390,009)	221,240	

251/415

Shaping for Mission

Reviewing Our Parish

There are five sections to this review: the place, the people, information and resources, Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism, and conclusions. Some parts of sections one and two and all of section three has already been completed for you, but you may want to add in any additional financial and building information that you may find helpful.

Our Parish – The Place

This section focuses on the geographical area of the Parish; what it includes in terms of Church of England presence, other Christian activity, other organisations and institutions, key gathering places etc.

1.Church of England presence in our Parish.

This section will be completed for deaneries

Church Schools	St Michaels' School Horton. Mrs Montgomery the headteacher is keen to lead the school in Christian values. The pupils have a worship committee, daily assembly and take part in Church visits and services such as the Carol Service. The school is rated outstanding in the current SIAMS report which can be viewed on the school's website.
Fresh Expressions	We try to have a family service each month. Mothering Sunday services and Carol services are well supported with tea and biscuits after, and we had Church Harvest open weekend which reaches out to community to encourage Christian worship.
Chaplaincies	
Parishes and Benefices	United Benefice of Cheddleton, Longsdon, Horton and Rushton Spencer
Other Anglican presence	

2. Ecumenical partners in the Parish.

What formal ecumenical partnerships or Churches Together groups are there in the Parish?

Where are there good informal ecumenical relationships?

There are good informal ecumenical relationships with Rudyard Methodist Church. The Methodist Church is located at Lake Road Rudyard local groups are held there such as WI. Members of the Church congregation attend some of these organisations. Additionally, Methodist Members help with Church fund raising events and some members of the congregation attend Chapel services.

Where are other denominations or Christian organisations doing work that we could support rather than repeat?

The Methodist Chapel has coffee mornings which members of the congregation help with.

Where are the bits of our Parish with no, very little, or no effective Christian presence?
(For example new housing estates)

The Parish is very rural and spread out.

3. Partnerships and networks

What organisations operate in this Parish with whom we have shared values?

Rudyard Methodist Chapel

St Michaels School

What resources are there in this area whose work overlaps with our mission and ministry?

4. Institutions and organisations

What major institutions and organisations are there in this Parish? What connections do we have with them? *(Hospitals, prisons, universities etc)*

There are no major institutions in the Parish

What schools (other than church schools) do we already have relationships with?

Horton Lodge Special School

Are there any big employers in this Parish, and / or big centres of employment? (Factories, shopping centres, etc) What connections do we have with them?

There are no big employers in the Parish, there are several businesses including a pub/restaurant, garage, Private Mental Health Hospital but predominantly the main local businesses are working farms. Many of the congregation are from farming families with long standing family connections.

5. Gathering places and Centres

Where are the main centres or gathering places in this Parish? (town centres, larger villages, community halls, etc)

Horton has a modern large village hall which is used for Church events such as Harvest Suppers and Fetes. It is often hired for wedding receptions and private parties as well as dancing lessons/dances. The Methodist Church also has a side hall which is used by local organisations such as Mother and Toddler Group, WI, British Legion and local history groups. The Visitors Centre at Rudyard Lake has an upstairs room which is hired out for corporate events and also by local groups and individuals.

Horton Parish is made up of 3 villages Horton, Rudyard and Gratton, it is close to the market town of Leek which has numerous pubs, restaurants and other public meeting places such as the Foxlowe. For theatre and cinema trips it is necessary to travel further field to such places as Hanley or Buxton. Though successful Male Voice Choir concerts have been held in the Church and the Village Hall.

What are the distinctive geographical features of the Parish and / or places of particular interest?

Horton Parish is made up of 3 villages; Horton, Rudyard and Gratton. The Church is situated on the hill overlooking them, Horton and Gratton are small rural villages consisting of only houses and numerous farms. Rudyard is larger populated village which increased in size during the Victorian age when it was a popular day trip resort. Visitors would arrive at the village train station from the Potteries and Manchester. Numerous small businesses sprang up to accommodate these visitors including hotels and tearooms. The visitors were attracted to the Reservoir known as Rudyard Lake where boating and walking were popular. Nowadays the area is still a well visited spot with numerous clubs using the Lake for water sports/fishing etc. The recent Lockdown has seen a return to unprecedented numbers of visitors which has been difficult for local inhabitants. The Railway station no longer has trains coming through from the cities, but it has been replaced by a small narrow gauge railway which offers trips along the lake

side. The Rudyard League of Friends are a voluntary group which manage the activities around the lake, their chairman has supported Church events.

What are the geographical opportunities and challenges of the Parish, in terms of thinking of collaborating and joining together across the Parish?

A Challenge to join the parish is the diversity of the population the farming families who have been in the area for generations and are busy working so unlikely to otherwise meet the population of Rudyard who are newer families in the area often commuters attracted to the close proximity of the city.

Also the Church being on a bank with little parking.

6. What else is useful to note about the geographical area of the Parish?

The Parish is located in the rural countryside though with access to main roads to Stoke and Manchester. Housing is popular and tends to be very expensive and not often available.

Our Parish – The People

This section is looking at the make up of your Parish in terms of both the general population and the Anglican population. Some of this section has already been completed for you.

1. Population

Approximate population of your Parish (number of people who live in the geographical area?)	Lichfield to complete
Number of people who attend Anglican churches in your Parish	Lichfield to complete

2. Formal Roles

Number of Authorised or Licensed Lay Ministers in your Parish	1 Licensed Lay Minister with PTO 2 Licensed Lay Ministers 1 Lay Community Minister
Number of people with formal lay roles (<i>Church wardens,</i>	Churchwarden

<i>treasurers, PCC secretary)</i>	Treasurer/PCC Secretary Enrolment secretary
Number of Clergy, Stipend and NSM	None the benefice is in a period of Interregnum since 2019.
Any other paid roles (<i>church administrators, youth workers etc</i>)	Church administrator for all the Benefice

3. Volunteers

Our Parish – Buildings and Financial Information

This section will be filled in by the Diocese so you don't need to complete it

What buildings do we have?	
Share payment history (over last 5 years)	
Subsidies available from either low income community funding or mutual support	
Summary statement about affordability based on points 1-3	
Churches in the Parish that are on the buildings at risk register	

Are people in your Parish involved in any of the following on a voluntary basis? The table has been filled out using the Diocesan mission stats and information from the Dementia- Friendly Church network, Eco Church and Places of Welcome.

- Do add in any further categories you think are important here
- Do amend anything you think is out of date or inaccurate

Places of Welcome	
Dementia-Friendly Church	
Eco Church	
Sunday school / Sunday kids work	
Parent/ carer and toddler group or play group	Toddler Group at Methodist Church
Youth work	
Community Café	
Foodbank	The Church supports the local foodbank through donations at Harvest Time.
Pastoral provision	There is no official Pastoral provision, however members of the congregation regularly visit and telephone people who cannot attend services through illness or being housebound.
Night shelter or other homeless provision	
Money matters and debt advice	
Breakfast / after school clubs	Kipling's Club at Horton School provides breakfast and after school club
Mental Health support connected with the church	A member of the PCC is a joint facilitator for the North Staffordshire Support Group for Bipolar UK
Support / activities for older	Members of the congregation support and help with a

people	monthly coffee morning held at the village hall aimed at isolated people.
Other community activity	<p>Harvest Festival Services and Pie Supper are hugely popular and supported by the surrounding community.</p> <p>Local History events and celebrations including a recent commemoration service and exhibition of local poet George Heath who is buried in the churchyard. Hoping to have local history day in the near future dependant on covid restrictions.</p> <p>Visits from local schools</p>

Our Parish – Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism.

Consider the following headings. Make notes on the mission and ministry in your Parish in these areas. You will want to consult as widely as possible across the Parish to respond to this section. What is happening? Where is God at work? Consider all ages and stages of faith across the breadth of the Parish, including your chaplaincies, schools and fresh expressions as well as parishes. You may have examples of things that happened before covid, things that started during lockdown and things that are emerging now. Any of these are worth noting in this section.

You do not have to use every heading, they are there as indicators of things to look for. If you want to see some examples of what might be included under each heading go to: <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/about-us/our-vision/shaping-for-mission/vision-of-a-healthy-Parish.php>

Discipleship.

How does your Parish support people and communities to grow more like Christ? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which discipleship is supported across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

1. Worship, Prayer and personal spirituality *(This may include church and online worship, regular prayer meetings, resources for prayer and spirituality.)*

Holy Communion fortnightly, with other Sunday Services being Morning Praise or Family Service. Streamed video service weekly for the whole benefice, members of the congregation take part with readings and Horton School have contributed. Funerals have been held outdoors during lockdown. The Remembrance Service was held outdoors at the Cenotaph. Covid restrictions have imposed difficulties.

2. Study and theological reflection *(This may include Bible studies/ small groups, online discipleship, growing new initiatives)*

Lent course was changed to on line. We distributed the Community of St Chad booklets to encourage personal prayer

3. Nurturing new disciples *(2nd Mark of mission)* *(This may include nurture courses, engaging with those baptised/ confirmed/ mentoring new disciples.)*

It is heartening to see the last young confirmed, now age 12-15, still attending and taking part in Christmas Services etc. During lockdown when the school could not have a normal Carol

Service in Church a good number of families still attended as they did at Easter. Baptisms are normally quite large family ones and they are welcomed and engaged with.

4. Spiritual direction and mentoring *(This may include use of spiritual directors, teaching on Christian living, ethics and faith in everyday life.)*

5. Stewardship *(This may include weekly giving, stewardship campaigns, non financial stewardship, giving to world church/charities.)*

At Harvest Services collections are taken to the local foodbank. Also, from the Harvest Supper a generous donation is made to Horton school for their charity Feed the Hungry which also involves the children making up food parcels for this. Bibles are given from the Church to each School leaver at a service in school. We take Christmas cards with a visit from a PCC member to elderly members of the Church. The Verger gives his time free at weddings and funerals and people give their time cleaning, attending to altar linen, and routine maintenance of the Church and Churchyard. A PCC member organises the Christmas Carol service with Michael Oliver, Lay Minister

6. Diversity, inclusivity and community *(This may include provision for all ages, ethnicity, work focused on intergenerational, different abilities and inclusivity, dementia friendly.)*

Horton is a very welcoming Church and after larger Services refreshments are served which brings the community together.

7. Relating to the wider church *(This may include relationships with other churches, global church and mission and outreach.)*

Each 5th Sunday month has a United Service of Holy Communion for the whole Benefice and these are well received. As previously stated, some members of the congregation occasionally attend Ruyard Methodist Chapel and vice versa. We have a link with the Anglican Church of Qu'Appelle, Canada

8. Other *(Anything else that you supports discipleship in the Parish)*

Vocation

In what ways is vocation encouraged in your Parish? How are individuals and communities supported to follow their calling to be Christ's body transforming the world? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which vocation is supported across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Exploring and nurturing everyone's vocation** *(This may include nurture groups, promoting vocations – lay and ordained, exploring gifts and passions, online opportunities, helping understand that God call*

To try to encourage each person's gifts for either maintaining the good connections with the school, visiting people to keep in touch and taking part in services

- 2. Collaboration between lay and ordained in leading worship, prayer and study** *(This may include opportunities for all ages to lead worship, lay and ordained to work together within a team, a wide variety of people leading church groups.)*

In the current situation we are fortunate to have several retired clergy in the area and we can maintain the fortnightly Communion Service. We have an excellent organist and welcoming Churchwarden.

- 3. Encouraging and caring for volunteers** *(This may include a supportive culture, drawing on gifts/ calling, regular contact and training and a healthy turnover of volunteers in roles.)*

The Churchwarden, PCC and volunteers such as readers and bellringers are in regular contact

- 4. Supporting whole-life vocation, Monday – Sunday** *(This may include teaching to enable discovery of vocation in home and workplace, resources, E.g. LICC, honour and support of all vocations.)*

- 5. Care and loving service in the wider community** (3rd Mark of Mission) *(This may include church members active in community, groups created to meet unmet needs, active involvement in Schools, help services, E.g. food bank, debt advice etc.)*

All the PCC support School activities and their fundraising, three are members of the WI, two are active supporters of the local branch of the NSPCC and one is joint facilitator for North Staffs support group for Bipolar UK.

- 6. Working for justice and peace** (4th Mark of Mission) *(This may include church and members being active in campaigns to seek change, awareness of injustice, prejudice, poverty and suffering and responding, being active in politics.)*

- 7. Care for creation** (5th Mark of Mission) *(This may include participation in activities with this focus, Memberships, E.g. Green churchyard management scheme, Eco church status, participation in environmental groups.)*

The Churchyard is an asset and a valuable wildlife habitat, with an abundance of wildflowers. It is not mown until these have died back. The Church energy use has been addressed.

- 8. Encouraging specific vocations and ministries** *(This may include information about different sorts of Ministry - lay and ordained, encouragement to formal ministries, encourage opening to service abroad.)*

To be the best we can in being part of God's family.

- 9. Other** *(any other ways in which vocation is supported)*

Evangelism

In what ways is evangelism enable in your Parish? How are individuals and communities inspired to share the Good News of Jesus? The different headings in this section provide a space to make notes of the different ways in which evangelism is encouraged across the Parish. For each heading note the key processes, events and activities that support this area.

- 1. Understanding of God's holistic mission** *(May include awareness and teaching of holistic gospel relating to things like 5 marks of Mission, expectation for God to be at work in the world and people's lives.)*
- 2. Developing approaches to evangelism that are sensitive to different traditions in the church and society.** *(This may include appreciation and support for different ways of evangelism, using the gospel to respond to context and culture, treating people as those God loves rather than those to be converted, understanding of different faiths and interfaith relationships.)*

This is taught in the local school and most of the congregation understand different faiths but there are no places of worship for different faiths in the immediate local area.

- 3. A culture of invitation and relationship building with those on the fringes of church** *(This may include intentionally re-engage with new members such as baptism families, attendees to one off events etc, having a culture of 'Invitation' creation of come-back activities, encouraging others to invite.)*

The Christmas Carol service and Harvest services encourage those on the fringe of the church to attend as they are also good social events. The recently bereaved are invited to attend the Memorial service. All of our fundraising events have been very well supported with hospitality and before Covid we had a Quiz night, Harvest Supper, Choir concerts and George Heath the poet memorial service with exhibition in the Village Hall. During lockdown we sold Church calendars, many being hand delivered by Church members.

- 4. Building personal relationships in the wider community that can lead to faith** *(This may include chaplaincies in community, working with Schools, meeting local needs, attending community events, local visiting.)*

We have excellent connections with the local primary school. Local visiting as mentioned above.

5. Creating confidence in sharing personal faith *(This may include encouragement and opportunities for congregation to share their faith, courses to support this E.g. talking Jesus.)*

6. Creating a missionary presence through digital media *(This may include online worship, good website access, Church has presence on social media, people equipped to share faith on social media.)*

We have weekly streamed services online. The website "St Michael's Church History and it's Community" is popular, reaches a lot of people and gives information on forthcoming events of the Church

7. Creating spaces to deepen relationships and explore questions of life and faith *(This may include courses such as Alpha, discussions and events in community venues and pubs, open meals as safe spaces to explore big questions, halfway points created such as book clubs, sports sessions etc.)*

We have people involved in Bible readings. Refreshments after some services pave the way for discussion as do the normally busy social and fundraising events we hold.

8. Discovering and releasing those called to be evangelists. *(This may include people with gifts in sharing faith identified, given training and support, opportunities to tell people directly about the Christian faith.)*

9. Sharing good practice across the Parish *(This may include Sharing things that work amongst churches, making Parish Synod a sharing ground for vision and review and celebration.)*

10. Planting fresh expressions of Church *(This may include Identifying communities where fresh expression are likely to be needed, knowing how they belong to the Parish and have appropriate involvement.)*

11. Other *(Any other ways in which evangelism is developed and encouraged in the Parish)*

Drawing some Conclusions

Looking at the information you have gathered for the review, make notes in the following areas:

1. What themes, issues or even words came up repeatedly?

Strong caring community. Good school involvement.

2. What are some of the main strengths of the Parish?

As above

3. What are some of the areas of weakness?

Young people could be more involved

4. Where is good collaboration and partnership happening?

Keeping the Church functioning through interregnum

5. Where is energy being wasted?

None wasted

6. What are some of the key challenges the Parish faces?

Elderly congregation, the spread-out geography of the parish

7. What is unique about this Parish?

The friendly welcoming people. The beautiful historic Church and the village setting

8. Looking at all of your responses, what do you think is the vocation of this Parish? *This will be the focus of the vision setting process, any notes you make here will help as you start that piece of work.*

To reach out into the wider community, to encourage young people to be more involved and to maintain strong links with Horton St Michael's School. To encourage the many who show exceptional support at special services to attend regular Sunday services.

19th April 2024

Lichfield Diocesan policy on UTR and its current financial position

Dear Colleagues

I refer to Reverend Stephen Anderson's representations against the draft scheme to re-organise the Leek Deanery,

This needs further clarification to enable everyone to understand both the Diocese's financial position and its policy around Unapplied Total Return (UTR).

Total Return Approach (TRA) accounting is a controversial subject and opinions on it vary not just in the Lichfield Diocese but nationally in other Dioceses as well. The Lichfield Diocesan Synod only voted to bring in a total return approach at its meeting in June 2023. There was, in the two-year period leading up to that, considerable debate in the governance committees which led us to proposing a conservative approach that acknowledges that TRA does not produce cash unless we sell houses, land or investments. Selling any of these will of course reduce income for the next budget round.

Diocesan policy says:

- 1) A maximum of 2% of UTR will go towards financing the stipends budget year on year,
- 2) A further 2% will be made available to support posts for new mission initiatives.

Rev Anderson has quoted the 2022 accounts, but the 2023 accounts show that the Diocesan Stipends Fund is worth £57m of which £30m is historical endowment, meaning our UTR is £27m. The practical outworking of this means that we will have £500,000 in total to utilise each year.

Like many Dioceses our financial position is not strong or sustainable. In striving to produce a **break-even budget** for 2024 we have made the following assumptions:

- 1) We will need £500,00 UTR,
- 2) A further reduction in the parish deployment numbers.
- 3) We budget for a vacancy rate of 14% which we are working hard to bring down.
- 4) Our stipendiary curate pool is substantially reduced, and we are striving to increase it again in 2025.



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5) Common Fund receipts need to exceed 95% of request.

Our Shaping for Mission work has identified the need for a reduction of deployment across the whole Diocese. The Leek changes form part of this plan. If the Diocese were to do as Rev Anderson proposes and subsidise a post in every Deanery that cost would be £1.215m per year. This is not achievable within the current policy. Despite this, I have reviewed the current common fund position in the Leek Deanery. The Diocese is currently subsidising their ministry costs by £25,000 in Special Arrangements with the reduced deployment number, so efforts are being made centrally to help the Deanery sustain its ministry.

One final point: it is not helpful to compare Lichfield's position with Oxford's. On reviewing their return to Companies house the following facts have emerged.

- Oxford have a balance sheet in excess of £500m, Lichfield have just under £200M.
- Oxford have endowment funds of £417M. Their DSF stands at around £117M – of which they have used £38m. Lichfield have £57m and are using £27m so our percentage use of UTR ranks favourably.
- Oxford recently sold Glebe land of over £4M which is why they were able to release higher amounts into the Unrestricted fund.

I would like to conclude by assuring all involved in the pastoral re-organisation that that our Area Senior Staff, Officers and governance members are continually striving to optimise our assets to support as much sustainable grass roots ministry and mission as possible.

I hope this provides helpful context.

As ever



Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary



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PARISH INFORMATION FORM

P100

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Please email the completed form(s) to: pastoral@churchofengland.org

BENEFICE	United Benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Rushton and Longsdon 
Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge (Date of institution/licensing)	None for the last 6 (six) years. 
Patron(s)	Bishop of Lichfield 
Parsonage house (address)	The Vicarage, Hollow Lane, Cheddleton, Staffs., ST 13 7 HP
PARISH	St Edward the Confessor Church, Cheddleton 
Population of parish (adults & children) (Please state how computed)	In excess of 5000. Approximately 21% of the population is aged between 0-18 years, and 19% over 65 years, as informed by Parish Councillor. (please see our Parish Profile)
Churches and sittings (See Note 1 overleaf) Date built (approx.)	Parish Church 12th Century, probably older.
Church services and numbers attending (See Note 2 overleaf) Example: 1st Sunday 10.00am Holy Communion Common Worship A (30)	1st Sundays Family Service / Holy Communion, 10.30 am; average 20 in the congregation 2nd Sundays Family Holy Communion, 10.30 am; average 20 in the congregation 3rd Sundays Baptism / Holy Communion, 10.30 am; average 10 in the congregation, more if it is baptism with the family and friends of baptism guests 3rd Sundays Evensong or Sung Eucharist, 4.30 pm / 6.30 pm depending on season; (the former if Holy Communion at morning service); average 15 in attendance 4th Sundays Holy Communion, 10.30 am; average 20 in the congregation 5th Sundays Joint Service with Benefice Churches, 10.30 am; on rotation (Whilst in transition of Benefice dissolution, we have been having Joint services with All Saints, Leek; average 20 in the congregation No weekday services since 2020 with the onset of the pandemic.

Electoral roll (for the last five years – the most recent first)	<p>2023 One hundred and five [105] names on the Electoral Roll. One hundred and four [104] members live in Staffordshire. One [1] lives in Kent. Of the membership seventy-five [75] {71%} live within the ecclesiastical parish and thirty [30] {29%} outside.</p> <p>2022 One hundred and one [101] names on the Electoral Roll. One hundred and one [101] members live in Staffordshire. Of the membership seventy-one [71] {70%} live within the ecclesiastical parish and thirty [30] {30%} outside.</p> <p>2021 One hundred and two [102] names on the Electoral Roll. [102] members live in Staffordshire. Of the membership seventy-two [72] {71%} live within the ecclesiastical parish and thirty [30] {29%} outside.</p> <p>2020 No report compiled due to the Global Covid 19 Pandemic</p> <p>2019 Ninety eight [98] names on the Electoral Roll. Ninety eight [98] members live in Staffordshire. Of the membership seventy-one [71] {72%} live within the ecclesiastical parish and twenty-seven [27] {28%} outside.</p>	
Staff/lay assistance (e.g. curates, lay readers, NSMs etc.)	1 (one) Lay Reader	
Church traditions and characteristics of that style of worship	Central Tradition	If there is more than one church in the parish please indicate any difference in the church traditions in the individual churches
Please indicate whether there is a PCC Resolution under Paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (if so, please explain the exact nature of the alternative arrangements made, and the reasons for requesting the same).	<p style="text-align: center;"> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> NOT VOTED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> </p> <p style="text-align: center;">Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests</p>	
Parochial church organisations and number of regular attenders	Choir, Flower Team, Sewing Guild, Bell Ringers, Brass Cleaners, FOSEC (Friends of St Edward's Church), Men's Society, Pastoral Care led by Church Wardens and PCC members (please see our Parish Profile)	
Other parochial and/or community buildings	St Edward's Centre, Cheddleton Community Centre (Parish Council)	<i>Please indicate if any building is not primarily for church use</i>
Other denominations	St Andrew's Methodist Church	
Sociological make-up of parish (e.g. rural, industrial, residential etc.)	Mixed (please see our Parish Profile)	

Shopping and other local facilities (e.g. Post Office, General Store, Doctor, Dentist, Police Station, Pubs, Clubs, other recreational centres)	General Food Shop, Off-license, Pubs, Chip Shop, Beauty Salon, Nail Bar Salon, Veterinary Clinic, Children’s Nursery x 2, Music Shop, Tea Rooms, Caravan Park, Local potter working with the church, working steam railway and museum, River Churnet & Flint Mill Museum, Community Centre with everything from slimming club to choirs and BP group and many more (please see our Parish Profile)	
Bus services (please give brief details of any daily bus service around the parish and/or to the nearest town/village centre and their relevance in enabling attendance at church services)	Half hourly daily running between Leek and Hanley	
	POPULATION	
1	Is the population increasing or decreasing and, if so, to what extent and over what period? (In case of doubt about population figures, the local authority may be able to help.)	Very slowly increasing over the last 20 years probably by 20%
2	How is the population distributed (e.g. in one or more centres, or dispersed over the parish)?	Dispersed
	PAROCHIAL LIFE ETC.	
3	Approximately how many of those on the church electoral roll live outside the parish?	Please see the ‘Electoral Roll’ information above
4	To what extent does the congregation come from outside the parish?	Very small, occasional visitor to the area.
5	Does the congregation increase significantly during the holiday season? If so, please give details.	No
6	Do a significant number of parishioners attend other Anglican churches in the area? If so, give details (eg for reasons of convenience or because the same congregation attends different churches in rotation).	Not known
7	Has any other denomination a strong following in the parish? If so, please give brief details.	St Andrew’s Methodist Church, Cheddleton
	CHURCH SCHOOLS	
8	Is there a church school? If so, please state name and type.	Yes, St Edward’s C of E Academy (please see our Parish Profile)
9	Approximately how many pupils are there?	190 children
10	From which area are they drawn?	School catchment area
11	Are the school buildings available for parochial purposes? If so, please give details.	No
12	Please also state name and type of other schools in the area.	We are unclear as to the size of ‘area’.
	MISCELLANEOUS	
13	What is the parish share, and to what extent does the PCC meet the working expenses of the clergy or lay workers?	Parish Share: 50% of an incumbent, a reduced sum due to the lack of an incumbent ie £32, 460 per year Only Visiting Clergy (VSF) and their expenses including travel.
14	Please indicate what, if any, trust funds are available to the parish and for what purposes.	Are you asking about trust funds for Church use only? We do not have any trust funds.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTUAL POINTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE PARISH BETTER ?

(Please see our Parish Profile)

**PLEASE: (i) INDICATE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT, OR OTHERWISE, OF THE PCC FOR THE PROPOSALS/DRAFT SCHEME (OR ORDER); AND/OR
(ii) PLEASE SHOW THE VOTING FIGURES (IF A VOTE WAS TAKEN)**

	For	Against	Abstentions
On the local formal consultations:	7 (seven)	None	None
On the published draft Scheme:	7 (seven)	None	None

Completed by **Michael T. Bowen, Church Warden** as we have no incumbent for the last 6 (six) years. Date: 21st Nov 2023

(Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge/etc.)

Note 1:	Please describe by dedication etc. and state whether the building is a parish church, chapel of ease or other place of worship (e.g. mission hall etc.)
Note 2:	Please state (1) the frequency of church services, (2) the time, (3) the type and/or name of the service (e.g. Holy Communion, Sung Eucharist, Morning Prayer etc.), (4) the service book used and (5) the average congregation for each service.

PARISH INFORMATION FORM

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BENEFACT	Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer	
Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge (Date of institution/licensing)	Vacant Last Incumbent finished on 25/09/2019	
Patron(s)	The Lord Bishop of Lichfield	
Parsonage house (address)	None	
PARISH	St Michael HORTON	
Population of parish (adults & children) (Please state how computed)	789 (Census)	
Churches and sittings (See Note 1 overleaf) Date built (approx.)	Parish Church Medieval	
Church services and numbers attending (See Note 2 overleaf) Example: <u>1st Sunday</u> 10.00am Holy Communion Common Worship A (30)	<u>Sundays - All</u> <u>Time</u> 11:30am <u>Service</u> Holy Communion Common Worship Order One <u>Numbers</u> 07.10.23 - 31 14.10.23 - 10 21.10.23 - 7 28.10.23 - 19	<u>Sundays</u> <u>Time</u> <u>Service</u> <u>Numbers</u>
	<u>Weekdays</u> <u>Time</u> <u>Service</u> <u>Numbers</u>	<u>Weekdays</u> <u>Time</u> <u>Service</u> <u>Numbers</u>
Electoral roll (for the last five years – the most recent first)	32 34 32 32 33	
Staff/lay assistance (e.g. curates, lay readers, NSMs etc.)	Retired priest lives in the former Vicarage and assists, along with several other retired clergy	
Church traditions and characteristics of that style of worship	Central tradition, with sacramental worship each Sunday in the Holy Communion, which is sung to the settings by Dom Gregory Murray and Inwood. The New English Hymnal, supplemented by Mission Praise, is used. Vestments are worn.	<i>If there is more than one church in the parish please indicate any difference in the church traditions in the individual churches</i>
Please indicate whether there is a PCC Resolution under Paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (if so, please explain the exact nature of the alternative arrangements made, and the reasons for requesting the same).	YES NO NOT VOTED	
	Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Parochial church organisations and number of regular attenders	Bellringers – six people	
Other parochial and/or community buildings	Horton Village Hall – can be used for parish functions eg Harvest Supper, Quiz Night etc.	<i>Please indicate if any building is not primarily for church use</i>
Other denominations		
Sociological make-up of parish (e.g. rural, industrial, residential etc.)	Wholly rural	

Shopping and other local facilities (e.g. Post Office, General Store, Doctor, Dentist, Police Station, Pubs, Clubs, other recreational centres)	Hotel / pub in Rudyard Supermarkets, shops, doctors, dentists, police station, pubs, clubs, park all at nearby Leek (3 miles)
Bus services (please give brief details of any daily bus service around the parish and/or to the nearest town/village centre and their relevance in enabling attendance at church services)	Bus service number 109 runs hourly during the day from Rudyard (in the parish) to Leek and Macclesfield. Regrettably, it does not run currently on a Sunday.

POPULATION	
1	Is the population increasing or decreasing and, if so, to what extent and over what period? (In case of doubt about population figures, the local authority may be able to help.)
2	How is the population distributed (e.g. in one or more centres, or dispersed over the parish)?
PAROCHIAL LIFE ETC.	
3	Approximately how many of those on the church electoral roll live outside the parish?
4	To what extent does the congregation come from outside the parish?
5	Does the congregation increase significantly during the holiday season? If so, please give details.
6	Do a significant number of parishioners attend other Anglican churches in the area? If so, give details (eg for reasons of convenience or because the same congregation attends different churches in rotation).
7	Has any other denomination a strong following in the parish? If so, please give brief details.
CHURCH SCHOOLS	
8	Is there a church school? If so, please state name and type.
9	Approximately how many pupils are there?
10	From which area are they drawn?
11	Are the school buildings available for parochial purposes? If so, please give details.
12	Please also state name and type of other schools in the area.
MISCELLANEOUS	
13	What is the parish share, and to what extent does the PCC meet the working expenses of the clergy or lay workers?
14	Please indicate what, if any, trust funds are available to the parish and for what purposes.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTUAL POINTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE PARISH BETTER ?

Parish has been left vacant effectively for 7 years. Previous Vicar left in 2019 (2019) but had been unwell with extended periods of absence since 2016.

PLEASE: (i) INDICATE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT, OR OTHERWISE, OF THE PCC FOR THE PROPOSALS/DRAFT SCHEME (OR ORDER); AND/OR (ii) PLEASE SHOW THE VOTING FIGURES (IF A VOTE WAS TAKEN)			
	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstentions</i>
On the local formal consultations:	None	10	None
On the published draft Scheme:	None	9	None

Completed by MARGARET HEATH ^{P.C.C Secretary} (Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge/etc.) Date 20.11.2023.....

Note 1: Please describe by dedication etc. and state whether the building is a parish church, chapel of ease or other place of worship (eg mission hall etc.)

Note 2:

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BENEFICE	Cheddleton, Harton, Longsdon and Rushton Spence		
Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge (Date of institution/licensing)	Vacant - The last incumbent finished on 25/09/2019		
Patron(s) JOINT	Bishop of Lichfield and Incumbent of Leek + Meerbrook		
Parsonage house (address)	None the vicarage, Hollow Lane, Cheddleton, Leek, ST13 7HP		
PARISH	St Chad LONGSDON		
Population of parish (adults & children) (Please state how computed)	Electoral Roll 500 Adults. S.M.D.C.		
Churches and sittings (See Note 1 overleaf) Date built (approx.)	Parish Church built 1903 – 1905		
Church services and numbers attending (See Note 2 overleaf) Example: <u>1st Sunday</u> 10.00am Holy Communion Common Worship A (30)	<u>Sundays</u> Time 9:30am Service Holy Communion Common Worship Order One Numbers 16	<u>Sundays</u> Time Service Numbers	
	<u>Weekdays</u> Time Service Numbers	<u>Weekdays</u> Time Service Numbers	
Electoral roll (for the last five years – the most recent first)	April 23 18	April 22 18	April 21 20
	April 20 18	April 19 19	
Staff/lay assistance (e.g. curates, lay readers, NSMs etc.)	The parish enjoys the assistance of several retired clergy from the local area		
Church traditions and characteristics of that style of worship	Central plus, with sacramental worship each Sunday in the Holy Communion. Catholic expression – Big Six, Statue of Our Lady, well used votive candle stand, All Souls. Vestments are worn.		<i>If there is more than one church in the parish please indicate any difference in the church traditions in the individual churches</i>
Please indicate whether there is a PCC Resolution under Paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (if so, please explain the exact nature of the alternative arrangements made, and the reasons for requesting the same).			YES NO NOT VOTED
Parochial church organisations and number of regular attenders	Choir – 4 members		
Other parochial and/or community buildings	Longsdon Memorial Hall		<i>Please indicate if any building is not primarily for church use</i>
Other denominations			
Sociological make-up of parish (e.g. rural, industrial, residential etc.)	Mixed rural and suburban residential		
Shopping and other local facilities (e.g. Post Office, General Store, Doctor, Dentist, Police Station, Pubs, Clubs, other recreational centres)	Supermarkets, shops, doctors, dentists, police station, pubs, clubs, park all at nearby Leek (2.5 miles)		

Bus services (please give brief details of any daily bus service around the parish and/or to the nearest town/village centre and their relevance in enabling attendance at church services)

Bus service number 18 runs two-hourly on a Sunday from Longsdon to Leek and Hanley.

POPULATION	
1	Is the population increasing or decreasing and, if so, to what extent and over what period? (In case of doubt about population figures, the local authority may be able to help.)
2	How is the population distributed (e.g. in one or more centres, or dispersed over the parish)?
PAROCHIAL LIFE ETC.	
3	Approximately how many of those on the church electoral roll live outside the parish?
4	To what extent does the congregation come from outside the parish?
5	Does the congregation increase significantly during the holiday season? If so, please give details.
6	Do a significant number of parishioners attend other Anglican churches in the area? If so, give details (eg for reasons of convenience or because the same congregation attends different churches in rotation).
7	Has any other denomination a strong following in the parish? If so, please give brief details.
CHURCH SCHOOLS	
8	Is there a church school? If so, please state name and type.
9	Approximately how many pupils are there?
10	From which area are they drawn?
11	Are the school buildings available for parochial purposes? If so, please give details.
12	Please also state name and type of other schools in the area.
MISCELLANEOUS	
13	What is the parish share, and to what extent does the PCC meet the working expenses of the clergy or lay workers?
14	Please indicate what, if any, trust funds are available to the parish and for what purposes.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTUAL POINTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE PARISH BETTER ?

Parish has been left vacant effectively for 7 years. Previous Vicar left in 2019 (check) but had been unwell with extended periods of absence since 2016.

PLEASE: (i) INDICATE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT, OR OTHERWISE, OF THE PCC FOR THE PROPOSALS/DRAFT SCHEME (OR ORDER); AND/OR (ii) PLEASE SHOW THE VOTING FIGURES (IF A VOTE WAS TAKEN)

	For	Against	Abstentions
On the local formal consultations:		10	
On the published draft Scheme:		10	

Completed by(Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge/etc.) Date

Note 1:	Please describe by dedication etc. and state whether the building is a parish church, chapel of ease or other place of worship (eg mission hall etc.)
Note 2:	Please state (1) the frequency of church services, (2) the time, (3) the type and/or name of the service (e.g. Holy Communion, Sung Eucharist, Morning Prayer etc.), (4) the service book used and (5) the average congregation for each service.

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BENEFICE	Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer	
Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge (Date of institution/licensing)	Revd Will Drain (Curate-in-charge of Rushton Spencer) – 05/11/23 Previous Incumbent of the benefice finished on 25/09/2019.	
Patron(s)	Joint Patrons – the Bishop of Lichfield and the Incumbent of the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook in his/her corporate capacity.	
Parsonage house (address)	Yes - The Vicarage, Hollow Lane, Cheddleton, Leek, ST13 7HP	
PARISH	Rushton Spencer	
Population of parish (adults & children) (Please state how computed)	732 total 95 children 637 adults (2011 Census)	
Churches and sittings (See Note 1 overleaf) Date built (approx.)	Built 1200	
Church services and numbers attending (See Note 2 overleaf) <i>Example:</i> <u>1st Sunday</u> 10.00am Holy Communion Common Worship A (30)	<u>Sundays</u> Time: 11.30. One Service: Holy Communion or Morning Prayer. No set pattern of type of service Numbers: 10 on average <u>Weekdays</u> No weekday services	
Electoral roll (for the last five years – the most recent first)	2019: no information available for this year 2020: 24 (8 non-resident) 2021: 24 (10 non-resident) 2022: 23 (8 non-resident) 2023: 26 (9 non-resident)	
Staff/lay assistance (e.g. curates, lay readers, NSMs etc.)	Lay Reader Alan Baldwin	
Church traditions and characteristics of that style of worship	Traditional Evangelical (middle churchmanship) - Traditional services - Informal friendly atmosphere - Clergy wear robes - Predominantly adult focused services	<i>If there is more than one church in the parish please indicate any difference in the church traditions in the individual churches</i>
Please indicate whether there is a PCC Resolution under Paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (if so, please explain the exact nature of the alternative arrangements made, and the reasons for requesting the same).	YES NO NOT VOTED X	
	Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests	

Parochial church organisations and number of regular attenders	PCC - 2 churchwardens, Treasurer, Secretary, 6 PCC members. Meetings well attended.	
Other parochial and/or community buildings	Rushton School and Swythamley Community Centre - neither owned by the Church	<i>Please indicate if any building is not primarily for church use</i>
Other denominations	None	
Sociological make-up of parish (e.g. rural, industrial, residential etc.)	Rural, residential, farming community	
Shopping and other local facilities (e.g. Post Office, General Store, Doctor, Dentist, Police Station, Pubs, Clubs, other recreational centres)	No shops, 2 pubs, Swythamley Community Centre with film club, history society, Pilates, Choir	
Bus services (please give brief details of any daily bus service around the parish and/or to the nearest town/village centre and their relevance in enabling attendance at church services)	109 Macclesfield /Leek weekdays and Saturdays	

POPULATION

1 *Is the population increasing or decreasing and, if so, to what extent and over what period? (In case of doubt about population figures, the local authority may be able to help.)* - The population has increased slightly in the updated 2018 figures but not by much. It is a fairly stable population.

2 *How is the population distributed (e.g. in one or more centres, or dispersed over the - parish)?* - Rural community that is dispersed over large geographic area of the parish

PAROCHIAL LIFE ETC.

3 *Approximately how many of those on the church electoral roll live outside the parish?* - 34%

4 *To what extent does the congregation come from outside the parish?* - 10%

5 *Does the congregation increase significantly during the holiday season? If so, please give details.* - It doesn't increase significantly

6 *Do a significant number of parishioners attend other Anglican churches in the area? If so, give details (eg for reasons of convenience or because the same congregation attends different churches in rotation).* - No

7 *Has any other denomination a strong following in the parish? If so, please give brief details.* - No other denomination strong following in parish

CHURCH SCHOOLS

8 *Is there a church school? If so, please state name and type.* - Rushton C of E First School

9 *Approximately how many pupils are there?* - 40

10 *From which area are they drawn?* - Local

11 *Are the school buildings available for parochial purposes? If so, please give details.* Yes - recently opened classroom available

12 *Please also state name and type of other schools in the area.* - Independent Kings School Macclesfield. Leek High, and Westwood High Secondary (all outside of the parish)

MISCELLANEOUS

13 *What is the parish share, and to what extent does the PCC meet the working expenses of the clergy or lay workers?* I have only just been appointed to the role and do not yet know. However I asked the wardens of the church and they gave this response - 'DUE TO BENEFICE REORGANISATION, MATTERS ARE IN FLUX'

14 *Please indicate what, if any, trust funds are available to the parish and for what purposes.*

ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTUAL POINTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE PARISH BETTER ?

As mentioned previously I have only just been appointed and so feel unable to comment on this however the wardens have written - 'ALTHOUGH ATTENDANCE NUMBERS HAVE DROPPED OFF, RUSHTON COMMUNITY IS VERY SUPPORTIVE OF THE CHURCH. THE LOCAL CHURCH SCHOOL HOLDS FESTIVAL SERVICES AT THE CHURCH AND JOINS IN ACTIVITIES SUCH AS REMEMBRANCE, GRAVEYARD TIDY AND BULB PLANTING. ALTHOUGH THE CONGREGATION CONSISTS OF MOSTLY SENIOR AGE GROUP, 6 YOUNG MEMBERS HAVE RECENTLY JOINED THE PCC AND ARE KEEN TO CONTRIBUTE TIME AND NEW IDEAS TO SUPPORT THE RUNNING OF OUR CHURCH.'

PLEASE: (i) INDICATE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT, OR OTHERWISE, OF THE PCC FOR THE PROPOSALS/DRAFT SCHEME (OR ORDER); AND/OR (ii) PLEASE SHOW THE VOTING FIGURES (IF A VOTE WAS TAKEN)

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstentions</i>
<i>On the local formal consultations:</i>	UNANIMOUS SUPPORT		
<i>On the published draft Scheme:</i>			

Completed by: Revd Will Drain (Curate in Charge)

Date: 23/11/23

Note 1:	Please describe by dedication etc. and state whether the building is a parish church, chapel of ease or other place of worship (eg mission hall etc.)
Note 2:	Please state (1) the frequency of church services, (2) the time, (3) the type and/or name of the service (e.g. Holy Communion, Sung Eucharist, Morning Prayer etc.), (4) the service book used and (5) the average congregation for each service.

PARISH INFORMATION FORM

P100

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Please email the completed form(s) to: pastoral@churchofengland.org

BENEFICE	St Chad's Bagnall & St Luke's Endon [Bagnall with Endon]	
Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge (Date of institution/licensing)	None	The last Incumbent finished on 31/07/2020.
Patron(s) - Joint	The Church Pastoral Aid Society Patronage Trust and the Incumbent of the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook	
Parsonage house (address)	Not Applicable	S LUKE'S VICARAGE, LEEK ROAD, ENDON, STOKE-ON-TRENT, ST9 9BH
PARISH	St Chad's	Bagnall S.Chad
Population of parish (adults & children) (Please state how computed)	812	
Churches and sittings (See Note 1 overleaf) Date built (approx.)	St Chad's is a Parish Church built in the 1830's	
Church services and numbers attending (See Note 2 overleaf) <i>Example:</i> <u>1st Sunday</u> 10.00am Holy Communion Common Worship A (30)	<u>Sundays</u> Time 10.45 Service Family Service Numbers 25 <u>Weekdays</u> Time 10.45 Service Holy Communion Numbers 24	<u>Sundays</u> Time 10.45 Service Praise and Prayer Numbers 20 <u>Weekdays</u> Time 10.45 Service Morning Prayer Numbers 18
Electoral roll (for the last five years – the most recent first)	2023 – 55 (37r/18nr), 2022 – 55, 2021 – 53, 2020 – 52, 2019 – 53	
Staff/lay assistance (e.g. curates, lay readers, NSMs etc.)	1 x Lay Funeral Leader, 3 x Lay Worship Leaders	
Church traditions and characteristics of that style of worship	Low – (missional) church tradition, styles of worship as recorded above. Variable and inclusive	<i>If there is more than one church in the parish please indicate any difference in the church traditions in the individual churches</i>
Please indicate whether there is a PCC Resolution under Paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (if so, please explain the exact nature of the alternative arrangements made, and the reasons for requesting the same).	YES NO NOT VOTED <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests <i>Really sorry but I don't know what this means.</i>	
Parochial church organisations and number of regular attenders	PCC members 11	
Other parochial and/or community buildings	n/a	<i>Please indicate if any building is not primarily for church use</i>
Other denominations	n/a	
Sociological make-up of parish (e.g. rural, industrial, residential etc.)	Rural	
Shopping and other local facilities (e.g. Post Office, General Store, Doctor, Dentist, Police Station, Pubs, Clubs, other recreational centres)	One public house, one village hall	
Bus services (please give brief details of any daily bus service around the parish and/or to the nearest town/village centre and their relevance in enabling attendance at church services)	No bus service only designated school bus	

POPULATION		
1	<i>Is the population increasing or decreasing and, if so, to what extent and over what period? (In case of doubt about population figures, the local authority may be able to help.)</i>	The population has increased since 2011 and now appears to have stabilised
2	<i>How is the population distributed (e.g. in one or more centres, or dispersed over the parish)?</i>	Dispersed over the parish.
PAROCHIAL LIFE ETC.		
3	<i>Approximately how many of those on the church electoral roll live outside the parish?</i>	18
4	<i>To what extent does the congregation come from outside the parish?</i>	18-25
5	<i>Does the congregation increase significantly during the holiday season? If so, please give details.</i>	no
6	<i>Do a significant number of parishioners attend other Anglican churches in the area? If so, give details (eg for reasons of convenience or because the same congregation attends different churches in rotation).</i>	no
7	<i>Has any other denomination a strong following in the parish? If so, please give brief details.</i>	no
CHURCH SCHOOLS		
8	<i>Is there a church school? If so, please state name and type.</i>	n/a
9	<i>Approximately how many pupils are there?</i>	n/a
10	<i>From which area are they drawn?</i>	
11	<i>Are the school buildings available for parochial purposes? If so, please give details.</i>	n/a
12	<i>Please also state name and type of other schools in the area.</i>	n/a
MISCELLANEOUS		
13	<i>What is the parish share, and to what extent does the PCC meet the working expenses of the clergy or lay workers?</i>	£13,275
14	<i>Please indicate what, if any, trust funds are available to the parish and for what purposes.</i>	No funds in trust
ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTUAL POINTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE PARISH BETTER ?		

PLEASE: (i) INDICATE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT, OR OTHERWISE, OF THE PCC FOR THE PROPOSALS/DRAFT SCHEME (OR ORDER); AND/OR (ii) PLEASE SHOW THE VOTING FIGURES (IF A VOTE WAS TAKEN)			
	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstentions</i>
<i>On the local formal consultations:</i>	<i>All in Favour</i>		
<i>On the published draft Scheme:</i>	<i>All in Favour</i>		

Completed by(Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge/etc.) Date

Note 1:	Please describe by dedication etc. and state whether the building is a parish church, chapel of ease or other place of worship (eg mission hall etc.)
Note 2:	Please state (1) the frequency of church services, (2) the time, (3) the type and/or name of the service (e.g. Holy Communion, Sung Eucharist, Morning Prayer etc.), (4) the service book used and (5) the average congregation for each service.

PARISH INFORMATION FORM

P100

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BENEFICE	Bagnall with Endon	
Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge (Date of institution/licensing)	Previous incumbent (Rev Alan Betts) retired July 2020	
Patron(s)	Joint Patrons: The Church Pastoral Aid Society Patronage Trust and the Incumbent of the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook.	
Parsonage house (address)	The Vicarage, 3 The Close Endon ST9 9BH	
PARISH	Endon and Stanley	
Population of parish (adults & children) (Please state how computed)	3163 [per Population Census 2021]	
Churches and sittings (See Note 1 overleaf) Date built (approx.)	St Luke's Parish Church	Built approx. 1730
Church services and numbers attending (See Note 2 overleaf) Example: <u>1st Sunday</u> 10.00am Holy Communion Common Worship A (30)	<u>Sundays – 1st and 3rd Sundays</u> <u>Time 9.15am</u> <u>Service Holy Communion – Common Worship</u> <u>Numbers</u> 28	<u>Sundays – 2nd and 4th Sundays</u> <u>Time 9.15am</u> <u>Service - Morning Prayer – Common Worship</u> <u>Numbers</u> 28
	<u>Weekdays – Alternate Wednesdays</u> <u>Time 9.15am</u> <u>Service Holy Communion (Ecumenical with Endon Methodist Church)</u> <u>Numbers</u> 8	<u>Weekdays -No other weekday services</u> <u>Time</u> <u>Service</u> <u>Numbers</u>
Electoral roll (for the last five years – the most recent first)	68/68/68/72/90	
Staff/lay assistance (e.g. curates, lay readers, NSMs etc.)	Lay Reader	
Church traditions and characteristics of that style of worship	Traditional liturgical – Common Worship	<i>If there is more than one church in the parish please indicate any difference in the church traditions in the individual churches</i>
Please indicate whether there is a PCC Resolution under Paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (if so, please explain the exact nature of the alternative arrangements made, and the reasons for requesting the same).	Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests	YES NO NOT VOTED <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Parochial church organisations and number of regular attenders	Endon St Luke's Flower and Crafts Club – attendance 20 – 35 and annual Wreath Making Club. Mothers Union.	
Other parochial and/or community buildings	Endon Village Hall (Formerly Endon St Luke's Parish Church Hall) – ownership many years ago transferred into The Endon Village Hall Trust for the use and benefit of the Community.	<i>Please indicate if any building is not primarily for church use</i>
Other denominations	Endon Methodists Chapel, Station Road, Endon.	
Sociological make-up of parish (e.g. rural, industrial, residential etc.)	Predominantly residential (numerically largely post 2WW) with historic rural traditions and businesses, including a corn merchant and smithy. It is the home of an annual Well Dressing Festival held in May which has been running for over 200 years.	

Shopping and other local facilities (e.g. Post Office, General Store, Doctor, Dentist, Police Station, Pubs, Clubs, other recreational centres)	Post Office, Convenience Stores (2), Doctors surgery, Police Community Office, Parish Council Office, 2 historic pub/restaurants, Tennis Club, Cricket Club, Recreation grounds (2) inc Children's playgrounds, Childrens Day Nurseries (2) Scouts and Cubs, Womens Institute, Pilates & Keep fit classes in Village Hall, Golf Club, Endon Community Choir,
Bus services (please give brief details of any daily bus service around the parish and/or to the nearest town/village centre and their relevance in enabling attendance at church services)	Bus services running hourly during the day from Hanley to Leek, with connections to Macclesfield and Buxton. Also services from Endon to Newcastle under Lyme. Most of our congregation either drive or walk to church.

	POPULATION	
1	Is the population increasing or decreasing and, if so, to what extent and over what period? (In case of doubt about population figures, the local authority may be able to help.)	Decreased from 3221 in 2011 Census, down to 3163 in 2011.
2	How is the population distributed (e.g. in one or more centres, or dispersed over the parish)?	Dispersed over the Parish
	PAROCHIAL LIFE ETC.	
3	Approximately how many of those on the church electoral roll live outside the parish?	16
4	To what extent does the congregation come from outside the parish?	Hardly at all
5	Does the congregation increase significantly during the holiday season? If so, please give details.	No
6	Do a significant number of parishioners attend other Anglican churches in the area? If so, give details (eg for reasons of convenience or because the same congregation attends different churches in rotation).	No
7	Has any other denomination a strong following in the parish? If so, please give brief details.	Methodism – we have close ecumenical links with Endon Methodist Chapel
	CHURCH SCHOOLS	
8	Is there a church school? If so, please state name and type.	St Luke's CE Academy. Primary ages groups
9	Approximately how many pupils are there?	209
10	From which area are they drawn?	Locally
11	Are the school buildings available for parochial purposes? If so, please give details.	Yes. An informal "family friendly" Family Service is run in the school hall at 11am every Sunday by members of St Luke's Church .
12	Please also state name and type of other schools in the area.	Endon Hall Primary School (Local Authority) with 201 pupils and Endon High School (A Shaw Trust school) with 700 pupils.
	MISCELLANEOUS	
13	What is the parish share, and to what extent does the PCC meet the working expenses of the clergy or lay workers?	Common Fund was being paid at £2500 per month. No claim for expenses is made by any lay members of the church team.
14	Please indicate what, if any, trust funds are available to the parish and for what purposes.	Nil

ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTUAL POINTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE PARISH BETTER ?

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PLEASE: (i) INDICATE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT, OR OTHERWISE, OF THE PCC FOR THE PROPOSALS/DRAFT SCHEME (OR ORDER); AND/OR (ii) PLEASE SHOW THE VOTING FIGURES (IF A VOTE WAS TAKEN)

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstentions</i>
<i>On the local formal consultations:</i>			
<i>On the published draft Scheme:</i>			

Completed by ...Barrie Jackson (Churchwarden and Lay Reader.....(Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge/etc.)
Date 29th December 2023.....

Note 1:	Please describe by dedication etc. and state whether the building is a parish church, chapel of ease or other place of worship (eg mission hall etc.)
Note 2:	Please state (1) the frequency of church services, (2) the time, (3) the type and/or name of the service (e.g. Holy Communion, Sung Eucharist, Morning Prayer etc.), (4) the service book used and (5) the average congregation for each service.

PARISH INFORMATION FORM

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BENEFICE	Biddulph	
Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge (Date of institution/licensing)	Revd Will Drain (Incumbent) 6/9/22	
Patron(s)	Martyrs Memorial and Church of England Trust (CPAS)	
Parsonage house (address)	7 Wrexham Close, Biddulph ST8 6RZ	
PARISH	Biddulph	
Population of parish (adults & children) (Please state how computed)	9000+ (8900 in 2011 census) – approx. 15% are children (2011 census)	
Churches and sittings (See Note 1 overleaf) Date built (approx.)	St. Lawrence's Parish Church Rebuilt after damage and opened in 1836	
Church services and numbers attending (See Note 2 overleaf) <i>Example:</i> <u>1st Sunday</u> 10.00am Holy Communion Common Worship A (30)	<u>Sundays</u> 1st & 3rd Sundays Time: 09.15 Service: Holy Communion Numbers: 44 Time: 11.00 Service: Service of the Word Numbers: 45 Time: 18.30 Service: Service of the Word Numbers: 18 2nd Sunday Time: 09.15 Service: Service of the Word Numbers: 44 Time: 11.00 Service: Informal – All in Together Numbers: 45 Time: 18.30 Service: Holy Communion Numbers: 18	<u>Sundays (cont.)</u> 4th Sunday Time: 09.15 Service: Service of the Word Numbers: 44 Time: 11.00 Service: Holy Communion Numbers: 45 Time: 18.30 Service: Holy Communion Numbers: 18 5th Sunday: Time: 10.30 Service: Holy Communion or SoW Numbers: 72 Time: 18.30 Service: SoW or Holy Communion Numbers: 18 <u>Weekdays</u> Time: Wednesdays – 10.00 Service: Holy Communion/SoW (alt.) Numbers:
	Electoral roll (for the last five years – the most recent first)	2023: 194 (67 non-resident); 2022: 193 (61 non-resident); 2021: 206 (68 non-resident); 2020: 213 (72 non-resident); 2019: 201 (63 non-resident)
Staff/lay assistance (e.g. curates, lay readers, NSMs etc.)	Revd Lindsay Clowes (PTO) Revd Keith Jones (<i>retired priest</i>) (PTO) Mrs. Catherine White (Reader) Jill Gover (LLM)	
Church traditions and characteristics of that style of worship	Charismatic Evangelical - Openness to Spiritual gifts and work of the Holy Spirit - Informal worship - Every member ministry - Robes not worn by clergy - 11am service contains little liturgy and is family friendly	<i>If there is more than one church in the parish please indicate any difference in the church traditions in the individual churches</i>
Please indicate whether there is a PCC Resolution under Paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (if so, please explain the exact nature of the alternative arrangements made, and the reasons for requesting the same).	YES NO NOT VOTED Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Parochial church organisations and number of regular attenders	PCC meets 6 times per year. There are 12 elected members, 2 ex-officio (Deanery Synod), 2 Churchwardens, 1 co-opted. Sub-Committees: Standing Committee, Finance, Buildings & Grounds, Mission Support, Events. Average attendance is around 85%	
Other parochial and/or community buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. Lawrence's Church Hall (formerly a school) adjacent to the church. Church Hall South View (Town Centre) – leased to a tyre company 	<i>Please indicate if any building is not primarily for church use</i>
Other denominations	In the parish – Methodist; in the town – Pentecostal & Roman Catholic	
Sociological make-up of parish (e.g. rural, industrial, residential etc.)	Residential with a rural fringe. Many commute to work in nearby towns and there is a significant retired population. Most homes are privately owned but there are also areas of council housing and housing association properties.	
Shopping and other local facilities (e.g. Post Office, General Store, Doctor, Dentist, Police Station, Pubs, Clubs, other recreational centres)	Biddulph Town Centre, with one large supermarket, several small struggling shops, a Post Office, take aways and pubs is at the southern edge of the parish. There is a Health Centre with 2 GP Practices, a dentist and a well-equipped leisure centre The church is <u>not</u> in the centre of town.	
Bus services (please give brief details of any daily bus service around the parish and/or to the nearest town/village centre and their relevance in enabling attendance at church services)	A weekday hourly bus route passes the church and a local circular route around town 4 times each weekday. There is no bus service to the main town of our deanery (Leek). There is 3 per hour bus route to Hanley (Stoke on Trent). No journeys pass near the church at weekends.	

	POPULATION	
1	<i>Is the population increasing or decreasing and, if so, to what extent and over what period? (In case of doubt about population figures, the local authority may be able to help.)</i>	The population gradually increased until around 2020 and continues to increase but less rapidly. There are plans for more homes to be built in the Parish.
2	<i>How is the population distributed (e.g. in one or more centres, or dispersed over the parish)?</i>	The population is dispersed throughout the parish.
	PAROCHIAL LIFE ETC.	
3	<i>Approximately how many of those on the church electoral roll live outside the parish?</i>	67
4	<i>To what extent does the congregation come from outside the parish?</i>	Predominantly the congregation comes from within the parish or nearby. People from outside the parish usually live within 8 miles but there are several who live further than this.
5	<i>Does the congregation increase significantly during the holiday season? If so, please give details.</i>	There is little change in the size of congregation during holiday periods other than Christmas special services like the carol services which increase significantly in attendance.
6	<i>Do a significant number of parishioners attend other Anglican churches in the area? If so, give details (eg for reasons of convenience or because the same congregation attends different churches in rotation).</i>	Unknown for certain but in understanding the local area this is doubtful.
7	<i>Has any other denomination a strong following in the parish? If so, please give brief details.</i>	Methodism has been very strong in the area. Nearby Mow Cop was the birthplace of Primitive Methodism.
	CHURCH SCHOOLS	
8	<i>Is there a church school? If so, please state name and type.</i>	There is not a church school
9	<i>Approximately how many pupils are there?</i>	N/A
10	<i>From which area are they drawn?</i>	N/A
11	<i>Are the school buildings available for parochial purposes? If so, please give details.</i>	N/A
12	<i>Please also state name and type of other schools in the area.</i>	Oxhey First School Kingsfield First School Woodhouse Academy (Middle School)
	MISCELLANEOUS	
13	<i>What is the parish share, and to what extent does the PCC meet the working expenses of the clergy or lay workers?</i>	Parish Share: £52818 (paid in full) PCC meets expenses in full
14	<i>Please indicate what, if any, trust funds are available to the parish and for what purposes.</i>	No Trust Funds
ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTUAL POINTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE PARISH BETTER ?		

PLEASE: (i) INDICATE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT, OR OTHERWISE, OF THE PCC FOR THE PROPOSALS/DRAFT SCHEME (OR ORDER); AND/OR (ii) PLEASE SHOW THE VOTING FIGURES (IF A VOTE WAS TAKEN)

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstentions</i>
<i>On the local formal consultations:</i>	16	1	0
<i>On the published draft Scheme:</i>			

Completed by Rev Will Drain (Incumbent)

Date: 23/11/23

Note 1:	Please describe by dedication etc. and state whether the building is a parish church, chapel of ease or other place of worship (eg mission hall etc.)
Note 2:	Please state (1) the frequency of church services, (2) the time, (3) the type and/or name of the service (e.g. Holy Communion, Sung Eucharist, Morning Prayer etc.), (4) the service book used and (5) the average congregation for each service.

PARISH INFORMATION FORM

P100

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BENEFICE	Leek & Meerbrook	
Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge (Date of institution/licensing)	Team Rector: The Revd Nigel Irons (08/04/2014)	
Patron(s)	<p>Leek and Meerbrook Patronage Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * the Bishop of Lichfield (Chair) 1 vote plus a casting vote as chair; * the Archdeacon of Stoke-upon-Trent (1 vote); * any vicar in the team ministry, any deacon authorised to serve in the team ministry and any person having special responsibility for pastoral care under section 34(8) of the 2011 measure (who shall jointly have 1 vote); ** for the purpose only of meetings at which the person to be appointed a vicar in the team ministry is considered and chosen, the Rector of the team ministry (1 vote). * the PCC's of the parishes of St Edward's, Leek; St Luke's and St Paul's, Leek; All Saints, Leek; St Matthew's, Meerbrook (each have 1 vote and shall be represented at any meeting of the board by 1 member of each of the councils authorised to act and vote on behalf of that council); ** additionally where a team vicar is to be appointed and the Bishop proposes to assign a special cure of souls to that team vicar in accordance with the provisions of clause 7, the PCC (or PCC's) of any parish or parishes to which (or to part of which) such special cure of souls would relate each of which shall be represented at any meeting of the Board to which this sub-clause applies by 1 lay member of the said council (or councils) authorised to act and vote on behalf of such council (each of whom will have 1 vote). 	
Parsonage house (address)	24 Ashenhurst Way, Leek, ST13 5SB	
PARISH	All Saints, Leek	
Population of parish (adults & children) (Please state how computed)		
Churches and sittings (See Note 1 overleaf) Date built (approx.)	1885	
Church services and numbers attending (See Note 2 overleaf) <i>Example:</i> <u>1st Sunday</u> 10.00am Holy Communion Common Worship A (30)	<u>Sundays</u> <i>Time 8.00am</i> <i>Service 1 per week</i> <u>Numbers 19</u> (on hold at the moment)	<u>Sundays</u> <i>Time 9.30am</i> <i>Service weekly</i> <u>Numbers 34</u>
	<u>Weekdays (Thursday's)</u> <i>Time 9.30am</i> <i>Service Holy Communion</i> <u>Numbers 14</u> (on hold at the moment)	<u>Weekdays</u> <i>Time</i> <i>Service</i> <u>Numbers</u>
Electoral roll (for the last five years – the most recent first)	2018 – 83 / 2019 – 63 / 2020 – 63 / 2021 – 66 / 2022 – 58	
Staff/lay assistance (e.g. curates, lay readers, NSMs etc.)	Eucharistic Minister x 2	

Church traditions and characteristics of that style of worship	Anglo-Catholic (High)	<i>If there is more than one church in the parish please indicate any difference in the church traditions in the individual churches</i>
Please indicate whether there is a PCC Resolution under Paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (if so, please explain the exact nature of the alternative arrangements made, and the reasons for requesting the same).	<i>Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests</i>	YES NO NOT VOTED <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Parochial church organisations and number of regular attenders	34	
Other parochial and/or community buildings	Church Hall	<i>Please indicate if any building is not primarily for church use</i>
Other denominations		
Sociological make-up of parish (e.g. rural, industrial, residential etc.)	All – Rural / Industrial / Commercial / Residential	
Shopping and other local facilities (e.g. Post Office, General Store, Doctor, Dentist, Police Station, Pubs, Clubs, other recreational centres)	All	
Bus services (please give brief details of any daily bus service around the parish and/or to the nearest town/village centre and their relevance in enabling attendance at church services)	Daily Bus Services & various routes Details available via Staffordshire County Council website	

POPULATION		
1	<i>Is the population increasing or decreasing and, if so, to what extent and over what period? (In case of doubt about population figures, the local authority may be able to help.)</i>	Decreasing due to COVID and age
2	<i>How is the population distributed (e.g. in one or more centres, or dispersed over the parish)?</i>	Over the Parish
PAROCHIAL LIFE ETC.		
3	<i>Approximately how many of those on the church electoral roll live outside the parish?</i>	47
4	<i>To what extent does the congregation come from outside the parish?</i>	50 – 50 split
5	<i>Does the congregation increase significantly during the holiday season? If so, please give details.</i>	NO
6	<i>Do a significant number of parishioners attend other Anglican churches in the area? If so, give details (eg for reasons of convenience or because the same congregation attends different churches in rotation).</i>	NO but with Churches Together we meet and rotate the Churches for celebrations and key events (e.g. confirmation)
7	<i>Has any other denomination a strong following in the parish? If so, please give brief details.</i>	Catholic / we work together with St. Mary's Catholic Church
CHURCH SCHOOLS		
8	<i>Is there a church school? If so, please state name and type.</i>	All Saints CE(A) First School
9	<i>Approximately how many pupils are there?</i>	289
10	<i>From which area are they drawn?</i>	Across Leek due to education structure
11	<i>Are the school buildings available for parochial purposes? If so, please give details.</i>	YES – the school have Eucharist Services 6 x per year
12	<i>Please also state name and type of other schools in the area.</i>	Meadows SEN / Leek First / St. Edwards Academy / Westwood First / Leek High / St. Mary's Catholic / Beresford Memorial / Woodcroft Academy / Westwood College
MISCELLANEOUS		
13	<i>What is the parish share, and to what extent does the PCC meet the working expenses of the clergy or lay workers?</i>	£38,130.00
14	<i>Please indicate what, if any, trust funds are available to the parish and for what purposes.</i>	
ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTUAL POINTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE PARISH BETTER ?		

PLEASE: (i) INDICATE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT, OR OTHERWISE, OF THE PCC FOR THE PROPOSALS/DRAFT SCHEME (OR ORDER); AND/OR (ii) PLEASE SHOW THE VOTING FIGURES (IF A VOTE WAS TAKEN)			
	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstentions</i>
<i>On the local formal consultations:</i>			
<i>On the published draft Scheme:</i>			

Completed by Angela Jervis – Church Warden (Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge/etc.) Date 01/02/2024

Note 1:	Please describe by dedication etc. and state whether the building is a parish church, chapel of ease or other place of worship (eg mission hall etc.)
Note 2:	Please state (1) the frequency of church services, (2) the time, (3) the type and/or name of the service (e.g. Holy Communion, Sung Eucharist, Morning Prayer etc.), (4) the service book used and (5) the average congregation for each service.

PARISH INFORMATION FORM

P100

It is important that the information provided on this form is accurate as the Church Commissioners may rely on such information in their consideration of representations and their decision could be open to legal challenge if any facts upon which they have relied are found to be incorrect.

Please email the completed form(s) to: pastoral@churchofengland.org

BENEFICE	Leek & Meerbrook	
Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge (Date of institution/licensing)	Revd Nigel Irons (8 th April 2014)	
Patron(s)	See attached	
Parsonage house (address)	24 Ashenhurst Way, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13 5SB	
PARISH	St Edward the Confessor, Leek	
Population of parish (adults & children) (Please state how computed)	Approximately 9,000	
Churches and sittings (See Note 1 overleaf) Date built (approx.)	The Parish Church of St Edward the Confessor, Leek	
Church services and numbers attending (See Note 2 overleaf)	<p><u>Sundays</u></p> <p><u>1st Sunday</u> 8.45am Holy Communion CW (7) 10.00am Holy Communion CW (54)</p> <p><u>2nd Sunday</u> 8.45am Holy Communion CW (7) 10.00am Baptism Service Morning Prayer if no Baptisms CW (123) 6.30pm Holy Communion sung BCP (15)</p> <p><u>3rd Sunday</u> 8.45am Holy Communion BCP (7) 10.00am Holy Communion CW (58)</p>	<p><u>4th Sunday</u> 8.45am Holy Communion CW (8) 10.00am All Age Celebration CW (46) 6.30pm Taizé / Iona/ Celtic Prayer (alternating) (16)</p> <p><u>5th Sunday</u> 10.00am Morning Prayer CW (83)</p> <p><u>Weekdays</u></p> <p><u>Friday</u> 10.00am Holy Communion CW (6)</p>
Electoral roll (for the last five years – the most recent first)	114 117 119 121 165	
Staff/lay assistance (e.g. curates, lay readers, NSMs)	Verger (23hrs per week) SSM	
Church traditions and characteristics of that style of worship	St Edward's embraces a variety of worship styles including sung 1662 Holy Communion, CW Holy Communion with choir and traditional hymns on the organ, modern hymns and songs led by the music group (keyboard/guitar/bass guitar/flute/drums) and Taizé/Celtic/Iona plus civic services for the Mayor, the Chair of the District Council, RAFA Sunday and Remembrance Sunday.	<i>If there is more than one church in the parish please indicate any difference in the church traditions in the individual churches</i>
Please indicate whether there is a PCC Resolution under Paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (if so, please explain the exact nature of the alternative arrangements made, and the reasons for requesting the same).	<p>YES NO NOT VOTED</p> <p><i>Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </p>	
Parochial church organisations and number of regular attenders	Wednesday Lunch Club (60-100) Wednesday Drop In for homeless & special needs (12) Parent & Toddler Group (15-25)	
Other parochial and/or community buildings	N/A	<i>Please indicate if any building is not primarily for church use</i>
Other denominations	Methodist/URC, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Salvation Army, Baptist, Quaker, Free	

Sociological make-up of parish (e.g. rural, industrial, residential etc.)	Part of a market town with residential estates, small businesses and a weekly livestock market.
Shopping and other local facilities (e.g. Post Office, General Store, Doctor, Dentist, Police Station, Pubs, Clubs, other recreational centres)	Part of a market town with a Post Office, two doctors surgeries, five dental practices, police station, five supermarkets plus many other small retailers, over 30 pubs, arts centre, leisure centre, six first schools, two middle schools, two special schools, two high schools and a college.
Bus services (please give brief details of any daily bus service around the parish and/or to the nearest town/village centre and their relevance in enabling attendance at church services)	There are regular bus services in and out of Leek but almost all members of the congregation either walk to church or come in their own vehicles.

	POPULATION	
1	<i>Is the population increasing or decreasing and, if so, to what extent and over what period? (In case of doubt about population figures, the local authority may be able to help.)</i>	Historically the population has been steady at around 20,000 for well over over a century. Some small additions are made to the residential housing stock but these only create small incremental changes.
2	<i>How is the population distributed (e.g. in one or more centres, or dispersed over the parish)?</i>	The parish of St Edward's mostly comprises residential housing in two large estates adjacent to one another.
	PAROCHIAL LIFE ETC.	
3	<i>Approximately how many of those on the church electoral roll live outside the parish?</i>	Only four people on the electoral roll live outside Leek. Leek itself is divided into three Anglican parishes and the mix in each is eclectic.
4	<i>To what extent does the congregation come from outside the parish?</i>	Again, almost all members of the congregation live in Leek though not necessarily within the parish boundary of St Edward's.
5	<i>Does the congregation increase significantly during the holiday season? If so, please give details.</i>	No.
6	<i>Do a significant number of parishioners attend other Anglican churches in the area? If so, give details (eg for reasons of convenience or because the same congregation attends different churches in rotation).</i>	Residents of the three different parishes in Leek go to whichever church they prefer, mostly on the grounds of family ties, style and churchmanship.
7	<i>Has any other denomination a strong following in the parish? If so, please give brief details.</i>	There are seven other denominations represented in the town but none are dominant. Probably the Roman Catholic congregation is the largest as their parish is very large.
	CHURCH SCHOOLS	
8	<i>Is there a church school? If so, please state name and type.</i>	There are four church schools in the benefice. The one in St Edward's parish is St Edward's Church of England Academy which is a VA Middle School. There are very close links between the church and the school.
9	<i>Approximately how many pupils are there?</i>	720
10	<i>From which area are they drawn?</i>	Leek and surrounding villages
11	<i>Are the school buildings available for parochial purposes? If so, please give details.</i>	The school buildings are not used by the church.
12	<i>Please also state name and type of other schools in the area.</i>	All Saints CoE First School Beresford Memorial CoE First School Blackshaw Moor CoE First School St Mary's RC First School Leek First School Woodcroft Academy First School The Meadows Special School Springfield Special School Churnet View Middle School Leek High School Westwood Road High School Leek & Buxton College
	MISCELLANEOUS	
13	<i>What is the parish share, and to what extent does the PCC meet the working expenses of the clergy or lay workers?</i>	The current share request is £40,887. St Edward's pays it's share in full every year as well as meeting all clergy expenses and paying the Verger's salary.
14	<i>Please indicate what, if any, trust funds are available to the parish and for what purposes.</i>	Leek Town Dole exists for the relief of poverty The Maude Trust can be used for maintaining church fabric and supporting youth and children's work.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTUAL POINTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE PARISH BETTER ?

None that I can call to mind.

PLEASE: (i) INDICATE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT, OR OTHERWISE, OF THE PCC FOR THE PROPOSALS/DRAFT SCHEME (OR ORDER); AND/OR (ii) PLEASE SHOW THE VOTING FIGURES (IF A VOTE WAS TAKEN)

The PCC are fully supportive of the scheme and have not raised any formal objections at any stage of the process. At its meeting on 22nd October 2022, in response to the proposals published by the Area Mission and Pastoral Committee, they expressed concerns about the additional workload that I would be asked to absorb in taking on additional responsibility for the parish of St Chad's, Longsdon (see extract from the minutes in attached file). The PCC subsequently sent a letter to the Diocesan Pastoral Officer raising these concerns (see copy in attached file). After the Draft Scheme had been published by the Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee in January 2023 they met with Archdeacon Megan Smith on 23rd July 2023 at which a helpful discussion took place which resulted in the PCC being happy for the scheme to go ahead (see copy of meeting minutes in attached file). No formal vote was taken as there was general consensus among the PCC.

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstentions</i>
<i>On the local formal consultations:</i>			
<i>On the published draft Scheme:</i>			

Completed by(Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge/etc.) Date

Note 1:	Please describe by dedication etc. and state whether the building is a parish church, chapel of ease or other place of worship (eg mission hall etc.)
Note 2:	Please state (1) the frequency of church services, (2) the time, (3) the type and/or name of the service (e.g. Holy Communion, Sung Eucharist, Morning Prayer etc.), (4) the service book used and (5) the average congregation for each service.

Constitution of the Leek and Meerbrook Patronage Board

The patronage board referred to in clauses 6 and 7 of this Scheme shall consist of:-

- (1) the following in right of their respective offices:-
 - (a) the Bishop of Lichfield, who shall be chairman of the board and shall have one vote as a member of the board and a casting vote as chairman;
 - (b) the archdeacon of the archdeaconry to which the benefice shall for the time being belong, who shall have one vote;
 - (c) the parochial church councils of the new parishes of Saint Edward's, Leek; Saint Luke's and Saint Paul's, Leek; All Saints, Leek; and Saint Matthew's, Meerbrook, which shall jointly have 4 votes and shall be represented at any meeting of the Leek and Meerbrook Patronage Board by one member of each council authorised to act and vote on behalf of the councils
 - (d) any vicar in the team ministry, any member of the team to whom section 34(3) of the 2011 Measure applies and any person having special responsibility for pastoral care under section 34(8) of the 2011 Measure who shall jointly have one vote which shall be exercised by such one or more of them (acting alone, unanimously or by a majority) as may be present at the meeting in question;
 - (e) for the purpose only of meetings at which the person to be appointed a vicar in the team ministry is considered and chosen, the rector of the team ministry who shall have one vote;
- (2) additionally where a team vicar is to be appointed and the Bishop proposes to assign a special cure of souls to that team vicar in accordance with the provisions of clause 7 hereof the parochial church council (or councils) of any parish or parishes to which (or to part of which) such special cure of souls would relate each of which shall be represented at any meeting of the Board to which this sub-clause applies by one lay member of the said council (or councils) authorised to act and vote on behalf of such council each of whom shall have one vote.

Extract from Minutes of St Edward's PCC Meeting 17th October 2022

Proposed Pastoral Re-Organisation

Nigel advised us of the Deanery plan to extend the Leek team boundary to include Cheddleton and Longsdon and advised that the consultation documents had been sent out to that effect as is the legal requirement.

The allocation of clergy time does not form part of the legal framework as that is a matter for the Bishop and Archdeacon to determine. The intention is that Nigel take on pastoral responsibility for Longsdon Church. According to the Deanery Plan the Bishop and Archdeacon have been asked to define the shape of that responsibility more clearly which they have not yet done. In particular Nigel was concerned to limit the number of Sunday services he would be expected to take which the Deanery originally proposed should be four a year at the major festivals of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Harvest. Nigel clarified that Longsdon would still remain as a separate parish in its own right with its own PCC which would be independently responsible for its own finances, the upkeep of its building and its payments to the Common Fund.

Concerns were voiced for Nigel's welfare by the PCC as this is a quite considerable increase to an already heavy workload. The PCC agreed that it wanted to express these concerns in its response to the consultation and Nigel undertook to draft something out for their consideration.

Lynne Ball who is on the Patronage board also agreed to write and voice her concerns independently.

Nigel advised that this is a 3-stage process of consultation. This stage was for consideration by the Area Mission and Pastoral Committee, the second stage would be considered by the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee and the third stage by the Church Commissioners. Each stage has a six-week consultation period.

Letter to Diocesan Pastoral Officer from St Edward's PCC

Mrs Clare Beavon
Diocesan Pastoral Officer
St Mary's House, The Close
Lichfield, WS13 7LD

The PCC of St Edward the Confessor
St Edward's Church
Church Street
Leek, ST13 6AB

Re: Mission and Pastoral Measure
Benefices of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer;
Biddulph; Bagnall with Endon; and Leek and Meerbrook

As a PCC we recognise the need to reorganise parish boundaries within the Deanery in accordance with the Deanery Plan agreed on 26th April 2022. We also understand that final deployment of clergy within the new structure will be a matter for the Bishop and Archdeacon to determine.

However we would like to express our concern about the lack of detail that has been provided so far about the nature of the proposal to give the Vicar of St Edward's Leek a level of pastoral care for the parish of St Chad's Longsdon. The Deanery Plan asks the Bishop and the Archdeacon to *work with the Shaping for Mission Team to provide clarity about the nomenclature to be given to the new form of ministry in the shaded parishes and to define the parameters on which the distinctive shape of that ministry will be based.* However we understand that no proposals have so far been put forward and we are particularly concerned that greater clarity is needed about the level of responsibility that our own Vicar, Nigel, will be asked to take on. Given the current workload he carries as our Vicar, Team Rector and Rural Dean alongside a number of other responsibilities he has in the Parish and Benefice which he has built up over the past 8½ years it is clear that he has only a limited capacity to take on any more. Specifically we understand that the Deanery had originally envisaged ministry in what are still referred to as *the shaded parishes* to require whoever was asked to take them on to take only 4 services a year there, but it is no longer clear whether this is the Diocese's intention. Furthermore a suggested allocation of 0.15 of Nigel's time was being put forward at one time, which is equivalent to one day a week. We just cannot see how this is reasonably possible.

These details, together with an appropriate nomenclature to describe them, need to be resolved before any new licences can be drawn up and we therefore urge the Bishop and Archdeacon to engage in dialogue with the Shaping for Mission Team about these matters and to take into account the above concerns.

yours sincerely,

Mrs Bev Seymour
PCC Secretary, St Edward the Confessor, Leek

Minutes of the Meeting of St Edward's PCC Wednesday 12th July 2023

Present:

Philip Allcock (Warden)	Geoff Channon (Lay Chair)	Megan Smith (Archdeacon)
Sheila Allcock	Robert Heath	Lewis Torr
Lynne Ball (Warden)	John Morton	Anne Ward
Jayne Baxter	Bev Seymour (PCC Secretary)	
Paul Brooks	Colin Seymour	

Apologies: Melody Cartledge, Brian Hartley, Alan Leese, Mel Newton

The meeting commenced with a welcome to guest Ven. Megan Smith and members of the PCC who were present introducing themselves.

Open Prayers were led by Lynne Ball.

The Chair Geoff Channon asked Megan Smith to give an overview of the expectation of the Vicars time as part of the Pastoral Scheme for the Deanery mentioned in the additional notes allocating 0.15 to Longsdon when the PCC has previously expressed a wish of 0.10.

Archdeacon Megan stated there was an objective to establish a more regular and predictable pattern of Christian worship within the Deanery and in particular in the rural parishes where congregations were small. This, combined with a need to reduce ministerial posts from eight to seven in the Deanery (some of which were currently vacant) meant that a new strategy was required. In order to address this the Archdeacon explained that Nigel Irons, our current vicar, had led a Deanery team to develop the Leek Deanery Plan.

The Plan

St Edwards Church twinned with Longsdon Church

St Paul's and St Luke's Churches twinned with Meerbrook Church.

All Saints Church twinned with Cheddleton.

The role of Clergy will be determined episcopally.

The aim is to continue to provide effective and regular local worship on a Sunday morning.

This will be achievable with Lay leadership at all churches. With Clergy administering services of Holy Communion.

Archdeacon Megan advised that the figure of 15% for the St Edwards clergy was a guideline only and until the role was up and running could not be realistically established. This should not be a cause for any concern to the PCC.

Archdeacon Megan advised that the Vicar of St Edwards will be the Chair of St Edwards, Leek and St Chad's, Longsdon PCC's and be responsible for ensuring that appropriate and robust governance is in place at both Churches, although not necessarily needing to attend all the meetings. Archdeacon Megan envisioned that clergy from St Edward's would officiate at service at Longsdon every 6 weeks.

Archdeacon Megan said that no formal training would be required for lay members of the congregation to provide services and resources were available online. Currently some research is being conducted by the Diocese in relation to this.

St Chad's had been without a vicar for 5 years and currently had no Churchwardens. The church was currently dependent on the ministry of retired ministers. It was made clear that if St Chad's was not able to pay its parish share St Edward's would not be responsible for any shortfall.

Lynne Ball and other members of the PCC expressed concerns for Nigel's wellbeing!

Archdeacon Megan advised that the Diocese offers pastoral supervision but Nigel will have an opportunity to review his workload with the implementation of the Deanery Plan.

The PCC asked Archdeacon Megan when she envisioned the plan would be implemented; she advised that she hoped on Nigel's return from his sabbatical in September things could begin to move forward. Legal documentation had to be approved and this was all currently being made ready.

The issue of Future proofing St Edward's was raised, and Archdeacon Megan advised that the plan for Leek Deanery was a new concept, with the general consensus of St Chad's PCC in agreement with the concept of lay-led worship.

Jayne Baxter commented that she felt we must all consider the local churches as a community and consider visiting and encouraging all local churches to show each other support.

Lynne Ball asked if the option of a Festival Church might be appropriate for St Chad's. Archdeacon Megan advised that this was not a solution and felt that the Deanery Plan was the best way forward.

Geoff Channon agreed that the meeting had been helpful and the concept of Lay led worship was positively received.

Closing Prayer's were led by Lynne Ball

PARISH INFORMATION FORM

P100

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Please email the completed form(s) to: pastoral@churchofengland.org

BENEFICE	Leek and Meerbrook	
Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge (Date of institution/licensing)	Team Rector – The Revd Nigel Irons (08/04/2014)	
Patron(s)	<p>Leek and Meerbrook Patronage Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * the Bishop of Lichfield (Chair) 1 vote plus a casting vote as chair; * the Archdeacon of Stoke-upon-Trent (1 vote); * any vicar in the team ministry, any deacon authorised to serve in the team ministry and any person having special responsibility for pastoral care under section 34(8) of the 2011 measure (who shall jointly have 1 vote); ** for the purpose only of meetings at which the person to be appointed a vicar in the team ministry is considered and chosen, the Rector of the team ministry (1 vote). * the PCC's of the parishes of St Edward's, Leek; St Luke's and St Paul's, Leek; All Saints, Leek; St Matthew's, Meerbrook (each have 1 vote and shall be represented at any meeting of the board by 1 member of each of the councils authorised to act and vote on behalf of that council); ** additionally where a team vicar is to be appointed and the Bishop proposes to assign a special cure of souls to that team vicar in accordance with the provisions of clause 7, the PCC (or PCC's) of any parish or parishes to which (or to part of which) such special cure of souls would relate each of which shall be represented at any meeting of the Board to which this sub-clause applies by 1 lay member of the said council (or councils) authorised to act and vote on behalf of such council (each of whom will have 1 vote). 	
Parsonage house (address)	The Team Vicar lived at St Luke's Vicarage, Novi Lane, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 6NR.	
PARISH	St Luke's and St Paul's Leek	
Population of parish (adults & children) (Please state how computed)	Approx 7,500. Leek town population was estimated at 19,900 in 2021(internet), with 2011 census having 20,770. The parish has the same population as St Edwards and more than All Saints (the other 2 parishes in the town).	
Churches and sittings (See Note 1 overleaf) Date built (approx.)	St Luke's Parish Church 1848	St Paul's Mission Church 1971
Church services and numbers attending (See Note 2 overleaf)	<p><u>Sundays - 2nd</u> <i>Time - 9.30</i> <i>Service - Communion</i> <i>Numbers 15</i></p> <p><u>Sundays Remainder</u> <i>Time - 9.30</i> <i>Service - Morning Prayer</i> <i>Numbers 15</i></p> <p><u>Sundays - 2nd</u> <i>Time - 11.15</i> <i>Service - Informal Family with Communion</i> <i>Numbers 35</i></p> <p><u>Sundays Remainder</u> <i>Time - 11.15</i> <i>Service - Informal Family</i> <i>Numbers - 35</i></p>	<p><u>Sundays - 1st</u> <i>Time - 10.00</i> <i>Service - Informal Family with Communion</i> <i>Numbers - 20</i></p> <p><u>Sundays - Remainder</u> <i>Time - 10.00</i> <i>Service - Informal Family</i> <i>Numbers - 20</i></p> <p><u>Weekdays – Wednesday Weekly</u> <i>Time - 19.30</i> <i>Service - Prayer & Praise</i> <i>Numbers - 10</i></p>
<i>Example:</i> <u>1st Sunday</u> <i>10.00am</i> <i>Holy Communion</i> <i>Common Worship A</i> <i>(30)</i>	E31	

Electoral roll (for the last five years – the most recent first)	2023 – 117, 2022 – 119, 2021 – 120, 2020 – 118, 2019 - 117	
Staff/lay assistance (e.g. curates, lay readers, NSMs etc.)	1 retired clergyman	
Church traditions and characteristics of that style of worship	Low evangelical	<i>If there is more than one church in the parish please indicate any difference in the church traditions in the individual churches</i>
Please indicate whether there is a PCC Resolution under Paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (if so, please explain the exact nature of the alternative arrangements made, and the reasons for requesting the same).	YES NO NOT VOTED	
	<i>Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Parochial church organisations and number of regular attenders	Mothers Union – 16, Lunch Club – 16, 3 Home Groups with 6 (daytime), 8 and 6 (2 evenings) attendees.	
Other parochial and/or community buildings	Church centre at St Luke's & Church Hall at St Paul's. The church hall is primarily used by the community.	<i>Please indicate if any building is not primarily for church use</i>
Other denominations	Baptist Church	
Sociological make-up of parish (e.g. rural, industrial, residential etc.)	Residential with a small rural area to the east	
Shopping and other local facilities (e.g. Post Office, General Store, Doctor, Dentist, Police Station, Pubs, Clubs, other recreational centres)	3 supermarkets, 3 doctor surgeries, 2 dentists, Police Station, 5 pubs, leisure centre, community centre, gym & 1 club.	
Bus services (please give brief details of any daily bus service around the parish and/or to the nearest town/village centre and their relevance in enabling attendance at church services)	There is a Leek circular bus service and the Hanley to Leek bus includes a loop around the local housing estate by St Paul's church. Both could be used for people living in other parishes in Leek.	

POPULATION		
1	<i>Is the population increasing or decreasing and, if so, to what extent and over what period? (In case of doubt about population figures, the local authority may be able to help.)</i>	Leek has decreased by 900 in 10 years, i.e. 4%
2	<i>How is the population distributed (e.g. in one or more centres, or dispersed over the parish)?</i>	Dispersed over the parish in the town.
PAROCHIAL LIFE ETC.		
3	<i>Approximately how many of those on the church electoral roll live outside the parish?</i>	51
4	<i>To what extent does the congregation come from outside the parish?</i>	All but 9 of these live in the other two parishes in Leek. Until 2021, Leek was one parish
5	<i>Does the congregation increase significantly during the holiday season? If so, please give details.</i>	No
6	<i>Do a significant number of parishioners attend other Anglican churches in the area? If so, give details (eg for reasons of convenience or because the same congregation attends different churches in rotation).</i>	Yes, as the other 2 churches in Leek offer different kinds of services
7	<i>Has any other denomination a strong following in the parish? If so, please give brief details.</i>	Methodist/URC, Salvation Army, Baptist and Pentecostal Churches all present in Leek
CHURCH SCHOOLS		
8	<i>Is there a church school? If so, please state name and type.</i>	Beresford Memorial CE First School
9	<i>Approximately how many pupils are there?</i>	162
10	<i>From which area are they drawn?</i>	Around St Paul's
11	<i>Are the school buildings available for parochial purposes? If so, please give details.</i>	No
12	<i>Please also state name and type of other schools in the area.</i>	Churnet View Middle School, Leek First School, Leek High School
MISCELLANEOUS		
13	<i>What is the parish share, and to what extent does the PCC meet the working expenses of the clergy or lay workers?</i>	£31,600. Fully meet expenses.
14	<i>Please indicate what, if any, trust funds are available to the parish and for what purposes.</i>	None

ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTUAL POINTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE PARISH BETTER ?

PLEASE: (i) INDICATE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT, OR OTHERWISE, OF THE PCC FOR THE PROPOSALS/DRAFT SCHEME (OR ORDER); AND/OR (ii) PLEASE SHOW THE VOTING FIGURES (IF A VOTE WAS TAKEN)

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstentions</i>
<i>On the local formal consultations:</i>	13	0	0
<i>On the published draft Scheme:</i>	8	0	2

Completed by Ian Bowdery.....(PCC Secretary) Date

Note 1:	Please describe by dedication etc. and state whether the building is a parish church, chapel of ease or other place of worship (eg mission hall etc.)
Note 2:	Please state (1) the frequency of church services, (2) the time, (3) the type and/or name of the service (e.g. Holy Communion, Sung Eucharist, Morning Prayer etc.), (4) the service book used and (5) the average congregation for each service.

PARISH INFORMATION FORM

P100

It is important that the information provided on this form is accurate as the Church Commissioners may rely on such information in their consideration of representations and their decision could be open to legal challenge if any facts upon which they have relied are found to be incorrect.

Please email the completed form(s) to: pastoral@churchofengland.org

BENEFICE	St. Matthew's Meerbrook/Leek, Meerbrook		
Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge (Date of institution/licensing)	The Revd Nigel Irons 08/04/2014		
Patron(s)	Leek and Meerbrook Patronage Board (see attached)		
Parsonage house (address)	NONE 24 Ashenhurst Way, Leek, ST13 5SB		
PARISH	St. Matthew's Meerbrook		
Population of parish (adults & children) (Please state how computed)	approx. 350.		
Churches and sittings (See Note 1 overleaf) Date built (approx.)	Parish Church		
Church services and numbers attending (See Note 2 overleaf) Example: 1st Sunday 10.00am Holy Communion Common Worship A (30)	Sundays Time 11.15 am Service Holy Communion Numbers av. 10 never recovered after Covid. Weekdays Time Service Numbers No Incumbent doesn't help.	Sundays Time Service Numbers Weekdays Time Service Numbers Wednesday 10.00 am. Mattins 4/5	
Electoral roll (for the last five years – the most recent first)	60.		
Staff/lay assistance (e.g. curates, lay readers, NSMs etc.)	NONE		
Church traditions and characteristics of that style of worship	TRADITIONAL		If there is more than one church in the parish please indicate any difference in the church traditions in the individual churches
Please indicate whether there is a PCC Resolution under Paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (if so, please explain the exact nature of the alternative arrangements made, and the reasons for requesting the same).	Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests ?		YES NO NOT VOTED <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Parochial church organisations and number of regular attenders	DISTRICT CHURCH COUNCIL 8		
Other parochial and/or community buildings	/		Please indicate if any building is not primarily for church use
Other denominations			
Sociological make-up of parish (e.g. rural, industrial, residential etc.)	RURAL, RESIDENTIAL		
Shopping and other local facilities (e.g. Post Office, General Store, Doctor, Dentist, Police Station, Pubs, Clubs, other recreational centres)	2 large pubs		
Bus services (please give brief details of any daily bus service around the parish and/or to the nearest town/village centre and their relevance in enabling attendance at church services)	None.		

POPULATION		
1	Is the population increasing or decreasing and, if so, to what extent and over what period? (In case of doubt about population figures, the local authority may be able to help.)	Stable.
2	How is the population distributed (e.g. in one or more centres, or dispersed over the parish)?	Dispersed over the parish
PAROCHIAL LIFE ETC.		
3	Approximately how many of those on the church electoral roll live outside the parish?	
4	To what extent does the congregation come from outside the parish?	50%
5	Does the congregation increase significantly during the holiday season? If so, please give details.	Not really.
6	Do a significant number of parishioners attend other Anglican churches in the area? If so, give details (eg for reasons of convenience or because the same congregation attends different churches in rotation).	No.
7	Has any other denomination a strong following in the parish? If so, please give brief details.	No.
CHURCH SCHOOLS		
8	Is there a church school? If so, please state name and type.	Yes. Blackshaw Moor C. of E. First School
9	Approximately how many pupils are there?	60+
10	From which area are they drawn?	Surrounding
11	Are the school buildings available for parochial purposes? If so, please give details.	No.
12	Please also state name and type of other schools in the area.	None
MISCELLANEOUS		
13	What is the parish share, and to what extent does the PCC meet the working expenses of the clergy or lay workers?	£10,000 pays all working expenses
14	Please indicate what, if any, trust funds are available to the parish and for what purposes.	Education - Charity - Children
ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTUAL POINTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE PARISH BETTER ?		

PLEASE: (i) INDICATE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT, OR OTHERWISE, OF THE PCC FOR THE PROPOSALS/DRAFT SCHEME (OR ORDER); AND/OR (ii) PLEASE SHOW THE VOTING FIGURES (IF A VOTE WAS TAKEN)			
	For	Against	Abstentions
On the local formal consultations:			
On the published draft Scheme:			

Completed by R. J. Sherrott Churchwarden (Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge/etc.) Date 07/02/24

Note 1:	Please describe by dedication etc. and state whether the building is a parish church, chapel of ease or other place of worship (eg mission hall etc.)
Note 2:	Please state (1) the frequency of church services, (2) the time, (3) the type and/or name of the service (e.g. Holy Communion, Sung Eucharist, Morning Prayer etc.), (4) the service book used and (5) the average congregation for each service.

Leek and Meerbrook Patronage Board:

* the Bishop of Lichfield (Chair) 1 vote plus a casting vote as chair;

* the Archdeacon of Stoke-upon-Trent (1 vote);

* any vicar in the team ministry, any deacon authorised to serve in the team ministry and any person having special responsibility for pastoral care under section 34(8) of the 2011 measure (who shall jointly have 1 vote);

** for the purpose only of meetings at which the person to be appointed a vicar in the team ministry is considered and chosen, the Rector of the team ministry (1 vote).

* the PCC's of the parishes of St Edward's, Leek; St Luke's and St Paul's, Leek; All Saints, Leek; St Matthew's, Meerbrook (each have 1 vote and shall be represented at any meeting of the board by 1 member of each of the councils authorised to act and vote on behalf of that council);

** additionally where a team vicar is to be appointed and the Bishop proposes to assign a special cure of souls to that team vicar in accordance with the provisions of clause 7, the PCC (or PCC's) of any parish or parishes to which (or to part of which) such special cure of souls would relate each of which shall be represented at any meeting of the Board to which this sub-clause applies by 1 lay member of the said council (or councils) authorised to act and vote on behalf of such council (each of whom will have 1 vote).

Annex R

Benefices of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer; Biddulph; Bagnall with Endon; and Leek and Meerbrook

Representations against the draft Scheme		
1.	Sarah Kirkham, Margaret Myatt and family	Members of St. Michael's Church, Horton
2.	Andy and Elizabeth Hallam	Members of Biddulph
3.	Shirley Machin	Longsdon St Chads
4.	Brian Hubbard	Former Chorister, PCC member and Treasurer, and Deanery Synod representative at St. Michael's, Horton and still a regular worshipper
5.	Wendy Hubbard	Horton parish
6.	Jane Bailey	Member of Horton Church for 60 years
7.	Jim Davies	On the electoral role of St Lawrence's, Biddulph
8.	Pete Turner	Parishioner and active church member of St Lawrence, Biddulph.
9.	Melvyn Nixon	Relatively new member of St Lawrence's church, Biddulph
10.	Robert Beech	Member of the PCC of St Lawrence's Church, Biddulph
11.	John Heath	Member of Horton church for 50 years
12.	Patricia Salt	Member of Horton church
13.	Andrew Shufflebotham	Churchwarden at St Lawrence's Biddulph
14.	Melanie Myatt	Member of Horton Parish for 25 years and PCC member of the past 5 years
15.	Lorraine Hare	Member of St Chads Church, Longsdon
16.	Louise Boulton	Member of Horton church
17.	Joyce Sillito	Member of Horton Church, PCC member and organist
18.	Callum Beswick	Parishioner of Horton Church
19.	Paul Roebuck	Treasurer St. Lawrence's Biddulph
20.	Carole Vickers	Member of electoral roll, regular weekly worshipper at Biddulph
21.	Eileen Moss	Member of Horton Parish for 73 years
22.	Mary James and family	Lifelong parishioner (57 years), PCC member of Horton Church

23.	Annette Bailey	Parishioner and PCC member of St Chads Longsdon
24.	Fr Stephen Anderson	Priest, parishioner and PCC member. Retired to Horton December 2021
25.	R J Hudson	Lifelong member of Horton Church, chorister for over 70 years, PCC member for over 30 years, currently serving second term of office as churchwarden
26.	Andrew and Maggie Nesom	Members of Biddulph Church
27.	David Turner	Parishioner and PCC member at Longsdon Church
28.	Susan Beswick	Parishioner of Horton
29.	Margaret Hulstone	Member of St Lawrence's church Biddulph for almost 70 years
30.	Horton PCC	
31.	Annie Roebuck	St Lawrence's Biddulph
32.	Margaret Heath	Horton Church
33.	Gerard Chell	Member of St Lawrence's Biddulph
34.	Joan Forster	Long standing member and sides person of St Lawrences' Biddulph
35.	Freda Nadin and John Nadin	Member of Horton Church
36.	Roy Lovatt	Member of Horton Church, was PCC member, Deanery Synod rep, churchwarden, reader and OLM from 2009 to 2018. Also worshippers at Endon.
37.	Cheddleton PCC*	<i>*Cheddleton PCC have clarified that their representation is in favour of the draft Scheme.</i>
38.	Mr S Sowerby	Treasurer of St Chad's Longsdon
39.	David Hulstone	Ex Reader at St Lawrences' Biddulph
40.	Irene Cork	Member of St Chad's Longsdon
41.	M Joan Axon	
Representations in favour		
42.	Terry Bloor	Associate Archdeacon (Stoke-upon-Trent). Interim Minister – Stafford Episcopal Area
43.	Dave Tinsley	St Lawrence's Biddulph
44.	Mr A Lancaster	Member of Biddulph church for most of his life (aged 76)
45.	Sarah Clulow	Member of Rushton Spencer Church
37.	Cheddleton PCC*	<i>*Cheddleton PCC have clarified that their representation is in favour of the draft Scheme.</i>

1. Sarah Kirkham, Margaret Myatt and family

Good afternoon Katie

We are members of St. Michael's Church, Horton and we wish to strongly OBJECT to the proposed Pastoral Reorganisation Scheme.

Horton Church is a central and highly valued part of our local community. I was christened, confirmed and married there, and we held my father's funeral there.

The current United Benefice of Cheddleton, Longsdon, Horton and Rushton Spencer works really well together, with similar and like-minded Churches, and it is completely undesirable to break this established bond which provides a positive and supportive relationship for all Churches in the United Benefice.

Horton is a rural and largely farming community, whereas Bagnall with Endon are essentially suburban parishes with professional workers, and the characters of these parishes are quite different. The parishioners of Horton would like to see a priest with a visible presence in the community, taking an active role within the two schools and the farming community.

The churchmanship of Horton lies within the central tradition, but we understand that the proposed changes would mean that Horton would have to accept an Evangelical Incumbant with Bagnall and Endon, resulting in us having a lay-led ministry with only occasional Holy Communion, and an undesirable change to service style and a very different pattern of services for Horton Church. We are a very traditional community, who like to celebrate the Holy Communion, and such changes may well impact upon the attendances and the level of support that the Church receives, as we are fortunate that our Church is widely supported by the community at present. The church building is kept in good repair, and regular worship is maintained, and the Church is the centre of the community and is used for weddings, christenings and funerals.

The current United Benefice works really well together, and so we would strongly object to any undesirable proposals for change.

It is felt within our community that if there has to be a change the existing United Benefice would be better suited to combining with the proposed Leek Team Ministry to ensure the continuation of sacramental worship, and allowing the existing strong relationship with Longsdon and Rushton Spencer to be retained.

We would urge you to please listen to, and take seriously the views of the members of the Church community who will be impacted by these proposals, and please do not proceed with the Draft Scheme.

We would be grateful if you would kindly acknowledge receipt of this email.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Kirkham and Margaret Myatt and family

2. Andy and Elizabeth Hallam

Hi Katie,

Will is a breath of fresh air at Biddulph St Laurence.

So was the previous Vicar Steve.

While you cannot directly compare the two, I fear the end result would be similar should Will be given more responsibility and less time to focus on Biddulph.

Steve started to get some real success in growing the church with more families in regular attendance and a real hope for the future. However as this growth happens it adds a lot of extra demand on the Vicar.

While we will support Will in this journey, I fear if he is not fully backed and given the time required to focus on solely Biddulph, the risk of burn out is highly probable trying to split between 2 parishes.

The reality is with the aging population of the Biddulph congregation, if we do not get growth in the next few years, it could be a very fast decline for Biddulph. This is both volunteers to continue operating as a church and financially. Bearing in mind, the church was without a Vicar and relying on volunteers for a very long time prior to getting Will in post. And a lot of these volunteers struggled with burn out trying to keep the church going for that interim period and families moved churches.

My wife and I have been members of Biddulph since 2014, now with our two children 4 and 6.

While we love the church and have faith God will bring other families to the church so our children have Christian friends of their age, unfortunately should Will not have the time to build the church and encourage other families to join, this would see us move church in the coming year as we see it as upmost important they have church friends of their own age group, for their Christian journey.

Thank you for taking the time to read our thoughts.

Thanks,
Andy & Elizabeth Hallam

3. Shirley Machin

Longsdon St Chads

I am happy with the church team proposals except I would like Horton to be included to maintain the very long standing friendships we have made..Also I cannot see how we could afford to pay for clergy to take services ,as we dont have church members who would wish to or be able to take services that would encourage new members.Longsdon would only get 1.5 share of available support, I feel that money is perhaps being wrongly directed to new projects rather than grass root Christianity which the Church should be all about..
Yours Sincerely Shirley Machin PCC member.

4. Brian Hubbard

Dear Mrs.Lowe,

I wish to object to the draft Pastoral Reorganization Scheme concerning the parish of Horton in Leek Deanery.

The present Benefice of four parishes works well, even though there has been no incumbent for some years.

The proposed new Benefice with Endon and Bagnall would comprise a different approach to worship as used in those two parishes compared to the traditional type of services at Horton. Also those two parishes differ from Horton in several ways.

If a new United Benefice including Horton has to be established there are surrounding parishes which would be more appropriately linked as a Benefice,not only in type of worship, but are also, like Horton, mainly rural, and similar in other respects.

An equal share of any future incumbent's time, rather than the present proposals, would also seem to be fair.

Would it be possible for the proposals to be looked at and reassessed to arrive at a more suitable plan?

Acknowledgment of receipt of this email would be appreciated.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Yours faithfully

Brian Hubbard

(Former Chorister, P.C.C.member and Treasurer, and Deanery Synod representative at St. Michael's, Horton and still a regular worshipper).

5. Wendy Hubbard

Dear Mrs.Lowe,

I wish to object to the Draft Pastoral Reorganization Scheme for Horton Parish.

I understand that Endon and Bagnall services are of an Evangelical form and mostly lay-led which is completely different from Horton.

The four churches in the existing Benefice are all of a rural nature and have similar services to one another.

They have similar country backgrounds and work well together.

As a past Churchwarden and still a regular worshipper at Horton I do not feel that being merged with Endon and Bagnall would be beneficial to us.

Will you please acknowledge receipt of this email. Thank you.

Yours sincerely
Wendy Hubbard (Mrs).

6. **Jane Bailey**

Dear Katie,

I am writing to you to strongly object to the draft proposals concerning the parish of Horton in the Leek Deanery within the Diocese of Lichfield.

I have been a member of Horton Church for 60 years having been christened, confirmed and married at this church. Horton is a very rural parish and follows a very traditional style of service. We have been without a vicar for over 6 years and during this time we have managed to hold weekly services taken by retired vicars and continue to maintain an active church . We hold regular fundraising events and are very well supported by the parishioners.

Under the proposed scheme we would amalgamate with Endon and Bagnall who follow an Evangelical style of service which would generally be led by lay preachers and a vicar would only take a service every two months.

This is not what we want for the future of our very special church and we feel that we have been misled during the draft proposal stage. The implications of the CPAS patronage which we would be taking on have not been clearly explained at any stage during the process.

I hope that you will refuse this proposal and look at the current benefice and acknowledge the strengths and similarities of rural parishes and the churchmanship that they offer to their parishioners. It would be more sensible to keep Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer within the same benefice and even incorporate Meerbrook ,which is a neighbouring rural parish .

Yours sincerely

Jane Bailey

7. Jim Davies

Katie,

I am writing against the proposal to merge St Lawrence's with Rushton Spencer.

St Lawrence's is a busy parish church and until fairly recently was blessed with both a vicar and a curate to carry out all the pastoral duties of the parish.. Our New Vicar Rev. Will Drain is in his first parish as priest in charge and I feel that on top of the heavy duties of Biddulph an additional parish, although small, would place an overwhelming burden on him.

Secondly Rev. Drain has set out a clear evangelistic vision for Biddulph which is in a highly populated area. Rushton Spencer church is set in the fields well away from Rushton village and the village itself has a fairly sparse population. I would not like to see Rev. Drain's vision and enthusiasm curtailed by having to administer such a limiting parish when he could be more usefully and effectively employed in Biddulph. I would have thought that a person nearer retirement would be much more suitable for a rural parish such as Rushton Spencer and that it would fall better under the care of one of the Leek parishes.

Your sincerely

Jim Davies (on the electoral role of St Lawrence's)

8. Pete Turner

Dear Ms Lowe

I am responding as a parishioner and active church member of St Lawrence, Biddulph.

Having served on the PCC, as well as attending St Lawrence, I am well aware of the considerations related to the reorganisation of the Leek Deanery, particularly as it relates to the benefices of Ruston and Biddulph.

Throughout the process I have been a vocal opposer of a single aspect of the considerations and unfortunately I remain holding the same conclusions.

St Lawrence is a sustainable church, paying the full element of its parish share and actively contributing to ministries outside of the immediate parish, including local food banks, overseas mission and poverty alleviation. This level of sustainability is heavily challenged due to a protracted vacancy and the impacts of lack of attendance during C19 lock downs. However, on the positive, the church remains well supported by its members and continues to find ways to serve the community as well as worship.

This position is not a certainty. It relies on a huge amount of proactive work from the leadership, not least of which is the vicar. The role of vicar of St Lawrence, with the multi-faceted activities of the church, is a full time role. This can't reasonably be challenged. The role is not just full-time, but requires the sustained and challenging expectation of the vocation to work beyond normal expectations in the service of God and the community. I believe that by expecting a portion of the role of the Vicar of Biddulph to be applied to Rushton is entirely unsustainable for a number of reasons.

1. By drawing the vicar away the service of the parish of Biddulph will be lessened. This is a fairly simple to identify. The lessening of capacity within the work of St Lawrence can only have a weakening effect on the outreach, pastoral care, strategic management, planning and in the end the sustainable future of the core worshipper levels at the church. This risks making a (now rarer) sustainable church unsustainable and therefore another burden on the diocese's strategic and financial management.
2. By drawing away capacity from St Lawrence the capacity for the church to effectively evangelise, drawing more to God, will be adversely affected.
3. By reducing capacity within the church, the work of rebuilding the congregation from those who have fallen away from regular engagement will be adversely affected.
4. We have, as a church community and the Church of England as an employer, a duty of care to our vicar and their family to ensure that they are not pulled in too many different directions that makes the vocation become less of a blessing and more of a problem that leads to personal difficulties.
5. The church at Rushton is and has been for a long time, no longer sustainable. It is an act of displacement management to add a function to an existing full time role that should be addressed in more direct terms. Whilst we all want to see the Kingdom of God represented in all communities throughout the world, we are not called to retain buildings for sake of posterity. The extremely small numbers of active worshippers of Rushton (about 7) will be welcomed in to other settings, all of which are extremely likely to be entirely more accessible than the very picturesque but old-fashioned setting of Rushton's church, which is without toilet, kitchen or accessible features that should be available. By not accepting that that church is no longer suitable or sustainable, the Church of England will be flogging a dead horse at the detrimental cost to a sustainable church community at St Lawrence. I am a chief executive of a large scale public body and I fully understand the diverse financial and operation pressures that continue to face services operating across large estates. Difficult decisions remain difficult whether we make them today or tomorrow, but if we fail to make difficult decisions today we add another day's negative impact on all our services.
6. The Diocese has failed to address the difficult and emotive issues required to reduce the cost of maintaining unsustainable church settings at the expense of their staff (vicars and support staff) and in doing so it will cost the church (the Christian fellowship of GOd as a whole - not a single building) dearly as it will distract from the meaningful work of we are all committed to.

In summary, I hope that, whilst I have no issue with changes in bureaucratic administration associated with benefices, there is no strategic, financial or

sustainable reason for the role of vicar of St Lawrence to be subdivided between two churches. This will lead to a degradation of church congregation at St Lawrence, a delay in the inevitable closure of the church at Rushton and, in the end, the unsustainability of St Lawrence and therefore a net loss of contribution to diocese as a whole. These are the management reasons. We should, in faith, also recognise that to achieve greater engagement with the faith we need churches that operate at full capacity in communities that have the critical mass and infrastructure to support the coming together in worship. Biddulph can provide this, Rushton can't.

I know the above may seem like a tirade, but it is only meant with honest concern for the future service of the church at St Lawrence as part of the whole community of God.

With thanks
Pete

9. Melvyn Nixon

I am a relatively new member of the St Lawrence church joining the congregation soon after Will's arrival as vicar. As an ordained minister formerly in the Methodist Church and as someone who engaged in church leadership training both within the UK and abroad I wish to express slight concerns as to the proposals based upon my own experience of parish/ circuit work.

No doubt these proposals stem from a shortage of finance and of clergy. One must ask why we find ourselves in such a situation? It has become common practice for the stronger churches to support the weaker which at first sight seems a true Christian principle. However in practice this rarely if ever saves or strengthens the weaker but rather weakens the strong. Churches with a commitment to mission and outreach remain as those still strong and getting stronger. Rarely do churches historically weak in mission change their spots. Meanwhile the mission centric churches are depleted with energies diverted. Nor is it true that an absence of leadership in mission churches as support is offered elsewhere is covered by growth in laity. Church plants are a completely different prospect but this is not what is in mind here. Add to this that Will is relatively new in post, still learning and with a deal to do if he is to lead St Lawrence's into a new found confidence and this proposal is in essence very flawed.

The current situation facing the Anglican church has been long in the making and radical truths need to be faced and incorporated into future strategic planning. This is not of this nature.

I confidently predict that if these proposals go ahead vital resources to the rebuilding of St Lawrence's will be wasted with no visible positive result.

I therefore wish to suggest that a more comprehensive strategy be developed with clear aims and objectives that can be measured in terms of time related targets. Moreover it would be advantageous to focus on the utilisation of laity as opposed to full time clergy in the support of Rushton Spencer.

I offer this in a spirit of openness to further debate and wish you well in the work you have to do.

Melvyn Nixon

10. Rob Beech

Draft Scheme of transferring the Parish of Rushton Spencer to the Benefice of Biddulph

Dear Mrs Lowe,

I write as a member of the PCC of St Lawrence's Church, Biddulph as well as being on the electoral roll and a member and regular attender of this church family.

I am writing AGAINST all parts of the Draft Scheme of:

"The parish of Rushton Spencer, being one of the constituent parishes of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer in the diocese of Lichfield, shall be transferred to the benefice of Biddulph (the name of which shall be altered to "The Benefice of Biddulph with Rushton") in the same diocese and shall continue distinct as one of the parishes which comprise the area of that benefice. "

My reasons are:

The Consultation Process with Biddulph, St Lawrence's

The consultation was not done properly by the Leek Deanery and Diocese. The Biddulph PCC was misled into thinking that it was being asked to support an informal arrangement rather than a formal change in the Benefice. At that time neither the Rural Dean or Archdeacon came to a PCC meeting to give us an explanation of what was proposed.

This fed into the timing of our Vacancy and became an issue that I would consider blackmail to our prospective candidates for our vicar's post, that is for full agreement for our candidates to accept the terms of taking on the two parishes as a joint Benefice.

Shortly before this period our now current Vicar Will Drain had been seeking God's guidance about applying for the Vicar post at St Lawrence's, Biddulph.

He felt and still does, a strong passion to be called here and that is reflected in the enthusiasm he has in his ministry and bonds with the people and area of Biddulph.

Unfortunately extra workloads begin to wear people down and can be counter-productive. This is a real danger that I see likely to emerge in the near future when I take a look at available human resources.

Human Resources

It is not profitable or productive to use our limited human resources to prop up a dying church that has a congregation of mainly elderly people.

There are times and circumstances where "Growing the Kingdom" has to be balanced with the best use of human resources.

Our human resources at Biddulph Church are getting elderly too, all in their mid to late 70's: Rev Lindsay Clowes (Assistant Minister), Rev Keith Jones (Retired Vicar) and Mrs Jill Gover (Reader).

St Lawrence's Biddulph has 3 Sunday services weekly and 1 weekly Wednesday morning service. It also conducts many Funeral services, and St Lawrence's Biddulph is always popular for Baptisms, for which we give thanks to God. I would think this is much more than most places of worship.

Taking Holy Communion to Rushton will be required at key events in the Christian calendar. There is no escaping the fact that this will take the vicar away from a church that is already very busy at these times.

To take 15% of the incumbent's time to prop up another church will only result in burn-out and/or less effective ministry.

The needs of Biddulph Parish have grown over the last few years as have all thriving parishes. GDPR, Health and safety and other legal requirements of this modern age all impact on workload. Yes, some responsibility lies with the PCC for these issues but clergy are frequently in the centre of it.

I saw what happened to our previous vicar as I was close to him for a few months as I helped him with a fruitful Alpha Course. He was on the verge of a breakdown with a heavy work load so had a 3 month sabbatical. He never seemed to fully recover from the relentless demands on him.

Access to Rushton Church.

Rushton church is along a very narrow single track road signed "Unsuitable for Vehicles". The lane has embanked sides most of the way, is about 2 miles long, has few passing places and the Church itself is situated across a field part way along this lane. I am told that the church itself has no toilet facilities?

Yesterday, Sunday 23rd July I decided to have a drive myself to the church. I took some photographs from the car. Yes, lovely countryside!

There are numerous blind bends, high ground embankments and hardly any passing places. I didn't see a sign to the Church as I negotiated that lane, so I couldn't find it! I wasn't prepared to drive back all the way along that road so I continued on to escape at the other end!

I'm told since returning from my drive out, that there is a small sign on a wall at the entrance to the field where the church is.

I have put a few photographs for anyone unfamiliar with the geography of access in Appendix 1.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my points of view.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Beech

Appendix 1.

Here is the start of the access road:



I met this blue car that thankfully reversed a long way (the photos show it reversing around 2 minutes) to a passing place, to prevent me having to reverse back on the busy main road.



11. John Heath

Dear Mrs Lowe,

I wish to express my objection to the proposed idea to put Horton St Michael's Church to Endon with Bagnall. I have attended this Church for the last 50 years and hope to continue doing so.

We were told this would be not a problem but after a meeting with Endon with Bagnall we find that it would mean a big change in the pattern of worship in our Church which we don't want!

We were part of a Benefice that worked well with Parishes similar to ours, being quite rural with large farming communities whereas Endon with Bagnall are quite urban. We get people in the congregation from Endon and Bagnall who dislike the Evangelical services there and choose to come to Horton instead.

Regards

John Heath

12. Patricia Salt

Dear Ms Lowe

I understand that there are proposed changes to the way my church, Horton St Michaels is to be run. I am very happy with the way things are and do not wish for the service structure to change to be evangelical type of service.

I have attended Horton St Michaels since I moved to the area in 1973 and worked hard as a school governor to make sure our children have a happy Christian grounding for life.

I am proud to be a member of the congregation and why would you change something which works so well.

Please can you acknowledge receipt of this email.

Kind regards

Patricia Salt

13. Andrew Shufflebotham

Mrs Katie Lowe
Pastoral Division
Church Commissioners
Church House
Great Smith Street
LONDON SW1P 3AZ

24th July 2023

Dear Katie

Re. Draft Pastoral Scheme – Deanery of Leek – Diocese of Lichfield

I am one of the churchwardens at St. Lawrence's Parish Church, Biddulph.

When discussions began on proposed pastoral reorganisation in the Leek Deanery, St. Lawrence's was in Vacancy. I was a PCC member and chaired PCC meetings. I became a Deanery Synod member in April 2021 and churchwarden in 2023.

Whilst understanding the need for some reorganisation in the Leek Deanery, particularly in regard to missional aspirations and deployment of resources, I write in opposition to the proposed scheme for the reasons below:

1. The Team put together to research, assess needs and produce draft proposals for the Leek Deanery Pastoral Scheme, the Shaping for Mission Team (SfM Team), was not properly constituted.

At the time of its creation, in late 2020, we were in the middle of the Covid crisis, Leek Deanery was without a Rural Dean, and there were no physical or virtual meetings of the Deanery Synod. (A Rural Dean was appointed in early 2021.)

- a. Parochial Church Councils, Deanery Synod representatives and Churchwardens of parishes within the Deanery were not properly consulted about the membership of the SfM Team or asked if they wished to put forward names to be considered for the Team.
- b. The membership of the Team was not agreed by or ratified by Deanery Synod. Lichfield Diocese website has a section about Shaping for Mission. The section about membership of Shaping for Mission teams states that, *'The final membership of the team will be agreed with the Archdeacon and Deanery Synod.'* (See Appendix 1) In the Leek Deanery,

names of team members were not brought to Deanery Synod and Synod members were not given an opportunity to comment or agree. Later, a few additional members, mainly clergy, were added to the Team. These additional names were not brought to Deanery Synod or agreed by its members.

- c. The Diocese website document talks about a *'variety of people who between them bring a range of perspectives, experiences, gifts and skills, and a shared desire to see Christian mission flourish in their deanery'*, who should form part of a SfM Team. As can be seen in Appendix 2b, Appendix 3 and Appendix 7, the composition of the Leek SfM Team was drawn from a very narrow group of people and included very few from the wide range suggested.

2. The process of consultation was not followed correctly.

- a. Deanery Synod's initial engagement with the proposals was at a meeting on the 19th October (see Appendix 3a). The proposals were explained as 'linking' parishes together. This is clear from the Rural Dean's notes from the meeting (see Appendix 2a and Appendix 2b). At this meeting, no reference was made to changes to Benefices within the Deanery. It was proposed that St. Lawrence's, Biddulph, could be 'linked' with the Parish of Rushton Spencer, and that this would involve providing help, support, and a proportion of our vicar's time.
- b. The above proposal of a 'link' was further reinforced at the next meeting of Synod on 18th January 2022 (see Appendix 3c). Churchwardens were supposedly invited to this meeting but our churchwardens did not receive an invitation nor was the invitation mentioned in the notice of the meeting (see Appendix 3b).

It was the proposal of a 'link', from this meeting, that we were asked to take back to our PCCs. The outcome of our discussion should then be communicated to the Rural Dean and Archdeacon as a formal PCC proposal. It was brought to a meeting of our PCC on the 21st February 2022 (Appendix 4) and, after discussion, a majority voted to accept the 'link'.

- c. A short time after the PCC's vote, an email arrived from our Patron (Martyrs Memorial and Church of England Trust), informing us that Benefice changes were under discussion and that a change to the Benefice Patronage was likely to be proposed. Before this email arrived neither the PCC or our churchwardens had heard anything about this.

(Appendix 5 & Appendix 6 show the email communications between the Diocese, the Patron and the Churchwardens.)

- d. Detailed minutes of Deanery Synod meetings were not kept making it difficult to track discussions. The customary practice, at the start of Synod and PCC meetings, is for the minutes of the previous meeting to be accepted. In Leek Deanery, Synod members are not given an opportunity to ratify the minutes, comment on their accuracy or to discuss matters arising from them.
- e. The first time that any clarity about proposed Benefice changes was brought to Deanery Synod was in the meeting of 26th April 2022 (see Appendix 7), after the vote by PCCs.

3. The letter from the Bishop

At the point where St. Lawrence's was about to advertise for a new Incumbent, a statement from the Bishop of Stafford (Appendix 8) was issued. It was to accompany the advertisement and the Parish Profile. This included a sentence about possible changes – *'It is likely that St Lawrence's will be asked to take on an additional small parish in the deanery.'* The statement does not mention any change to the Benefice of Biddulph.

4. The question of tradition and geography

To enable a Benefice to achieve the optimum impact missionally, its parishes need to be able work together effectively and efficiently, and to share common beliefs.

- a. St. Lawrence's, Biddulph, defines itself as 'open evangelical' whereas Rushton Spencer holds a more central churchmanship.
- b. But of most concern to me, is the geography of the two parishes. Although, together, we are part of the Staffordshire Moorlands, the town of Biddulph has closer links with Congleton to the north and the Potteries to the south, and the parish has close links with its neighbours within the town. The Parish of Rushton, however, has much closer links with Leek and, to a lesser extent, Macclesfield. There is no major road connecting Biddulph with Rushton Spencer.

If changes are needed, it would make far more sense, missionally, to 'link' the Anglican churches in the Biddulph valley together – St. Lawrence's, Biddulph, St. John's, Knypersley, and Christ Church, Biddulph Moor. These churches already have the same Patron, are of a similar churchmanship, and work well with each other and with other denominations through Christians Together in ST8 (Biddulph Churches Together). This would help create a common

missional outreach to the whole town and district of Biddulph. If the proposal as it currently stands is agreed, it would be much more difficult to make yet another change to the Benefice in the near future.

The parishes of Knypersley and Biddulph Moor are already part of a single Benefice and I appreciate that a further reorganisation might add an extra level of complexity to the proposals, but this is surely an option worth exploring in order to forward the mission of the church in the Biddulph area. With appropriate staffing, this would seem to me to be an adequate solution.

It would also seem sensible, and much more beneficial to the people of Rushton, for the Parish of Rushton Spencer to be linked with one of the Leek churches.

5. The new vicar

Following the departure of our previous vicar, the Covid 19 pandemic, and a long Vacancy, St. Lawrence's has, despite lots of prayer and energy, struggled missionally in its attempts at engaging with under 40s, young families and children.

The arrival of our new Incumbent, Revd Will Drain in September last year, has been a breath of fresh air and brought a new lease of life to the church. He, together with our Children's and Families' Leader, is working tirelessly to build up this vital area of church life. This hard work is just beginning to bear fruit. A concern is that, with any proposed pastoral reorganisation or redeployment of clergy, the amount of Will's time taken up with another parish might well have an adverse effect on his ministry in Biddulph and the good work he has begun to do with all age groups but specifically with the under 40s.

If the scheme, as proposed, does go ahead, I would hope that the diocese would regularly monitor Will's workload and provide adequate support if required.

I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposals. As I stated at the beginning of my letter, I appreciate that there is need for change. I present the above points to you for your consideration and ask that, in the light of them, you will urge a reconsideration of the proposals as they stand.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Shufflebotham (Churchwarden of St. Lawrence's Parish Church, Biddulph)

Andrew also included as part of his representation Appendix 1 "Forming a Shaping for Mission deanery team" from the Lichfield Diocese – attached as a separate document.

14. Melanie Myatt

Dear Mrs Lowe

I have been a parishioner of Horton Parish for the past 25 years and a PCC member for the past 5 years; I wish to register my opposition to the draft proposal for the reorganisation of the Leek Deanery with respect to the proposal of dissolving the benefice of Cheddleton, Longsdon, Horton and Rushton and creating a benefice which would see Horton join the Parishes of Bagnall and Endon.

My opposition is based on fundamental disparities between Horton Church and the Churches of Bagnall and Endon.

Horton is a rural church in a largely farming community; the congregation is made up of people whose families have worshiped at the church for generations. This deep connection with the farming community can be seen at weddings, funerals and baptisms when the farming families turn out in large numbers and can be depended on when the church organises community events with every seat taken. This is in contrast to the churches of Bagnall and Endon which have a different make up of congregation given that they serve a more urban area, thereby having different needs and interests. We tend to have much more in common with other rural churches such as Rushton and Meerbrook who have similar congregation background and Churchmanship.

Horton is a parish within the Leek postal area, the population regularly travel to Leek for education, health care and amenities and should stay within the Leek Area Benefices. Bagnall and Endon are Stoke on Trent postcodes and have their own schools and health care.

Horton has been without a vicar for around 5 years which has been a difficult time, exacerbated by the covid pandemic . We have however maintained the building well, paid our parish share and continued the tradition of mainly weekly Holy Communion services with the assistance of wonderful retired vicars. Under the new proposals Horton would be given 15% of the vicar's time this means that very few vicar led services would be possible. Without access to the retired vicars system we would not be able to provide the services as they are expected and given at the moment. Endon and Bagnall have a more evangelical approach and have services led by volunteers. This is a difference in Churchmanship with differences in style of worship and delivery of services which would not work for Horton, additionally we do not have available volunteers amongst an already time constrained farming congregation.

Along with other churches we have suffered from the lack of a central figurehead since the last vicar left and for some time prior to this as the last vicar was unwell for some time. Under the new proposal we would only be awarded 15% of a new vicars time, this is insufficient for a parish which

has been without a vicar for so long and requires a central pastoral leader to support growth and consistency for the parishioners.

Horton St Michael's CE First School & Nursery is the school which the children of the parish attend. It has always had close links to the church. Previous vicars have taken on the roles of School Governor and held regular assemblies at the school. My own children attended the school and regularly spoke of visits by the vicar and we all looked forward to the School Christmas Carol Service held in the church. If the realignment were to take place as planned with Horton only receiving 15% of the vicars time such close links would be lost as the vicar would not have the time to commit to the school. We would thereby lose the close connection along with the children who may follow on into the church. Horton St Michael's First School is a feeder school to the Leek Middle School system and Leek High Schools, any links into Leek are very important for when these rural children move into the bigger Leek schools. The schools at Bagnall and Endon Schools are feeder schools to Endon High School and the city colleges therefore there is no common link for the pupils of Horton.

The reason for this re organisation has been identified as financial cost, but the cost to the parish of Horton is more than financial. We would lose our identity and be a small fraction of a benefice in which we would not fit.

Please could you send acknowledgement of the receipt of this message.

Yours faithfully

Melanie Myatt

15. Lorraine Hare

Good morning Katie,

I wish to convey my own personal concerns and reject the proposal you have given St Chads, Longsdon and St Michaels Church, Horton.

St Chads & St Michaels has been without an incumbent for more than 5 years, yet despite this, we have maintained our numbers, continued to do our best in the somewhat difficult circumstances, holding regular Sundays services, conducting many weddings, many Baptisms and Funerals, whilst continuing to fundraise.

I feel that the process of the splitting up of the benefice has been forced upon us. There has been meetings but within these meeting we have been talked over, and given a dark and a bleak future if we do not play along. There has been absolutely no space to suggest alternatives, in fact, I would say that we have been given no other way, but presented with this plan as the only available option. This has not

been consultation as views have not been heard and listened to, or if they have, they have been quickly dismissed. Even the minutes do not show anything other than compliance to the suggested plan.

I have come away from these meetings feeling low and despondent. The downsides of the proposal includes such thing as the suggestion of turning people away if we cannot afford a baptism for example, and always the **threat** of “festival church” left hanging in the air. These proposals do not fill me with optimism for a bright future for St Chads or St Michaels.

There must be alternative, one that keeps the close bond that these two churches hold together, a part time position maybe or at least grant us the support to explore what other options are available. You must acknowledge that we function well together, we all hold the same values and worship the same way.

To disband this arrangement would leave St Chads church lost under the demands of a larger church, and for St Michaels way of life, and indeed worship changed forever - and at what cost would all this come? This is not the way to grow a church community!

Yours sincerely,

Lorraine Hare
Member of St Chads Church

16. Louise Boulton

Dear Mrs Lowe,

Concerning the reorganisation of the Parish of Horton. I wish to oppose the draft proposal to join Horton with Endon and Bagnal.

I have lived in Horton parish for 30 years. My son attended Horton School, and I attend church. I feel that the new proposal, with 15% of the Vicars time to Horton, does not provide enough time to give the services that are required. It will also not give the time for the Vicar to get involved in the, which is a Church of England school.

Please could you acknowledge the receipt of this email.

Yours sincerely

Louise Boulton.

17. Joyce Sillito

Submission to the Church Commissioners

I wish to object to the draft proposed scheme concerning St Michael's Church Horton.

At the church, I am on the Pcc and also the organist.

During recent months the information came to us that Cpas was to become admitted to the patronage of the new proposed benefice

I believe that this could result in a dramatic change to our style of worship.

During the interregnum Horton Church has been privileged in having fully trained vicars to conduct the service. Under the new proposed system, I believe, the weekly Sunday services will largely be taken by lay people. I don't think that this would contribute to a growing congregation.

Also the small allocation of the priests time (.15%) would be detrimental to the life of the Church. Horton parish has a junior school and a special school which I would like to think that a new priest would be able to find the time to incorporate the children into church life.

I sincerely hope that other options may be considered for our Church.

Yours sincerely

Joyce Sillito

18. Callum Beswick

Dear Mrs Lowe,

As a parishioner of the Church of St Michael and All Angels, Horton within the Diocese of Lichfield, I would like to strongly object to the draft proposals of the Diocesan Committee which would result in the dissolution of the current benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer, with Horton Church becoming part of the benefice of Bagnall with Endon. The reasons for this objection are detailed below:

First of all, as a parishioner who was baptised at the church, I believe that the current benefice meets the requirements for our parish, offering weekly Church services presided over by a Vicar which are well attended at significant religious events e.g. Easter, Harvest and Christmas. The provision of a vicar for the benefice also ensures that family events such as Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals are able to be properly conducted. The current benefice combines four relatively similar parishes, which (with the exception of Cheddleton) are rural parishes with the congregations consisting primarily of people connected with the farming community.

The proposal to place Horton in a benefice with Bagnall and Endon would result in Horton (a very rural parish) being combined with two parishes which are much more urban (particularly Endon which consists of a large built up village). The needs of people in terms of worship in these parishes are, in my opinion, quite different - in a rural parish such as Horton we value a traditional church service presided over by a qualified vicar, whereas those in more urban parishes may find modern forms of worship more appropriate. We have been informed that the current proposal would

result in Horton only receiving a vicar approximately six times per year which would mean that some important events in the religious calendar would not be marked with a proper service and the provision available for family events (Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals) would be severely affected. I am led to believe that Bagnall and Endon practice a form of "Evangelical Worship" - this would not in my opinion, match the expectations of those in rural parishes such as ours and therefore wish to join other parishioners in objecting to this form of worship being forced upon us.

I personally believe that there must be a more logical grouping of parishes available. For example, if Cheddleton is required/wishes to join with Leek benefice, could a new benefice consisting of Horton, Longsdon, Rushton Spencer and Meerbrook be created. Meerbrook is a parish which is much more similar to ours than Endon or Bagnall and would, in my opinion, provide a much more logical grouping.

I hope that the Church Commissioners will support us, the parishioners of St Michael's Church, Horton and request that the diocese reconsider these unwelcome and unwanted proposals. I would appreciate it if you could indicate your receipt of this objection.

Your sincerely,

Mr Callum Beswick

19. Paul Roebuck

Dear Mrs Lowe

I am writing in connection with the proposed changes which will affect St. Lawrence's Biddulph and St. Lawrence's Rushton Spencer churches.

I recognize that changes have to be made due to all sorts of different circumstances, many of which I am probably not aware of. However, I am not sure that the proposal to combine the 2 St. Lawrences into one benefice is a practical solution. I will outline some of my concerns later on in my email.

My understanding is that St. Lawrence's Rushton Spencer is a very small congregation, a dozen people maximum I have heard. While I fully understand that the people who worship there will want to keep the church going as long as possible, I feel it would be a much better idea for them to become part of a bigger congregation. That could be St. Lawrence's Biddulph, but not necessarily. I realise that this may be a hard thing for them to do, but could actually be an amazing way forward for them if they grasped hold of the possibilities that could come out of such a decision. I suspect that the proposal being made will only delay the inevitable closure of St. Lawrence's Rushton Spencer.

Here are my concerns about the proposal being suggested:

1. Will Drain as vicar at St. Lawrence's Biddulph is already working at 100% capacity. He has been with us almost a year and he is full of ideas to move

- the church forward. My concern is that if 15% of his time is to be spent at St. Lawrence's Rushton Spencer what will he have to drop at Biddulph?
2. I suspect Will would be very susceptible to burn out. 15% of his time will not cover all that he will have to do at Rushton Spencer. Sunday services, PCC, Standing Committee, Finances, Building projects, Managing all the different people involved. It just won't happen in the 15% and so he will end up overworking and then dealing with all that might entail for him and his family.
 3. Travelling time alone will be a major issue, you are looking at a 50-minute round trip minimum spent on the road!
 4. We already have 4 very different services each week at St. Lawrence's Biddulph.
 5. St. Lawrence's Biddulph is a large church with many different issues that Will is already dealing with. What will happen when there is a crisis at St. Lawrence's Rushton Spencer, and it will happen! He will end up having to spend more than the allotted 15%.
 6. At St. Lawrence's Biddulph we are hoping that Will be staying for some time. However, if he decides to move on choosing a new vicar would be difficult for 2 churches with very different theological standpoints.

The above are in no particular order, they are just some of the thoughts that come to mind when thinking about the proposed changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our thoughts and views before any decision is made.

Best wishes

Paul Roebuck
Treasurer St. Lawrence's Biddulph

20. Carole Vickers

Dear Mrs Lowe,

I am writing to you regarding the proposed reorganisation of the benefice of Rushton Spencer and Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent.

As a member of the electoral roll and a regular weekly worshipper I am opposed to this proposal.

St Lawrences Biddulph was without a vicar for two years, the previous vicar having left, one of the contributing factors being the high volume of work.

If you were to visit St Lawrences website you would see the many activities that contribute to this workload.

There are three Sunday services as well as a mid week service.

Baptisms.

Weddings.

An unusually high volume of funerals.

Pastoral care.

There are several children's groups: Kangers and Roos (babies/pre-school), NRG (reception/year 4), NRG+ (years 5/8), Youth (years 9/11).

The church also provides the opportunity to go into the local primary schools, where they provide Open The Book. A wonderful opportunity for the children to see bible stories acted out by members of our church.

During the summer school holidays we have VIBES (a holiday club for reception to year 8).

There are home groups.

Alpha courses.

Kintsugi Hope.

REVS

Involvement in The Biddulph Festival, including the Churches together café in the town hall.

During the winter months the church organised a Nibble and Natter service providing a snack lunch and social interaction for the community.

The vicar is also involved with resurrecting the church music group for our Sunday services.

The congregation of St Lawrences, Biddulph prayed for two years! We prayed that God would send us the 'right' person to lead our worship and to grow our community in faith.

Is it then right to overrule the will of God!

Is it right to undermine and disregard the many heartfelt prayers of the people of Biddulph who prayed for so long for God to provide them with the right vicar after two years of lay readers!

The congregation of St Lawrences, Biddulph have seen their prayers answered in the appointing of Will Drain, and we are as excited as he is to see where his ministry will lead us.

I do not wish to see Wills enthusiasm and his love for the people of Biddulph diluted by your proposal.

I do not wish to see our much loved vicar lost to added pressure or to a position that is not in his heart.

I therefore graciously request that the proposal of the committee be reconsidered.

Yours in Christ

Carole. A. Vickers

21. Eileen Moss

Nature of interest in case

Member of Horton Parish for 73 Years

Is your representation for or against the draft scheme or order (required)

Against

Representation:

I Have Been a member of Horton parish for 73 years and my family have attended Horton for generations.

I oppose the draft scheme for Horton to join the parishes of Bagnall & Endon

My Reason for opposition is the change in service style of worship which would occur. I have attended Holy Communion each week and in this proposal it would not be possible if we had no vicar each week.

We have had no vicar for five years and we need a new leader to move us forward.

22. Mary James and family

Letter to the Church Commissioners regarding the Proposed Pastoral Scheme concerning The United Benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer within the Leek Deanery, Diocese of Lichfield.

To the Church Commissioners,

I write as a lifelong parishioner (57 years) and PCC member of the Parish of Horton to **STRONGLY OBJECT** to the proposals for our United Benefice.

When the proposed changes were first put to our parish it was with the impression that if they were not accepted then there would be no alternative but to see church closures.

I feel we were not adequately informed or advised of the process and the potential changes we would see, and not given any opportunity to discuss possible alternatives.

The Parish of Horton St. Michaels is irrefutably rural and agricultural. Regular worship is maintained by many families and the church remains in a good state of repair. The proposal to combine our parish with that of Endon with Bagnall, which is predominantly a suburban area, seems ill advised as there is a complete contrast between the two. We currently have a Holy Communion service every Sunday and have done for as long as I can remember. The draft proposals with its lay led worship, and the proposed change of Patronage to include CPAS, will inevitably lead to a complete change in churchmanship for Horton which currently remains very traditional. With the involvement of CPAS in the appointment of clergy a more evangelical approach is inevitable. This is not what the parishioners of Horton wish to see and I feel this would result in a reduction in church attendance.

We have a church primary school attended by three generations of my family which has always had strong involvement and connections with the church. The Parish priest visited school weekly and actively encouraged children to attend church and become involved. The importance of the visibility and active involvement of a Parish Priest in all local events cannot be understated and home visits to parishioners, particularly the elderly, are an important part of the church.

I feel that all alternative possibilities have not been considered and certainly not been discussed with the parish. There are opportunities to maybe combine other rural parishes (e.g. Meerbrook with Rushton, Longsdon and Horton) to establish a rural Benefice of parishes of a similar nature who could pay for an incumbent.

I urge you to consider the proposals very carefully as I feel they will be damaging to our parish and the future of our church.

Yours faithfully

Mary James and family

23. Annette Bailey

Submission to the Church Commissioners
By Mrs Annette Bailey member of
St Chads Longsdon, part of the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon
and Rushton Spencer.

I am writing in protest at the draft submitted to us to reorganise our benefice. I am a parishioner who worships and is a member of the PCC at St Chads Longsdon.

On the 22nd January 2023 St Chads parishioners and PCC members met with Dr Megan Smith and Bishop Matthew Parker. This was to discuss the reorganisation of our Church communities in the surrounding area. We were given no alternative, at this meeting than to accept their proposal, joining our rural Church of St Chads, to St Edwards Church in Leek along with 5 other Churches under the guidance of one Vicar! A Proposal to sell the parsonages too. So even if we advertised for a vicar, where would they live? In my opinion the above equates to the destruction of our strong rural community of worshipers of St Chads and our United Benefice. The Church's in this benefice are strongly United. Thankfully we have been informed by Rev Stephen Anderson we have a choice of sustaining our communities. This was not at any point given to us at the meeting on 22nd January 2023. (Under Section 1 of the Mission and Pastoral matters 2011. It fails the test 3(1)-(3). As Father Stephen Anderson informed us, this scheme does not meet the needs of us, the parishioners.

The proposal will destroy our community of prayer, services, sacraments and worship of God. Local Churches have great importance in keeping places of worship thriving and growing in their communities. Our Church of St Chads Longsdon is open every Sunday and is used greatly to welcome children by baptism, couples to marry and of course, laying our fellow villagers to rest. Supporting our rural community through their lives.

Five years ago we lost our Vicar Rev Amanda Pike through ill health. This left the United benefice adrift with no Shepherd. This made a huge difference to parishioners.

At that time, to my knowledge an advertisement was placed for a new Vicar. There were apparently no applicants. No other effort was made in that five years to advertise vigorously for a Vicar/Shepherd to lead the benefice. I understand the drop in ordinations but there are substantial people being ordained as remarked on in the press.

I understand one of the "excuses" to down grade our communities and possibly shut our Churches was the financial deficit. I understand the deficit could be dealt with the Diocesan stipends to clear the deficit.

I understand there is a release of 5.85 million pounds of unapplied return within the DSF. Cost of a stipendiary priest would be 1 per cent on an annual basis.

I feel totally misled. The information above should have been shared with our benefice as a choice. Choice which we weren't given.

I fully endorse Father Stephen Anderson proposals to sustain our rural communities. In this case our United Benefice of Longsdon Cheddleton, Horton and Rushton Spenser.

Also Thinking of his proposal of substituting the parish of Cheddleton with St Matthews Meerbrook thus retaining our rural identity (quite different to a urban/suburban identity)

The identity of our rural congregation, encompasses the population of families and particularly the elderly and sick in the parishes. The proposal to link our rural communities with Leek will be a further reduction in Church attendance and growth of our Christian community. We would end up with the bare minimum of services and little support to our communities from the Vicar.

I look forward to your understanding and change of heart to the proposals to reorganise our benefice and worship.

Yours sincerely
Annette Bailey
Parishioner and PCC of St Chads Longsdon
PCC member

24. Fr Stephen Anderson

**Submission to the Church Commissioners
by The Revd Stephen Anderson
regarding the
Draft Pastoral Scheme**

**concerning
The United Benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon
and Rushton Spencer (the “United Benefice”)
within the Leek Deanery, Diocese of Lichfield**

https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/draft_scheme_31072023_cheddleton_horton_longsdon_etc.pdf

Overall Summary of my views:

Specifically:

This proposed Pastoral Reorganisation scheme is not being advanced for a proper purpose under the enabling legislation. I wish to object to it.

It does not further mission under section 1 of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 (the “MPM”). It fails the tests under sections 3(1)-(3). Please may I respectfully remind the MPCPC of its function under section 3 of the MPM?

It has been voted down unanimously by the PCC at Horton (6th November 2022).

This is because the scheme does not meet the needs of the parishioners here, does not respect their needs and traditions and therefore appears more, rather than less (as is misleadingly claimed in the reasons given for the proposals) likely to lead to parish church closures.

There are missional and financial alternatives, which the Diocese has failed to consider although it is required to do so; these are proposed below.

Living among the people gives me a claim to local knowledge which is at least as informed and relevant as that of the Diocese. As a priest, I do not judge the scheme, if implemented, likely to achieve the “better cure of souls” as the legislation requires. It does not benefit worship, mission or community.

The Commissioners should be proactively concerned to prevent this kind of scheme which appears to be in neither the intention nor the spirit of the legislation. The imbalance of power between people and diocese is very apparent in cases where proposals for genuine alternatives are not sought and the United Benefice has long been left by the Diocese without an incumbent priest.

- **My locus standi as an objector**

My interest in the proposed Pastoral Scheme is as priest, parishioner and PCC member, which I submit gives me some informed credibility to also judge what is appropriate locally for the cure of souls.

My concerns include, but are not limited to, the proposal **to transfer the parish of Horton to the benefice of Bagnall with Endon.**

I retired to Horton in December 2021, having been a parish priest in Cambridge until October that year.

I have been granted Permission to Officiate by the Bishop of Lichfield and, during the current vacancy, I am called upon regularly to officiate both at Horton and elsewhere in the United Benefice.

I am a member of the PCC at Horton by co-option; and I am in attendance by invitation at the PCC at Longsdon.

More broadly, I Chair the Finance Committee of the Fellowship of St John the Evangelist currently (a £12m grants giving charity).

Before ordination, I was the Chapter Steward of York Minster; Chief Executive of the St Andrew Holborn Foundation; and subsequently Executive Director of the Academy of Social Sciences. I am also a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.

In an earlier secular career in finance and commerce, I have been the Chief Operating Officer of a major insurance company and a director of various financial operations.

Stated Objectives of the Proposed Scheme

The stated objectives of the draft Proposal are to “allow all parishes [*in the Leek Deanery*] to have a sustainable future, both missionally and financially ... preventing any church closures within the deanery”.

This statement can be tested and found wanting under the following sub-headings.

1. Missional

I do not believe this scheme to be in furtherance of mission, therefore the Diocese appears to be in breach of Section 1 and Section 3(1) in Part I of the MPM.

To those of us with local knowledge of the relevant communities, there is a patent failure by the Diocese to consider Section 3(2)(c) of the MPM: “In carrying out any of its functions the mission and pastoral committee shall also have regard to — ...

(c) the traditions, needs and characteristics of particular parishes.”

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/MPM%202011%20as%20in%20effect%2001032019.pdf>

- **Recruiting a Parish Priest.**

The United Benefice has been left vacant for some 5 years now, but effectively for much longer, as the previous incumbent was unfortunately unwell and required extended periods of sick leave before her departure. The Diocese would be profiting from its own dereliction of duty if allowed to bring a scheme now.

With the right appointment, the recruitment of a parish priest could well herald a new era of growth and development of the congregation, with increased giving.

But it has been decided not to pursue this conventional and time-honoured approach. Instead, the presumption appears to be that it will be more costly and less successful than alternative proposals, now the subject of the Draft Pastoral Scheme.

It is difficult to see how the mission of the church is furthered, or how this scheme could make church closures less likely to result, when the Church of England's own research shows that church attendance is correlated with the presence of stipendiary clergy in an area.

Reducing the number of parish clergy, when clergy are affordable (see below), would seem therefore to be counter intuitive and lead to relatively unproductive outcomes.

- **Characteristics of the parish community.**

Horton is overwhelmingly rural in character and relies heavily on farming. Indeed, every member of the 10 person PCC (except me) either lives on a farm or has done so recently.

Bagnall with Endon are essentially suburban parishes, with a high proportion of professional and blue-collar workers.

There is a complete mismatch in the character of these parishes with Horton and the missional needs of each are quite different.

Parishioners at Horton want to see a priest visible in the community, engaged in visiting and associated pastoral work with the two schools in the parish and farmers in their homes. This is a less likely outcome in these draft Proposals, which would stretch a priest, located in a much further away parish, far too thinly.

Generally speaking, the neglect of, and discrimination against the needs and wishes of, rural parishes like Horton in leaving them without a parish priest for long periods and then trying to force them into groups with urban parishes in disregard of their geography, tradition and way of living, on the basis of a spurious claim that this will "better" serve the cure of souls, is a distortion of the true picture.

Mission here is about nurturing faith through habits of commitment and patient pastoral care and friendship. It takes time to build trust and confidence and with just a 0.15-time allocation by a priest from Bagnall with Endon, is unlikely to be achieved. **The proposal fails the test of providing for the better cure of souls.**

This is the more dismaying coming from a Church administrative body which exists to serve the parishes and is funded by them. It should respectfully be remembered that rural parishes “punch far above their weight” in terms of church attendance and giving.

- **Natural centres.**

Bagnall is 6 miles away and Endon is 4 miles away from Horton. Bagnall with Endon are not day-to-day destinations for Horton parishioners. As suburban locations, they are places to pass through on the way to and from Stoke-On-Trent.

All the many local supermarkets, full range of shops, GP surgeries, Cottage Hospital, transport links are available in Leek, which is about the same distance from Horton as it is to Endon.

Given the known and well documented reluctance of congregations to travel to other churches, there is no reason to think that Horton people will be any different, especially in circumstances where there is just no regular reason for association anyway.

Crucially, Horton just does not “identify” with Bagnall with Endon and so sociological factors will work against the proposed amalgamation.

- **Public Transport links.**

Mobility will be severely restricted in the proposed Benefice because there are no direct public transport links at all between Horton and Bagnall with Endon. This discriminates against the elderly and the poor.

- **Form of worship.**

The usual pattern of worship in the United Benefice overwhelmingly is for a celebration of the Holy Communion each Sunday (44 out of 50 services during the year ending June 2023). This has been the pattern for at least a generation and more.

There are 60 occasions (Sundays and Festivals) when worship would ordinarily be offered during the year. Based on the deployment model provided by the Diocese, Horton will be allocated 15% of the incumbent's available time in the new Benefice. This would mean cover by the incoming incumbent for 9 services during the year. The question arises - by whom are the remaining 51 services to be officiated?

The “big idea” in the draft Proposals envisages the development of lay led worshipping communities. This is problematic in terms of recruitment within a farming community, the capability to preach and officiate worship and then engage pastorally with the congregation. Not everyone has the time, the particular gifts required or can be trained effectively in them.

There also appears to be a morale-destroying undervaluing of the importance of parish clergy being present in the community for both the cure of souls and pastoral care. This is of the essence in rural places, where the Church has much to offer and sometimes the parish church is the only focus for community.

In these circumstances, the Holy Communion cannot legally be celebrated by having lay presidency. Communion can of course be offered by Extension, by an appropriately trained and authorised person, but it is not intended for regular use.

Instead, the presumption must be that Holy Communion is likely to be replaced by lay volunteer led services of the Word.

It is therefore highly likely that Horton will be deprived of the regular reception of the Sacrament, and this would amount to a fundamental change of churchmanship. This is a failure to respect its tradition – although the MPM requires this to be done.

Of course, it is possible that local retired clergy could continue to be asked to celebrate the Holy Communion. However, it is difficult to see that the PCC would receive sufficient financial support to pay both the level of Ministry Share requested by the Diocese (for an arrangement imposed on the parish) and for the ministrations of retired priests from current income.

After being kept waiting for more than five years for a priest and active pastoral care in a rural community, to make a sweeping change to lay led ministry (if available) signals the withdrawal of the Church in a way which is likely to have a detrimental effect on the future financial support available.

- **Patronage and the character of worship.**

The churchmanship of Horton lies within the central tradition, whereas that of Bagnall with Endon is more evangelical.

The admission of the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS), into the patronage of the proposed Benefice will lead to a change in the churchmanship at Horton.

The Objective of CPAS, expressed on the Home Page of their website (accessed 2nd July 2023), reads as follows:

“Our current ministry involves ... appointing evangelical clergy to our patronage parishes”.

CPAS always place their logo on every vacancy advert with which they are associated as patrons and that immediately conveys the kind of candidate that is being sought in terms of churchmanship.

Bagnall with Endon seems likely to be more receptive than Horton to evangelical clergy. While it is difficult to give a prognosis until an appointment has been made, it is likely that not only will the format of worship be likely to change at Horton, but the way it is conducted too, further driving the change in churchmanship which is likely to result in reduced congregation numbers and giving. This is again a failure to respect its tradition as the MPM requires. It seems indifferent to the faithful witness and giving which has been seen until now.

- **Occasional Offices.**

During the 12 months ending June 2023, there were 3 Baptisms, 1 Wedding and 10 Funerals at Horton. Who would officiate at these services in future when the incoming incumbent could well have a greater number at Bagnall with Endon and be unable to delegate to lay leaders?

As is the case at Horton, funerals in the farming community are extremely well attended, with full churches. This offers the Church a most significant role in local people's lives, encourages them to confront their own preparation for the life hereafter and keeps them engaged with God, their Maker and Redeemer, in a very positive way. The significance to families of seeing their loved ones buried by a priest who knew the deceased is immeasurable at a time of grief and loss.

2. Financial

The Diocese has a financial deficit. Apparently to cut costs, the Leek Deanery has been tasked with “losing” a stipendiary clergy post.

- **Overall Diocesan position**

It is a red herring to suggest that this scheme is a financial necessity. The Lichfield DBF deficit is just under £1m at the most recent set of accounts (2021). However, there is enough money in the Diocesan Stipends Fund (“DSF”) to clear that - and, if necessary, use the resulting ‘spare’ parish share for other purposes.

- **Total Return Accounting.**

Moreover, any financial case for disbanding benefices and reducing clergy numbers falls away with the adoption of Total Return Accounting for the DSF. A proposal in this regard is progressing through the Diocesan approvals process, most recently at the Diocesan Synod on 28th June 2023.

The paper from the Diocesan Board of Finance shows that, as at the end of 2021, this will release £5.85m of Unapplied Return within the DSF. The cost of engaging a stipendiary priest would be just 1% of this figure on an annual basis.

Far from needing to reduce parochial stipendiary clergy numbers in the Diocese, a greater number could in fact be engaged and parish amalgamations avoided.

The financial case to reduce stipendiary parochial clergy numbers by dissolving the current United Benefice and dispose of The Vicarage (at Cheddleton) is made irrelevant if the Unapplied Return is used to sustain parochial stipendiary clergy numbers.

The Church Commissioners should therefore consider that the stated basis for the scheme is inapplicable and misleading.

- **Selection for dissolution without considering financial alternatives.**

The United Benefice has been selected for dissolution on financial grounds when the combined Parish Share is £65,000.

It is well able to pay for an Incumbent directly. If not for a full-time parish priest (generally costed at around £55,000), then either a proportion of a priest's time (Half Time at around £40,000) or, at the very least, a House for Duty priest (at around £20,000) could well be afforded.

These options do not appear to have been fully considered by the Diocese via proper discussion with the parishes. This puts the Diocese in clear breach of its obligation to consider alternative proposals under the MPM Code of Practice (para 2.35, third bullet, and para 2.38): <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/MPM%202011%20Code%20of%20Practice%20-%20volume%201%20-%206th%20May%202021.pdf>

The draft proposal to dissolve the United Benefice therefore seems a political and not financial one. It is timed to take advantage of the current Vacancy in the Benefice when parishes are more vulnerable.

The Church Commissioners need to be more alive to the inequality of power and unfairness which this adds to a one-sided process which is familiar to the Diocese, but completely unfamiliar to parish volunteers, at a time when they are already expected to cope with running the parishes in the United Benefice, having unreasonably been left by the Diocese for a long period without an incumbent.

- **Conduct of process**

The consultation process has not been conducted properly as time and again in various meetings at parish level, the Diocese has led the laity into believing that there is no alternative to the current proposals, otherwise the future will result in church closures.

It has required a resolute response at Horton not to accept under pressure the Diocesan proposals.

3. Likelihood of Church Closures

- **There are alternatives.**

It is disingenuous to suggest, as the Diocese does at the end of its statement (and has been communicated repeatedly at meetings with the laity in the Deanery), that any alternative to the proposed Pastoral Scheme will inevitably lead to church closures.

As the Diocese most surely knows, it would be inappropriate to close a church when, as at Horton, the pattern of regular worship is being maintained and the building is kept in good repair.

Closure is not the alternative, but a strong sense of there being no other viable alternative to the current proposals has been conveyed misleadingly to the laity. This is improper and looks like an attempt to pre-empt the argument that the legislation is not being complied with in this respect.

On the contrary, the failure to observe Horton's characteristics, needs and traditions inherent in these proposals make them, to my mind, far less likely to result in the future of its church being "sustainable" as the scheme claims.

- **Alternatives**

With imagination, there are always alternatives. These include:

- **Retain the United Benefice and appoint an Incumbent.**

The obvious alternative is to revert to the status quo ante and engage an incumbent either Full Time or Half Time or at least HFD, based on the Parish Share, where a stipendiary priest can be afforded.

If the Diocese does not wish to retain the current United Benefice Vicarage, then a rental in the area could readily be considered. Rentals are comparatively low in this part of the country and there is a plentiful supply of properties to let in the area.

But the Diocesan hierarchy seem summarily set against this option, having decided it cannot work, without proper evaluation and sharing of the results.

- **Move Horton to the Leek Team.**

A simple alternative would be to place Horton with the Leek Area Team. The Benefice of Bagnall with Endon does not need the 0.15 deployment of Horton to be viable.

This option would be more pastorally sensitive, allowing the existing collaboration, sharing and friendships with Longsdon and Rushton Spencer to be retained.

There is also the benefit of public transport from Rudyard, the largest settlement in the Parish of Horton, with Leek.

Given the similarity in churchmanship with some of the parishes in the Leek Area Team, there would likely be a greater confidence in the continuation of the Holy Communion as the principal service.

- **Create a new rural Benefice.**

In the hinterland around Leek, there is a big swathe of green belt to the west and south of the town, which is overwhelmingly rural in character and where farming is the dominant occupation. The parishes in the area are broadly similar in nature and composition.

Adding Meerbrook to Rushton Spencer, Horton and Longsdon, in the place of Cheddleton, would ensure a Benefice with parishes that have a natural affinity and could pay for an incumbent, at least on a part time basis. The Benefice would surround the town of Leek to the south and west and extend northwards into the Peak District. It might be attractive either as a first incumbency or for a priest not quite wanting to retire fully just yet.

This would mean ceding Meerbrook from the Leek Area Team. This may not necessarily be resisted by the Team Rector.

Based on review and discussions, this would be my preferred alternative option and would, I suggest, command widespread support at Horton, unlike the current proposal, which the PCC has rejected completely.

I urge the Commissioners to hold an oral hearing and, if so, I will wish to speak at it.

The Revd Stephen Anderson

27th July 2023

25. R J Hudson

Dear Mrs. Lowe

I am writing to you to register my objection to the reorganisation of parishes within the Deanery of Leek in the Diocese of Lichfield, insofar as this proposal affects the parish of Horton in that deanery. The proposal is to combine the parish of Horton with the parishes of Endon and Bagnall in a new benefice.

As a lifelong member of the Church of Saint Michael, Horton, and having served as a chorister there for over seventy years, as a PCC member for over thirty years and currently serving my second term of office as churchwarden, I feel justified in thus objecting mainly for the following reasons:

1. It is obvious to anyone familiar with the area that the parish of Horton is totally dissimilar to the other two parishes in terms, not only of church tradition, but generally with regard to the make-up of its population, economy, culture and historical background. In fact, there are three parishes within this deanery which are very different in essence from the other dozen or so. These are the parishes of Horton (in particular), Meerbrook and Rushton Spencer which are rural, whose economy is based almost entirely on livestock farming, who have largely stable populations with the majority of their families having farmed the area for many generations. The contrast, then, between the overall character of Horton parish and that of Endon, for example, could not be greater. While there are parts of Endon which are still relatively rural, it is, to all intents and purposes, mainly a commuter suburb of the city of Stoke on Trent in which a great deal of residential development has taken place over the previous 120 years; this is in contrast with Horton where any kind of housing or commercial development has entirely passed it by. The result of the residential development of Endon over a long period is that the population contains a large number of younger families from a more urban background whereas the people of Horton tend to be older and much more "rooted".

2. These differences in background have inevitably had an effect on the composition of the two church communities over a very long period and thus the church tradition of each parish is substantially different from the other. The congregation of St. Michael's Horton is made up largely of more elderly individuals whose families have been involved in the life of their local church for many generations. The congregation at St. Luke's Endon and, for that matter, St. Chad's, Bagnall, are generally from a very different constituency; that is, they are mainly from a much more youth-orientated, urbanised culture. The result is that the traditional, more formal approach to worship at Horton is in complete contrast to the exuberant evangelism of Endon and Bagnall. This, inevitably, must lead to a total mis-match in what the congregations of the proposed new benefice view as the "norm" for forms of worship and for church life in general; and it is understandable that the Horton congregation fear that their traditions and their way of life within the church will be swamped and lost, since Horton is a tiny parish in terms of population when compared with Endon and Bagnall, although huge in terms of area.

Whilst I understand that the objective of reducing the number of parish clergy is more or less forced on the diocese by current circumstances, I also believe that there is an argument for preserving the present United Benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer, the economic case for which could be discussed elsewhere. If the *status quo* in this case, however, cannot be maintained, I wonder if there might be any alternative possibility of a combination which involves the union of Horton with Rushton Spencer and Meerbrook, three parishes which, as I have mentioned earlier, have a great deal in common, both as communities and in church style.

Yours Sincerely,

R. J. Hudson Churchwarden

R J Hudson

26. Andrew and Maggie Nesom

Hi Katie

We write to express great concern about the proposed combination of St Lawrence Biddulph and St Lawrence Rushden Spencer into one benefice.

We worship in Biddulph and have a new vicar (Will Drain) who applied for the Biddulph ministry as a full time position. There is a vision for Biddulph that is full time. To spread his time into another parish will either dilute God's work in Biddulph or be at the expense of his family.

Rushden Spencer is a rural parish with different challenges including a church school but perhaps most pertinently no obvious mission field. It is unclear what Will's role would be and what would constitute success.

We understand there is hundreds of years of heritage at Rushden Spencer that people don't want to lose. But that requires a viable congregation which doesn't appear to be the case at present.

We also haven't had clarified any financial commitments across the proposed benefice, either now or when the two parishes are merged assuming that is the end game.

Finally we are unclear about input to future appointment of minister for the benefice. Is this in proportion to congregations?

Regards
Andrew and Maggie Nesom

27. David Turner

Dear Sir / Madam,

I wish to oppose the draft Pastoral Scheme concerning the United Benefice of Cheddleton, Holton, Longsdon & Rushden Spencers, as I would prefer to stay in our current Benefice. I am a parishioner & member of the P.C.C. at Longsdon church where we have formed good relationships with the other churches in the benefice over recent years while we have been together.

We have been without a regular vicar for more than 5 years now. I believe we should be eligible for a new vicar to be appointed. We all pay towards the Parish Share and I understand that funds are available for the funding of our own vicar. There is a figure of £5.85 million in the Diocesan Stipends Fund. A very small percentage of this could be used to provide a vicar for us.

Also under the new
Draft Scheme Longsdon would only receive
15% of the time available which would mean
a big reduction in the number of services.

Yours faithfully.

D. Turner (David Turner)

28. Susan Beswick

Dear Mrs Lowe

As a parishioner of Horton I am emailing to log my objection to the changes proposed which include the transfer of the parish of Horton into the benefice of Bagnall with Endon. This change alone will mean that the parishioners of Horton will not only lose their rural identity but also their weekly service with a vicar present.

I personally feel that if change has to be made a scenario which would mean a formation of a benefice which included Horton with Ruston, Meerbrook and Longsdon would be much more fitting and mean that Horton St Michaels and All Angels could not only continue to exist in its current form but also benefit from being part of a wider rural church community, leaving Cheddleton to become part of the Leek benefice if it wished to do so.

If you could please acknowledge receipt of this objection,

Yours sincerely

Mrs Susan Beswick

29. Margaret Hulstone

I am writing as a concerned member of St Lawrence's Biddulph. I have attended St Lawrence's for almost 70 years. I served as a reader for a number of years and continue to be involved in leading worship and other roles. I decided to stand as Deanery synod representative this year after hearing about the proposed changes. I have previously been a member of the PCC and Deanery rep.

I would not wish to speak to the committee but simply state my thoughts in this email.

Having come through a difficult few years with covid and a long vacancy I looked forward with some excitement to where the Lord will lead us next under the leadership of our Vicar Will Drain.

At the APCM Will outlined a simple vision statement of UP, IN and OUT. At St Lawrences we will worship God together as we look UP. We will build our community and discipleship as we look IN. And we will reach out in mission and evangelism to our town and surrounding areas as we look OUT. This is all based firmly in Acts 2:42-47 the fellowship of the believers.

I do not feel that this vision will be helped by Will needing to devote some of his time to St Lawrence's Rushton Spencer.

Although Biddulph is only one church we do have four congregations and are a very busy parish serving the wider community of Biddulph.

Historically and geographically we have no connections with Rushton Spencer. They would more likely be linked with the town of Leek.

Although I realise the need for leadership for smaller churches like Rushton Spencer I feel that the proposal would only hinder the mission of St Lawrences Biddulph and would be concerned about the added workload on the present or any future vicar.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts
Mrs Margaret Hulstone

30. Margaret Heath on behalf of Horton PCC

Dear Katie Lowe,

I enclose the minutes of the PCC meeting of Horton Church relevant to the above

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, HORTON. Extract from the minutes of the PCC meeting

The meeting of the PCC of St Michael's Church held on 6th November 2022 at 12.30pm, with 9 PCC members present and one apology.

The meeting was held to discuss the draft proposals for the re-organisation of the Benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer.

Many concerns were raised including the difference in the style of worship and the patronage arrangements of Bagnall and Endon.

It was proposed by Mr J Hudson, seconded by Mrs J Bailey that the PCC reject the plan to transfer Horton to the Benefice of Bagnall and Endon as set out in the Draft Proposals put forward by the Diocese of Lichfield.

A vote was taken and the objection was unanimously agreed.

Regards

Margaret Heath, PCC Secretary, St Michael's Church, Horton

31. Annie Roebuck

Dear Mrs Lowe,

In reference to the proposed new benefice of St Lawrence's at Biddulph and St Lawrence's Rushton Spencer; thank you for inviting comment, please find below my concerns outlined.

Rev Will Drain has now been in post for almost a year and has worked hard at understanding the people in the church and in Biddulph, and gently moving us forward. Part of the parish profile submitted when seeking a new vicar was that the incumbent encourages us in new initiatives concerning evangelism, and the work of the Spirit. If his work load at Biddulph is to diminish by 15% how is he expected to fulfil his duties and role as a vicar and look to implement these new initiatives-- the very things that attracted him to St Lawrences at Biddulph in the first place?

In his official capacity there will be:

- 2 PCC's and he will be required to chair all PCC meetings, and action whatever decided
- 2 AGM's and all the work prior to the actual meetings
- 2 churches to maintain, insure and manage
- 2 sets of finances to be totally 'au fait' with
- 2 sets of treasurers, wardens, other church officials to manage

This is before services, people, events are taken into consideration.

I appreciate there are many vicars who have several churches to manage in this way, but at St Lawrence's in Biddulph we are a reasonably large church and effectively have 4 very different congregations in their make-up of people and in their style of worship. To take on another whose style and theological stance is different again is, I believe, asking too much of a new vicar in his first post.

The travelling time alone is a 50-minute round trip from the vicarage to Rushton Spencer and back; if his time at RS is 15% (in real terms slightly less than one working day) then this is not good use of his already valuable time. In winter Rushton Spencer is even harder to access without a tractor!

'Part-time jobs', especially in such a situation as church where the work is a vocation of calling rather than a regular career, have a habit of never staying part time even with the best will in the world and careful planning. Unplanned events / crisis happen frequently that are not in the diary that change the workload considerably. One church will suffer at the expense of the other, or worse still it will eat into precious and necessary time Rev Drain spends with his family. We want to protect the vicar so that he is always able to give of his best, not playing catch-up or being over-tired or stressed.

Please may I ask; is this really the best way forward for a church of less than a dozen in its attendance? I understand for them it would be hard to leave a

church where their loved ones may be buried or where they have attended all their lives, but surely the 'Church' exists for the proclamation of the Gospel and the discipleship of its people; we need to look forward and outward in this new millennium rather than hold on to historic traditions, and let me be clear here—I believe tradition is vitally important but it has to be dynamic and living—otherwise the 'Church' will collapse inward.

We need to take brave steps forward and I believe Rev Drain is very willing to do just that, but will find it much harder to do so if he is shackled with this proposed benefice.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Kind regards

Annie Roebuck
St Lawrence's Biddulph

32. Margaret Heath

Dear Katie Lowe

I wish to object to the draft scheme to reorganise the Benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer in the Deanery of Leek, Staffordshire.

This Benefice has always worked well. The proposal to include Horton St Michael's in the Benefice of Bagnall with Endon is not workable as they are not compatible.

Bagnall with Endon is committed to CPAS, a fact that only came to light in November 2022. I feel we were misled about this. They have a very different style of worship to that of our existing Benefice.

It would be detrimental to Horton Church to have CPAS with authority over the Church. Horton has a wide community of Church supporters with traditional values, as evidenced by large congregations at local Baptisms, Funerals and special Services. The wide support of Horton Church is also financial (at two recent funerals donations to the Church were £2300.00) The same people would not give so generously were we to be part of a Benefice that they have no connection with, or if we were threatened with closure. We are very able to pay into the Common Fund.

The school of Horton St Michaels also plays a part in some services and is a valuable connection.

I feel that the Diocese does not have the measure of Horton Church, its community and fellowship, and is not making the right decision.

Yours Faithfully

Mrs Margaret Heath

33. Gerard Chell

Dear Katie

As a long standing member of St Lawrence's Church Biddulph I was disappointed to hear that we would be partnered with St Lawrence's Rushton Spencer.

The Churches are quite a distance appart and it will unnecessarily divide the attentions of our vicar.

Biddulph is a large and growing town with a lot of scope and having a vicar that is unable to direct all his efforts to the service of this community is not what we want. The reverse is also true. Rushton Spencer needs a minister that can wholly dedicate themselves to growing and serving that community too.

I am against the proposal and would ask that the merging of the parishes not go ahead.

Blessings

Gerard Chell

34. Joan Forster

Dear Katie

My name is Joan Forster a long standing member and sides person of St. Lawrence's church.

I must oppose this merger, my concerns are as follow:-

The two churches have no common community connection.

Biddulph Parish covers a large area and St. Lawrence Church is involved with the schools, the community, the churches together
And with the local Council.

Our Church has a vision to reach out to the community of Biddulph and our Vicar and our Children's and Family Worker are working hard
To recover the momentum which was lost due to Covid, so I feel that the Proposal would detract from our vision.

Our previous Vicar left due to the pressures of the workload leaving the church without a replacement for over 2 years. I am concerned that the Extra workload would create further pressure on our new Vicar, Rev. Will Drain who has only been in post for less than 12 months and we do not
Want to lose another Vicar as a result of the Proposal.

Should the Proposal go ahead what support would be put into place for the future of our Church.

Whilst I appreciate the reasoning behind the Proposal I feel that this is definitely not the right time for this to happen.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Forster (Mrs)

35. Freda Nadin and John Nadin

Dear Church Commissioners

As a member of the congregation of Horton St Michaels we feel that the consultation process has continued without thought to alternatives to the current proposals. The proposed merge is with 2 much larger parishes of an Evangelical nature whose needs are somewhat different in nature to those of the largely rural community at Horton. This could result in the alienation of Hortons congregation and ultimately the failure of the church commissioners to serve our population. Support will most likely drain away if the congregation feel unheard. In our opinion as parishoners Horton would be served better, if it must merge, to be joined with a Staffordshire Moorlands neighbour such as the Leek area team.

We would very much like to see the same vicar or team of vicars on a regular basis. This has been happening recently and has been very appreciated as evidenced by there being a regular congregation who support the church.

Kind regards from

Freda Nadin and John Nadin (Partially sighted so he can't send his separate email)

36. Roy Lovatt

Dear Mrs. Lowe

I am writing to you as I believe you are the appropriate person to contact with my objection to the pastoral reorganisation within the Deanery of Leek in the Diocese of Lichfield. I write with particular reference to the proposed absorption of the incumbency of St. Michael's, Horton into the United Benefice of St. Luke, Endon and St. Chad, Bagnall.

For many years, my wife and I (who is a native of Horton parish) were active members of Horton Church, initially as PCC members, Deanery Synod representatives, and in my wife's case as Gift Aid secretary. I subsequently served as Churchwarden, Reader and ultimately as OLM from 2009 to 2018, licenced to the benefice which currently includes Horton. From 2015 onwards, at least until the covid restrictions prevented us, we were regular worshippers also at Endon (my native parish and our home parish for the past 64 years). It is because of these connections that I feel emboldened to ask to be allowed to comment on the current draft proposal with regard to Horton's future.

To anyone who has been actively and intimately involved in the church life of both Horton and Endon, it soon becomes quite clear that there is a wide difference between the style of worship and the parish profile of these two churches.

Horton parish is an almost exclusively rural parish, the vast majority of the stable population of which are connected either directly or indirectly with agriculture; whereas Endon, although still containing a great deal of rural area, also has a quite substantial suburban population consisting largely of younger people mostly engaged in technical or IT occupations (for example) alongside a proportion of retired professionals such as teachers, accountants etc. and it is from that community that the congregation of Saint Luke's is largely drawn. On the other hand, St. Michael's congregation is obviously made up of people, generally slightly older, with a more traditional, rural and possibly more conservative (in its widest sense) outlook than that of Endon.

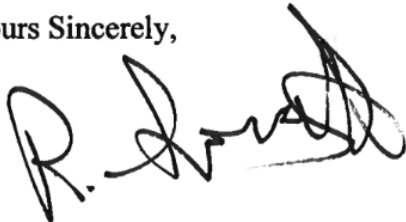
It can be seen that these cultural differences have had, over time, a powerful effect on the (equally valid) style and practice of worship in the two parishes; Horton's having evolved over many years into a more formal and eucharistic pattern than the less formal and more "evangelistic" style favoured by Endon and Bagnall. My own experience in presiding at Communion in all three of these churches bears this out.

It is with these differences in mind that I wonder if the combination of these three parishes under the pastoral oversight of a single clergy member might not be detrimental to all three parties; and I also wonder if it may possibly be worth considering attaching Horton to one of the more conservative churches within the Leek Team's ministry instead?

It is interesting to note also, that up until about six or seven years ago the current united benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer was considered worthy of, and able to maintain, a full-time incumbent. In the intervening years, as far as I am aware, little has changed in these parishes. Would it, therefore, not be possible to preserve the *status quo* in this benefice, perhaps with some form of part-time pastoral oversight?

However, I am confident that whatever the outcome, those responsible for making these complex and difficult decisions will have gone about their task lovingly and prayerfully with maximum consideration given to the welfare, happiness and success of the Deanery and its people.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Lovatt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Roy Lovatt

37. Cheddleton PCC – clarified as representation in favour (see Representations in favour below)

38. Mr S Sowerby

Submission to the Church Commissioners - Draft Pastoral Scheme concerning The United Benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer (the “United Benefice”) within the Leek Deanery, Diocese of Lichfield.

Submission by the Treasurer of St Chads Church, Longsdon. (Mr S. Sowerby)

Summary of views:

I have a concern that this reorganisation scheme is not being advanced for a proper purpose under the enabling legislation and as such I wish to object to the changes. I believe it does not further mission under section 1 of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 (the “MPM”).

There is a concern that the scheme does not meet the needs of the parishioners here at Longsdon, does not respect their needs and traditions and therefore appears more, rather than less (as is misleadingly claimed in the reasons given for the proposals) likely to lead to parish church closures.

There are financial and missional alternatives, which the diocese has failed to consider although it is required to do so; these are included below.

There is a concern that the consultation process has not been conducted properly as time and again in various meetings at parish level, the Diocese has led the worshipers into believing that there is no alternative to the current proposals, otherwise the future will result in church closures.

There are concerns from the PCC at St Chads Church Longsdon that a full range of alternate considerations have not been fully explored and jointly discussed with the PCC, rather a fait accompli presented.

Speaking generally:

The Commissioners should be proactively concerned to prevent this kind of scheme, which appears to be in neither the intention nor the spirit of the legislation. The imbalance of power between people and diocese is very apparent in cases where proposals for genuine alternatives are not sought. The United Benefice being left for some time in the unfortunate position by the Diocese without an incumbent priest.

My interest as well as my learned colleagues is in a fair, a balanced and equitable approach to serving parishioners in our local parishes especially when considering the amount of parish share monies being outlaid.

My concerns include, but are not limited to, the proposal **to transfer the parish of Longsdon to the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook.**

Stated Objectives of the Proposed Scheme

The stated objectives of the draft Proposal are to “allow all parishes [*in the Leek Deanery*] to have a sustainable future, both missionally and financially ... preventing any church closures within the deanery”.

This statement can be tested and found wanting under the following sub-headings.

1. Financial

I believe and I am advised that the Diocese has a financial deficit. Apparently, to cut costs, the Leek Deanery is to be tasked with “losing” a stipendiary clergy post.

- **Overall Diocesan position**

It is a misleading to suggest that this scheme is a financial necessity. The Lichfield deficit is just under £1m in accordance with most recent financial returns (2021). However, I believe that there is enough money in the Diocesan Stipends Fund (“DSF”) to clear this - and, if necessary, use the resulting remaining parish share for other purposes.

- **Total Return Accounting.**

The paper from the Diocesan Board of Finance shows that, as at the end of 2021, this will release £5.85m of Unapplied Return within the DSF. The cost of engaging a stipendiary priest would be just 1% of this figure on an annual basis.

It is considered that this compares to a relatively small Diocesan deficit. Rather than needing to reduce parochial stipendiary clergy numbers in the Diocese, it is becoming increasingly apparent that a greater number could in fact be engaged and parish amalgamations avoided.

The proposed financial case to reduce stipendiary parochial clergy numbers by dissolving the current United Benefice and dispose of The Vicarage (at Cheddleton) becomes irrelevant if the Unapplied Return is used to sustain parochial stipendiary clergy numbers.

The Church Commissioners may therefore consider that the stated basis for the scheme might be inapplicable and misleading.

- **Selection for dissolution without considering financial alternatives.**

I believe the United Benefice has been allegedly selected for dissolution on financial grounds when the combined Parish Share is £65,000.

At this level of funding, it is well able to pay for an Incumbent directly. If not for a full-time parish priest, then either a proportion of a priest's time (part Time) or, at the very least, a House for Duty priest could well be afforded.

The above options do not appear to have been fully considered by the Diocese via proper discussion (as highlighted earlier) with the parishes, and one might question the openness of the communication and engagement process. This raises the question on if it places the Diocese in clear breach of its obligation to consider alternative proposals under the MPM Code of Practice.

Our concerns are that the draft proposal to dissolve the United Benefice therefore seems a political and not financial one. It is timed to take advantage of the current Vacancy in the Benefice when parishes are more vulnerable.

I agree with learned colleagues, that the Church Commissioners need to be more alive to the inequality of power and unfairness, which this adds to a one-sided process. Which is familiar to the diocese, but completely unfamiliar to parish volunteers, at a time when they are already expected to cope with running the parishes in the United Benefice, having unreasonably been left by the diocese for a long period without an incumbent.

2. Missional

There is a question of if the scheme is in fact in furtherance of mission, therefore the diocese appears to be in breach of Section 1 and Section 3(1) in Part I of the MPM. "In carrying out any of its functions the mission and pastoral committee shall also have regard to the traditions, needs and characteristics of particular parishes." Has this really been considered and fully explored with parishioners?

- **Recruiting a Parish Priest.**

I am aware that the United Benefice has been left vacant for some 5 years now, but effectively for longer, as the previous incumbent was unfortunately unwell and required extended periods of sick leave before her departure. The diocese would be profiting from its own dereliction of duty if allowed to bring a scheme now.

A little short sighted as with the right appointment, the recruitment of a parish priest could well herald a new era of growth and development of the congregation, with increased giving.

But it has been decided not to pursue this conventional approach. Instead, the presumption appears to be that it will be less costly and less successful than alternative proposals, now the subject of the Draft Pastoral Scheme.

It is difficult to see how the mission of the church is furthered, or how this scheme could make church closures less likely to result, when The Church of England's own research shows that church attendance is correlated with the presence of stipendiary clergy in an area. Reducing the number of parish clergy, when clergy are affordable as previously shown, would seem therefore to be counter intuitive and lead to relatively unproductive outcomes. I would request that the Church Commissioners seek the diocese to provide empirical evidence to support such amalgamation.

- **Characteristics of the parish community.**

Longsdon is semi-rural in character and relies mostly on farming.

The Leek has a high proportion of professional and blue-collar workers.

There is a mismatch in the character of the proposed alignment of Longsdon with Leek and the missional needs of each are quite different.

Parishioners at neighbouring Horton and Longsdon want to see a priest visible in the community, engaged in visiting and associated pastoral work with the local community and farmers in the parish. This is a less likely outcome in these draft Proposals, which would stretch a priest located in a much further away parish too thinly.

The neglect of and discrimination against the needs and wishes of, rural parishes like Longsdon and Horton in leaving them without a parish priest for long periods. Then trying to force them into groups with urban parishes in disregard of their geography, tradition and way of living, on the basis of a spurious claim that this will "better" serve the cure of souls, is a distortion of the true picture.

Mission here is about nurturing faith through habits of commitment and patient pastoral care and friendship. It takes time to build trust and confidence and with just a 0.15-time allocation by a priest from Leek, is unlikely to be achieved. The proposal fails the test of providing for the better cure of souls.

This is the more dismaying coming from a Church administrative body which exists to serve the parishes and is funded by them. It should be noted that rural parishes "punch far above their weight" in terms of church attendance and giving.

- **Natural centres.**

Given the known and well-documented reluctance of congregations to travel to other churches, there is no reason to think that Longsdon people be any different in circumstances where there is no regular reason for association anyway.

- **Public Transport links.**

Mobility will be severely restricted in the proposed Benefice because there is limited direct public transport links at all between Longsdon and Leek especially on the Lords Day (the Sabbath) and felt to be discriminatory against the elderly and the poor.

- **Form of worship.**

Statistic and history shows that the usual pattern of worship in the United Benefice overwhelmingly is for a celebration of the Holy Communion each Sunday (44 out of 50 services during the year ending June 2023). This has been the pattern for at least a generation and more.

There are 60 occasions (Sundays and Festivals) when worship would ordinarily be offered during the year. Based on the deployment model provided by the Diocese, Longsdon will be allocated 15% of the incumbent's available time in the new Benefice. This would mean cover by the incoming incumbent for 9 services during the year. The question arises - by whom are the remaining 51 services to be officiated?

The "big idea" in the draft Proposals envisages the development of lay led worshipping communities. This is problematic in terms of recruitment, the capability to preach and officiate worship and then engage pastorally with the congregation. Not everyone has these particular gifts or can be trained effectively in them. There also appears to be a morale-destroying undervaluing of the importance of parish clergy being present in the community for both the cure of souls and pastoral care. This is of the essence in rural places, where the Church has much to offer and sometimes the parish church is the only focus for community.

In these circumstances, I believe that Holy Communion cannot legally be celebrated by having lay presidency. Communion can of course be offered by Extension, by an appropriately trained and authorised person, but it is not intended for regular use.

Instead, is there a presumption that Holy Communion is likely to be replaced by lay led services of the Word?

It is therefore highly likely that Longsdon will be deprived of the regular reception of the Sacrament, and this would amount to a fundamental change of churchmanship. This is a failure to respect its tradition – although the MPM requires this.

There is the possibility that local retired clergy could continue to be asked to celebrate the Holy Communion. However, after being kept waiting for five years for a priest and pastoral care in a rural community, to make a sweeping change of this kind signals the withdrawal of the Church in a way which is likely to have a detrimental effect on the financial support available. It is difficult to see that the PCC would receive support to pay both the level of Ministry Share requested by the Diocese (for an arrangement imposed on the parish) and for the ministrations of retired priests from current income.

- **Patronage and the character of worship.**

The churchmanship of Longsdon lies within the central tradition, and parishioners would look for this to continue but no guarantees have been offered.

There is a concern that the admission of the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS), into the patronage of the proposed Benefice may lead to a change in the churchmanship at Longsdon.

- **Occasional Offices.**

Longsdon continues to deliver Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals. Who would officiate at these services in future when the incoming incumbent could well have a greater number at the other 5 churches in the Leek Team area and be unable to delegate to lay leaders? Funerals in the farming community are extremely well attended, with full churches. This offers the Church a most significant role in local people's lives, encourages them to confront their own preparation for the life hereafter and keeps them engaged with God, their Maker and Redeemer, in a very positive way. The significance to families of seeing their loved ones buried by a priest who knew the deceased is immeasurable at a time of grief and loss.

3. Likelihood of Church Closures

- **There are alternatives.**

It is disingenuous to suggest, as the Diocese does at the end of its statement (and has been communicated repeatedly at meetings with the laity in the Deanery), that any alternative to the proposed Pastoral Scheme will inevitably lead to church closures.

As the Diocese most surely knows, it would be inappropriate to close a church when as at Longsdon, the pattern of regular worship is being maintained and the building is kept in good repair.

Closure is not the alternative, but a strong sense of there being no other viable alternative to the current proposals has been conveyed misleadingly to the laity. This is improper and looks like an attempt to pre-empt the argument that the legislation is not being complied with in this respect.

On the contrary, the failure to observe Longsdon's characteristics, needs and traditions inherent in these proposals make them, to my mind, far less likely to result in the future of its church being "sustainable" as the scheme claims.

Alternatives

With imagination, there are always alternatives. These include:

- **Retain the United Benefice and appoint an Incumbent.**

The obvious alternative is to revert to the status quo ante and engage an incumbent either Full Time or Half Time or at least HFD, based on the Parish Share, where a stipendiary priest can be afforded.

If the Diocese does not wish to retain the current United Benefice Vicarage, then a rental in the area could readily be considered. Rentals are comparatively low in this part of the country and there is a plentiful supply of properties to let in the area.

But the Diocesan hierarchy seem summarily set against this option, having decided it cannot work, without proper evaluation and sharing of the results.

Create a new rural Benefice.

In the hinterland around Leek, there is a swathe of green belt which is rural and where farming is the dominant occupation. The parishes in the area are broadly similar in nature and composition.

Adding Meerbrook to Rushton Spencer, Horton and Longsdon, in the place of Cheddleton, would ensure a Benefice with parishes that have a natural affinity and could pay for an incumbent, at least on a part time basis.

This would mean ceding Meerbrook from the Leek Area Team. I believe the Team Rector may not necessarily resist this.

39. David Hulstone

Hello Katie

Re St.Lawrence's & Rushton Spencer

My concern is that our vicar Will could eventually spend more time at Rushton Spencer than the 15% allocated each week. I am also concerned that at special times of the Church's year, i.e. Easter & Christmas he will be expected to be at Rushton and will find it difficult to satisfy both congregations.

David Hulstone - EX Reader at StLawrence's.

40. Irene Cork

Dear Katie

Some years ago I lost my son to cancer and we held the service at St.Chads. It was a lovely service dedicated to my son. Several weeks went by and I decided to attend a Sunday service. The reception I received was very warming and welcoming and I became a regular member of the congregation.

Sadly several years later I lost my daughter. The comfort I received could not be put into words not just through my faith but through all the friends I had made since attending the church. Making friends is part of the commitment you make whilst attending services and helping each other. We are a very close knit rural community along with Horton and Rushton and we all enjoyed the closeness of the 3 parishes. When Father Eric retired we were joined with St Edwards which we are happy with. Always after a service we chatted and had cups of tea which we put on hold with covid. Unfortunately today our congregations are getting smaller while we always encourage newly weds to perhaps come back some time and visit us its only happened a couple of times when they have. I write to you to try and explain how happy we are with things as they are I know people are reluctant to change but change yes, only if people are happy to change and its beneficial to them. I have spoken to people from the other churches and have yet to find someone who is happy with the reorganisations. I know there is a financial problem but surely its better to address those problems than to risk losing congregations.

Kind Regards

Irene Cork

41. M Joan Axson

St Lawrence, Biddulph and St Lawrence Rushton Spencer are linked by name only. Geographically remote from each other, with Leek being the town Rushton Spencer relates to most readily. I think the proposal is not fruitful for either church.

Yours faithfully
M J Axon

Representations in favour:

42. Terry Bloor

Dear Katie,

Re: Pastoral Scheme concerning the benefices of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer; Biddulph; Bagnall with Endon; and Leek and Meerbrook.

I write in emphatic support of the draft pastoral scheme mentioned above. I have knowledge concerning the development of this comprehensive plan having, in part, facilitated a representative group which derived it, prior to its adoption by the Deanery of Leek at one of its Synods. Its proposed effect on the benefices included (and those of the deanery which remain unaffected) came via a most rigorous and

transparent exploration of mission challenges, pastoral and financial sustainability, as well as necessary governance, as part of a Diocesan-wide, mission initiative.

The reconfiguration of the parishes concerned is admittedly ambitious, but long overdue. Those who have worked and/or worshipped within the Deanery of Leek for some time would concur with my understanding that the current configuration has evolved over years through many individual, pastoral reorganisations as expedient measures to solve local problems, without any coherent and missional objective shared by the whole deanery. Furthermore, despite numerous historic interventions by the DBF, the current configuration is financially unsustainable.

The scheme as proposed:-

- reduces the deployment across the deanery by one post, thus making it sustainable overall,
- addresses mismatches from geographical perspectives for better ministry effectiveness and pastoral care,
- puts weaker parishes with stronger ones for support and should avert moves towards closures or changes of status,
- makes for manageable parish groupings more likely to attract applicants for the vacant roles,
- has already received (as mentioned above) the support of the Deanery Synod.

The proposals have also been presented to the Bishop's Staff by whom they have been thoroughly interrogated, as part of its current procedure before permitting any role to move to the appointment stage. There is no plan B which would be deemed acceptable. The Diocese will not appoint to benefices which are clearly financially unsustainable and show no signs of being able to become so, nor allocate stipendiary resources where neither mission opportunities nor objectively assessed pastoral needs are present.

Best wishes,
Terry

Terry Bloor
Associate Archdeacon (Stoke--upon--Trent)
Interim Minister – Stafford Episcopal Area

43. Dave Tinsley

Mrs Lowe

My wife and I have been members of the congregation at St Laurences, Biddulph since 2012 and are in favour of the proposals.

Thanks

Dave Tinsley

44. Mr A Lancaster

I am 76 years old, and have lived in Biddulph for most of my life, attending Church on a regular occasion.

I am also familiar with St Lawrence church at Rushton. This is a small rural church that's quite isolated in the countryside. It's attended by local parishioners, most of which live and work in the farming communities.

These people rely on this church for their social "well being". i.e. to meet their neighbours, to pray and take communion ect.

From what "feedback" that I have had with members of the congregation at Biddulph St Lawrence, they seem generally against! any possible "joint" with Rushton St Lawrence, on the grounds that, they don't want "their" Vicar to share his time/effort with another church!

I consider this "line of thought,
Selfish, inconsiderate and a
very unchristian attitude.

Therefore I beg you to "go
ahead" with the proposal to "join"
Biddulph and Rushton St Lawrence!
and to keep this "Gods little holy
sanctury" "alive" for many years
to come.

Yours Sincerely
of Lancaster.
L.

45. Sarah Clulow

Good evening

My name is Sarah Clulow and I am part of St Lawrence's Rushton Spencer Church family, and PCC, hence why I have received the email requesting a vote for the proposed merge with St Lawrence's Biddulph.

Please can I express my own personal vote yes for the proposal. The merge would appear to offer greater support, a variety in services and as well as the opportunity to grow and attract children and their families which is at present a challenge, as well as ensure that we are working for God's families in the local community in which we serve.

Kindest regards

Sarah Clulow

37. Cheddleton PCC (clarified as representation in favour)

Response of the PCC of St Edward the Confessor Church Cheddleton to the Draft Pastoral Scheme

Following considerable scrutiny, consideration and debate, the forementioned PCC have agreed the following response.

Before stating this, however, it was considered pertinent to ask the following questions and make comment.

1. Why were the laity not involved in the discussions at a much earlier stage in the process? Surely it is obvious that a wider understanding of the needs, aspirations and ambitions of those most closely affected could have been achieved and considered at the outset.
2. Why are the papers written in arcane, ecclesiastical, legalistic jargon? They were supposedly written to inform and clarify what should have been a relatively simple, straightforward process and therefore written in 'plain English'. The time for legalism comes at the end of the process when the final decision is to be implemented.
3. Will the views of the laity be given sufficient consideration, or will the decision be hierarchically, ('top down'), made?
4. Why has the process taken such an inordinately protracted period of time to resolve, given that several churches, including our own, have been in interregnum for a number of years, much to their detriment?

The perceived impression is that the hierarchy of the church still hold the latent ideology that only the clergy and the nobility are literate and have the intellectual capacity to formulate and understand ideas and initiatives. To clarify, since the Education Act 1870, the vast majority of the population are literate, many have the intellectual capacity to attain qualifications at degree level and higher and are very able to understand and formulate ideas and initiatives. To underestimate this would be grossly mistaken.

The agreed response to the scheme is that it is, at best, the least worst option. It cannot provide what the residents of this Parish so deeply desire, which is the consistent and continual presence of a committed, vital and active priest, who will be an instrumental lead in our efforts to draw and welcome members of our community into our church. Anything less will simply allow the Covid induced decline in our congregation to continue.

We have to have some hope in the light shone by the statement that our vicarage will be used 'to house clergy'.

Appendix 1

(from <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/forming-a-shaping-for-mission-deanery-team.php>)

Forming a Shaping for Mission deanery team

Diocesan Vision Prayer

As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad, we pray that the two million people in our diocese encounter a church that is confident in the gospel, knows and loves its communities, and is excited to find God already at work in the world. We pray for a church that reflects the richness and variety of those communities. We pray for a church that partners with others in seeking the common good, working for justice as a people of hope.

What is the Shaping for Mission Team?

- Shaping for Mission is the work in Lichfield Diocese to strengthen our life of discipleship, vocation and evangelism while facing a significant reduction in financial income. It commences in autumn 2020 with the formation of Shaping for Mission teams in each deanery.
- The task of the team is to carry out the first stage of this work, identifying the strengths of the deanery and drawing up a vision for the future of the church's ministry and mission there.
- You can find out more about Shaping for Mission and how it works at www.lichfield.anglican.org/shaping-for-mission including some frequently asked questions.
- Shaping for Mission is a big shift for deaneries. Traditionally, deaneries have had two roles: to provide governance for the diocese; and to provide a support network for those in ministry. We are adding a third task: to discern the mission of the church in this area. This task means we are seeking people who might not have previously become involved in deanery life to take part in Shaping for Mission teams.
- Smaller deaneries will be invited to work in partnership with a neighbouring deanery.
- The Shaping for Mission team will have the challenge of looking across the whole deanery to look for the gifts, strengths, opportunities and challenges that God has gifted the church with. The team will then pray and work to discern a faithful vision in response. **We are seeking faithful, hopeful Christians to work together in each deanery to take on this challenge.** Teams must make their own discernment, but will be supported by an external facilitator and are provided with a strong template to guide them on their way.

Why might I join the Shaping for Mission Team in my deanery?

- I am passionate about the Good News of Jesus and how we best share it and live it out in this area
- I am committed to, and share the diocesan vision.
- I feel called to be part of shaping the church so that our mission is visionary and sustainable now and into the future
- I have gifts and skills around change management or project work that may be helpful in the process
- I am good at representing and taking into account a range of views and perspectives and committed to disagreeing well. I bring a particular perspective that is not always taken into account in church governance, or that represents a particular approach to

Appendix 1

(from <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/forming-a-shaping-for-mission-deanery-team.php>)

mission and ministry, or that offers an important balance to the Shaping for Mission Team

- I am hopeful about the next phase of the life of the Church and believe that God is at work in our churches and communities
- I am committed to my local area and excited about the possibility of working with others beyond the parish or benefice and to collaborative relationships across the diocese.

What would I actually be committing to?

- Being part of the Shaping for Mission Team until July 2021.
- Joining in five 1-hour online training sessions with the rest of the team, spread between October and May.
- With the rest of the team carrying out a structured review of the deanery, gathering input from across the deanery.
- With the rest of the team drawing up a vision for this deanery.
- With the rest of the team gathering information about the resources we have across this deanery.
- With the rest of the team beginning to look at what it might mean to put this into action.
- With the rest of the team presenting this material to Deanery Synod.

How is the team being formed?

The Rural Dean will gather a team of people to carry out the Shaping for Mission programme with, and on behalf of, the deanery. The team will include a range of people and seek to represent the richness and variety of the deanery. The criteria for establishing the team are below. **The final membership of the team will be agreed with the Archdeacon and the Deanery Synod.**

The Criteria for forming a Shaping for Mission Team:

- The team will be led by the Rural Dean or someone nominated by the Rural Dean and agreed by the Archdeacon.
- The team will be made up of a variety of people who between them bring a range of perspectives, experiences, gifts and skills, and a shared desire to see Christian mission flourish in their deanery.
- Each deanery is different, and the make-up of the team will vary from place to place. However, the SfM Team should include a range of the following:

People with expertise or experience in, or energy for:

- **Chaplaincy.**
- **Fresh Expressions or pioneering ministry.**
- **Schools / youth / children's work.**
- **Social media / online presence / IT and church.**
- **Extensive knowledge of the local area, particularly charities, community enterprises, partners (or potential partners) working for the common good.**

Appendix 1

(from <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/forming-a-shaping-for-mission-deanery-team.php>)

- Knowledge of and connections with other Christian churches and group in the area, ecumenical groups and global partnerships.
- Project management, team work, collaboration.
- Recent (last 3 years) engagement with missiology, theology and Christian culture

People who bring a perspective that may be a minority voice in church meetings:

- Young people.
- Ethnic Minorities.
- Disabled or differently abled people.
- Rural /urban /suburban.

People with a passion for issues and areas core to Christian mission

- Sharing the Good News of Jesus.
- Social Justice.
- Community connections and partnerships.
- Flourishing of individuals and communities.
- Climate crisis and the environment.

Leek Deanery Shaping for Mission Presentation to Deanery Synod

Our Shaping for Mission Team has consisted of:

Revd Philip Swan (Diocesan Facilitator)

Revd Preb Terry Bloor (Associate Archdeacon)

Revd Nigel Irons (Rural Dean) – Leek St Edward's

David Wright (Deanery Lay Chair) - Milton

Revd Darren Fraser – Knypersley & Biddulph Moor

Revd Matt Malins – Leek St Luke's & St Paul's

Revd Lindsay Clowes – Biddulph

Vickie Longson – LDBE Schools Advisor

Neil Taylor – Endon

Revd Diane Oliver – Cheddleton, Longsdon, Horton & Rushton Spencer

The Team met seven times between October 2020 and May 2021 and a great deal of work was done between meetings. The whole process was infused with prayer and a genuine desire to seek the discernment of the Holy Spirit in formulating the best way forward for the Deanery as a whole.

We are going to begin our presentation by summarising where we were and where we are before outlining the principles we believe should be applied to take us to where we need to be.

This is the present configuration of Leek Deanery which is divided into six different parishes. Norton & Milton in orange; Bagnall, Endon and Brown Edge in red; Knypersley & Biddulph Moor in purple; Biddulph in green; Cheddleton, Longsdon, Horton and Ruston Spencer in yellow; and finally the Team Parish of Leek & Meerbrook containing the Districts of St Edward's, St Luke's & St Paul's, and All Saints and St Matthew's which share the same Team Vicar. This gives us a current allocation of eight full time stipendiary ministers. Doing the maths we recognise that due to budgetary constraints the Deanery can only afford seven full time posts and we have therefore adopted that as a baseline for our Vision.

This map shows the deployment of clergy in the Deanery a year ago in October 2020. The shaded parishes (or districts in the case of All Saints and St Matthew's), were vacant. Of the eight allocated fulltime posts only three were filled, those being myself at St Edward's, Matt Malins at St Luke's & St Paul's and Darren Fraser at St John's Knypersley & Christ Church Biddulph Moor. Four of the five vacancies had occurred due to clergy retiring or leaving within the previous nine months. Those retirements included our Rural Dean and Assistant Rural Dean, so the Deanery had no formal leadership and that situation continued until I was appointed Rural Dean in April 2021.

The benefice of most concern was that of Cheddleton, Longsdon, Horton and Rushton Spencer, which had been vacant for over eighteen months. However the previous incumbent had sadly become severely incapacitated during the last two or three years of her ministry which meant that (apart from a six month period with an interim minister) there had been either limited ministry or no full-time ministry in the benefice for three to four years. With the exception of Cheddleton all the parishes in this benefice were struggling in significant ways and it was apparent to us that this benefice was the most needy of all and that the linkage of these four parishes needed to be reviewed.

So that is where we were a year ago. Ministry in the Deanery was, and still is, heavily dependant on the willingness of retired priests supporting the local lay ministers in taking services and occasional offices. Leek Deanery is blessed with relatively high numbers of retired ministers with PtO, but during the pandemic many of them understandably chose to self-isolate and are just beginning to become available again as we come out of lockdown.

Today in October 2021 we have been very pleased to welcome Karen Petherick as an additional full-time minister to the benefice of St Philip & St James' Milton & St Batholomew's Norton. Karen has been appointed with the provision that one additional responsibility will be added to her remit.

The parish of St Lawrence's Biddulph is also being advertised at the present time, again with the provision that one additional responsibility will be added to that post.

This final map shows the configuration of the Deanery that the Shaping for Mission

So now we want to explain the process by which we arrived at the conclusions which we have presented to Bishop Matthew and Archdeacon Megan. There were four stages in our journey to these conclusions which were # the Collection of Data, the RAG Rating of the Deanery, the Analysis of Missional Activity and finally the Conclusions and Principles themselves.

We invited every parish to complete the Shaping for Mission review form and out of the 16 separate parishes or autonomous districts in the Deanery we received a response from all of them apart from Horton. # These responses were collected together in a 191 page document which also included an overview of the Deanery's engagement with its Church Schools and a summary of the Parish Share contributions for 2019.

Members of the Shaping for Mission Team were then invited to rate each Parish or autonomous District. Using the parish review document we assessed discipleship, vocation, pastoral care, evangelism, community involvement, stewardship of creation, wider church family involvement, engagement with schools, income and charitable giving plus liabilities the status of church buildings and produced this map

of the Deanery with Green for the highest level of activity, Amber for average and Red for struggling. This is a summary of our conclusions. Clearly there is a degree of subjectivity in assessments of this kind but this is a combination of the ratings of the five people who took part in this exercise.

The particular element of this exercise which stood out most of all was the clear identification of the benefice of Cheddleton, Longsdon, Horton and Rushton Spencer as the most struggling in the Deanery, containing the two lowest rated red parishes and two of the lowest rated amber parishes also.

We also considered the current financial performance of the Deanery and identified three parishes, shown here in red, with significant levels of arrears. Whilst wanting to retain the overall emphasis on mission this information also played a part in reaching our final conclusion.

We then looked at the arenas of missional engagement in each Parish or autonomous District and this is a collation of the results of ten different maps with coloured markers on them.

There was a good level of engagement in each area # but again this exercise highlighted that if we looked at the benefice of Cheddleton, Longsdon, Horton and Rushton Spencer the parishes of Horton and Longsdon had lower levels of activity and Rushton Spencer moderate levels. This reinforced the findings of the RAG rating exercise and indicated a general pattern that the areas of greatest missional engagement were in the more concentrated areas of population with the smaller villages finding things more difficult.

All of this data led us to conclude that this benefice in particular was no longer viable and that the individual parishes within it needed to be linked to stronger parishes in order to provide support for future missional engagement.

Finally we agreed a number of principles which we have recommended be used to arrive at the new configuration for the future of the Deanery. These principles are that we are seeking to:

link weaker parishes with stronger ones

welcome the contribution of retired clergy

encourage lay participation, especially in schools

maintain equity of responsibility for Deanery clergy

avoid adding struggling parishes to benefices where clergy are already in post (so that posts can be advertised with full disclosure as to the responsibilities involved)

recognise the physical, emotional and spiritual limitations within which full time clergy can be missionally effective (hence the creation of Festival Churches which can be significant arenas of ministry for retired clergy)

Appendix 2a 19/10/2021 Meeting of deanery Synod

In addition, we are proposing that each of the seven full time priests in the Deanery should be designated a specialist area of knowledge that it will be part of their responsibility to keep up to date with and to be available to give advice on to the Deanery as a whole. It is our hope and intention that each of these areas of responsibility will become a permanent part of the job description when advertising vacancies in the Deanery and be recognised by the Bishop and Archdeacon as an integral part of the role of ministers in each benefice as we move into the future.

The seven specialist areas are:

AV systems

schools work

Mission Action Planning

community engagement

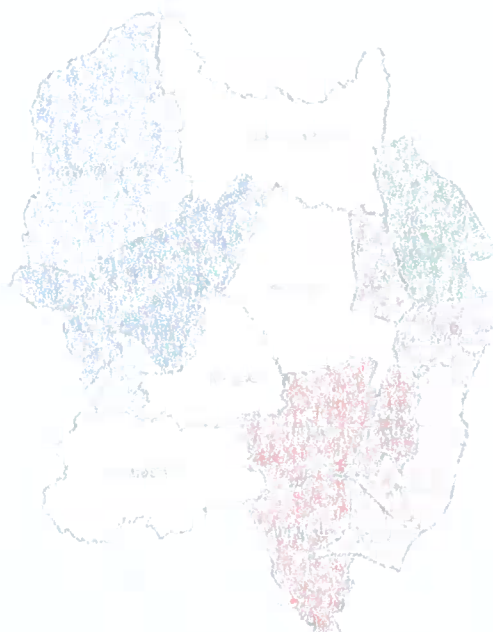
stewardship and fundraising

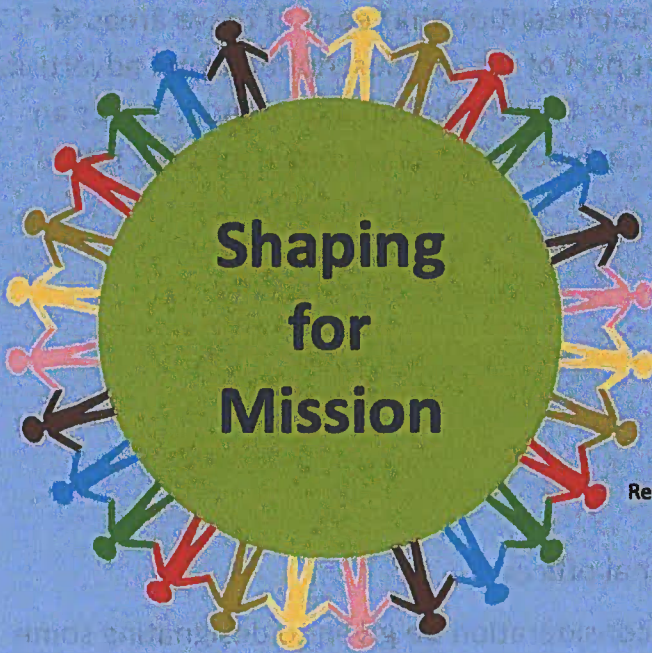
online worship and livestreaming

development of contacts from occasional offices

And finally have recommended that consideration be given to designating some struggling parishes as Festival Churches. This would mean that the churches remained open for community services like baptisms, weddings and funerals but that a Sunday service would only take place four times a year at Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Harvest. The church building would remain open and be run by a Trust on behalf of the PCC responsible for their operation. No Parish Share would be payable but the Trust would need to raise sufficient income for the upkeep of the building.

LEEK
DEANERY

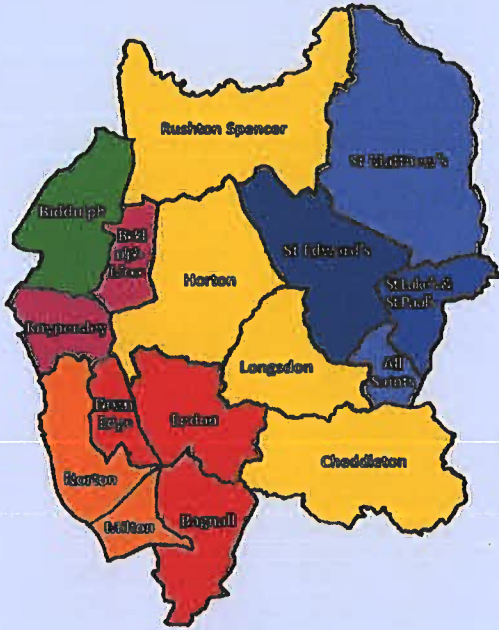




**Shaping
for
Mission**

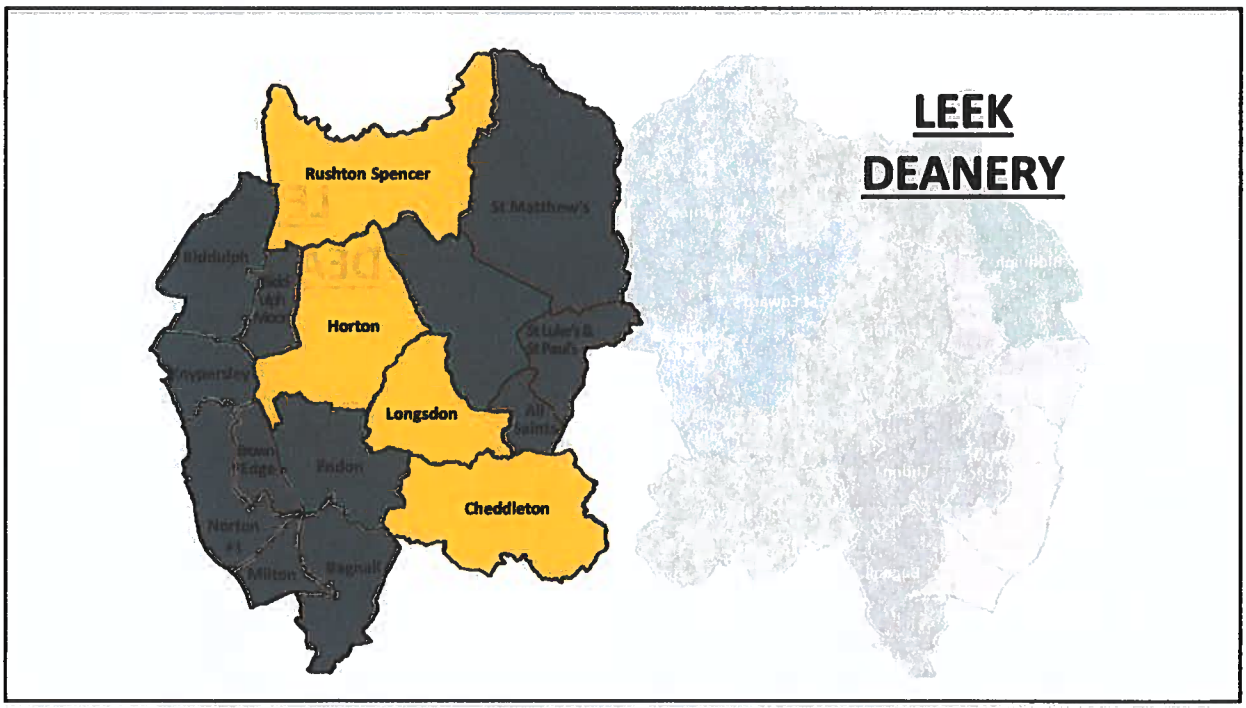
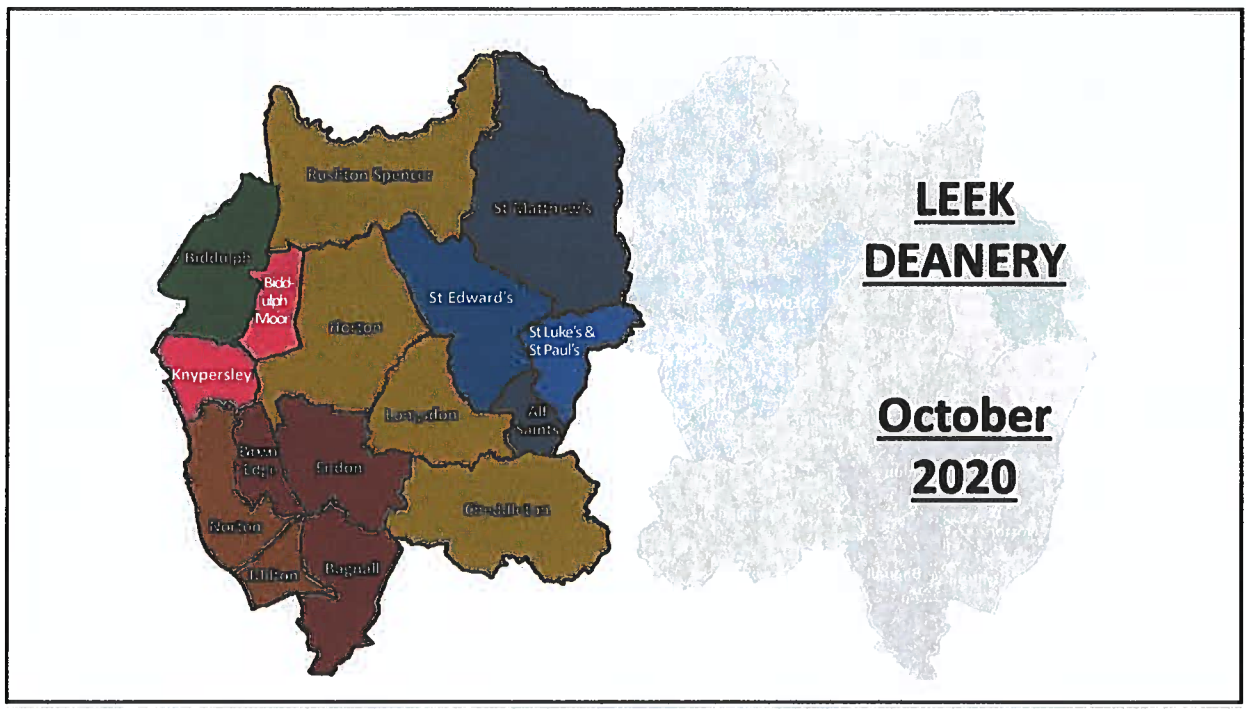
Leek Deanery Shaping for Mission Team

- Revd Phillip Swan (Diocesan Facilitator)
- Revd Preb Terry Bloor (Associate Archdeacon)
- Revd Nigel Irons (Rural Dean) – Leek St Edward’s
- David Wright (Deanery Lay Chair) - Milton
- Revd Darren Fraser – Knypersley & Biddulph Moor
- Revd Matt Malins – Leek St Luke’s & St Paul’s
- Revd Lindsay Clowes – Biddulph
- Vickie Longson – LDBE Schools Advisor
- Neil Taylor – Endon
- Revd Diane Oliver – Cheddleton, Longson, Horton & Rushton Spencer

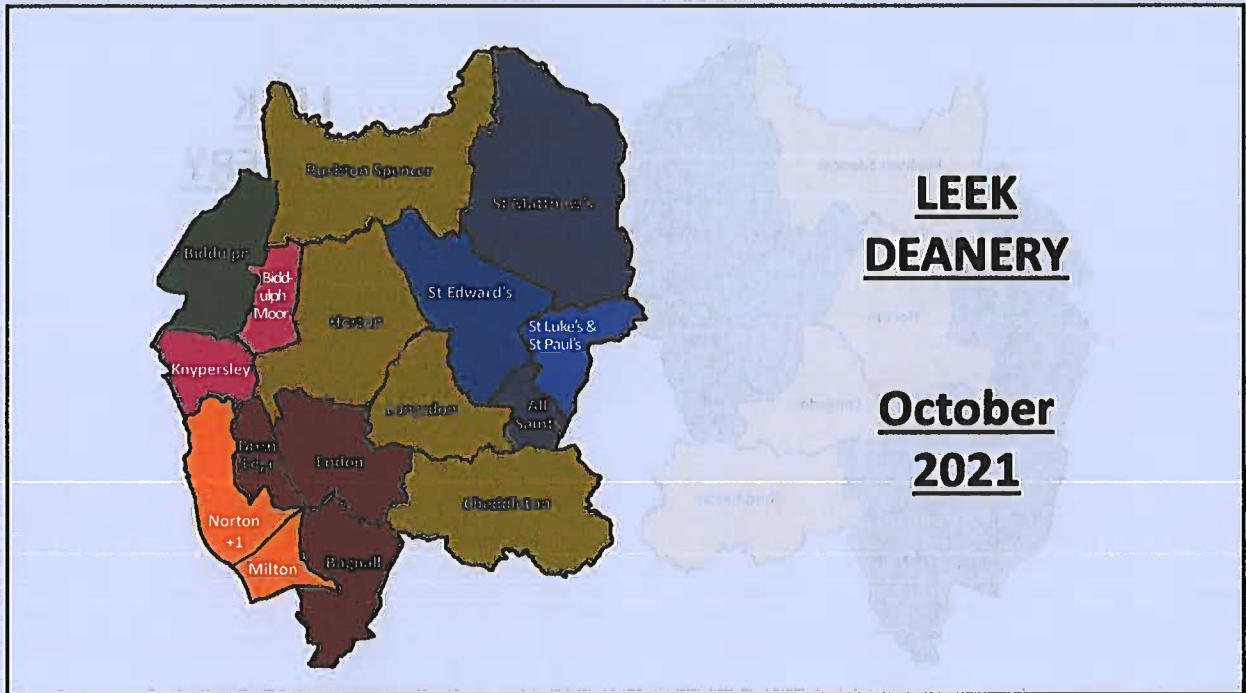
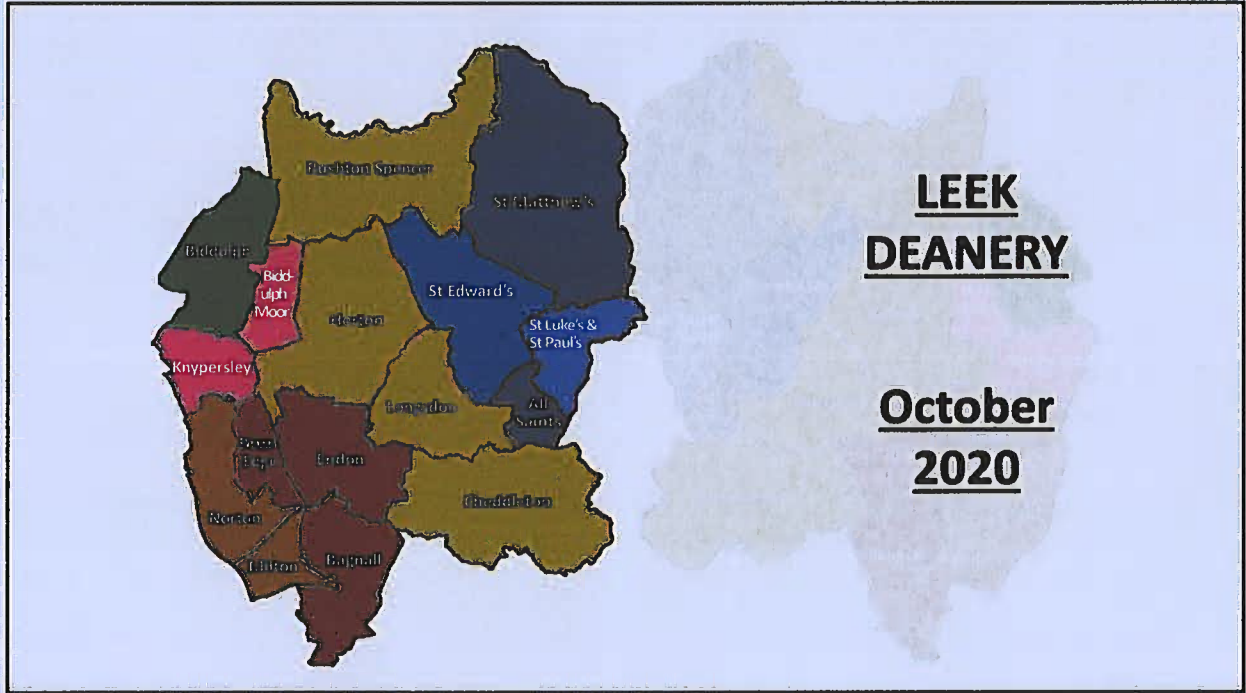


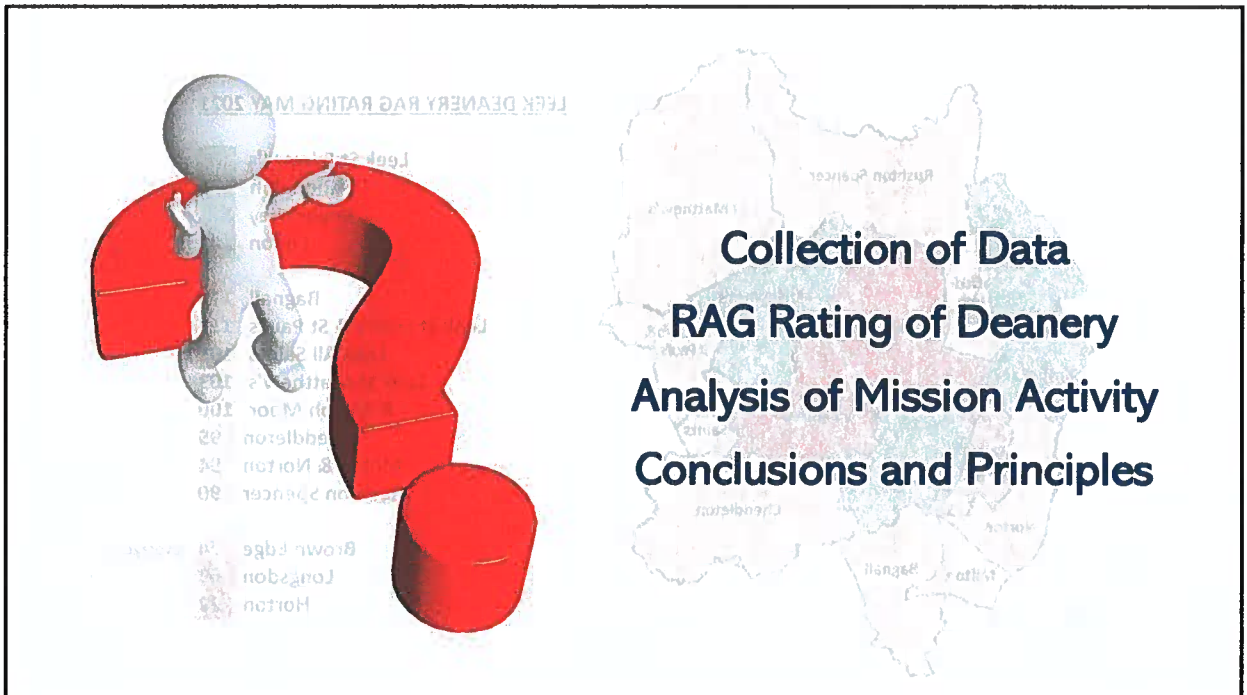
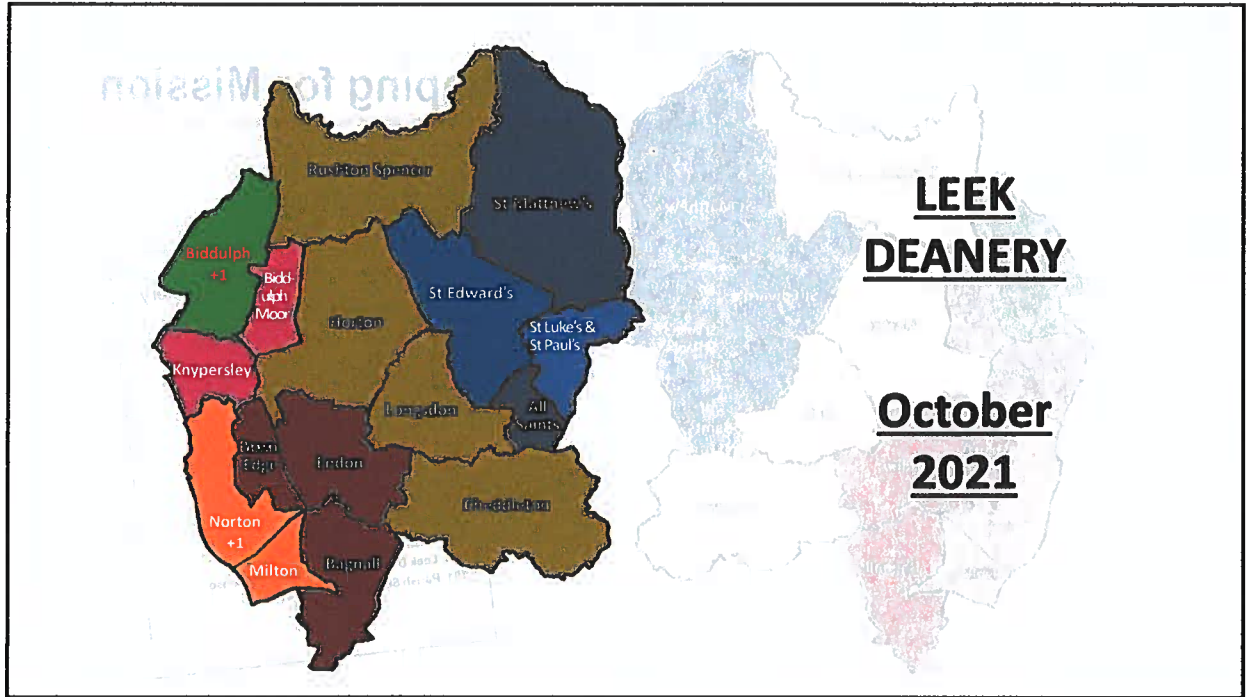
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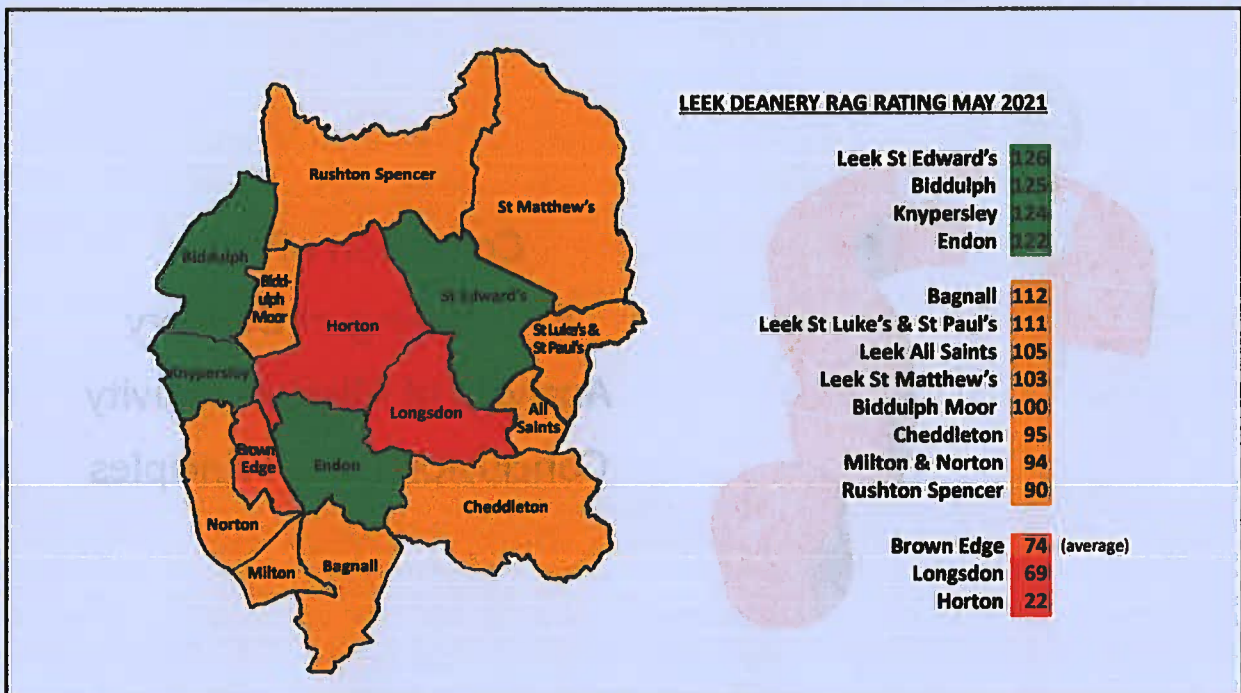
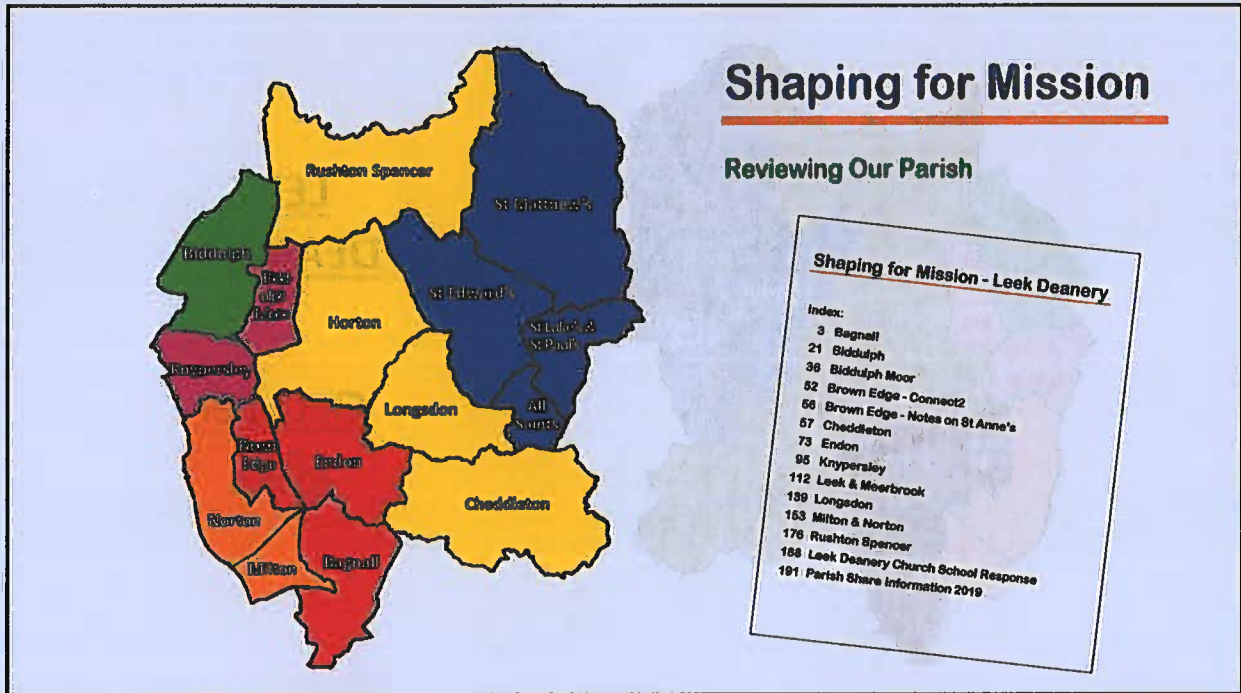
The map shows the following parishes: Rushton Spencer, Biddulph, Knypersley, Horton, Longson, Cheddleton, St. Matthew's, St. Edward's, St. Luke & St. Paul, All Saints, Biddulph Moor, Green Edge, Barton, Milton, and Bagnall.



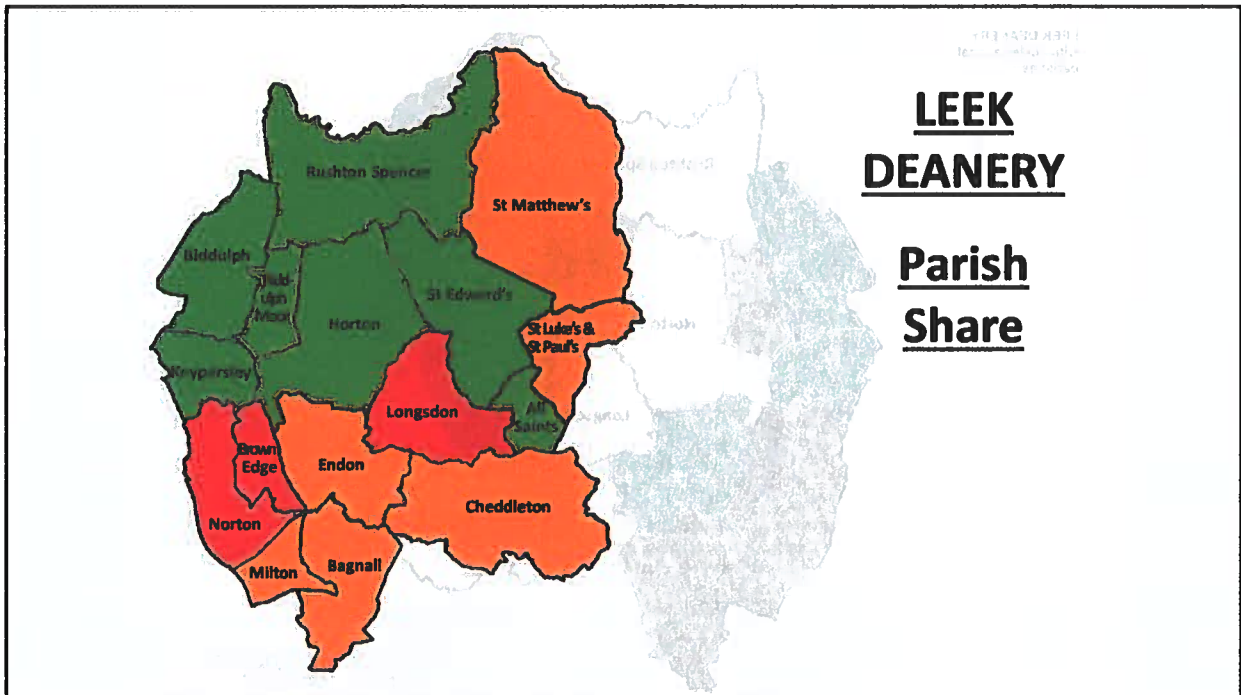
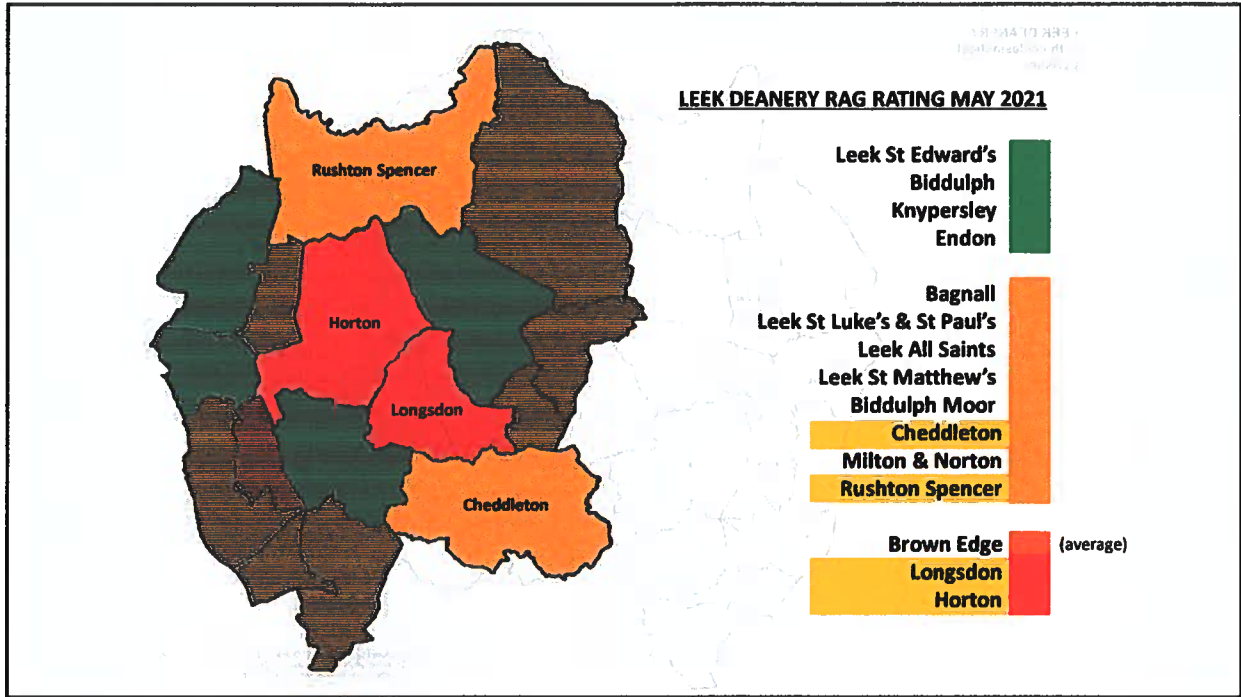
Appendix 2b



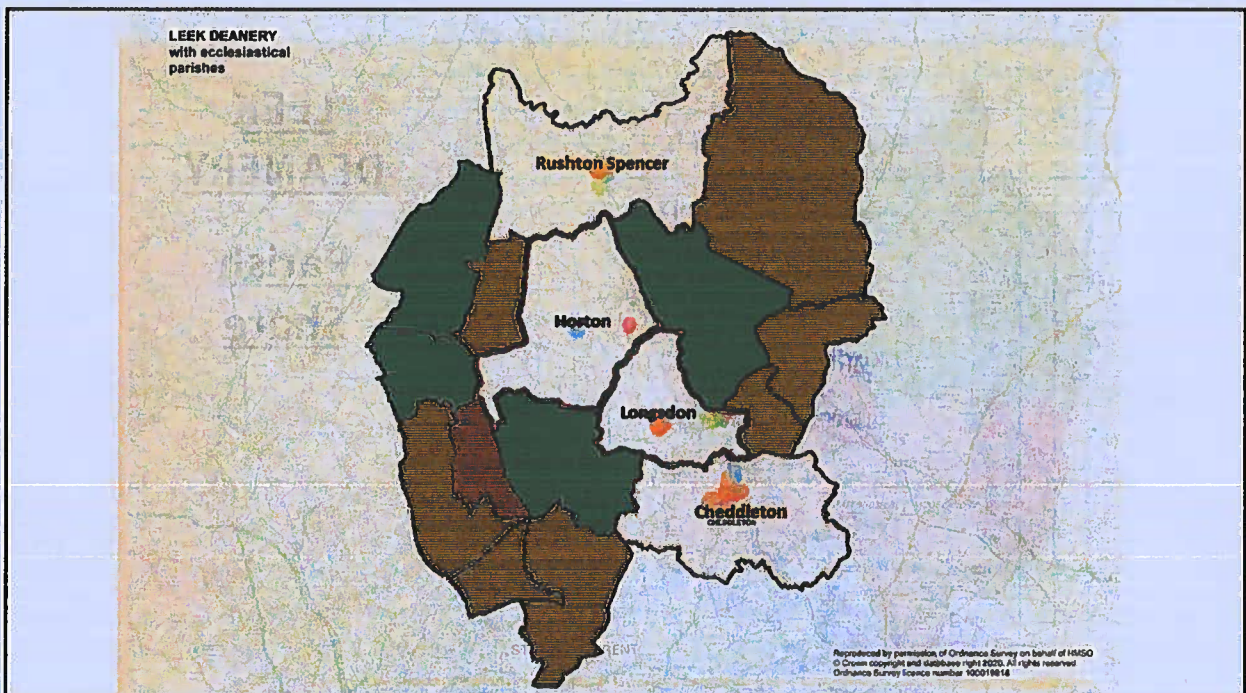
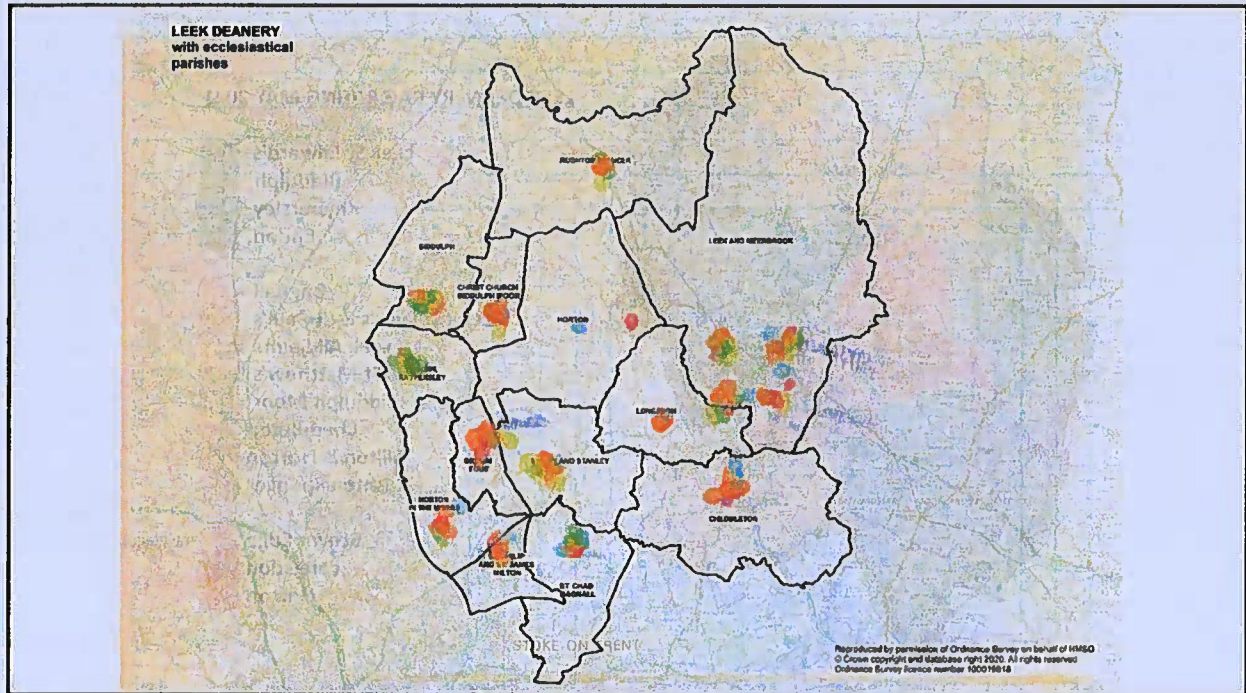




Appendix 2b



Appendix 2b



Minutes of meeting held at St Paul's Church, Leek
Leek Deanery Synod



Synod Lay Chair responded to Nigel invited questions from the meeting, which he and David Wright, Deanery

How was the team set up? The team was put together by the Diocesan Facilitator Philip Swain and the Assistant Archbishop Terry Bloor who worked with the Lay Chair David Wright and the Deanery Clergy to choose the rest of the team.

link weaker parishes with stronger ones by breaking up the benefice of Cheddleton, Longsdon, Horton and Rushton Spencer
welcome the contribution of retired clergy
encourage lay participation, especially in schools
maintain equity of responsibility for full time Deanery clergy
avoid adding struggling parishes to benefices where clergy are already in post
recognise the physical, emotional and spiritual limitations within which clergy can be missionally effective
designate a specialist area of knowledge to each of the 7 full time stipendiary ministers which they will give help and advice about across the Deanery as a whole:
 AV systems
 schools work
 Mission Action Planning
 community engagement
 stewardship and fundraising
 online worship and livestreaming
 development of contacts from occasional offices
consider designating struggling parishes as Festival Churches which would not then pay any Parish Share

The map shows the Leek Deanery with parishes color-coded: Rushton Spencer (brown), Biddulph +1 (green), Biddulph Moor (pink), Knypersley (red), Brown Edge (orange), Norton +1 (orange), Milton (orange), Bagnall (dark brown), Horton (blue), St Edward's (blue), St Luke's & St Paul's (blue), Longsdon (brown), Cheddleton (brown), and All Saints (grey).

**Leek Deanery Synod
Minutes of meeting held at St Paul's Church, Leek
on 19th October 2021 at 7.30pm.**

1. Attendance recorded:

House of Clergy 5 members 2 apologies

House of Laity 18 " 3 " 9 visitors

Rev Nigel Irons, Rural Dean, welcomed everyone to St Paul's, thanked Rev Matt Malins for hosting the meeting, and led us in worship and prayer.

2. Notices

Nigel reminded the meeting about encouraging people to join the "Open the Book" initiative.

3. Speaker

Nigel presented "Showing the Mission", showing the process and the conclusions to be presented to the Bishop. The presentation, consisting of a Powerpoint presentation and a word document, is attached separately.

We are now waiting for Bishop Matthew and Archdeacon Megan to come back to the team with their proposals.

4. Questions

Nigel invited questions from the meeting, which he and David Wright, Deanery Synod Lay Chair, responded to.

How was the team set up? The team was put together by the Diocesan Facilitator Philip Swann and the Assistant Archdeacon Terry Bloor who worked with the Lay Chair David Wright and the Deanery Clergy to choose the rest of the team.

Why are people already in post not getting extra responsibilities? Partly because they are already busy people and partly because the extra responsibilities need to be part of the "job description", which it will be for new people taking on these posts.

Was any thought given to Lay Leadership? Yes, many already have these responsibilities. Thanks go to them and to the retired Clergy, all much valued for their work.

I'm surprised Horton didn't send in a report! The Church Wardens were reminded but a form never arrived. Rev Diane Oliver will contact Horton again. There has been a delay because of Covid cases there.

Are Festival Churches a local idea? This is a national designation for struggling churches.

How revolutionary could you be? Has thought been given to moving boundaries? Yes, but there would be a reduction in the number of clergy if we did! We also thought of shutting churches but decided against it.

Appendix 3a – Minutes of Deanery Synod 19-10-2021

Have you thought where each weaker bit would be paired? Bishop Matthew and Archdeacon Megan will make that decision, taking into account this team's suggestions.

Bishop Matthew is keen to get the posts for weaker areas advertised as soon as possible.

There will always be a need for lay people to help in any configuration. This might mean some helpers change.

Any changes can be reversed (eventually) if their situation changes in the future.

**Nigel thanked us for attending and asked us to keep this issue in our prayers.
The meeting closed by sharing The Lord's Prayer.**



Leek Deanery Synod

Agenda for Meeting at St Philip & St James' Church

Baddeley Green Lane, Milton

7.30pm on Tuesday 18th January 2022

Refreshments will be served from 7.10pm - 7.30pm

1. **Opening Worship and Prayers**
2. **Notices from the Rural Dean and Lay Chair**
3. **Notices from around the Deanery**
(these should be submitted to the Rural Dean by Friday 15th January)
4. ***Shaping for Mission***
A presentation from Archdeacon Megan outlining the proposed Deanery Plan put forward by the Diocese for Leek Deanery.
An opportunity for questions will follow this presentation.
5. **Closing Prayer**

Leek Deanery Synod
Minutes of meeting held at St Philip and St James Church, Milton
on 18th January 2022 at 7.30pm.

1. Attendance recorded:

House of Clergy – 8 members 0 apologies
House of Laity 18 “ 1 “ 22 visitors

Rev Nigel Irons, Rural Dean, welcomed everyone to St Philip and St James', particularly Archdeacon Megan Smith. He thanked Rev Karen Petherick for hosting the meeting and Karen led us in worship and prayer.

2. Notices

Nigel and David Wright had no notices.

3. Speaker

Nigel gave a resume of “Shaping for Mission”, the process and the conclusions presented to the Bishop.

Archdeacon Megan thanked the meeting for attending tonight and for working on through the problems of the last few years. Her presentation showed how she and Bishop Matthew thought the mission of Leek Deanery might proceed. Megan had three “musts”. The final structure needs to be about Mission whilst supporting and encouraging current congregations, the plan needs to be “doable”, there being a finite amount of extra ministry clergy can take on and the plan needs to be affordable.

The plan suggests seven clergy posts across the Deanery. In the case of the four churches considered for the Festival Church model it had been thought best to designate these as missional congregations with regular services and mission work being primarily arranged and conducted by the PCC and Laity. Those churches would be linked to a larger church whose Vicar would take services at the four major Christian festivals (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Harvest), run the PCC and help to provide and encourage increased involvement of lay people through appropriate training.

Retired clergy would be available, as now, to officiate at occasional offices and communion services. This needs commitment from the community. The proposed deployment of clergy was shown (see attached slide) but there may be adjustments after the details of the Parish Share receipts for 2021 are known. All clergy in the Deanery could be licensed to the Deanery as a whole as well as their parish so that talents could be shared to strengthen the Deanery.

PCC's now need to discuss this and feedback their questions and comments and any alternative suggestions they wish to make. This is the first step towards appointing more clergy using the current legal processes. If the Deanery Synod agrees on a Deanery Plan the scheme will progress more quickly.

A “question and answer” time followed after a short break with discussion among meeting attendees.

Questions

(All Saints, Leek) What sort of time-line are we looking at? How long are we going to be without a vicar?

(Megan) As short as possible. Hopefully responses will be back in two months , then about six months to get the Church Commissioners approval. Then advertising for clergy. We may be able to appoint interim clergy – not sure.

(St Bartholomew's) If the Deanery endorses the plan is it certain it will go through?

(Megan) There may be more questions but I anticipate a fairly quick delivery.

(Knypersley) How will folks not here get your enthusiasm? Could those in charge of parishes be given a deadline?

(Nigel) I will be contacting all the parishes in the next few days.

(Megan) Nigel will organise a member of the Deanery Team to explain to those not here. This is a consultation, the diocese can not direct completion by a certain date.

(Nigel) Churchwardens please tell Carol (Deanery Secretary) which Church you are from so we know which are represented here.

(Cheddleton) If the clergy are to be licensed to the Deanery will this also apply to Lay Ministers?

(Megan) We haven't had this discussion but we can do.

(St Matthew's) How about retired clergy?

(Megan) Retired clergy can already officiate in any church which invites them.

(Cheddleton) How will it be decided where each vicar lives?

(Megan) Probably in the larger parish, but in the case of All Saints and Cheddleton the vicar will live in All Saints vicarage because the Cheddleton one needs too much work.

(St Luke's & St Paul's) How will vicars be able to take responsibility for more people, strategies etc without going under?

(Megan) Vicars will need help from the community, an ideal opportunity for laity to do God's work. All must be missionary minded, but some activities may have to stop to enable new or different ones to proceed. Please pray more!

Megan suggested Nigel helped us pray together. Nigel thanked Megan and the meeting for coming and after a pause for reflection led us in prayer.

The meeting closed by sharing The Grace.

Nigel reminded those attending that any questions brought up at PCC meetings not covered tonight should be addressed to him or Archdeacon Megan immediately and not wait for the next Synod meeting.

Minutes	
PCC MINUTES FOR THE PARISH OF ST LAWRENCE'S BIDDULPH	
Minutes of the meeting held at 1930 on Monday 21st February 2022 in Church Hall.	
Present	
In attendance: Andrew Shufflebotham (AS), Rob Beech (RB), Lindsey Clowes (LC), Paul Roebuck (PR), Alison Gibson (AG), Andrew Nesom (AN), Jill Gover (JG), Bill Brown (BB), Mike Murphy (MM), Carole Taylor (CT), Cynthia Dale (CD), David Gisborne (DG)	
Apologies: Cathy White, Sonya Cooper, Andrew Hallam, Pete Turner, Oliver McGuinness, Julie Ellis	

PCC Secretary: Andrew Nesom Date minutes circulated 2022

	Item	Action
1	Prayers and Worship	
	AS read 2 Timothy 4:1-8 and encouraged us to preach gospel so that we could confidently say we had fought a good fight, and won the race.	
2	Minutes of last meeting	
	Minutes of the meeting on 24 th January were presented and accepted as an accurate record.	
3	Safeguarding	
	3.1 Nothing from Eileen. 3.2 CT asked for copies of completed training certificates. 3.3 JG to remind Gez to display posters around church and hall.	JG
4	Evangelism	
	4.1 PCC agreed that Annie Roebuck and RB would run course on 14 th May on "How Do I..." 4.2 RB has purchased 420 pamphlets for Queen's Platinum Jubilee. These will be distributed to congregation as witness aids to family/friends.	
5	Vacancy Update	
	5.1 Five applications have been received. AS is encouraged by breadth of applications. These will be reduced to shortlist early March with interviews on 11 th April. 5.2 Currently one application for Youth and Children Worker.	
6	Shaping for Mission	
	PCC talked through proposals. Concern was expressed that incumbent may be stretched too far. PCC will encourage incumbent to i) seek diocesan support where it would be beneficial; ii) attend CPAS Arrow course to identify weaknesses and ways to address; iii) consider being mentored. 6.1 PCC agreed that it was willing to work with Rushton Spencer with one abstention. Proposer RB; Secunder JG 6.2 PCC agreed unanimously that it was willing to accept the suggested 0.85/0.15 allocation subject to regular review. Proposer BB; Secunder AG	
7	Finance	
	7.1 PCC unanimously agreed response to Archdeacon to leave contribution to Common Fund unchanged. 7.2 PCC agreed the proposed split of Confirmation plate: 50% to diocese ordination fund and 50% overseas (Crosslinks Alison Tarbert) 7.3 PR confirmed Year End accounts had been approved by Independent Examiner.	

From: Clare Beavon <clare.beavon@lichfield.anglican.org>

Sent: 22 March 2022 10:48

Subject: Pastoral Reorganisation - Patronage

Dear Patrons, local conversations have been taking place about some potential pastoral reorganisation and I am in the process of preparing some draft proposals to provide for the following:

- Dissolve the benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer.
- Move the parish of Rushton Spencer to the benefice of Biddulph.
- Move the parish of Horton to the benefice of Bagnall with Endon.
- Move the parishes of Longsdon; and Cheddleton to the benefice of Leek and Meerbrook.

This will therefore have an affect on the patronage interest for each of the benefices and after researching where the patrons originated from we are proposing the following:

1. The benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer currently has 2 Joint Patrons – The Bishop of Lichfield and the Incumbent of Leek and Meerbrook.
2. The benefice of Biddulph has a Sole Patron - The Martyrs Memorial and Church of England Trust.
 - a. **We would like to propose that we add the Incumbent of Leek and Meerbrook as a Patron and therefore share the patronage interest as Joint Patrons.**
3. The benefice of Bagnall with Endon has 2 Joint Patrons – CPAS and the Incumbent of Leek and Meerbrook.
 - a. **We would like to propose that we add the Bishop of Lichfield as a Patron and therefore share the patronage interest as Joint Patrons.**
4. The benefice of Leek and Meerbrook has a patronage board, we would have needed to add the Bishop of Lichfield to the board due to the parishes being moved however the Bishop is already a member of the patronage board so no amendment is required in this regard. Within the draft proposals we will need to provide for an amendment to the patronage board to add in reps from the PCCs of the parishes being transferred into this benefice.

We are unable to move the draft proposals to the consultation stage unless we have written approvals in place from all of the affected patrons.

Could you consider these proposals and let me know if you are in favour of these (or not) with any further comments you may wish to make by emailing clare.beavon@lichfield.anglican.org by **5th April**.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate in contacting me.

Best wishes.

Clare

Mike

Appendix 6 – Patron & Churchwardens response to the proposals

----- Original message -----

From: Mike Duff <mduff@cpas.org.uk>

Date: 04/04/2022 19:57 (GMT+00:00)

To: Alison Gibson <ali.gibbo55@gmail.com>, Jill Gover <jill.gover@btinternet.com>

Cc: Kathy Burch <kburch@cpas.org.uk>

Subject: RE: Pastoral Reorganisation - Biddulph

Alison and Jill

Thanks for your time just now.

Here is my proposed response. Do let me know if there is more to be added, or any words are not as you would wish them to be said.

Blessings

Mike

Dear Clare

Thank you for your patience.

I have now had the opportunity to talk with the church wardens at St Lawrence, Biddulph, and I am copying them into this response.

They explained to me that they have not as yet had any contact from the Archdeacon about this matter, nor from the Area Dean – nor has there been any formal invitation for conversation with Rushton Spencer's PCC.

They said that the understanding of the PCC of St Lawrence was that they were being asked to offer informal support to Rushton Spencer rather than to be involved in pastoral reorganisation. The idea of a combined benefice was a surprise to them as was the idea of a change of patronage. Their understanding was that Rushton Spencer would be lay led.

They said that the PCC were happy to continue discussions with regard to an informal arrangement with Rushton Spencer.

They also noted that if it were necessary to think in terms combining the two parishes into one benefice, they would only be willing to do so if there was only one PCC and that CPAS remained as their sole patron.

Having heard their views, the patronage trustees would not wish to give support to this part of the proposal as it currently stands. I very much look forward to being drawn into further conversation about this in due course.

With all very best wishes

Mike

Leek Deanery Synod
Minutes of meeting held at St Luke's Church, Leek
on 26th April 2022 at 7.30pm.

1. Attendance recorded:

House of Clergy	5 members	1 apologies	
House of Laity	30 "	2 "	0 visitors

Rev Nigel Irons, Rural Dean, welcomed everyone to St Luke's, particularly Archdeacon Megan Smith. He thanked Rev Matt Malins for hosting the meeting and led us in worship and prayer.

2. Notices

Nigel and Lay Chair David Wright had no notices.

3. Speaker

Nigel gave a resumé of "Shaping for Mission", the process and the conclusions presented to the Bishop. He reported that discussions had taken place with Clergy and the Lay Chair. Allocations are in the gift of Bishop Matthew. The Deanery Plan showing the "shape" of Benefices including the clergy posts were the focus of the meeting. Some parishes which were shown as shaded on the plan will have a different shape of ministry with the PCC playing a more significant role. Nomenclature for these parishes is not yet decided.

The motion (amended and set out in full below) was then opened for discussion and the following comments were made:

(Biddulph, St Lawrence) It will be good to know what other PCC's think. The PCC at St Lawrence voted to agree to link with Rushton Spencer but didn't realise that the churches would be joined in a Benefice. We are happy to work together as linked churches, but all roles have not been explained, particularly any diminishment in patronage. There has not been enough information given to PCC's or communication about the vacancy between Deanery and PCC.

(Nigel) The map and the information about the Benefices was set out at the last meeting to which Churchwardens were invited therefore some of the comments made are inaccurate.

(Megan) Nigel's point is correct. The aim is to link stronger and weaker parishes so not all small parishes are stuck together. The clergy oversight of smaller parishes will encourage lay Ministry. The plan is a way to avoid church closures. Patronage will need discussing in individual parishes.

(Nigel) It is important that everyone feels free to speak from the heart. Approval tonight is just the start of a lengthy process during which more consultations will follow.

(St Bartholomew's, Norton) The general feeling of our PCC was that this is a "Fait Accompli". Smaller churches shouldn't be made to feel like "poor relations". Pastoral care may suffer. Is it possible for some of the clergy admin, for example, to be done by someone else?

(Nigel) The Shaping for Mission Team were particularly concerned not to overload clergy.

Appendix 7 – Proposals at Deanery Synod meeting

(Megan) The mindset about clergy ministry needs to be reassessed, needs to be shared. The Laity can help here.

(Nigel) All these points will be shared with the Bishop and Archdeacon.

(St Luke + St Paul, Leek) Our PCC is generally supportive of the plan considering the level of needs in the Deanery.

(Nigel) Thank you.

(Horton, St Michael) We are supportive of the plan but concerned about the amount of the Vicar's time we would get. What about the Parish Share?

(Megan) The Parish Share will be allocated according to the amount of Vicar's time each parish gets. Perhaps a change of services, for example reducing communion services, may help. We are lucky there are a lot of retired clergy in Leek.

(Nigel) Vacant parishes can claim the costs of retired clergy during the vacancy, but not when they become part of a Benefice with a priest allocated to work with them.

(All Saints, Leek) Our PCC came with more questions. Why was there not greater representation of the Shaping for Mission Team? Our vacancy has lasted 2½ years and we are now looking at up to 4 years. It's really hard work for Churchwardens! Should the suggested two year review be by an independent team? We agree with change, but it must be the right change.

(Nigel) The team was put together by the Diocesan Facilitator. The team was intended to be small and focused. All Parishes were consulted early in the process. Any future review would involve a consultation with all parishes about how the life of their churches has developed and grown and whether they have been able to keep up their contributions to the Common Fund.

(All Saints) Filling in a form doesn't really give the life of the Church, but we agree with that.

(Megan) Teams are not fixed and members can be changed. I am sure Nigel would be happy to hear from anyone who is interested in serving on the Team.

(Nigel) Absolutely please get in touch if you like to do that.

(Biddulph, St Lawrence) Can we add in "Subject to further consultation"?

(Nigel) We could put that right at the beginning. Further consultation will happen.

(Appendix "B" attached)

The following motion was then put to the Synod:

That subject to the future processes of consultation:

i) the formation of the new benefices on the Final Vision Plan (*see Appendix A*) accompanied by the creation of a new and different shape of ministry in the parishes of Brown Edge, Horton, Longsdon and Ruston Spencer be approved

and

ii) the synod request that the Bishop and Archdeacon work with the Shaping for Mission Team to provide clarity about the nomenclature to be given to the new form of ministry in the shaded parishes and to define the parameters on which the distinctive shape of that ministry will be based

and

Appendix 7 – Proposals at Deanery Synod meeting

iii) the Shaping for Mission Team be asked to review the effectiveness and impact of the new arrangements (in terms of both missional growth and contributions to the Common Fund) two years after they are implemented

and

iv) once these changes come into effect all incumbents in the Deanery be asked to share a specialised skill (to be agreed between each of them and the Deanery Synod) which they will be responsible for giving help and advice on across the Deanery

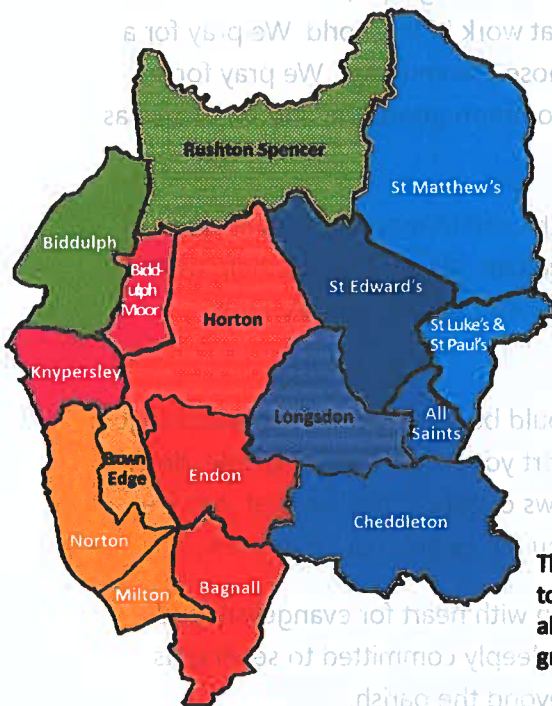
Members present were then invited to fill in the voting slips and to indicate the name of the representative they were attending on behalf of if they were casting a proxy vote.

The result of the vote was 33 in favour, 3 against, 0 abstentions. *(This includes a vote from Revd Darren Fraser who was unable to attend due to the meeting coinciding with an APCM but who had indicated in advance his support for the proposal).* All parishes in the Deanery were represented at the meeting.

(Nigel) Thank you all for discussing and voting.

Nigel led us in a prayer of thanks for the Deanery, for the empowerment of the resurrection and for peace. He prayed for the Bishop, Archdeacon, and the Diocesan Team before giving the Blessing to close the meeting.

Appendix A



LEEK DEANERY PLAN

April 2022

Biddulph + Rushton Spencer 1.00

Knypersley + Biddulph Moor 1.00

Norton + Milton + Brown Edge 1.00

Endon + Bagnall + Horton 1.00

The Team Benefice of:

St Edward's + Longsdon 1.00

St Matthew's + St Luke's & St Paul's 1.00

All Saints + Cheddleton 1.00

The shaded parishes of Rushton Spencer, Horton, Longsdon and Brown Edge to have a new and different shape of ministry with the priests being allocated to them having a support focussed role and PCC's being given greater responsibility for the running of the church.



Statement by the Bishop of Stafford on the expectations of the Diocese of Lichfield in relation to the benefice of Biddulph St Lawrence

The Diocese of Lichfield is a diverse, rich and exciting place to live and work. It has almost 600 churches, over 420 parishes and over 200 schools in an area which includes Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, the northern half of Shropshire, Wolverhampton, Walsall, half of Sandwell and even three parishes which straddle the Welsh border. It lies at the heart of England, not just geographically but culturally and socially. There are areas of spectacular natural beauty that sit beside the legacy of centuries of industry and commerce; areas of urban deprivation and rural poverty beside places of aspiration, growth and hope.

What unites us as a Diocese is the invitation to “Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad”. St Chad, the first Bishop of Lichfield, challenges us to humble, faithful and courageous mission in this part of the Midlands and in this generation. We are committed to the mutual flourishing of faithful Anglicans of all traditions, and to welcoming and honouring people of all backgrounds.

We are inspired by our Diocesan Vision:

“As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad, we pray that the two million people in our diocese encounter a church that is confident in the gospel, knows and loves its communities, and is excited to find God already at work in the world. We pray for a church that reflects the richness and variety of those communities. We pray for a church that partners with others in seeking the common good, working for justice as people of hope.”

We have identified three priorities as we seek to realise this vision more fully: to *developing discipleship*, *encouraging vocation* and *inspiring evangelism*. These priorities help us focus our work in all the varied forms of Christian life in the Diocese; in our parishes, Fresh Expressions, Schools, Chaplaincies and the Cathedral.

The priest appointed to the post of Vicar of Biddulph would be accepting an invitation to join us in this pilgrimage of faith. We will do all we can support you to grow as a disciple, deepen your vocation and be a confident bearer of the good news of Jesus Christ so that you are equipped and ready to do same for those with whom you are called share in ministry.

St Lawrence’s is a lively church in the evangelical tradition with heart for evangelism and mission. There is strong lay leadership and the church is deeply committed to serving its community as well as fostering connections and links beyond the parish.

Appendix 8 – Statement by the Bishop of Stafford

The Diocese of Lichfield is currently undertaking a deanery based process called *Shaping for Mission* (<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/shaping-for-mission>) in which deaneries are invited to respond to the challenges of mission and resourcing following the pandemic. It is likely that St Lawrence's will be asked to take on an additional small parish in the deanery. This is not to detract from the health of St Lawrence's but to enable the parish to be a blessing and encouragement to a less well-resourced church in the Deanery.

You can find out more about the Diocese of Lichfield by exploring our website: (www.lichfield.anglican.org/our_vision and the discover more about serving in this diocese at www.lichfield.anglican.org/vacancies)

+Matthew Stafford:

If a patient is found to be at risk of falling, a care plan should be developed to address the risk. This should include measures to prevent falls, such as providing a walking stick or grab rails, and ensuring the patient is supervised when walking. It is also important to ensure that the patient is aware of the risk and is encouraged to take steps to reduce the risk. This may include wearing appropriate footwear, using handrails, and avoiding alcohol and sedatives. The care plan should be reviewed regularly and updated as needed. It is also important to ensure that the patient is aware of the risk and is encouraged to take steps to reduce the risk. This may include wearing appropriate footwear, using handrails, and avoiding alcohol and sedatives.

You can find out more about the Disease of the Eye at www.diseaseoftheeye.org.uk. This website provides information about the disease and how to get help. You can also find out more about the Disease of the Eye at www.diseaseoftheeye.org.uk. This website provides information about the disease and how to get help.

Andrew Jeffrey

**Benefices of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer;
Biddulph; Bagnall with Endon; and Leek and Meerbrook**

Supplementary comments received from the following representors who made representations against the draft Scheme:

3.	Shirley Machin	Longsdon St Chads
13.	Andrew Shufflebotham	Churchwarden at St Lawrence's Biddulph
24.	Fr Stephen Anderson	Priest, parishioner and PCC member. Retired to Horton December 2021
26.	Andrew and Maggie Nesom	Members of Biddulph Church

Supplementary comment from Cheddleton PCC who made a representation against the draft Scheme but has since confirmed it is in favour of the draft Scheme

37.	Cheddleton PCC
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We have also received a number of comments from people who did not originally submit a representation as follows:

1.	Pat Saul	Secretary of St Chad's PCC at Bagnall
2.	Judith Beckett	Member of St Chad's family
3.	Kathryn Howell	Lay minister and warden at St Chad's Bagnall
4.	Sheila Tipper	Member of St Chad's Church, Bagnall
5.	Peter Millard	PCC member of St Chad's Church, Bagnall
6.	Mrs K Cooke	Headteacher, Forsbrook CE Primary School
7.	Wilf Houston-Brown	Member of St Chad's Church, Bagnall
8.	Muriel Finney	Member of St Chad's Church, Bagnall
9.	Marion Lycett	Parishioner of St Chad's Church, Bagnall
10.	Claire Houston-Brown	Parishioner of St Chad's Church, Bagnall
11.	Caroline Wren	Regarding planned changes to the parish and church of Horton
12.	Dr Catherine Stewart	Regarding proposed changes at Horton Church
13.	Anna Bairstow	Regarding proposed changes affecting the parish of Horton

Representations against the draft Scheme

3. Shirley Machin

This is all a bit late as Nigel Irons has already been installed as our “Curate” and Cheddleton are interviewing vicars,!

Shirley Machin. St Chads Longsdon.

13. Andrew Shufflebotham

My brief comments on the document:

Response to the Church Commissioners January 2024 re: Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

Benefices of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and Rushton Spencer; Biddulph; Bagnall with Endon; and Leek and Meerbrook

Proposed Pastoral Scheme

In section 5 (Deanery synod):

- 18th January 2022 - The churchwarden of St. Lawrence’s, Biddulph, did not receive an invitation to the 18th January 2022 meeting of the Deanery Synod
- 23rd February 2022 - St. Lawrence’s Biddulph PCC motion
 - o The PCC is willing to accept the proposed link with St. Lawrence’s, Rushton Spencer. (Passed with one abstention)
 - o The PCC agreed unanimously that it was willing to accept the 0.85/0.15 allocation subject to regular review.
- Although factually correct, this motion talks about a link with St. Lawrence’s, Rushton Spencer and not a Benefice reorganisation. I was chairing PCC at this time, during the Vacancy, and this is what I was led to believe that the PCC was being asked to vote on. The discussion was overwhelmingly positive* and there was a genuine desire to help a struggling church. If that vote had been taken once it was realised that there would be a Benefice change, I’m confident that the ensuing vote would have been quite different.
- All the decisions of Deanery Synod were recorded in the Synod Minutes but there is no record that any of those sets of minutes was accepted as ‘a true and correct’ record of the meetings because none of the sets of minutes was formally accepted by the Synod at the subsequent meetings.

*- In Representation 44, from Mr A Lancaster, he implies that St. Lawrence's is against 'any possible joint' with St. Lawrence's Rushton Spencer. The discussion and vote at the Biddulph PCC meeting clearly show that this is not correct and that there was (and is) a willingness to work with the church at Rushton.

In Section 5 (PCCs)

- The first time that it became clear to the churchwardens and PCC of St. Lawrence's, Biddulph, that a Benefice change was proposed was in an email from our Patrons, received on 22nd March 2022 -after the discussions at our PCC had taken place.

Andrew Shufflebotham (Churchwarden & Deanery synod Rep. St. Lawrence's, Biddulph)

24. Fr Stephen Anderson

**Supplementary Response to the Church Commissioners
by The Revd Stephen Anderson
regarding the proposed Pastoral Scheme
concerning
The United Benefice of Cheddleton, Horton, Longsdon and
Rushton Spencer (the "United Benefice")
within the Leek Deanery, Diocese of Lichfield**

Introduction

The objections expressed by 41 respondents and 2 PCCs are very well summarised in Annex One of the letter from the Commissioners to the Bishop of Shrewsbury (the Diocesan Bishop on sabbatical) dated 3rd November 2023.

Having now seen the response on behalf of the Bishop dated January 2024 (hence the "Diocesan Letter"), it is the unanimous view, once again, of the PCC of Horton, meeting on 13th February 2024 and five members (two absent due to sickness) of the PCC of Longsdon, meeting informally (*a formal meeting not possible due to the recent appointment of the Rural Dean, a proponent of the Plan, as Curate in Charge*) on 9th February that their earlier responses to object to the proposed Pastoral Scheme should stand, for the reasons already given.

I do not propose to repeat again all the objections raised in my earlier submission dated 27th July 2023 that the proposed Pastoral Plan fails the tests under Sections 3(1)-(3) of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011, which still stand. I will instead respond more substantially to the most significant concerns raised by the Diocesan Letter.

1. Origins of the Proposed Pastoral Scheme - Finance

The stated premise at the end of the second paragraph of the Diocesan Letter is that “*Leek Deanery needed to reduce stipendiary clergy deployment from 8 to 7 wte (whole time equivalent) across the deanery*”. That can be challenged as unnecessary financially.

This is because the Diocese has, since its most recent Financial Accounts 2022, adopted Total Return Accounting (TRA). This allows the capital gains (over and above inflation) of endowment funds to be applied to income.

As a consequence, the Diocese now intends to apply £0.5m of its assets to income to balance its 2024 Budget. However, it seems strangely unprepared to adopt the same approach to the Diocesan Stipends Fund (DSF) - see paragraph 8 of the Diocesan Letter - which is inconsistent. Adopting TRA gives it an opportunity to spend a lot more on the provision of parochial clergy. Paragraph 8 also claims that applying TRA “*does not generate anything available to be spent*”. This is not correct. The whole point of TRA is to generate income from capital gains.

This can be illustrated by reference to the thirteen dioceses that use TRA for their DSF. They are able to convert the capital gain on the original endowment in the DSF (over and above inflation plus any accumulated income) as a separate figure in what is termed the “Unapplied Total Return” (UTR). Those dioceses that have used their UTR most effectively (such as Oxford and Gloucester) have applied 6% of the total DSF to the payment of stipends. This is quite proper under accounting rules and very sensible in order to maximise the funds available for the provision of parochial clergy, all while still maintaining their DSF at a consistently high level.

As at the end of 2022, the latest date for which financial records are available publicly, the Diocese of Lichfield had £61m of assets in the DSF. If Lichfield under TRA was to apply 6% of DSF to income, then £3.66m would be available for stipends, rather than the apparent £1.2m currently going to stipends from the DSF; this is equivalent to 45 additional clergy.

Even if Lichfield was to take a more cautious approach of applying, say 4% of DSF to income, this would pay for another 21 clergy.

It would be normal practice to take account of likely investment market fluctuations in calculating how much UTR is available for stipends. Since no Diocese should spend all of its UTR in any one year, their spending policy would allow for fluctuations and still leave a healthy balance of UTR in the DSF. For example, the Diocese of Oxford has implemented a policy of keeping at least £10m UTR in its DSF; yet it was still able to spend more than 6% of DSF on stipends in 2022 – and with its DSF still valued at over £101m at the end of the year.

So, the money is available under TRA to provide more parochial clergy. To ignore this powerful source of funding for clergy stipends ignores the case for investment in parochial clergy now, where there is proven evidence (*Evaluation of Transforming Wigan report by Kate Hudson*) of the direct correlation between clergy, mission and giving. In this way the Church's future will be better secured.

An outline proposal to use UTR for transitional support for parochial ministry.

The Diocesan Letter implies that in a large Diocese, applying some of the UTR across 424 parishes would spread it too thinly to have any real effect.

This need not be the case. I have already shown above how a proper use of TRA could fund an additional 45 clergy. It is not beyond imagination to devise a scheme for allocations to Deaneries, for example, as a top up available, over and above the Parish Share, to pay for a WTE where only a half time post might otherwise be afforded; or a half time post where a House for Duty post might otherwise be afforded.

This could be on a conditional basis of the funding being available for a transitional period of say three years or so to give a newly recruited parish priest the opportunity to grow the congregation and, with it, giving and fund raising, so that the parish becomes self-sufficient financially within the specified period of time, without further recourse to the UTR.

This could be transformational and merits more serious consideration as an alternative approach than a couple of paragraphs in the response in the Diocesan Letter. The whole point of this analysis is to argue that the money is there in the UTR to partially contribute to the WTE post otherwise proposed to be lost in the Leek Deanery; or at least contribute to other alternatives set out below.

The Holy Communion

The Diocesan Letter reports in Section 2 that there has not been "*a eucharist in every parish for a very long time*". Moreover, in Section 9c, the further comment is made that eucharistic services are "*no more the tradition in Horton than anywhere else*".

In relation to Horton, the facts say otherwise:

- In 2022, there were 41 services of Holy Communion out of 49 services in all.

- In 2023, there were 43 services of Holy Communion out of 53 services in all.
- In 2024 until 18th February, there were 8 services of Holy Communion out of 8 services in all.

A similar profile is exhibited at Longsdon.

The Holy Communion is the presumptive main act of corporate worship. The mystery of Our Lord and the saving events of His life, passion and resurrection is made manifest and present in Eucharistic worship and nourishes discipleship. That is why its retention is so important. It is a sacramental sign of the very purpose of creation, which is our communion with God and each other.

The clerical oversight model with lay leadership of services being proposed will fundamentally change the nature of worship and deprive the congregation of the regular reception of the Sacrament.

The claim is made in the Diocesan Letter that Mattins or Morning Prayer is equally traditional “*as a primary act of worship on a Sunday*”. and could be offered instead by a layperson. The practice was that when it was done so, there was always an early service of Holy Communion, or one added to the end of Morning prayer, in most parishes.

But ever since the Parish and People movement of the early 1950’s most Anglican churches have made the Holy Communion the central service - and that is almost three quarters of a century now.

Indeed, one central driver was to make people understand they were not mere attenders but active participants in the liturgy, which being sacramental was transformative and made them Christ’s body in the world. So, the driver was indeed missional.

This is contra to the quite extraordinary and deeply disturbing comment which is made in Section 2 that “***guaranteeing a eucharist every week decreases the missional opportunity for an incumbent as their focus is on maintenance of services rather than mission***”.

Worship is the outcome of mission, not a diversion from it. Mission, perhaps in the form of social enterprise in its various guises, while drawing people into the church environment, does not automatically lead to conversion or develop discipleship without having a bedrock in worship.

Worship should be edifying of heart, mind and spirit. It should connect us with the numinous, feed and inspire us and provide a foundation for life. The concern is that even on the heroic assumption that a lay volunteer can be found to lead worship in the form of the ministry of the Word, it would not be

informed by training, theology and praxis. Lightly setting aside centuries of liturgical construct and tradition with lay led worship does not fulfil the requirement for the better cure of souls.

Lay people, particularly in rural communities, feel ill equipped to lead liturgy, understand fully the Church's liturgical year, choose appropriate hymns or worship songs, let alone prepare and preach an inspiring and well-constructed sermon.

There is also the related issue of the likely reluctance of parishioners to engage with lay leaders on pastoral matters, which can be highly sensitive and confidential. These need to be handled with great care and for which they may have had little training. Parishioners do not want lay leaders, who are also their neighbours, "knowing their business". Equally, the alternative of approaching the oversight minister for pastoral care would not be likely as he or she may well be remote physically and emotionally from most parishioners. If the benefice priest is only leading worship occasionally – every 6 weeks as implied in the Pastoral Plan – it will be difficult to become known and trusted.

The Diocesan Letter mentions the availability of retired clergy in the Deanery currently to celebrate the Holy Communion. That is not the vision of the oversight model. Retired clergy can play a valuable role in maintaining the continuity of sacramental worship, but the issue here is affordability because recourse by the parish to the DSF for their payment is not possible where parochial clergy are in post and this would then constitute a demand on PCC funds, in addition to the Parish Share.

The laity wonder then where the current Parish Share is going. If it is not for the provision of a parish priest, who will lead services, that calls into question in their minds whether it is worth paying for this perceived devaluing of the structure, occasion and content of worship.

The justifiable concern then is that the implementation of these proposals will drive decline rather than lead to a revitalization. It fails the crucial test, which the Commissioners must employ, for the better cure of souls.

Alternative Proposals

The comment is made in Section 6 of the Diocesan Letter that "*no one has yet suggested an alternative plan which works for the whole deanery and achieves the required reduction in posts*".

I had a discussion over coffee with the Area Bishop and Archdeacon Stoke in December 2022 about possible alternatives. My recollection is that they were anxious to get away for a service at the Cathedral and so the meeting was

brief and distracted. I had only begun to think about possible alternatives and the idea of there being any was turned aside.

Indeed, this is the very often heard comment set out by several of the respondents: the proposed Pastoral Scheme has been presented time and again on the basis of there being no alternative (see responses 15, 22 and 23). The strongly held perception is that objections have been brushed aside by a hierarchy more concerned with the management of clergy deployment rather than responding to the genuine pastoral concerns of the laity. There is a widespread view that local people are simply not being listened to and parallels are being drawn with the treatment of sub postmasters by the Post Office.

With imagination, there are always alternatives. One such is to group the four, essentially rural, parishes of Meerbrook, Rushton Spencer, Horton and Longsdon surrounding the market town of Leek into a single Benefice. The social and agrarian characteristics of each parish are remarkably similar, being essentially disbursed farming communities, although Longsdon is more mixed, being also a suburban community to Leek.

Under this proposal, the Benefice of Leek would still retain four parishes and does not need Longsdon or Meerbrook to be viable; neither Biddulph with Rushton Spencer.

The combined parish shares of the four parishes under this proposal is £36,000, The position could be topped up to £50,000 for a half time priest or £70,000 for a full time priest by the application of UTR, mentioned earlier, for an agreed transitional period, while the Benefice achieves a growth in engagement, numbers and giving that a new parish priest would be mandated to pursue.

At Horton, congregations increase significantly to up to fifty for Harvest, Carol and Remembrance Sunday services. Notwithstanding 7 years more or less of vacancy, this shows the potential is still there for a new parish priest to grow the congregation by the time-honoured means in rural areas of getting alongside people and gaining their confidence.

Moreover, it is very possible that in at least one of the parishes, there would be a preparedness to pay substantially for a more conducive settlement. Nobody in authority has asked this question of the parish. It could form the basis for an acceptable financial solution in addition to using the UTR.

There are obviously variations on these possibilities and all that is asked for is the opportunity for an open discussion with the Area Bishop and Archdeacon Stoke about these possibilities, without their minds being closed, based on one scheme only.

To say that such an opportunity was given by Archdeacon Stoke to the Churchwarden at Horton in the summer of 2023 does not reflect the given intention of the meeting, which was to request Horton to work with Bagnall and Endon in compiling a Parish Profile for the combined Benefice against the wishes of the PCC and in the middle of a statutory consultation by the Commissioners. Despite the rejection of the proposal at the meeting, this request was then followed up in writing by the Associate Archdeacon.

The perceived problem seems to be because of the detachment of Brown Edge from the Bagnall with Endon grouping and its transfer to the Milton and Norton grouping. That has left a deficit of 0.15wte in the Bagnall with Endon position. The possibilities for transitional financial cover here are contained in my previous comment.

My own experience of the Church over many years elsewhere is that this kind of shortfall from a WTE post is often made up with the addition of a sector ministry of some kind; or in declaring the parish as “strategic” if the Bishop really wants something to go ahead.

Another alternative would be a Benefice comprised of Horton, Longsdon and Meerbrook. The one sentence comment is made in Section 7 of the Diocesan Letter that “*Meerbrook is settled within the Leek team*”. Comments that have been heard are that Meerbrook, which is a rural parish, is despondent and exhausted from the demands of lay ministry and would welcome a discussion about closer priestly engagement with compatible parishes.

The Parish Share of this grouping would be sufficient to pay for a House for Duty priest (but see previous comment about the availability of UTR for a transitional period to top up to a half time post).

There is no vicarage currently, but one could be rented relatively cheaply in the locality. This practice is followed by other Dioceses who see the advantage of flexibility in accommodation and in not having the burden of structural maintenance of parsonage houses.

Conclusions and Recommendation

The perception held by respondents who have objected to the proposed Pastoral Plan is that, despite its title, it lacks pastoral sensitivity, especially in relation to putting clearly incompatible parishes together which will not foster cohesion.

It has been developed as a managerial solution to a perceived financial problem that need not exist if the Diocese, like others, was prepared to use its UTR as an investment in parish clergy with a missional brief to increase

numbers and giving. There is the opportunity to learn from the experience of other dioceses in how they are prioritising the funding of clergy posts.

Section 12 of the Diocesan Letter states that “*alternatives could be considered if financially sustainable ... but not one of these are*”. Potentially viable alternatives for discussion are suggested here and need to be taken seriously.

A better outcome to this process would then be for the Commissioners to refer the proposed Pastoral Scheme back to the Bishop to enable a more open and pastoral focussed discussion to take place around meeting the genuine needs of the parishes for the better cure of souls than the one which is being proposed currently.

Thank you for your consideration.

26. Andrew and Maggie Nesom

Thanks Katie for your mail.

The thrust of the Bishops response is that reorganisation is for financial reasons. We're unconvinced that can be the key driver behind linking parishes and would have expected mission to have been given higher priority. Has thought been given to combining Rushton with (say) Bosley? Similar farming parishes, with better transport links between them.

Representation in favour of the draft Scheme

37. Cheddleton PCC

Email dated 12 April 2024

Dear Katie

Following our telephone conversation this morning, may I please take this opportunity to confirm the position of the PCC of St Edward's Church, Cheddleton, as outlined in my email of 9th April, which states that we have no objection to the Pastoral Scheme as proposed, we are happy to become a member of Leek Team Ministry and look forward to a shared ministry with All Saints Church.

Our original response to the consultation was purely concerned with the extremely protracted amount of time being taken to resolve the situation and the somewhat obscure nature of the language used.

I hope this makes our position very clear and helps to bring a speedy resolution.
With very best wishes
Mike
Michael Bowen, Churchwarden

Email of 9th April from Cheddleton PCC

Dear Katie

May I please clarify the position of the PCC of St. Edward the Confessor church in Cheddleton?

The PCC and the congregation in general are entirely satisfied with the scheme as proposed, are happy to share a member of clergy with All Saints church in Leek and to become part of Leek Team Ministry. In fact, we have already established a close bond and look forward to working together with our new priest when one is finally appointed. Our original observations were, as noted, concerned with, 1)procedural matters and delays, which have resulted in a very protracted, difficult interregnum and, 2) the use of a form of language which could be considered obscure and unhelpful.

These particular concerns should, we believe, have no bearing upon the outcome of the scheme, only upon the pace of the resolution and the earliest institution of a member of the clergy.

Thank you for your continued interest and support,
Michael Bowen, Churchwarden

Comments received from those who had not originally submitted a written representation

1. Pat Saul

Good afternoon.

I would like to express my views about the joining of these parishes, if I may.

I am Secretary of St. Chad's PCC at Bagnall and have attended it for many years, despite living in Stone !

I feel that members of our Church, including myself, would be very happy to join with them both, despite the fact that our worship at St. Chad's is a different kind of Chuchmanship from that of Horton. I feel that St. Chad's folk would be happy to make things work.

We are a rural parish in every sense of the word. We have approached folks in Horton in a sociable manner but received no response. I find this sad. They do not seem to be interested. A continued partnership with Endon would certainly work, I feel.

I do hope these comments will be helpful.

2. Judith Beckett

Dear Katie

I am a member of St Chad's family and have been for many years. My daughters were christened, confirmed and married at St Chad's.

We are a rural village church in a thriving community involving all ages and types of worship.

Since Alan Betts retired we have been ably led by lay readers and helpers and look forward to the appointment of a new vicar.

It is obvious from the number of objections that Horton parishioners are not willing, or even to consider any links with Bagnall and Endon in a combined benefice and have previously not responded to any communication from us.

Despite our, so called, differences in the way we worship as fellow Christians, surely we can work together to enhance and grow as one family in God.

3. Kathryn Howell – lay minister and warden at St Chad's Bagnall

To whom it may concern,

It is with much regret that I write this today – having read the objections from the Horton which has left me feeling quite appalled that our Brother's and Sister's in Christ can make such venomous comments about fellow Christians who they do not even know.

Having sent emails and arranged coffee and a chat meet up, I have to say that we were truly disappointed to find that nobody from Horton either replied to the correspondence or took us up on the offer of sitting around a table and engaging in conversation.

Neither St Luke's, Endon nor St Chad's, Bagnall have any objections with expanding our benefice to include Horton, we were willing to embrace another church even though the churchmanship differed from our own. We are all adaptable and would have been able to work out something which would have suited all three churches.

Now however, we were made to feel like the 'commoners' with whom our counterparts do not wish to associate. The problem is that none of the facts put forward actually match who we are as the churches currently stand.

Bagnall is a rural village, surrounded by beautiful countryside and farming community, Endon is obviously less so but is a vibrant village with schools and amazing opportunities for future outreach. The School in Bagnall hasn't been in existence since 1967 so, needless to say, there aren't any pupils to go on to Stoke-on-Trent schools!

I really don't understand why Christian Communities cannot look for similarities rather than differences, the Church of England is truly diverse and should encourage and embrace change rather than vehemently object and fight against it.

It deeply saddens me that we don't all sing from the same song sheet we need to step back and reflect on who we are and where God is in any of this. Actions like these certainly disenchant those who have worked so hard during such a long interregnum to keep the church alive.

I believe some of the comments made in the objections need to be redacted as they do defame the congregations of both of our churches – God loves all his children – not such a difficult concept to accept.

4. Sheila Tipper

I have been a lifelong member of St Chad's church, Bagnall. I am a member of the PCC, a sidesperson and I produce a weekly newsletter which benefits those members of the congregation who are unable to attend the services. I also help to organise our pastoral care team.

We are a rural church based in the Staffordshire Moorlands with an affiliation to St Luke's church in the village of Endon, again in the Staffordshire Moorlands. This is an agricultural area based within much green belt land, and we are proud of our rural heritage.

I am more than happy to continue with our relationship with St Luke's and to welcome Horton into our benefice. However, it seems that Horton are against this union as, despite invitations to wardens and parishioners to meet with members of St Chad's and St Luke's, we have had no response or communication from them. I am also very happy to continue to be solely affiliated with St Luke's.

Despite the apparent differences in our church services, (I must confess to never having visited Horton church), I am sure that a compromise can be reached, after all we are all members of the Church of England and as so worship the same God, even if our services differ, and we all may be able to learn something from each other.

I sincerely hope that my comments may help you to reach a conclusion.

5. Peter Millard

Good morning Katie,

As a member of the PCC of Bagnall St Chad's church I was initially very supportive of the deanery proposal to unite Endon and Bagnall with Horton.

I am mindful of the current resourcing difficulties facing the Church, both financial and personnel, and the proposed scheme seemed to be a viable and pragmatic solution to these issues. However, as time has gone on and various objections have been raised I feel it is time for everyone to wake up and smell the coffee!

We have an enthusiastic lay team at St Chad's who have thus far enabled this church to continue its outreach effectively, and to function as a lively part of the village community. Nevertheless, we are all shouldering responsibilities that were never envisaged that are beginning to wear people down. In my view the one thing not on our side is time.

All the churches would obviously like a full time vicar, but given that this is currently unrealistic, continuing to link Bagnall with Endon seems sensible. Whether Horton is part of this or not is now not for us to decide, but my fear is that further delays in starting recruitment of the new incumbent will have a detrimental effect on the vitality of all the churches involved.

Please get it sorted!

6. Mrs K. Cooke – Headteacher, Forsbrook CE Primary School

Dear Katie,

I am a member of St Chad's Church in Bagnall where I attend with my husband and daughter Florence (7).

I grew up in Stanley and despite having many places in which I have lived, I have always gravitated back to St Chad's for worship.

It is a very special place, building, community and a significant place where we have married, buried and christened members of our family.

Before I became headteacher of a church school at Forsbrook, I was headteacher at St Luke's in Endon. I got to know Alan Betts very well through this role and valued his work. Since his retirement, we have continued leading worship via lay readers,

helpers and community church members who have carried St Chad's on its mission but we are very much looking forward to the appointment of a new vicar.

I am bewildered at why we would have so many objections from Horton parishioners when we are all serving the same purpose - to worship as one family. I am sure we can find a way to all focus on this united commitment and work together to serve and worship.

My daughter, Florence has asked me to share the following:

I am a member of the school worship committee at St Edwards in Cheddleton. My school values focus on working together, worshipping together, kindness, respect and compassion.

I go to St Chad's and love helping Kath by carrying the cross, collecting the offering and reading prayers. She is brilliant and very kind but please can we have a new vicar to help her.

Thank you.

7. Wilf Houston-Brown

Dear Mrs Lowe,

I have been going to St Chad's Church, Bagnall since I was baptised there as a baby. It has been a constant throughout my life and I am now 17 years old. From very early on I was asked to be involved in Family services and I have always felt part of the church community. I often read from the Bible or read the prayers in services. My confirmation service was a few years ago (at St Luke's Endon) and now I take communion at St Chad's. The people in St Chad's congregation are incredibly kind and friendly. Since the leaving of our last vicar, the church community has stepped up to help but we would like a vicar. A lot of the people doing the work are really great but they are not trained vicars. It would also mean Kath Howell could have a rest because she isn't always well. It doesn't seem fair that people who are not paid and are not well, keep doing all the work. Please ask the bishop to move things along as fast as possible because St Chad's in a great church and it would benefit from a vicar.

Thank you,

8. Muriel Finney

I have been a member of the congregation at St Chad's, Bagnall for more than thirty years when, at first, it was part of the Bucknall Team Ministry and then as the joint benefice with St Luke's, Endon.

I am a Worship Leader having completed the Bishop's Certificate during Godfrey Stone's time as Team Rector, then a local training course with Alan Betts. I am a PCC member, pianist, service planner, TLM representative and have also planned and led Bible Study groups, Confirmation training, Baptism visits and have been the vergier at funerals.

I understand the need for financial restraints and can see that the only way to reduce expenditure thus ensuring the continuation of viable churches in the diocese is by reducing the overall number of clergy.

We cannot return to the past. We need to move forward to continue to be a Christian presence in our area.

Therefore I wish to support the proposed changes and look forward to working with our new incumbent-hopefully in the not too distant future.

9. Marion Lycett

Dear Katie,

In response to recent communications with regard to the above I wish to make my representation. I live in the village of Bagnall and have done so since the late 1960s so have had a history of various vicars at Bagnall St Chads and have always been impressed by the sense of community and the importance of St Chads to Bagnall and the outlying areas it serves. Bagnall is a very rural village - originally it had five farms - and the church has always played a very important role in the area. It was with great sadness that our late retiring Vicar was not immediately replaced by a resident vicar and the vicarage was sold privately. Since that time Kath Howell has been fantastic in holding the community together, continued regular services despite the effect of Covid, and maintained a great team around her and has services weekly involving all ages from an active young congregation, young families and the ageing population of the area, and deserves all the support, both professionally and personally that we can give her.

In the present climate the only practical solution would be to make the appointment of someone who is able to meet the needs of a number of parishes, albeit with different churchmanship.

I therefore ask the Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee and whoever else who is involved in decision making to agree to recommend an appointment be made as soon as possible and support the hard work that is and has been undertaken over the last few difficult years.

Your sincerely

10. Claire Houston-Brown

Hello Katie,

I am a member of St Chad's Church, Bagnall PCC. I am the most recently joined and least experienced member of the PCC so I hope that this is not too informal in tone or unfocused in content.

St Chad's is a church full of friendship and the love of Jesus. I believe it to be welcoming, happy and inclusive. Despite being in a small, rural village, we are part of a community taking an active part in village life, with joint events with the village hall and the pub. We are striving to move forward and grow our congregation. It's a smallish congregation although we have number of young people and children who attend regularly and take part in services. We are an informal church but highly value our Eucharist services, not least, as without a vicar, we only have them once a month. At other times St Chad's is kept worshipping by congregation involvement. Many of us read, lead prayers, do the talk for family service. We have learned to get on with it as Rev Alan Betts left such a long time ago. It hasn't been ideal but much good has come out of it: a strong sense of a Christian community, individuals finding spiritual confidence and growth, the understanding that we are all needed. We are so looking forward to the leadership of a vicar though!

Regarding our future: Bagnall has a great deal in common with St Luke's Endon, a church that, I think, also gets on with it. We have many similarities in our approach and there is a friendship between us. I have heard nothing negative from members of our congregation about joining with Endon and Horton. I am certainly happy to make this work with any church if we can have a vicar soon. It really is time now that there are no more delays. Some of those who currently lead St Chad's are elderly and really quite unwell. They need to take a less stressful, less prominent role. I am not sure if you know that an early meeting in St Luke's Chapter House to move forward, seemed to show that those members of the Horton congregation who attended were not happy to join with St Chad's and St Luke's. Later approaches to have coffee and meet to talk have not been responded to by Horton. I have also read some written comments that we are "evangelical" and lay led. We are lay led by necessity. We are evangelical, I hope and pray, in the truest sense of the word. I realize that it is now a loaded term and often meant as to convey something negative. St Chad's has a range of services, prayer and praise, all-age-family service, Holy Communion, open air services, etc. We have no organist but have congregation members who play the piano. We incorporate music both traditional and new. I wish to convey that we are flexible and enthusiastic. I believe that we are open to change and to try new ideas in our worship but we all respect and need tradition too. I would be delighted for St Chad's to move forward with Endon and indeed with Horton, if there were to be no more delays. However, if the congregation of another church would be unhappy with us and resistant, then it would be better if there was a different arrangement. I suppose my real anxiety is that we move forward as quickly as possible.

With thanks,

11. Caroline Wren

RE: Proposal for the parish of Horton merging with Bagnall and Endon.

Dear Madam,

In advance of the public hearing on 2nd May 2024, I am writing regarding the planned changes to the parish and church of Horton.

The Stewart and Moxon family have had connections to Horton for almost a century and we are very concerned about the significant changes proposed to the parish of Horton by merging it with Bagnall and Endon.

Horton church, with it's own vicar, is central to providing personal, confidential pastoral care and a place of worship and sanctuary to the local farming community at Horton and surrounding villages.

Maybe the focus of the church commissioners should be about preserving and encouraging small parishes, not 'dumbing down' the vital service provided to these important rural communities.

I beg you to please reconsider your proposal to merge Horton with Bagnall and Endon.

Horton and it's community need and deserve their own locally-base vicar and church.

yours faithfully'

Caroline Wren (Stewart)

12. Dr Catherine Stewart

Dear Sir or Madam,

Re: Proposals for the Benefice of Horton with Longsdon, Rushton and Cheddleton

In advance of the upcoming Public Hearing on Thursday 2nd May, I am writing regarding the proposed changes at Horton Church.

The Stewart family have had connections to Horton for more than 80 years and are so concerned to hear recently that radical changes have been proposed. The current benefice, with it's own vicar, may be changed to combine the parish of Horton with that of Endon and Bagnall. This would mean that the mostly farming parishioners around Horton would be mixed with urban parishioners. The whole ethos would be changed drastically.

Horton and the allied villages depend and thrive on their Church communities. The church is absolutely central to the way people live and worship. Numbers are, of course, lower than within the surrounding towns, but this makes the church even more essential for the villages. When you meet village parishioners, you hear that the role of their local church is paramount to rural living. The vicar not only provides very personal, confidential pastoral care, but he/she drives all the village activities and community spirit. In my opinion, to lose this huge asset dumps down the role of the Church in the same way that has happened to the police force and GPs, where important local public figures are reduced to behaving as shift-workers who invest little continuity of care or personal investment. In my view, the Horton, Longsdon, Rushton and Cheddleton benefice must resist this “modernisation.”

Please, please reconsider the option to retain a locally-based vicar for the benefit of local people who need to congregate together as a rural community with all the local activities centred around their church and vicar.

Yours faithfully,
Catherine Stewart

13. Anna Bairstow

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: Proposed changes for Horton Church

I am writing regarding the plan to transfer the parish of Horton to the benefice of Endon and Bagnall. There is no surer way to swiften the breakdown of church and community, and threaten a community's faith in the Church of England. I beg you to reconsider.

Firstly, the parish of Horton is very different to the parishes you'd like to combine it with, it has a small local farming community, versus the more urban areas of Endon and Bagnall.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the Church plays a huge and direct role in the lives of its parishioners, more so than is perhaps common in this modern age. The local vicar is a constant presence and support, from worship and pastoral care, to providing a local forum for the local issues that arise, and building a sense of community.

Horton was home to my grandparents, my great grandparents, and my great great grandparents, and they are all buried in the Horton church graveyard, alongside their friends from the community. I know they would be sickened at the proposed changes.

I beg to you reconsider the plan. Please keep Horton, Longsdon, Rushton and Cheddleton as a benefice, and keep a local vicar in Horton. I assure you that Horton will not be the same without, and I do not believe the community, or indeed the faith of its parishioners, will recover.

Yours faithfully,

Anna Bairstow

Anna Bairstow