

Parish Profile

Aston by Sutton, Little Leigh and Lower Whitley



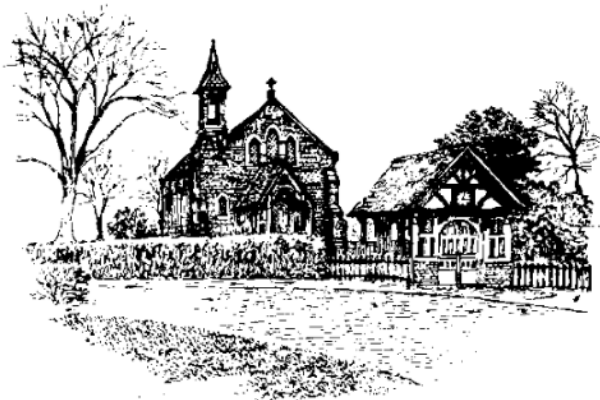
St Peter's

Aston by Sutton



**St Michael's and All
Angels**

Little Leigh



St Luke's

Lower Whitley



A message from **the Bishop of Chester**

Thank you for looking at this post in Chester Diocese. Whatever the Lord has for you, I want to assure you of my own prayers and a deep gratitude that we might get to partner together in this part of the Lord's work.

I have spent ages trying to capture the enormity of the privilege I feel in getting to serve the people of this diocese, and my words cannot bear the weight of that calling. This community of communities ranging from the very richest to the very poorest and the deepest rural to the most industrialised and urban is amazing. The diocese holds together in a shared sense of call to be 'Together in Christ Sharing Hope'. We have a deeply held vocation to serve the 1.5 million inhabitants who have no meaningful connection with a community of faith, and share the feast which has been shared with us in Jesus.

In Chester Diocese this is always going to be worked out locally first and foremost: no-one met Jesus through a Diocese! Lives are changed in parishes, chaplaincies, and new expressions of Christian community, when people are invited in kindness and grace into transformative encounter with the love of the God who made them. Together we focus on our broad strategic aims so that those who know they are the people of God can serve all the people God calls in their everyday living.

We are utterly committed to safeguarding, because every person matters to our God and Saviour more than we know how to express. This is also why we welcome applications from every background for posts in this diocese. We are learning how to do all of this as guest rather than always as host, as we partner to serve the world to which we are sent.

If God is calling you to serve with us, I rejoice! Come, roll up your sleeves, and get stuck in! If the call is elsewhere then be assured of our gratitude and earnest prayer that the Lord will lead and provide in all things. Please do pray for us, too – the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

+Mark

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, we thank you for the fellowship experienced in our Parish and in this period of vacancy please help us to continue to work closely together. Guide us to seek the right person to lead our Parish forward on our spiritual journey and help us to share the good news of Jesus with our communities.



Background

The Parish is part of the Great Budworth Deanery and during the current vacancy we have been grateful for the support of members of the Deanery taking services and helping with queries about the day to day running of the Parish.

We have embraced one service a week in the Parish conducted by the vicar and rotating on a three week cycle around the three churches. St Michael's and St Luke's have generally held their service at 9.30am and St Peter's at 11am. We would welcome the opportunity for more family orientated services that many parishioners enjoyed.

We have one unified PCC to run the Parish that has been meeting regularly during the vacancy. The PCC has a secretary and a treasurer who runs the Parish Account. Each Church has two Church Wardens and a treasurer to manage the individual church accounts. In addition to the Wardens each church can have up to three other ordinary PCC members.

During the vacancy the congregation at all three churches has grown and we have become closer and more united, supporting each other's churches in their services and fundraising initiatives. We are fortunate to be supported by retired clergy with permission to officiate taking Communion services at St Michael's and St Luke's and Joan Sears, a reader with PTO, taking Morning Prayer at St Peter's. We enjoy a coffee together after each service as we enjoy each other's company and want to make sure any visitors feel welcome.

We are a parish of central tradition following Common Worship for Communion. Clergy wear a cassock, alb and stole for Communion and we do have chasubles available if required. Our congregation enjoys singing and we are lucky to have a working pipe organ in each of the three churches. These are played by our organist who resides in Whitley and covers funerals and weddings in the Parish as well. We currently use the hymn book "Hymns Old and New".

Our new vicar

We asked our congregations to describe the attributes they would like to see in our new incumbent in just three words. This is what they came up with.



We are now looking for a new incumbent to help us continue our spiritual journey, with particular emphasis on -

- Encouraging the congregation to live out their faith in daily life
- Pastoral support within the community
- Fostering a strong safeguarding culture in the parish
- Someone who is happy to delegate and encourage involvement from church members
- Effective communication skills
- A desire to deliver a traditional and accessible religious experience
- Enthusiasm to grow the congregation and build on the links with our local schools.

We are a sociable and happy congregation and would like someone to join us and share in our values.

Our Communities

The Parish covers a large area to the south of the M56 between junctions 10 and 11 and incorporates the villages of Aston, Sutton Weaver, Little Leigh, Dutton and Whitley. Historically agriculture was the predominant industry but because of good transport links, there are a wide range of trades and professions represented now with an industrial estate on the border of Dutton and Aston.

There are three primary schools in the Parish, in Aston, Little Leigh and Whitley. None of these are church schools. Previous incumbents have been invited into the schools for collective worship and good relationships have been built between the churches and their local schools.



Aston Primary School



Little Leigh Primary School



Whitley Village Primary

Special school services take place in each of the churches. These include Harvest festivals, Carol services, Christingle and Y6 Leavers services. We would welcome more contact with the Village schools and encourage more use of our churches for special occasions.



Summer village festivals in Little Leigh and Whitley are widely supported by the community and offer a great opportunity for outreach with the relevant May Queen and Rose Queen and their retinues being invited to attend a special church service and also Church festivals and fundraisers throughout the year.



Fundraising and volunteers

Each Church runs a variety of fundraising activities ranging from concerts in church, Daffodil and Harvest teas plus annual grand raffles and summer and Christmas Fairs. These are well supported and bring members of the wider community together. Some of these take place in the churches but others make use of the local Village Halls or in the case of St Peter's at their own Church Hall



We also have a number of volunteers who help to open the Churches at weekends during the summer to allow for quiet reflection, historical research, maintenance and cleaning as well as providing an opportunity for parishioners to meet up and share fellowship over a cup of tea.

Our PCC

Church Wardens

Aston: Joan Sears - also a lay reader

Karen Sandiford

Little Leigh: Barbara Horton - also Treasurer for Little Leigh

Val McDermott

Whitley: Darren Walter - acting Chair of PCC during the vacancy and

Safeguarding officer

Robert Houghton

PCC Members

Aston: Jacky Hancock - Treasurer for Aston

Little Leigh: Margaret Davies

Harry Kennedy

Sofia Kennedy

Whitley: Melanie Barber - Secretary for the PCC, Treasurer for Whitley and organist

Our Buildings

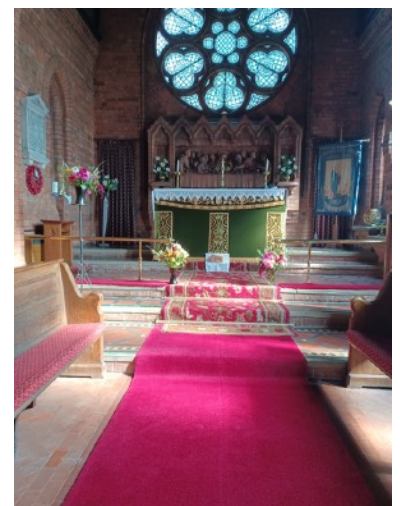
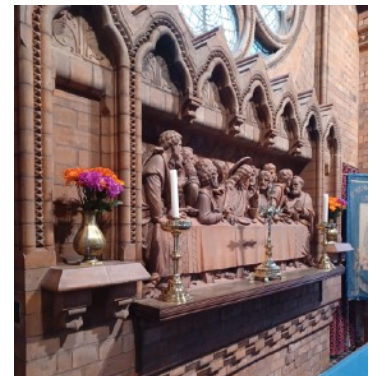
St Peter's Aston-by-Sutton

- The Church & Churchyard are grade I listed, with unique historical artifacts. Bombed during WW2 and rebuilt, it has maintained its charm with a peaceful traditional churchyard. Space is still available with a designated area for the internment of ashes.
- There is a well maintained 100 year old organ and clock
- Kitchen & toilet facilities, enabling us to hold social events in the building
- The building is fully accessible, including the facilities
- We have a Church Hall at Sutton Weaver 5 minutes drive from St Peter's, with carpark and kitchen, which is fully accessible. It is booked throughout the year, used by community groups for luncheons and quiz nights, plus the Parish Council



St Michael's and All Angels Little Leigh

- The Church is a grade II red brick listed building opened in 1879 with an impressive spire and beautiful stained glass
- An exquisite 'reredos' depicting DaVinci's Last Supper has recently been restored.
- The Church and large Churchyard and garden of remembrance are all well maintained. Recognising the need to work towards a more ecofriendly environment a part of the Churchyard is left as a 'wilding' area to encourage wildlife.
- Little Leigh Village Hall is opposite the Church and is used for fundraising events and and also provides access to toilet facilities when required.



St Luke's Lower Whitley

- The original Church on this site was a Chapel of Ease dating back to the 1600's.
- The building is grade II* listed. Baptism registers go back to 1777 and burials in the churchyard were licensed from the mid 1800's.
- There is a well maintained organ added in the 19th century and a small working bell tower on the North West corner of the church.
- The interior has an outstanding hammer beam roof with intricate carvings.
- Beautiful stained glass windows in the nave date from the 1860's and depict different scenes from the New Testament.
- The lychgate houses the community World War 1 memorial.



Mother's Union

The Whitley branch of Mother's Union has twelve members from Whitley and the surrounding area. They meet monthly at Whitley Village Village Hall and take an active part in fundraising activities for St Luke's.

Baptisms and Weddings

In 2025 there was one baptism and one wedding held in the Parish. These are always joyous occasions and the families welcomed into the family of the church.



Funerals, burials and interment of ashes.

There were eight funerals held in the parish in 2025 and several interments of ashes. The churchyards at all three churches do currently have spaces for burials and there is a dedicated Garden of Remembrance at each church for the interment of ashes. Recently bereaved families are invited to the All-Souls service along with our regular congregation to give thanks for the lives of those passed away.

The Vicarage



The Vicarage for the Parish is on Street Lane Lower Whitley WA4 4EN about 200m from St Luke's Church. It is a four bedroomed house with two reception rooms and a separate office and toilet accessible without entering the main body of the house. It has been recently decorated throughout.



It has long been recognized that the site on which the vicarage stands is over-large, and maintaining the garden has sometimes proved a significant challenge. Partly for this reason, the diocese is currently seeking planning permission to build another house in the grounds. This would be a good distance away from the vicarage and appropriate privacy would be maintained. Potential applicants for the post are in any case invited to arrange an informal conversation with the Archdeacon of Chester, and he would be very happy to provide an update on this project as part of that conversation.

Finances

Our Parish is similar to many others in that our finances are tight and with rising running costs this has put a strain on our finances. Up until 2024 we were meeting our full parish share. We have now agreed a lower level of parish share with the diocese which we are now fulfilling, and this will sustain ministry of Sunday plus two days per week. We also cover vicar's expenses on submission of a claim form. We ran a parish wide fund raising initiative in 2025 dropping a Giving leaflet to every household in the parish, which did have some impact on our regular giving. At St Luke's we have trialled digital giving with QR codes on pews and on the Church noticeboard and this is starting to be used by parishioners. As a PCC we are looking for different ways to raise funds and promote the value of our local village churches as an asset to each community. We encourage parishioners to Gift Aid their giving wherever possible. We do cover vicar's expenses

Our Policies

We have adopted the national Church of England's comprehensive safeguarding policies and guidelines and have our own safeguarding officer.

We are looking at ways of reducing our carbon footprint including changing our lighting to LED fittings and exploring different ways of heating our churches.

Summary

St Peter's, St Michael's and St Luke's are important parts of the fabric of our villages and the wider countryside. They provide a focus for our parishioners who are welcomed at our services and community events.

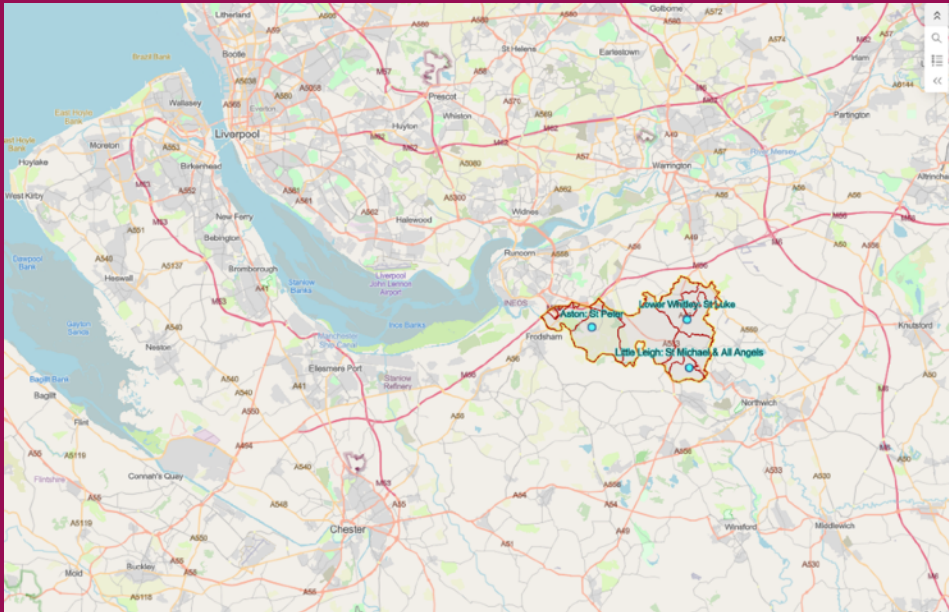
We know we face challenges in the future both financial and in terms of resources available to us but also recognise that we are custodians of three beautiful and historic buildings, places where people can feel safe in their worship and grow in their faith.

We look forward to sharing our future with a vicar who can ensure that fellowship continues to be found within our congregation and helps us to grow in faith and spread the word of Jesus Christ to others.



The Parish

The Parish of Aston by Sutton, Little Leigh and Lower Whitley was formed in 2013 prior to our last incumbent beginning their ministry. This involved bringing together the Parishes of Aston and Sutton Weaver with their Parish Church of St Peter's, Little Leigh with Dutton and their Parish Church of St Michael's and All Angels and Whitley with their Parish Church of St Luke's.



For a more detailed look at the Parish please click on the link below and search under Great Budworth Deanery for this Parish

[Chester Parish Census Dashboard](#)

