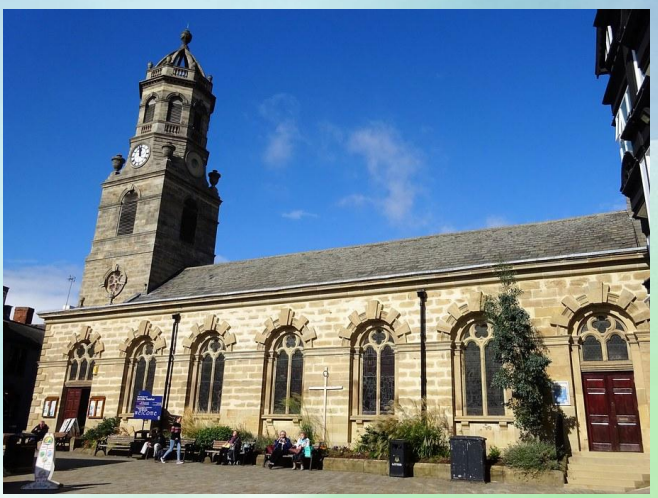
The Benefice of Pontefract



St Giles, Pontefract

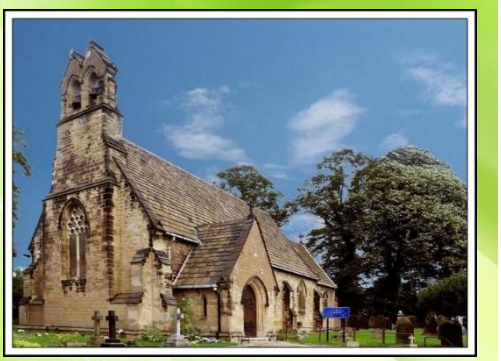


All Saints Pontefract



St Mary's, Chequerfield





St Michael the Archangel, Carleton



St Stephen's, East Hardwick

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Leeds

All Saints ✠ St Giles with St Mary's ✠ St Michael the Archangel ✠ St Stephen's
Strengthening Faith, Building Community



The Lady Chapel in St Giles on a sunny winter's day

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A Message from The Vicar of Pontefract

Thank you for taking the time to consider whether you feel called to join us here in the Benefice.

By now you will have probably already looked through the role description, and what the Benefice is looking for in terms of the new member of our clergy team.

In the following pages, we hope to give you a taste of our Benefice and all that we have to offer, perhaps even a taste of the journey we are on, and the possibilities that lie ahead for us.

The Benefice of Pontefract is still young, and while we have already started to make some big steps forward, with such a large area and the opportunities that we have yet to explore, we are looking for the right person to join us as we walk this journey together.

We are looking for an energetic and enthusiastic priest, who has a heart for God, the building up of His Kingdom, and who has a deep sense of community and belonging to come and join us.

For the right candidate, there is a warm welcome waiting to greet you.

If after you have read all the information, you would like to ask any questions, and an informal chat, then please do get in touch.

Please pray for us, as we pray for all who are considering being a part of this journey.

God Bless

Fr Ian Bullock
Vicar of Pontefract



Pontefract is ...

... a **historic market town** with its own unique identity;

... **easy to get to**, via the M62, M1 or A1 and

... **easy to get away from**, to visit the Yorkshire Dales, the North York Moors, the Yorkshire Wolds the Peak District and the bracing Yorkshire Coast.

... home to no less than **three railway stations**, with direct trains to Wakefield, Leeds, York and Sheffield; only **just over two hours from London** via a direct rail service;

... surrounded on almost all sides by small villages and **peaceful countryside**.

It's a good place to live. It is ...

... proud of its history:

The layout of the town centre has remained broadly the same since mediaeval times: even the street names have been preserved;

The town's motto, '*Post patrem pro filio*', Latin for "After the death of the father, support the son", a reference to the town's Royalist sympathies in the English Civil War, when the magnificent Norman castle, now in ruins, was subjected to three sieges by the Parliamentary forces, it being the last major stronghold of the Royalist armies to surrender. All Saints Church, in those days the Parish Church of Pontefract, was reduced to a ruin by the repeated bombardments; St Giles' later took on that role, in 1789.

... in the process of establishing a new identity:

The town centre is pedestrianised and the pubs, which once gave the town the perhaps dubious record of having the greatest number of pubs in a square mile, are being replaced by bars and cafés.

The population is predominantly from skilled or semi-skilled backgrounds; however, there is a growing number of professionals and new families coming into the area as a significant number of new residential development have sprung up, adding to traditional housing stock and local authority housing, with a mix of social housing and owner-occupier.

There has been a shift towards more affluent home ownership, making the contrast with the pockets of deprivation within the Benefice all the more stark: the demand for Food Banks is high.

... well supplied with services:

There are several retail parks around the town, with Frasers Plus Designer Outlet Leeds (known locally as Junction 32) about a mile from the town, near the M62. These have increased choice in the area, somewhat to the detriment of the town centre. While there are numerous charity shops, nail bars and hairdessers there are relatively few empty shop units.

We have Pontefract General Infirmary with its Urgent Treatment Centre, the Prince of Wales Hospice and numerous care homes.

Education is well provided for, with a range of nursery and primary schools, two 11-16 high schools, Carleton and The King's School, and New College post-16.

... and amenities:

Aspire @The Park and Xscape (including a cinema and ski slope) offer a wide range of sport and leisure facilities on our doorstep, while Army and Air Force cadet corps provide another outlet for the some of the young people of the town.

Pontefract boasts its own racecourse, and between Easter and late autumn, there are a number of fixtures in the racing calendar, which draw people from far and wide.

The well- tended Valley Gardens in the centre of town and the extensive Pontefract Park, are much favoured by people seeking a green space away from the bustle of the busy town centre.



The View over East Hardwick

The Benefice of Pontefract Team

The New Benefice of Pontefract was established on 1st May 2024, uniting the Parishes of All Saints, St Giles with St Mary's, St Michael the Archangel and St Stephen's under the leadership of the Vicar of Pontefract.

The make-up of the Leadership team is as follows:

Stipendiary Clergy

Fr Ian Bullock – The Vicar of Pontefract
Vacant - Associate Priest – who will be known as 'Priest Missioner' who will have a special care for the Mission of the Benefice.

Non-Stipendiary Clergy

Fr Rod Walker - self-supporting priest
Fr Wayne Phillips – part-time self-supporting priest

PTO Clergy

Fr Michael Taylor – a retired member of clergy who supports our ministry

Licensed Lay Ministers

Mr David Brooks – Lay Reader (Emeritus)

Mrs Jill Clapham – Lay Reader
Mrs Anita Hayes – Lay Reader
Mrs Natalie Vause – Lay Reader

Mrs Barbara Pollard – Lay Worship Leader

Mr Alf Taylor – Pastoral Minister

With the exception of Fr Michael, Barbara and Alf, the team rotates around all of the churches in the Benefice, so that all the congregations have the opportunity to build relationships with us, so that we can offer support and encouragement.

None of the clergy are 'tied' to one Parish, and we are working on a model of one team supporting a united Benefice with each Parish being part of the whole, with its own distinct qualities.

Historically we have been a training Benefice, with our last Assistant Curate leaving in summer 2024, and we are looking forward to welcoming a new one when the opportunity arises.

Our Churches

All Saints



All Saints has a fascinating history. It has been a parochial centre from Anglo-Saxon times. The church owes its existence to the close proximity of Pontefract Castle and what was the second largest Cluniac Priory in England, St John's Priory.

The priors were granted permission to build a church in the graveyard, enabling them to meet the spiritual needs of an influx of tradespeople to the town. This 11th c. church was recorded, with its priest, in the Domesday Book of 1086. A rare Double Helix staircase, contained within the church tower, is one of only two in the country.

In 1645, as a result of the Civil War, the church was badly damaged. By 1649 it was a roofless ruin, abandoned as a place of worship. Restoration began two hundred years later, the 20th c. seeing further renovation and re-ordering, which continues to this day.



All Saints has varied in style over the years, from Evangelical in the past to currently more broadly central in its views. We currently have a small group of volunteers who act as sides, readers and chalice administrators.

Our Worship Group, includes an organist / Keyboard player, a drummer, a guitarist and a singer. This allows for the opportunity to have a varied musical range.



All Saints have a modern, purpose-built Church Hall dating from 1997, which is currently rented exclusively by the Saviour Trust (see below), so is not available for use by the Parish. It is a useful source of income and we are beginning to look at ways in which we can build stronger links with them in the future.

Service at All Saints

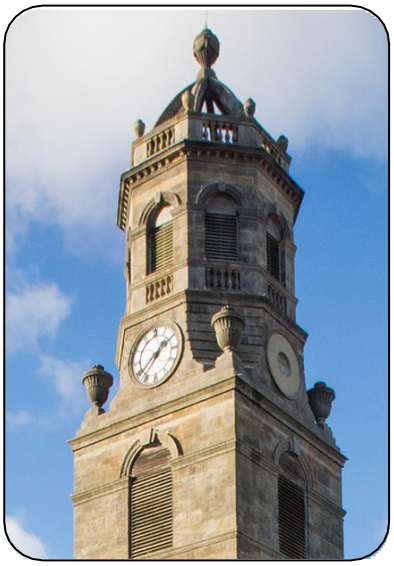
<u>Sunday</u>

Holy Communion	10.00 a.m.
Evensong	6.30 p.m. (4th Sunday - Holy Communion)

<u>Wednesday</u>

Mid-week Communion	9.30 a.m.

St Giles Church



"St Giles' is my church, the one out of many churches that I have attended that feels like coming home. This is a place where I can speak to God and feel Him answer."

The Parish of St Giles with St Mary's comprises of St Giles Church, Pontefract and St Mary's, a Licensed Place of Worship within a community centre in Chequerfield.

The Parish covers virtually all of the North Ward covering the north and west of the town and part of the South Ward, including the large Chequerfield estate.

St Giles' Parish Church - 'The Church in the Heart of the Town' - is a dominant feature of the town's Market Place. Its unique octagonal tower, visible for miles around, proclaims the Glory of God to the people of Pontefract and visitors to the town.

There has been a church building in Pontefract Market Place since at least the 12th c. The present church is a Grade II* listed building. There is no churchyard attached to the church. Although mainly Georgian in aspect, foundations of a Norman chapel have been discovered and the north arcade is believed to be of 14th / 15th century origin.

The church won the Building Conservation category of the RICS Pro-Yorkshire Awards in 2014, following the full reordering of the interior. It is a peaceful, warm and welcoming place to be.

St Giles would be described as broadly as Liberal, the worship style is Anglo-Catholic, with incense on High and Holy Days, with a strong musical tradition which plays an important role in the services through our robed choir.

With St Giles being the Town Centre Parish, it also plays a part in Civic services and other events.

A full set of robes is available for all occasions and services, all in excellent condition.



Service at St Giles

Sunday

Parish Mass 10.15 a.m.

Wednesday

Mid-week Communion 9.30 a.m.

Friday

Mid-week Communion 10.30 a.m.

St Mary's



It is affectionately called our 'Church in a Cupboard' and has a wonderful and long history but is still a vibrant place of worship.

St Mary's is the daughter of St Giles, a small but devoted group, holding services in the hall at St Mary's Community Centre in the heart of the extensive Chequerfield estate.

Members of the congregation come together and run the Saturday coffee morning at St Giles Church when there is a fifth Saturday, in order to raise church funds.

This church maybe small, but it will play an important part in the future as we see Chequerfield as an important part of our ministry, which as yet has been unexplored to any significant degree.

At the beginning of 2025 the decision was made to move the regular worship to 4.00 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon as the 9.00 a.m. service was rapidly failing and needed a new lease of life.

Currently the schedule of services is as follows:
1st Saturday – Contemporary Worship
2nd Saturday – Café Communion
3rd Saturday – Messy Church
4th (and 5th) Saturday – Café Church

We have seen some modest growth, but there is more work to do here. From January 2027 the schedule of service will change, as we have just been given the green light to launch Bubble Church.

This church would identify more as 'middle of the road' open and friendly to all. As the daughter of St Giles, we have much more flexibility here to try new and imaginative ways to reach out into Chequerfield.

St Michael the Archangel



Our church is a delightful small mid-Victorian village church, built by local benefactors in the perpendicular style in 1848, with beautiful stained-glass windows and depictions of St Michael in many mediums throughout the Church. The church provides a warm, comfortable and safe environment for anyone who comes in.

We can seat around 100 people using a combination of fixed pews and moveable seats. There are two churchyards, one surrounding the church (currently being closed) and the other a short distance away. We were given this in the early 20th c., a third of it is currently in use and another third is awaiting consecration. This church would be described best as 'middle of the road' and very warm and welcoming.



Our congregation is predominately aged 70+ and female. The majority live within the Parish and will travel two miles or less to attend. The congregation numbers have declined over the past 20 years, most of this through death or moving away to be nearer to family.

Service at St Michael the Archangel

Sunday (*Livestreamed to Facebook*)

Parish Mass 10.00 a.m. (1st and 3rd Sundays Only)

Last Wednesday of the Month

Mid-week Communion 3.00 p.m.

St Stephen's



East Hardwick is a small, friendly, village located approximately three miles, by car, south of Pontefract town centre. The village name is referred to in a deed dated 1120 as 'Herdwica', which means 'herd farm', and farming remains the key economic activity in the area today.

There are no schools, shops, post office, pub or public transport in the Parish. Consequently, the church has an important role and a beneficial influence on social interaction within the community.



St Stephen's is middle of the road, liberal tradition, in 2025 we celebrated our 150th anniversary, and the church is a traditional cruciform style, with the addition of a small kitchen and toilet.

As a rural Parish it enjoys close links with our farming and agricultural neighbours, and this is reflected in some of our special seasonal services such as Plough Sunday.

Service at St Stephen's

Sunday

Parish Mass 10.00 a.m. (2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays Only)

Thursday

Compline 5.45 p.m.









Attendance and Statistics

The following gives an overview of the current Average Attendance figures and Occasional Offices undertaken by the Clergy.

All Saints

Sunday Morning – 25
Sunday Evening – 15
Wednesday – 15

St Giles

Sunday Morning – 75
Wednesday – 20
Friday – 10

St Mary's

Saturday – 8

St Michael the Archangel

Sundays – 40
Last Wednesday – 14

St Stephen's

Sundays – 40
Thursday - 6

Occasional Offices

These figures reflect the number of services throughout the Benefice Annually

Baptism Services – 30
Weddings - 6
Funerals (Church and Crematorium) – 80

(*These are based on 2025 figures*)

We also hold a Benefice Confirmation Service, in 2026 six were confirmed.

Make-up of congregations

As with other churches, there is still a weighted average of older members, however, we are seeing modest growth in younger families joining us for worship, and while our Junior Church closed for a period at St Giles, we are delighted to have had cause to re-open and we now see between four and eight children weekly.

Activity of Churches outside Worship

The Benefice holds a number of church-based activities outside of worship as follows:

St Giles – Open Church
Church is open to the public everyday between 10.00 a.m. – 2.00 p.m. for people to come in pray, light a candle and have some quiet time.

St Giles – Coffee Morning
Wednesday 10.00 a.m. – noon
Saturday 9.00 a.m. – noon
Serving refreshments and offering fellowship

St Giles – Lunch With Us
Wednesday lunchtime – serving a two-course meal to anyone who has need, often the homeless, those in need and the elderly. It works on a system of people pay what they can afford, and receive a hot meal.

St Giles – Junior Singers
Wednesday afternoon 5.00 p.m. – 6.00 p.m. (Term time)
Our Director of Music offers his time to young people who want to sing as part of a choir.

St Michael's – Drop-in
Thursday afternoon 2.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.
Offering refreshments and home baked good as well as conversation and fellowship

St Stephen's – Hand Bells
Thursday 4.45 p.m. – 5.45 p.m. a group gather to practice the art of handbells and will occasionally join us for special services

St Stephen's – Village Singers
Thursday 6.00 p.m. – 7.00 p.m. a group from the village and beyond gather to practice as a choir, and sing at a variety of events and services through the year.

St Giles – Choir
Friday 6.30 p.m. – 8.00 p.m.
Our Church Choir meet to practice and prepare for worship





Benefice Staff Team

The Benefice is blessed with a number of staff who support the work of the churches:

Benefice Administrator

Monday – Friday Four hours per day

Our current Administrator is due to retire in December 2026, and work was done with Ss Giles, Michael and Stephen to agree a way in which these Parishes could share an administrator. This was accomplished and we have appointed an Administrator who now provides support to these three Parishes in a variety of ways.

Parish Administrator

5 hours per week

All Saints has had an Administrator for many years, and they provide support for All Saints church.

Caretaker – St Giles

Monday – Friday (with occasional weekend working)

Our Caretaker at St Giles ensures that the church is maintained and kept clean and tidy throughout the week, completes minor works as required and provides support for the user groups we have.

Director of Music – St Giles

Our DoM works with The Vicar on music selection, trains and prepares the Choir, runs the Junior Singers and supports the musical aspirations of St Giles,

Organist – All Saints

Our Organist works with The Vicar on music selection and rehearses with the Worship Group to ensure all is ready for Sunday worship.

Food Share Project Leader

16 hours per week.

St Giles has a Food Share Project based in a shop in Chequerfield, and the Project Leader manages this initiative for St Giles (More below)

Food Share

The Foodshare is part of the outreach of St Giles Church into our community.

It is managed by our Project Lead and governed by an oversight committee, that ensures it is being operated correctly, and supports the work of the team.

We aim to help those who may be finding it difficult to manage at the moment by supplying a food parcel for only £3 each week.

This is a weekly service and your food is collected from our shop at 6 The Circle, on their allocated day - Tuesday or Friday.

We are blessed through the generosity of a number of organisations as well as the kind donations of local churches and individuals who provide the food for us to distribute.

Those using the service, will receive mainly tins and packet items, and when we have the provisions, fruit, veg, milk and bread. They may get food which has passed its "best before" date but is still safe to eat.

Recently we have just received a grant from the National Lottery to fund the Project Leader for another year.



Community Focus

As you can see there is a number of ways in which we focus upon the communities that we are embedded in, and there is one more resource which the Benefice has which we haven't yet touched on.

When St Giles was re-ordered in 2014 a big aspect of the work was to create a space which could be used by the community, and this improvement has benefitted not only the church, but more importantly the community.

We have four rooms of varying size in the west end, and we also allow user groups to use our café area, and the nave can be hired out for concerts.

Some of our regular users include:

Citizens Advice – the hub in St Giles is recognised as the busiest and most utilised one in the area.
Chair Aerobics (for the young at heart)
NHS for various wellbeing courses
Monthly Wellbeing Café
Pontefract Food Bank (Part of the Trussell Trust)
Citizens Advice – Debt Management advice (works with the Foodbank)
Various Choirs \ Brass Bands \ Groups hire the church for larger Events
Pontefract Civic Society – Moved their showcase to us in 2026, and we have now become their new home for this all-day community event.

It isn't just our community that utilises our facilities and over the past two years we have been re-discovering how to use the space ourselves, and this has also meant that we can work with our local schools in a much better way.

We are now constantly pushing the boundaries of what is possible in the space, and when any of our sister churches have need of a large space, they are delighted that they can come to St Giles.

It is fair to say that there is a good amount of support for hosting community events around the Benefice. There is a genuine amount of goodwill outside of our congregations for the churches and we find that people support event, and while there are some pockets where significant improvements are needed, there is a good momentum which can be nurtured and grown.

Schools and Families

Within the Benefice we are blessed with a significant number of schools:

Primary

St Giles C of E Academy (Our Church School)
Carleton Park Junior & Infant School
Cherry Tree Academy De Lacy Academy
Halfpenny Lane School
Harewood Centre Nursery School
Larks Hill Junior & Infants School
Orchard Head Junior, Infant and Nursery School
The Rookeries Carleton Junior, Infant and Nursery School

Secondary

Carleton High School
The Kings High School

Higher Education

NEW College

While we have some connection with many of these, this is a key area of work that needs much more attention than has already been given.

The only exception to this is St Giles where The Vicar goes in fortnightly, and also sits on the governing board.

Outside of Baptism, our offering to families has been a challenge over the past few years, prior to COVID we had a successful toddler's group, but since then the effectiveness has dwindled, and we identified the main problem was down to the new pre-school provisions that were being offered.

Three years ago, we launched Messy Church, and while it had some impact, it was short lived, and while the team has worked hard, it has not borne fruit and so the decision to close it at the end of 2026 was made.

Recently we were introduced to Bubble Church, and after discussions we decided that we would use this to replace Messy Church, and we are preparing to launch it in 2027 at St Mary's, in the hope that this shorter, interactive worship would allow us to engage with families on Chequerfield.

Building Review

Within the Benefice we have two Grade 2* churches and two unlisted. Here is a brief overview of their condition:

All Saints

As a Church built within the remains of the previous one, it presents us with a unique set of challenges. It currently sits on the 'At Risk' register due to the complexities of its needs, and we have recently started to consider the various works that need to be completed. We have just finished a piece of work with a heritage conservation company, and will be looking to look to drawing up a heritage plan to resolve its issues, and ensure it is fit for purpose for the future.

St Giles

After a huge project which was completed in 2014, the church is in a very good state of repair. We are blessed with a team of volunteers who form a maintenance group who meet weekly to ensure that all the job that need to be done are completed as part of an annual schedule.

St Michael the Archangel

Overall, the church is in a good state of repairs, and has few issues. The Parish want to create a small kitchen and toilet which is easily accessible, and have the plans drawn up, and are currently fundraising to make it a reality.

St Stephen's

Sadly, there are a number of significant issues here, the first being that we need a new roof. However, the church has been working incredibly hard fundraising and through the tenacity of one of the PCC members, he has secured a number of grants. The fund stands at almost £160,000 against a £250,000 project. There is currently a large grant bid pending, and if this is given then the work on the roof will start as soon as practical in 2027.

As you can see the Benefice does have some building challenges, but we are working on resolving them to ensure the longevity of the buildings we have been blessed with.

Vision and Mission

One of the biggest challenges that we encountered as we became this new Benefice was how to learn to work together, and have a common vision for the future, whilst ensuring that the four Parishes retained their own individual qualities.

In October 2025, everyone in the five churches was invited to a Benefice service, then after sharing a bring-and-share lunch together, we spent the afternoon discussing the way we could move on.

While The Vicar facilitated the afternoon, the thoughts and ideas all came from the Parishioners. At the end of the day two volunteers were asked for from each Parish, so that they could form a Vision Steering Group.

In February 2026 the group met for the first time, and set out an initial roadmap, and a future roadmap for what we could do.

This year we have been working in these initial ideas (borne from the Vision Day)

1. Having a whole Benefice service in each of the Four Parishes annually.
2. While it was acknowledged that communications inside the Parishes was good, full Benefice Communication is poor and needs improving.
3. Bringing all the Parish magazines together, and creating on Benefice Magazine.
4. Improving our Social Media presence.

In addition to these priorities, it was universally acknowledged that some work on Stewardship was needed as nothing has been done in a considerable amount of time, and so this would sit alongside the priorities for 2026.

The Steering Group have met a number of times, and work is proceeding and we are hopeful that our first priorities will be met within the timescale we have set.

It is envisaged that the Steering Group will remain as an extension of the four PCCs and provide feedback, and receive advice which will enhance the work.

Later in 2027, we will start to reflect together upon the work started and accomplished and begin to think about where future priorities lie.

The new Priest Missioner will play an important part in these conversations and the work that will follow.

Digital Presence and IT Infrastructure

Shortly after The Vicar arrived work began on creating a cohesive electronic presence. A new web address was secured – www.cofe-pontefract.co.uk and work began on winding down the individual Parish websites, in favour of a new unified one.

There were a number of advantages to this:

1. It gave the Benefice a professional outward image.

2. As part of our hosting package, we are able to have bespoke e-mail addresses, and our reliance on third party e-mails was removed,

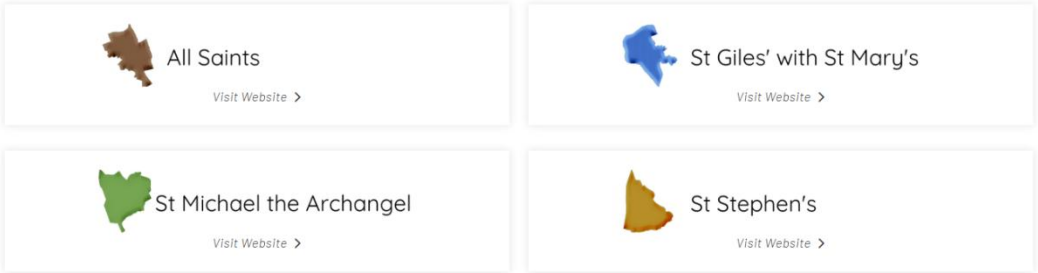
3. Where a Parish didn't already have a Facebook page, one was created, and then all the pages were brought under a cohesive umbrella.

4. The use of the scheduling software Hootsuite allows us an unprecedented level of accessibility when we want to post to social media

5. We were able to introduce intelligent contact forms to make contacting us easier, and ensures that the Administrators are provided with the information they need to carry out their roles.

More recently we have been given a grant by Microsoft for access to their software, which is allowing us to consider how we share data securely between the officers of the Parishes.





Net Zero Carbon

As a Benefice we are committed to the Church of England 2030 commitment. Two of our Parishes have already begun their journey, Ss Giles and Stephen's, and then other two will begin in 2027. The vision is for us to work together, sharing the learning we already have and striving to become a Zero Carbon Benefice.

So far St Giles has reached its Silver Eco-Church Award and St Stephen's its Bronze







NZC Project – St Giles

Early in 2025 St Giles completed a major piece of work, as we gained permission, and secured government funding to add an array of 21 Solar Panels on the South roof. In addition to this, we were also able to install new lighting in the Nave and Chancel which significantly reduced our electricity usage. We also now see extra power back to the National Grid, and updated the insulation in the loft space to a much healthier option for the building. (Below are a couple of pictures showing what was achieved)

The work is continuing, and as part of a NZC project that we are current leading on, we are now working in collaboration with the Diocese and building a support community, where others who are wanting to start or move their NZC projects forward can seek advice and help from others on the journey.





Accommodation for the Priest Missioner

The Benefice has a Vicarage located in the Parish of St Michael the Archangel. A good sized four-bedroom house, which was fully refurbished after the previous occupant had left.














Final Thoughts

We hope that you have enjoyed looking through this Benefice Profile and seeing some of the highlights of the work that is being done here in The Benefice of Pontefract.

If you feel God may be calling you to this post, why not arrange a visit or a conversation by contacting: The Reverend Ian Bullock, Vicar of Pontefract
fr.ian@cofe-pontefract.co.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read the information and we hope to hear from you.

God Bless.