

Revised Service Schedule from July 2026

For some years now we have recognised that the pattern of services we have across the benefice of Acklington, Shilbottle and Warkworth is unsustainable given the resources we have (1 full-time stipendiary priest). PTO clergy (retired priests with *permission to officiate*) are volunteers just like you are and should not be expected to bear the burden of keeping the show on the road.

Once we go into vacancy (end Sept) we cannot ask our PTOs to do more, and indeed we ought to allow them to do less, as their contribution at the moment is considerable. They will of course be covering Life Events during the vacancy (baptisms, weddings and funerals), Collective Worship in our two schools and elements of our Pastoral Care - as they do now.

Making changes now, also ensures that the parish profile will be more attractive to prospective future incumbents. It additionally allows for our lay ministers to continue to develop their roles and experience.

Sundays

On the new rota there will routinely be two Eucharists a month at each church and two lay-led services. The first Sunday pattern at Acklington and Shilbottle will not change but there will be a Eucharist on the first Sunday at Warkworth to ensure that there is a Eucharist in the benefice each week; so that those who prefer a service of Holy Communion can easily travel to one. Parishes that do not have a Eucharist on any given Sunday will have one, mid-week, in the following week.

The congregation most likely to suffer in the vacancy is Warkworth, as when you have over 50 folk it's easy for any number of people to think 'it won't matter if I'm not there this week' and before you know it the church is half empty. Smaller congregations stick together more easily. So the pattern at Warkworth will be HC weeks 1 & 3 to give a regularity to it that is easier to keep in mind.

On the third Sunday all 3 churches will have a Eucharist - this enables a 4 week schedule which is easier to follow and only requires 1 additional priest. On the third Sunday the service at Warkworth will be said and followed by Soul Space (non Eucharistic). You might ask 'why does Warkworth get an extra service?'. This is no different than Adoration, Time to Pray, Celtic Prayer, Mindful Prayer etc. Soul Space just happens to be on a Sunday. It has a faithful following and is an appreciated part of our offer. Warkworth will also have Choral Evensong on that Sunday as they do now.

The other Sunday services (Sunday Worship) will take the form of *ante-communion*, the service largely as it is now with the intercessions ending with the Lord's Prayer and the service ending with the Peace, Final Hymn, The Grace. This is in order that people know what they are coming to, have the reassurance of something familiar, that the service is manageable for our Authorised Lay Ministers (Margaret, Christine, Remley) without them having to prepare something new etc. and it gives our other lay assistants the continued opportunity to support in the role of *liturgical deacon* building their skills and experience. This shorter service also allows for a short time of engagement with the preacher after the service. Fifth Sundays will be managed ad hoc.

Mid-week

The churches which didn't have a Eucharist on the Sunday will have one in their mid-week slot so that folk who can't/won't travel can still make their communion - there is also always the Saturday 4pm as an alternative to a Sunday service and of course our on-line/telephone service at 10am on a Sunday. The Tuesday service at Acklington will move to 9.30am and be Common Worship rather than BCP. The church which has had a Eucharist on the Sunday will have Common Worship Morning Prayer for their mid-week.

The services for the next Sunday will be announced each week as part of the notices with the opportunity for those who need transport to arrange that following the service, well in advance, so that no one should be put in the position that they cannot worship as they want to. Those travelling to the Eucharist elsewhere are encouraged to fill their cars so that no-one is worried about not being able to park.

Many groups of churches in our position have simply moved to a schedule of ‘benefice’ services. This is not a road we want to go down because we appreciate what a difference it makes to have a service of some sort in each church each Sunday. However the travelling Eucharist (on weeks 1,2 and 4) does give everyone an opportunity to follow the Eucharist around the benefice and get to know the other churches and their fellowship better.

ASW Benefice Sunday Services - from July 2026						
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Key
St Lawrence Warkworth	9am HC	9am SW	9am HC (said)	9am SW	To be determined.	HC - Holy Communion Service
			10.30am SSp			
ZOOM/ Whypay	10am HC (v)	10am HC (v)	10am HC (v)	10am HC (v)		Service on Zoom and Whypay – virtual communion
St James Shilbottle	10am CC	10am HC	10am HC	10am SW		SW - Sunday Worship – familiar service without Communion
St John the Divine Acklington	11am SSp	11am SW	11am HC	11am HC		SSp – Soul Space
St Lawrence Warkworth	4pm Messy Church		4pm Choral Evensong			CC – Café Style Church

The three PCCs and the ministry team were unanimous in their support for this schedule and my thanks in particular to Margaret Weaver who has the task of populating it!

Making the changes in July enables me to properly support its implementation before the vacancy begins. If you have any questions at all please do feel you can address them to me directly.