
The United Benefice of Atherton & Hindsford with Howe Bridge



A welcoming, worshipping, relevant Church,
reflecting God's love, reaching out to the
community to make new friends for Jesus and
equipping all for life.

Parish Profile April 2025



St John's



St Philip's



St Michael's



St George's



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1. Welcome & Introduction

Jesus says, 'I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.' (John 10:14). Is God calling you to join us in shepherding our vibrant community comprising of four active churches in Atherton, Hindsford, and Howe Bridge? Our two Parish 'United Benefice' is rich in tradition yet full of opportunities for growth and service. While we worship separately on a Sunday and during the week, we regularly pray and worship together as a United Benefice.

Our growing community offers a unique, exciting (and yes, challenging) opportunity for ministry, with people from diverse backgrounds—longstanding congregations, new families, and a growing number of people moving into the area. We have strong partnerships with four church primary schools, a special needs school, the opportunity to build connections with a local high school and uniformed organisations.

This is a wonderful opportunity for a minister with the right experience to make a lasting impact in a community full of faith and potential—and you won't be alone. You'll be supported by dedicated churchwardens and a well-established ministry team, including a curate (to be priested in June 2025), two Readers Emeritus, an ALM, and committed lay leaders.

Our Benefice has a strong tradition of ministry training. We currently have an ordinand due to be ordained in June 2025, after which she will be moving on, and two stipendiary curates—one moving on to take up an Incumbency as Hulme Lecturer and Associate Vicar at Bolton Parish Church, and another currently exploring her first Incumbency.

When staffed appropriately, all our churches endeavour to have lots going on, offering with a variety of events and activities throughout the year (see section 6). There is always room for more, and we welcome fresh ideas and different ways of working. A spirit of creativity and a good sense of humour will be valuable as we grow together in faith and love.

We hope this profile gives you a sense of the exciting opportunities awaiting you here. We invite you to prayerfully consider whether this could be the place where your ministry flourishes and leaves a lasting impact. Above all, please be assured of our prayers as you discern where God is calling you.



2. Serving in the Diocese of Manchester

Our Benefice supports the Diocese of Manchester's vision of renewing parish life and realising 'Vision 2030'. This vision is an aspiration to build a worshipping, growing, and transforming Christian presence at the heart of every community. It is underpinned by four key priorities: Growing Younger, Church Planting and Revitalisation, Developing Missional Leaders, and Parish Renewal.

Through this vision, the diocese is committed to engaging with children, young people, and families, revitalising existing churches, establishing new worshipping communities, and equipping leaders for mission. At its heart is a belief in the transformative power of the Gospel and a determination to support clergy as they lead with faith, courage, and resilience, shaping a flourishing and sustainable future for our diocese.

Greater Manchester offers a wonderfully diverse and vibrant context for ministry. From lively urban centres to quiet suburban communities, and from areas of significant economic deprivation to thriving cultural and academic hubs, the diocese presents a variety of opportunities for mission and growth. Clergy here can expect to make a profound impact in communities that are eager for leadership, compassion, and hope.

The diocese is blessed with an exceptional network of church schools that provides both an incredible evangelistic opportunity and a supportive foundation for clergy families. Clergy benefit from strong collegial networks, pastoral support from Bishops, Archdeacons, and Area Deans, and targeted initiatives like the Parish Renewal Programme and leadership development pathways, all designed to help bring our Vision 2030 to life.



Manchester Cathedral

The work of renewal is rooted in prayer and the grace of God, who alone can bring transformation. Together, we pray:

**Heavenly Father, inspire us as we seek to worship, grow, and transform.
 Equip us to make disciples, plant new worshipping communities, raise up leaders, and nurture
 children and young people. Give us faith to embrace Your vision,
 ears to hear Your Spirit, and courage to follow Your call, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

For more information, visit the Vision 2030 pages on our website: www.manchester.anglican.org

3. Our United Benefice Vision



**A welcoming, worshipping, relevant Church
reflecting God's love, reaching out to the
community to make new friends for Jesus and
equipping all for life.**

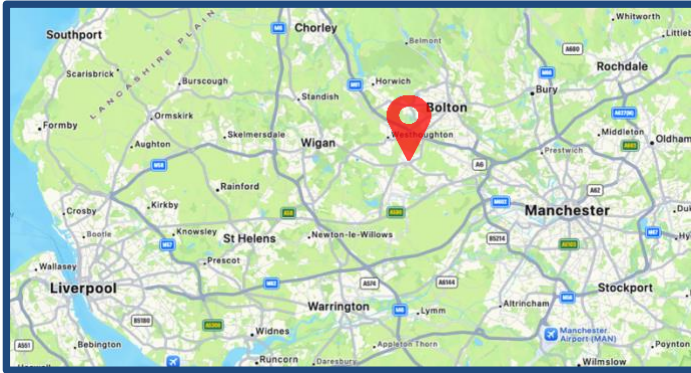
Our Benefice's vision of being a welcoming, worshipping, and relevant Church aligns with the Diocese of Manchester's 'Vision 2030', which calls for a worshipping, growing, and transforming Christian presence in every community. Committed to inclusivity and engagement, we strive to deepen faith, equip disciples, and extend our worship beyond the church walls. Grounded in prayer, service, and God's grace, we seek to be a community that welcomes all, worships together, and empowers people to live out their faith in daily life.

Our Benefice's mission action plan (updated in 2024) unites us with a shared vision for the future, focusing on key goals that shape our ministry and service. These include:

- An eager willingness to learn more about God and develop deeper in faith.
- Development of new groups to study the Bible, and support and pray for each other.
- A team trained in defined vocations, ordained, lay, and volunteers.
- Lay leaders in each church working alongside the ministry team.
- A healthy children's and youth/young adults ministry with trained leadership.
- Provision for young families inside and outside of Sunday worship.
- Providing well for our older generation's spirituality and in fellowship.
- For worship to be engaging, accessible and relevant.
- Schools' ministry with our connected schools – to create deeper church/school/family links.
- Seeking new ways to connect with the community and those taking part in occasional offices.
- To have buildings that are well-maintained, fit for purpose, and welcoming to worship in.
- To continue to explore how we can sustain and strengthen our four churches for the future.
- To continue our exploration, and aspiration for all our churches to gain 'Eco Church' Status.



4. Our Benefice & Wider Community



Situated to the north-west of Manchester, within the Salford & Leigh Deanery, our Benefice enjoys excellent transport links. Just 12 miles from Manchester city centre, we are served by two train stations, bus routes, and have easy access to the motorway network. Nearby towns such as Bolton, Wigan, and Leigh offer further amenities and opportunities.

Atherton is a traditional Lancashire town with a strong family-oriented ethos, home to professionals, skilled tradespeople, and a diverse mix of residents. Historically, the town was built on industries such as nail, nut, and bolt manufacturing, later followed by mining and cotton. While local industry is now limited, many residents commute to Manchester or nearby towns for work. The town centre is a lively hub with a variety of restaurants, cafés, and bars, supported by a strong community-driven effort towards retail regeneration. Its industrial past is still visible in two repurposed mills, now hosting retail and leisure facilities.



St John's Church (Atherton Parish)



St Michael's Church (Howe Bridge)

Howe Bridge, a suburb of Atherton, has a rich historical heritage. In the 1870s, colliery owners Fletcher Burrows commissioned the creation of a 'model village' for their workers, incorporating houses, shops, a school, a village hall, recreational facilities, and St Michael's church. This heritage remains central to the identity of Howe Bridge and is documented throughout the village via an innovative QR-coded heritage trail. The Church is located within a conservation area, has a well-established and positive

relationship with the local authority, councillors, the Bridgers Community Group, and the local cricket club. The village is proud to hold Green Flag status and has been recognised as a Northwest in Bloom award winner.



"It's wonderful to see the parish church clock is working again—it's part of who we are"

As a Benefice we serve a diverse urban and suburban community of approximately 22,551 people*, many of whom hold their churches in high regard, even if they are not all regular attendees. A truth reflected after the repair of Atherton Parish Church clock in 2024, as one resident described it on Facebook as, *"part of who we are."* These seeds of encouragement highlighting the exciting opportunity our new rector will have to help all our churches grow as beacons of hope and inspiration.

5. Benefice Demographics

The latest census highlights a strong Christian presence in the community, yet a significant number of people identify as having 'no religion'. This presents a real opportunity for mission and outreach. Despite their close physical proximity, there is a striking contrast in deprivation levels between the two parishes. Atherton and Hindsford has a larger and more diverse population, with more estates such as Hag Fold, while St Michael's is smaller and more affluent. Together, they form a broad and varied mission field, offering rich opportunities for meaningful and inclusive ministry.

Parish Name	ATHERTION & HINDSFORD		HOWE BRIDGE	
Population	17,633		4,918	
Age spread				
0-14	3,204	18%	862	18%
15-59	10,126	58%	2,953	60%
60+	4,303	24%	1,103	22%
Ethnic Mix (%)				
Ethnic group: Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	2		2	
Ethnic group: Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	2		1	
Ethnic group: Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	1		1	
Ethnic group: White (%)	94		95	
Ethnic group: Other ethnic group	1		1	
Other Faith Mix (%)				
Christian	59		62	
No Religion	34		31	
Other (Muslim or Hindu)	2		2	
No answer	5		5	
Employment (%)				
Managerial, admin, and professional	36		48	
Small employers and own account workers	10		10	
Supervisory, Technical and Routine	37		32	
Never worked/Long Term Unemployed	12		6	
Full time Students	5		5	
Deprivation Index				
Least deprived on scale of 1-12239 (1 being the most deprived area)	Rank: 680. In bottom 5.6% of all areas.		Rank: 7591. 62% less deprived of all areas.	

6. Our Church Community

Our United Benefice comprises of two Parishes, four Churches, and a dedicated community of faithful worshippers. Our worship tradition leans towards modern catholic, with little variation across the churches. Clergy wear vestments for Eucharistic services, while morning worship, often led by lay members, is conducted without robes.

On a rotating basis Eucharistic services are held in two churches every Sunday, and morning worship in the other two. In addition, there are two mid-week Eucharist services, one in each parish. All major



Our outgoing Rector's Final Sunday Eucharist at St John's Church

seasons and principal festivals are celebrated. There is also a faithful group of lay people who (on rota) lead services, read, and intercess in each Church on a Sunday.

The structure of the Benefice means there are two PCC's, Atherton & Hindsford with 17 members and Howe Bridge with 9 members. Each church looks after its own fabric and finances, and reports to the PCC. We also come together regularly to have a United Benefice PCC

meeting. There is much collaboration and cooperation between each parish; we very much see ourselves as a 'United Benefice' of worshippers rather than two parishes.

Our Churches serve very faithful congregations. Apart from St Michael's in 2023, parish share has been paid in full for several years, however, attendance (post COVID) has declined. All the church buildings are sound and well looked after but if significant building issues arose it would be a financial challenge. We have close links with four church schools and a primary special needs school, along with an opportunity to link with a local High School, and other local schools.

Occasional offices provide a valuable opportunity for mission, our Benefice has a significant number of these. This has made us an appealing setting for ordinands, and curates in training.

As you will see below, our community presence reaches outside of the walls of our churches and we also have a presence on Facebook [@AHHChurches](#) (with over 670 followers), and a [Benefice Website](#) that (at the time of writing) is currently under maintenance.

We are proud to say we do not have any resolutions in place regarding the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993. We are very much inclusive with respect to leadership and in all other aspects of ministry.

6.1 Our Church Community: Activities Beyond Sunday

Our Benefice is **active and welcoming, extending far beyond Sunday worship**. With so much going on, we celebrate reading the notices each week! Whether people seek spiritual nourishment, social connections, or simply a place to be part of the community, **we strive to offer something for everyone**. Before vacancy, a typical week included many activities, an example of which is outlined below. Each month, we publish a diary detailing events across the Benefice, we distribute a weekly newsheet both electronically (via email, Facebook, and [A Church Near You](#)) and in hard copy at Sunday services.

The weekly life of our Benefice:

Day	Activity & Location
Monday	<i>Little Blessings Toddler (and their Adult) Group at St George's CE Primary School, Atherton (0-4 years old, lunch provided, £1 donation if able, term time only)</i>
	<i>Crafts and A Place to Be in St Anne's Hall at St John's Church (Soup, hot drinks, and conversation; open to all)</i>
Tuesday	<i>Coffee Morning with Toddler Toys at St George's Church, Atherton (Family craft activities during school holidays, 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM) (nominated for a "Connecting Communities" award, because of the intergenerational links between parents and children)</i>
	<i>9:30am Said Eucharist at St Philip's Church</i>
	<i>Daytime Bible Study at St Philip's Church (Term time only)</i>
Wednesday	<i>10:15am Said Eucharist at St Michael's Church</i>
	<i>Knit & Natter Group (2nd Wednesday of each month)</i>
	<i>Outdoor Forest Worship at Hindsford School (Term time only)</i>
	<i>Bi-weekly Online Evening Bible Study</i>
Thursday	<i>St Michaels Bingo at the Cricket Club (we endeavour to hold this monthly)</i>
Friday	<i>Coffee Morning in St Anne's Hall</i>
Saturday	<i>Men's Breakfast in St Anne's Hall, Atherton Parish Church, (Bi-monthly)</i>
	<i>Atherton Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast (Last Saturday of the month, venue varies)</i>
	<i>Messy Church at St Philip's Church (2pm Third Saturday of the month)</i>

6.2 Our Church Community: Worship Beyond Sunday

We are committed to ensuring those in care homes or unable to attend church can still worship. Every other Tuesday afternoon, we hold a short service with music at Chanters Care Home, attended by 13 to 15 residents, with communion available by arrangement. On the second Sunday of each month, we take communion to residents at Belong and The Hamiltons. Attendance at Belong varies from 2 to 10, depending on carers' availability, while at The Hamiltons, around 12 residents join in.

In addition, we provide pastoral support to the housebound, including taking communion. We provide chaplaincy support to The Spinney for men in medium and low secure rehabilitation wards with personality or mental health challenges. We also (on request) hold an outdoor thanksgiving service with The Bridgers Community Group in Howe Bridge.

6.3 Our Church Community: Connections Beyond Sunday

Supporting Our Community

Our Crafts and 'A Place to Be' in St Anne's Hall at St John's Church on Mondays, provides a warm space with food and drink, and good company. We also use this time to make knitted items such as knitted hats for the foodbank to help keep people warm, and knitted blankets for



Cats Protection, offering care and support to animals in need. Our Knit & Natter Group, that meet Monthly on Wednesdays, have knitted hearts, robins, Christmas trees, angels and Nativity sets, for residents in our three care homes, along with

knitted poppies and soldiers for our Remembrance display in church, some of which can be seen here. Both groups have also created blankets for Rowan Tree School wheelchair users, providing warmth for those who need it.



Supporting Civic Duties

We take our civic duties seriously, particularly leading the yearly **Remembrance Day** and **Remembrance Sunday** commemorations and worship at Atherton Cenotaph. Each year, we



process through the streets of Atherton & Howe Bridge and gather as a community to honour those who gave their lives in service, offering prayers, reflections, and a moment of silence. Last year, it was estimated that over 600 people attended.

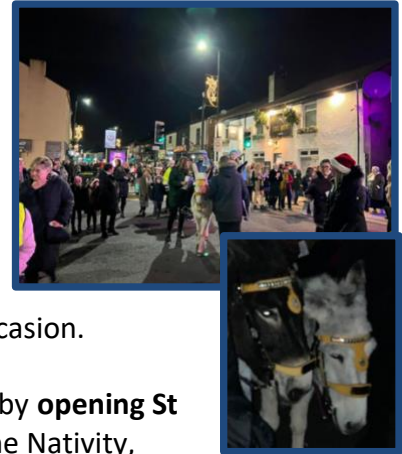


We also host a special Service of Remembrance at St John's Church in the afternoon on Remembrance Sunday. We work closely with local councillors and the Royal British Legion, supporting other significant commemorations, such as the 80th anniversary of D-Day in 2024. A selection of photos from these events can be seen here.



Supporting Atherton Walking Nativity

The **Atherton Walking Nativity** is a cherished annual event that was conceived from an idea of a parishioner at St Michael's and subsequently organised with The Bridgers Community Group for several years. It is now firmly established in Atherton and the Christmas Story is brought to life through a community procession, involving local schools, churches, and other organisations. As the journey unfolds through the streets, participants stop at various points to share and enact key moments of Jesus' birth, **accompanied by real donkey's**, adding to the authenticity and atmosphere of the occasion.



We are proud to support this event by **opening St John's Church as the final stop** of the Nativity, where the story reaches its conclusion with a special gathering. This provides a warm and welcoming space for reflection, worship, and celebration, ensuring the event ends with a meaningful moment for all who take part. Some photos of the event can be seen here.

Supporting Charities & Other Community Activity



In addition to the events listed in the table in section 6.1, we organise a variety of fundraising activities and annual social events that bring our community together. These include **Quiz Night's**,



Harvest Supper, and **St Michael's Patron Saint Michaelmas Celebration**, all offering opportunities to gather and celebrate. Several **garden parties** take place throughout the year, hosted by **St Philip's**



Church, the **Hardmans**, and **David & Dorothy Whalley** on behalf of St Michael's. **Concerts**, our **Singing Group**, and **Curry Nights** add music and food to our calendar, while our **Christmas Lunch/Dinner** brings festive cheer. We



also participate in **Atherton Carnival**, the **Christmas Market**, and other events on **Market Street in Atherton**. These gatherings not only provide enjoyment but also strengthen our sense of community and belonging. Along with this we also support charities such as **MacMillan Cancer Support**, **Save The Children**, **Christian Aid**, **The Children's Society**, and the local **Food Bank**.

7. Benefice Statistics (2024)

Regular Sunday attendance is lower than we would like, especially children; however, our children focused messy Church at St Philip's is well attended. The major festivals present a missional opportunity, with **over 170 people attending our Easter Sunday Service**, and high numbers at Christmas. **Baptisms and confirmations remain strong**, and **weddings, are increasing**, with **seven booked for 2025** and **three already for 2026**. Funerals continue to be a key part of our ministry.

CHURCH		ST JOHN'S		ST PHILIP'S		ST GEORGE'S		ST MICHAEL'S	
Patron									
Diocesan Board of Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986: David Thompson (Appointed 12 February 2025)									
Electoral Roll									
Number of People		83		73		31		56	
Average Attendance		0-15	16+	0-15	16+	0-15	16+	0-15	16+
Average Sunday Attendance		6	40	8	25	4	23	5	28
Average Weekday Attendance		N/A		1	19	N/A		0	11
St Philip's Messy Church				N/A					
Occasional Offices, Celebrations etc.		ST JOHN'S		ST PHILIP'S		ST GEORGE'S		ST MICHAEL'S	
Baptisms		12		7		11		13	
Weddings		1		0		0		2	
Confirmation	Adult candidates	1		Joint Benefice Confirmation Service					
	Under 16 candidates	17							
Funerals		13		7		5		8	
Festivals		ST JOHN'S		ST PHILIP'S		ST GEORGE'S		ST MICHAEL'S	
Easter Day		0-15	16+	Joint Benefice Easter Eucharist (10am)					
		56	114						
Christmas Eve		7pm Eucharist		4pm Crib		Worship in Other Churches		3pm Christingle	
		0-15	16+	0-15	16+			0-15	16+
		17	33	40	66			39	72
				11pm Eucharist				11pm Eucharist	
				0-15	16+			0-15	16+
		0	27			0	26		
Christmas Day		10am St George's Joint Benefice Eucharist							
		0-15				16+			
		13				35			

8. The Church Buildings

The Benefice has four distinct churches, each serving its community. **St Michael and All Angels**, a Grade II* listed building, is valued in Howe Bridge for its gardens, community ties, and is a popular wedding venue. **St John the Baptist**, a town centre landmark, has a large seating capacity and hall for worship and events. **St George's**, well-placed for the Hag Fold estate, offers a flexible layout and good parking. **St Philip's**, extended in 2010, has a welcoming space and well-kept gardens for summer events. All four churches maintain strong school links and a commitment to worship and outreach.

Each Church in Brief



St. Michael and All Angels

- Grade II* listed building in a conservation area
- Built and consecrated 1875-1877
- Seating capacity for 150 (mainly pews)
- Popular for weddings
- Lovely, well-maintained gardens
- Close links with St Michael's School
- Car park and Rectory in grounds
- Greatly valued by the 'village' of Howe Bridge
- Sunday and midweek services

St. John the Baptist

- Iconic town centre church
- Built in approx. 1880 (3rd church on site)
- Excellent car parking nearby
- Significant refurbishment 1990's
- Seating capacity 400 (mainly pews)
- Incorporates St. Anne's Hall (can be hired out)
- Lady Chapel with a dedicated area for prayer
- Close links with Hindsford CE School



St George's

- Seating capacity 130 (padded chairs)
- Built in 1912
- Adjacent to Ormerod House (Health Centre)
- Close links with St. George's School
- Ideally situated to serve the Hag Fold estate
- Planning for internal improvements
- Good sized car park
- Flexible layout



St Philip's

- Seating capacity 150 (mainly padded chairs)
- Built in 1914
- Meeting room space for small groups.
- Close links with St. Philip's School
- Sunday and midweek services
- Summer garden parties
- Good gardens and grounds
- Flexible layout



Christmas Carol Service 2024 at St John's

9. The Rectory & Vicarage

We have a rectory and a vicarage in the Benefice. The Rectory is in the grounds of St Michael's Church (this was home to our outgoing Rector); the Vicarage is located next to St Anne's Church (deconsecrated in the 90's) in Hindsford, it is currently home to one of our curates.

St Michael's Rectory

A modern four bedroomed rectory with a family bathroom, large kitchen with utility, separate dining room, lounge, downstairs study and a downstairs toilet, garage, private parking in the grounds, gardens to the side and rear and a greenhouse.



St Anne's Vicarage

A large gardened, spacious four bedroomed vicarage with a study, family bathroom, downstairs toilet, lounge, dining room, kitchen (units recently replaced), utility room and pantry, as well as a garage. Bedrooms and hall carpets have also been recently replaced. It is near Hindsford CofE primary school (see section 12 below) and a well-regarded high school.



10. The Parish Hall

St Anne's Hall located inside St John's Church

St Anne's Hall is a cherished and well-used space at the heart of our community, serving as a hub for both church and local activities. Its story is one of resilience and renewal:

In 1991, St John's Church was badly damaged by fire. During its restoration in 1996–97, the decision was made to re-order the building, creating a dedicated community space by dividing the chancel from the rest of the church. This new hall was named St Anne's Hall, honouring the memory of our deconsecrated church and ensuring its legacy lives on.

Today, St Anne's Hall continues to be a place of welcome, connection, and support. Every other month, it hosts the Men's Breakfast, providing a warm setting for fellowship and discussion over a shared meal. Friday Coffee Mornings offer a friendly space where people can gather, chat, and enjoy refreshments together. Every week we host a free community warm space, where people can come for food, drink, and do craft activities. We also host the Eccumenical prayer breakfast on a rotating basis.

The hall also plays a vital role in supporting those in need, as the Foodbank operates here twice a week on Wednesdays and Fridays, offering essential support to the local community. On the first Tuesday of each month, Cherish U.K. hires the hall, further extending its outreach. It has also been used to host courses exploring faith, such as Alpha, alongside other church-led activities.

Beyond these regular gatherings, St Anne's Hall remains available for hire, making it an adaptable and invaluable resource for both the church and wider community. From social events to support groups, it continues to be a place where people come together, share experiences, and find a sense of belonging.

Pictures of the hall in use:



Men's Christmas Breakfast 2024



Atherton & Leigh Food Bank Distribution Day

11. Finances

This section outlines the financial position of both parishes. Despite financial challenges, **both parishes have managed their obligations**, with Atherton & Hindsford consistently paying its full Parish Share and Howe Bridge recovering from a shortfall in 2023. Notably, **a generous legacy of £115,000 has been received by each parish in early 2025**, which will significantly support our future financial stability. Several congregation members also pay directly into the bank every month by standing order, providing us a more guaranteed income. We also hold fund-raising events during the year in all churches.

Finance Returns (£)				
Benefice Name	ATHERTON & HINDSFORD		HOWE BRIDGE (ST MICHAEL'S)	
Year	2023	2024	2023	2024
Parish Income	87,791	88,810	25,548	27,309
Tax Efficient Planned Giving	31,979	31,989	9,528	9,665
Other giving/Income	55,812	56,821	3,091	3,079
Parish Expenditure	93,733	85,014	25,677	26,059
Parish Share Assessed (included in above expenditure)	46,561	38,000	17,738	11,000
Parish Share Paid	100%	100%	51.48%	100%

Howe Bridge Parish Financial Summary

In this single church parish, the parish share has been paid in full each year except 2023 when the churches expenses exceed the receipts by almost £9,000. In 2024 we agreed a reduction in the Parish Share, and it was paid in full. It is expected that Parish Share will be fully paid in the future. Currently our reserves amount to £38,000; however, we have recently been notified of a legacy of £115,000 from a member of our congregation, which matches an equal amount given to Atherton & Hindsford Parish. St Michael's Church had a Quinquennial Inspection on 10th December 2024 and the results are awaited. Appropriate funding streams will be considered to finance any works required. This will likely include improvement works to the Chorister Vestry to enable better use of the space for community involvement and the opportunity to generate income by renting out the space. The Church is also appreciative of all the hard work that takes place throughout the year by its pro-active congregation to raise funds to supplement our income, notably a garden party that usually raises more than £1,000.

Atherton & Hindsford Parish Financial Summary

In addition to three church accounts (see above table and below summary per church) a PCC account is maintained. It is used to record parish expenditure where it is not practical to assign it to an individual church. It is also used to record and pay Atherton & Hindsford Parish Share. Its income is derived from church assessed share of Parish Share, wedding and funeral fees, clergy giving, donations made to the parish as a whole and the proceeds of the annual parish dinner. For the past ten years we have paid parish share in full. In 2024 a reduction of £9,000 was agreed, making our Parish Share £38,000, this was paid in full. A legacy of £115,000 from a member of our congregation received in January 2025 will ease the situation as we go forward.

11.1 Atherton & Hindsford Per Church Finances

Finance Returns						
Church Name	ST JOHN'S		ST PHILIP'S		ST GEORGE'S	
Year	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024
Income	32,276	37,610	20,060	20,791	20,042	20,545
Tax Efficient Planned Giving	12,762	11,955	10,834	11,017	4,124	5,022
Other giving/Income	19,514	25,655	9,226	9,774	15,918	15,443
Expenditure	39,504	37,671	22,796	19,879	21,798	18,770
Parish Share Assessed	18,277	14,675	13,821	11,088	14,463	12,182
Parish Share Paid	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

St John's

St John's is the parish church of Atherton. Whilst its congregation is small for the size of the building, the local community are supportive. 2024 was a difficult year with ever increasing costs but the reduction in Parish Share meant we were able to break even without further recourse to our reserves.

St Philip's

St Philip's church has a mixed age congregation with several young families. In 2024 we had to use £1,500 of our reserves to pay for repairs to the boiler. There is the possibility of a large housing estate being built not far from the church which could mean a potential growth in the congregation. During local and national elections, the church is also used as a polling station, for which we receive a fee.

St George's

St George's church has a small but enthusiastic and supportive congregation who make up the shortfall in weekly giving with very successful fundraising events. Our finances are greatly helped by the annual £4,000 income from the rental of our car park to the health centre next door. We are waiting approval of a faculty for a reordering of our current drinks area. This approval is expected very soon. We have successfully secured grant funding for this work from Manchester Dioceses' Council for Social Aid funds. During local and national elections, the church is also used as a polling station, for which we receive a fee.

12. Our Schools

There are four primary schools that (pre-vacancy) we regularly engage with, either clergy attending school to lead them in worship, or the children coming to church. We also have connections to a local special needs school (Rowan Tree), and we are often invited to their events during the year. In addition, children from a none CoE school, Parklee, attended our schools Experience Easter activities in 2024. There is also a High School in the Benefice, which we have not yet fully engaged with (outside of them attending St John's Church over Christmas 2024); however, is a potential missional opportunity.

St Philip's Church of England Primary School, Atherton

St Philip's School is a Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School located directly opposite St Philip's Church. The school aims to provide a nurturing, safe, and inclusive environment where each child can achieve their full potential. Guided by Christian values, St Philip's has a loving family atmosphere, emphasising the development of spiritual and moral values alongside academic excellence. The school maintains strong links with the church, enhancing its religious education and community involvement. In their most recent Ofsted inspection on 8 November 2023, the school was rated 'Good' overall, with 'Outstanding' in Personal Development.



Our Clergy Visiting St Philip's School

[School Website](#) [Ofsted Reports](#)

St George's Church of England Primary School, Atherton



St George's School Children Visiting St George's Church

Atherton St George's CE Primary School is part of The Wings' CE Trust and caters to children aged 2 to 11. The school is committed to ensuring that every child achieves their full potential in a happy, safe, caring, and Christian environment. With high expectations for attainment, achievement, attitude, and behaviour, St George's provides pupils with aspirations to be the best they can be. The school has a long-standing history in the community, established for over a century, and enjoys strong links with St George's Church, situated directly across the road. In their latest Ofsted inspection on 20 June 2023, the school received a 'Good' rating.

[School Website](#) [Ofsted Reports](#)

Hindsford Church of England Primary School, Hindsford

Hindsford Church of England Primary School is a one-form entry school with a capacity for 210 pupils, admitting up to 30 children into the reception class each year. The school has close links with St John's Church, and some of the children and teachers join us for our monthly all-age Eucharist service. Pre-vacancy we also ran a weekly (after school) forest-worship something the children and parents really engaged with. We would love this to start again when we are able as we regularly had over 20 people attend. In their most recent Ofsted inspection on 29 October 2024, the school was rated 'Outstanding' in all key areas, including Quality of Education, Behaviour and Attitudes, Personal Development, Leadership and Management, and Early Years Provision.



Hindsford School Family fun at Forest Worship

[School Website](#)
[Ofsted Reports](#)

St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Howe Bridge



St Michael's School Prayer Tree

St Michael's CE Primary School in Howe Bridge is a Voluntary Aided school that immerses students in a Christian community. The school encourages, challenges, and nurtures each child to learn and grow, aiming for them to achieve their full potential. The school's values are Love, Respect, Kindness, Faith, Honesty, and Courage. St Michael's maintains a close relationship with St Michael's Church, with visits, and the school participating in church and community events. On one recent visit the children made a prayer tree, as can be seen in the photo. In their latest Ofsted inspection on 31 October 2023, the school was rated 'Good' across all evaluated categories.

[School Website](#)
[Ofsted Reports](#)



Banner displayed in St Philip's School Hall



13. Our Hopes for the Future

Our churches seek to be at the heart of our communities, offering the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through worship, witness, and service. United in faith, we are committed to growing disciples, developing leaders, and making a tangible difference in people's lives.

As a joint Benefice, we value collaboration while maintaining the distinct identities of our two PCCs. We work closely together in mission and ministry, with regular shared worship and practical coordination across our churches. This includes:

- Joint all-age services that encourage unity across our congregations.
- Regular meetings between churchwardens and treasurers.
- Two safeguarding officers who serve across all churches.
- A unified approach to service planning, newsheets, and fundraising.

To give our next Rector a clear and realistic starting point, our immediate priorities are:

- Reconnecting with children and families, through deeper school and community engagement.
- Strengthening lay leadership and ministry teams, enabling more shared responsibility.
- Create more spaces for prayer and Bible study to nurture both new and established disciples.

Our priorities directly support the Diocesan call to *Develop Missional Leaders* and *Grow Younger*, while laying foundations for long-term *Parish Renewal*.

Beyond our immediate priorities, we hope to:

- Broaden our outreach and visibility in the community.
- Develop fresh expressions of worship to reach different groups.
- Make better use of our church buildings and grounds as accessible, welcoming spaces.

While we are full of hope, we are also realistic. Sunday attendance is not where we would like it to be, and although our finances are currently stable, sustaining four churches long term will require discernment and creativity. We do not present this as a burden for one person to carry, but as a shared challenge and an opportunity for honest conversation and collective action.

Together, through prayer and by God's grace, we believe we can build on strong foundations and play our part in realising the Diocese's vision—renewing parish life and seeing our communities transformed by Christ's love.

14. Is God Calling You? – Our Promise Your Invitation

We hope this profile has given you a sense of how our United Benefice offers a unique and exciting opportunity to lead a faithful and committed church community—rooted in tradition, yet open to growth and renewal. You would be joining a team of dedicated lay leaders, clergy colleagues, and volunteers, all eager to support you and work alongside you in nurturing faith, serving the wider community, and engaging with new generations.

We believe this role offers the scope to make a real difference—spiritually, pastorally, and missionally—in the life of our parishes and beyond. With strong foundations already in place and a clear vision for the future, we are praying that the person God is calling will join us for the next chapter of our shared journey.

Our Commitment to You

We recognise that parish ministry brings both joy and challenge. What we are looking for is not a superhero, but a pastor—someone who will lead us in prayer, walk with us in faith, and love us and our communities with grace and care. Ministry is a shared calling, and we want to help you lead from a wellspring of God's love—nurtured by rest, sustained by prayer, and supported by a team that walks alongside you.

You will be supported by a committed team who genuinely want you to thrive. Together, we will work collaboratively, valuing your leadership and making space for your rest and renewal. We also hope to be a community where you find laughter and joy alongside the work of ministry.

As a Benefice Team, we Promise To:

- Uphold you in prayer as an individual and in your role as our spiritual leader.
- Provide practical support through active churchwardens, lay, and ordained leaders.
- Respect your need for time with family, friends, and God.
- Explore ways to reduce the strain of administrative tasks.
- Encourage friendship and fellowship through social events and informal gatherings.
- Offer you a private home in the Rectory that is comfortable, well-located, and truly yours to enjoy.
- Be honest about our challenges, but hopeful and proactive about how we face them together.

We are also part of a wider Diocesan family that takes wellbeing seriously. The Diocese of Manchester provides a range of resources and support for clergy wellbeing, including access to pastoral care, counselling, and spiritual direction.

You can explore these resources further at: www.manchester.anglican.org/wellbeing

We Are Looking for a Rector Who Will:

- Lead us in prayer and spiritual growth, helping us deepen our discipleship.
- Offer pastoral care with compassion, presence, and wisdom.
- Support our vision of being a welcoming, worshipping, relevant Church reflecting God's love.
- Work collaboratively with our PCCs and congregations, value shared leadership and lay ministry.
- Help us reconnect with children, young people, and families.
- Be open to developing fresh styles of worship while respecting our traditions.
- Encourage and support vocations and take on the role of training incumbent for our OLM curate.
- Engage creatively with our wider community and help us to be more outward-looking in mission.
- Bring resilience, a sense of humour, and a hopeful vision for what God can do among us.

Your Invitation

If you are seeking a post where you can make a real difference—spiritually and in the life of the wider community—then we prayerfully invite you to join us on this journey of faith, growth, and renewal. We are hopeful, honest, and ready to walk this path together.

Our ministry is shared: rooted in prayer, sustained by collaboration, and nurtured through mutual care and encouragement. We will support and pray for you, just as we hope you will help us grow in faith and mission. Every person brings something unique, and every calling begins with a response. Is God calling you to bring your gifts, your faith, and your story to the next chapter of ours?

