



# PARISH PROFILE





The Crowton 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary wall hanging



# INTRODUCTION



We are a collection of committed, faithful Christians of all ages and a range of churchmanship, four parishes serving five villages. We are seeking a new vicar to minister among us and our neighbours in our rural communities.

The regular congregations in the benefice are warm and welcoming, full of people who want to grow closer to God, embrace all comers, and share the love of God through word and action. We are rooted in prayer, enthusiastic about developing in our faith, and willingly express our commitment in a wide variety of voluntary service.

We seek to make Jesus Christ known and experienced in our villages. We strive to be a safe haven where everyone can feel at home and find support. Public transport is limited and amenities such as shops are thin

on the ground but the parish church in each village still retains some of its traditional significance in the community. While past traditions are cherished and respected, we are not afraid to face strategic change.

All five villages are growing, with some new housing developments and new people moving into the area. In some villages the church has grown a little in the last decade, although a great many newcomers choose to attend church ad hoc. While attending to the spiritual needs of the “regulars”, we try to foster a nurturing environment of discipleship that enables these more occasional attenders to develop their relationship with God and their commitment to belonging to church.

We are earnestly praying for the person God wants to come and minister among us and lead us in continuing to build up God's kingdom.



# WE OFFER

- a warm welcome
- joy in our worship and fellowship
- a commitment to change through knowing Jesus and a willingness to try new things
- an eagerness to serve our Lord through all kinds of service here in our communities
- four unique rural parishes, each cherishing in its individuality, and all collaborating as one benefice - usually fruitfully if sometimes with creative friction! - to help build the kingdom of God
- experienced wardens, dedicated PCCs, and a further host of volunteers of all ages and talents
- a confident and experienced ministry team embodying a range of churchmanship and encouraging others in developing their ministry
- dedicated foundation governors and chairs of governing bodies for all three of our church schools
- school head teachers and staff committed to a Christian ethos, welcoming of a close relationship with the benefice and committed to working together refreshing energy and enthusiasm among our schoolchildren and young people
- an appreciation of the beauty of our rural environment and a proper concern for its stewardship
- recognition that a vicar is but a human being, balancing strengths and weaknesses as we all do: a respect for time off, family responsibilities, personal interests and the occasional challenges we all experience

We would like a vicar who can relate to all age groups and types of people, someone who is pastorally sensitive and who will embrace and continue to build our ecumenical friendships. We would like preaching that is clear and relevant in today's world. We believe we live in a peaceful, friendly benefice with warm and welcoming congregations and local communities who are used to getting things done together. There is much to offer someone who wants to share and celebrate the love of God in this corner of the countryside.

A Christingle service at Norley

# WE ARE PRAYING FOR

Someone who loves God, loves people, and is:

- secure in his/her faith with a clear vision and spiritual depth
- passionate about sharing the love of Christ
- able to listen, discern the way forward, and prioritise as appropriate
- appreciative of rural life, with or without previous experience of rural ministry
- approachable, pastorally sensitive, a "people person" comfortable in their own skin and able to relate to others
- committed to encouraging and enabling discipleship
- a good communicator
- sensitive to existing traditions of worship while also confident in leading change
- keen to keep building up community spirit and ecumenical links
- committed to the pastoral care of old, young and all in between
- blessed with leadership skills and confident in delegating, who would relish ministering alongside a dedicated team of retired ordained priests, lay ministers and committed congregants
- determined to work with the PCCs to help get the finances back on track
- committed to establishing a strong safeguarding culture in the benefice
- able to encourage the congregations in living out their faith in daily life

We asked our children and young people what they would like in our new vicar. This is what they said:

Someone who

- will look after us and care for us
- has time for us and will get involved with us
- is interested in us
- is lively and fun, happy and friendly
- has a good sense of humour
- is young at heart
- will play games with us
- will teach us

No-one is all of these things, but if you are some of them and feel a call to minister among us, please do get in touch!





View from Norley church

The villages lie on the edge of the Sandstone Trail, 12 miles east of Chester and close to Delamere Forest, between the former Viking settlement of Helsby and ancient market town of Frodsham on the River Mersey and the pre-Roman “salt” town of Northwich on the River Weaver. The villages nestle in farmland, crisscrossed by quiet country lanes, yet motorways, national rail links and airports and the culturally vibrant cities of Chester, Liverpool and Manchester are all within easy reach.

**Norley** (c. 1,219 residents) boasts a small shop, pub and church-aided primary school with 100 children on roll. The village hall, opposite the Methodist church, is a lively community hub, with an excellent children's outdoor play area. Ecumenical links with Methodist friends, refreshed since Covid, underpin mutual support for mission in the village. In the 1970s a former army camp was converted to create Delamere Park, a self-contained estate of mostly larger, detached houses and

bungalows with its own community centre: it constitutes a potential mission field.

Christ Church is at the heart of the village of **Crowton** (c. 516 residents), opposite the pub and near the primary school and much-used village hall. Blessed with incomers, Crowton is still a farming community. The church-aided school has 48 children on roll, almost all from outside the village.

**Kingsley** (c. 1559 residents) is the most demographically diverse of the villages. Ecumenical links with “The Hurst” - the Methodist church – have been refreshed since Covid. As well as its pub, Kingsley offers a Post Office, a chemist's, a supermarket, a community centre and other services. It enjoys a wealth of lively community, sporting and other groups. Of the two primary schools, one is church-aided, with 53 children on roll.

**Alvanley and Manley** are two small Cheshire villages near to Helsby and Frodsham. The church stands in the centre of Alvanley, opposite the pub. Alvanley (c. 503 residents) has a cricket club with a number of adult and junior teams and a village hall hired out for a range of community clubs and activities. The primary school, currently with 91 on roll, is run on two sites with KS2 pupils at Alvanley and nursery, reception and KS1 children at Manley.

There is a small 1970s estate of large detached houses and a few newer properties have been built in the last ten years. Most of the housing dates from many years ago. Alvanley is just one mile from Foxhill, the Diocesan Retreat Centre and the diocesan administrative hub, Church House, is around 20 minutes' drive from the benefice.

Manley (c. 599 residents) has a village hall that hosts a lively range of local clubs and societies. Across the road, Manley playing field is home to the biennial Manley Spring Fair. On the edge of the village is Manley Mere, a water-sports centre and adventure trail. Most of the housing in Manley was built many years ago. A small mission church building was recently sold.

In the neighbouring towns there are two good state secondary schools with sixth forms, a respected state 6th-form college, and a private school for pupils aged 3-18. There is ample nursery care in the area, which is also well served with residential and nursing home care for the elderly and those living with dementia.

Within a 10-mile radius, there is a wide range of shopping, retail and leisure facilities. There are also museums, galleries and other tourist attractions and major annual county shows. The Roman city of Chester and its cathedral are within 15 miles.

The countryside around all the villages, including Delamere Forest, is very popular with nature lovers, walkers, anglers, cyclists and horse-riders.





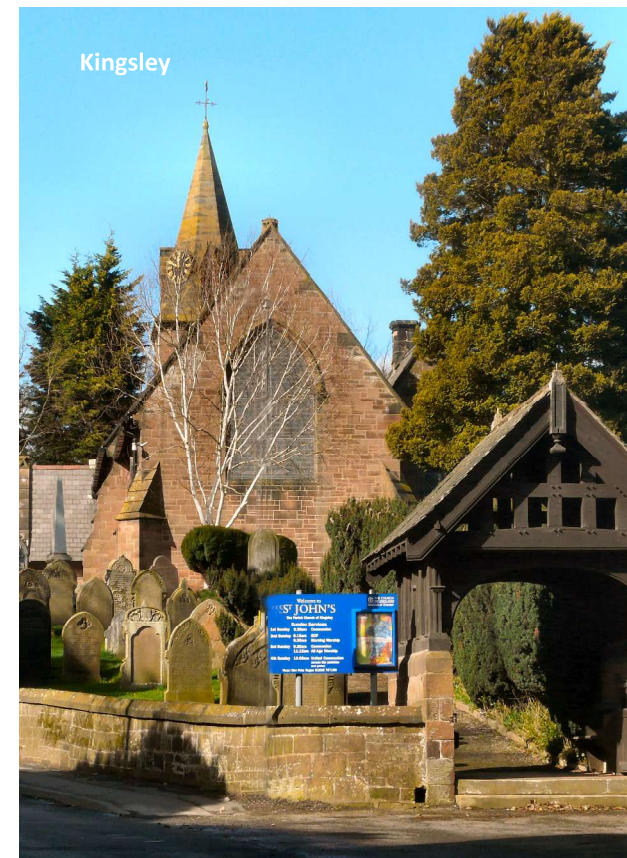
# THE CHURCHES



Norley



Crowton



Kingsley



Alvanley

Church is, of course, primarily a community, not a building, but given our wish and need to come together, in our benefice we are blessed with four Grade II listed buildings in which to do so. All built of red sandstone in the 19th century they differ in size, character and ease of access. Each has an open burial ground – Kingsley's for ashes only.

**St John the Evangelist in Norley** is the largest, seats 220+ and is known locally as "The Cathedral in the Forest". The pews, while heavy, are not fixed, so the space offers some flexibility. There are 3 Commonwealth War Graves in the churchyard on the route of a popular local commemorative WWI wildflower walk. It has a large car park, shared with the NCK Centre.



NCK Centre

Surrounded by gardens, **the NCK Centre** is a modern, light, practical, accessible, and flexible space with an office and a kitchen, used by the church and other groups for meals, meetings, work, worship and play.



Vicarage

**Christ Church Crowton**, seating up to 180, is a cherished intimate space glazed entirely with beautiful stained glass. The church has modest cloakroom, toilet and kitchen facilities.

**St John the Evangelist in Kingsley** seats around 220 and has a church room with toilet and kitchen facilities just across the modest car park. Plans to re-order the church have been drawn up.

**St. John the Evangelist in Alvanley** is the parish church for the two villages of Alvanley and Manley. It seats up to 220 people. There is access to a toilet in the village hall next door.

All the churches are heated, and each has a hearing loop and sound system. Norley, Crowton and Kingsley churches have a screen and projector. All have a working organ. All buildings and their grounds are well-maintained and in good order. The church is welcomed in using other community or school buildings in the villages as need arises.

**The Vicarage** sits behind the church in Kingsley village, within walking distance of the local shops and primary schools. It is a modern 5-bedroomed detached house with 2 bathrooms upstairs, gas central heating and double glazing. There are 2 reception rooms, a large dining kitchen, and a utility room inside the back door. The entrance hall houses a cloakroom with toilet and gives access via a door on the one side to a study, and on the other via another door, to the living quarters, which can thus be kept separate. Outside are a large storeroom, a garage and tarmacked parking for several vehicles. The large garden is laid mainly to lawn and has views across open countryside.

# AND OTHER BUILDINGS



4 churches  
4 parishes  
3 church-aided schools  
2 associate ministers  
2 readers

# CHURCH

**V**olunteers underpin every aspect of church life. For services, they will read lessons, lead prayers, carry out sidesperson duties, provide refreshments, and generally clean, prepare and tidy up. Volunteers of all ages also lead, support and help with regular and one-off events, giving generously of their time, talents and resources.

We are blessed with a volunteer ministry team comprising two retired priests with permission to officiate and two Readers. The team ministers around the benefice and represents a range of churchmanship. The four usually meet each week for prayer and to support the wardens and the four PCCs in planning and coordinating activity.

We have on occasion had a stipendiary curate training with us, and in the last twenty years have sent five parishioners for ordination. Each church has at least one warden and a loyal PCC. These generally meet independently every quarter. Over the next year we intend reviewing this structure to enable more joint meetings with specific focus relevant to the needs of the whole benefice.

We want our churches to be known as places of welcome, safe haven and celebration before God. We are keen to embrace every opportunity that might help introduce people to Jesus or encourage them in developing and deepening their faith. To this end we take great care in preparing for and conducting occasional offices, building and sustaining relationships with those concerned as best we can. Across the benefice in 2024 there were:

Weddings	12
Funerals	28 & 10 Burials of Ashes
Baptisms	11



**A**ll our ministry is rooted in prayer. We are steadily increasing the times when our church buildings are open for people seeking peace and space for personal prayer. Each church has a prayer board in the porch; prayers posted up are offered within the next Sunday worship at that church.

After the hiatus of Covid, our Youth Group is slowly growing again, both in number and in their understanding of the Christian faith. As well as games and activities, a “God slot” is included in the programme. The group has recently moved from meeting monthly to meeting fortnightly: a great encouragement.

A group meets each week on Monday morning to pray together. Another group meets on Tuesday evening for Bible study. Both groups meet in Kingsley Church Room.



The NCK Centre is the venue once a month for “Meet and Eat”: volunteers prepare a two-course lunch for anyone who wishes to come along for companionship.

During Lent and Advent we usually offer a short interactive series of learning sessions exploring in depth one of the books in the Bible, or other material.



# LIFE

## In the benefice we pray through Jesus

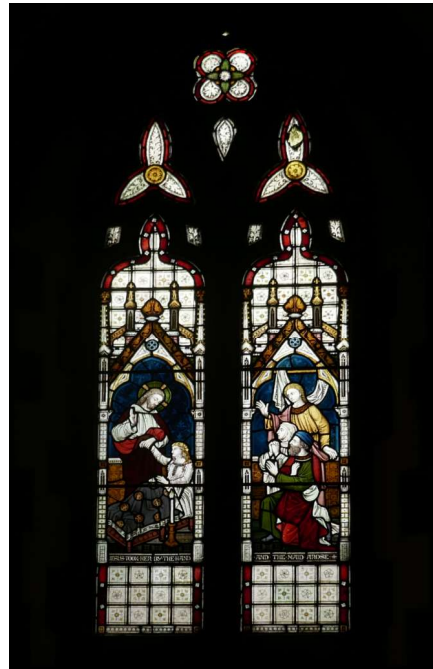
... to grow in our love and to extend God's kingdom in keeping with God's guidance; enacting God's plans, not just plans of our own making.

... for the church to have impact for good in our communities.

Above all, we want to be led and renewed by the Holy Spirit, encouraging spiritual gifts in one another, praying for, caring for and loving our neighbours, and acting as Jesus' eyes, ears, hands and feet, that the church may be a beacon of light and hope in our villages.



# PATTERNS OF WORSHIP



Alvanley window and carving



parish are some who are reluctant to join in worship or support other activities beyond 'their' church. Newcomers generally prove more flexible, even venturing over the hill, a physical and psychological/social barrier which stands between Alvanley and Manley and Norley, Crowton and Kingsley.

We follow Common Worship lectionary on most Sundays, occasionally diverting into a theme, e.g. during *Thy Kingdom Come* or Advent. Seasonal service booklets are used on most occasions except for "family" services and Sacred Space, when any text required is projected onto a screen. We aim to have an organist at every main Sunday service, and we are blessed with a handful of musicians happy to accompany more modern songs. A group of singers helps lead our worship. We enjoy a range of music, from traditional hymns and Taizé chants to modern worship songs and fun children's songs - with actions and extra instruments!

Most services are followed by refreshments and valuable space and time for fellowship and for welcoming newcomers. 2ndSunday@6, a relaxed service for enquirers and committed Christians alike, flips this pattern, the time together beginning with chatting over refreshments.

Once a month Sacred Space - "a quiet time in a peaceful place" - offers a gently structured contemplative act of worship where those attending may simply "be" in the presence of God and of one another.

Worship in our benefice has evolved over recent years to provide a range of service styles in an effort to meet the expectations of our regular worshipping and wider communities. At present our congregations come together each Sunday morning in one church in turn for a 10.00 a.m. Holy Communion service, at which regular attendance is 50-70. A service of Holy Communion is offered in each of the four churches on Christmas Day and Easter Day.

A Thursday midweek Holy Communion service, held in turn in Norley, Crowton and Kingsley, has an average attendance of 15-20. A less formal "family" Holy Communion service is offered on the first Sunday each month in response to wishes expressed by some of our congregation members with teenagers and younger children. There is a monthly said B.C.P. service at Crowton attended by 15-20 people.

Some progress has been made in bringing four separate parishes into worshipping, working and witnessing together. More remains to be done. Historical and geographical loyalties run deep: among the long-term faithful members of each

On Good Friday each year there is an afternoon meditation to help us direct our thoughts and prayers towards Jesus and the cross, and to prepare us for Easter.

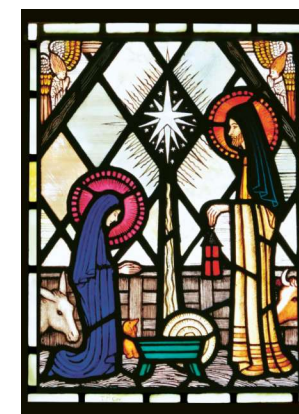
Periodically we hold a Holy Communion service using oils and offering individual prayer for healing.

Invitations to an annual Service of Consolation go to those who have suffered the loss of a family member or friend within the last couple of years.

The liturgy is designed with sensitivity to promote healing among all who have been bereaved.

Young people of all ages are always welcome during our worship. However, we recognise that they have needs different from those of the adults in our regular congregations, so we strive for part of the time to provide space and sessions to help them learn in ways appropriate for them.

- |                   |  |  |
|-------------------|--|--|
| <b>1st Sunday</b> | 10.00 a.m. "Family" Holy Communion   | Norley   |
|                   | 6.30 p.m. Sacred Space   | Crowton  |
| <b>2nd Sunday</b> | 10.00 a.m. Holy Communion  | Crowton  |
|                   | 6.00 p.m. 2ndSunday@6  | NCK Centre, Norley                                     |
| <b>3rd Sunday</b> | 10.00 a.m. Holy Communion  | Kingsley   |
| <b>4th Sunday</b> | 8.30 a.m. BCP Holy Communion   | Crowton  |
|                   | 10.00 a.m. Holy Communion  | Alvanley   |
|                   | 4.00 p.m. 4thSunday@4  | NCK Centre   |
| <b>5th Sunday</b> | Worship Together – something different concluding with an act of worship (e.g. a walk, a picnic, etc.), on occasion with our Methodist church friends in Norley and Kingsley | Based at Kingsley or Norley parish or Methodist church |



Windows at Crowton

In February 2025 we launched a monthly Sunday afternoon story-and-activity-led service for younger children and their parents.

During "family" services, children are encouraged to serve in any way they can, getting involved in reading and acting out Bible passages, contributing to prayers and speaking out confidently about their faith. Their enthusiasm is a joy.

One of the most stimulating yet challenging aspects of our benefice is the breadth of traditions, opinions and theological perspectives we hold. This is particularly reflected in our approach to worship. Many in our congregations are keen to see a greater focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in our worship, preaching and prayer ministry, while others remain hesitant about moving away from more conventional structures and content. Considering how we move forward, balancing the traditional, formal and liturgical with the contemporary, spontaneous and interactive, will be an intriguing conundrum for our new vicar.





# ENGAGEMENT



The church is closely involved in the three church-aided primary schools in the benefice, not least through the activities of the Foundation Governors. With our Methodist friends we take it in turns to lead Collective Worship each week in each school.

We are blessed with three head teachers who embrace the Christian ethos and work happily together, and with our ministry team.



We involve the schools in preparation for major services at Harvest and Remembrance, when children lead elements of the worship. All the schoolchildren participate in an annual Christingle service in “their” parish church, and all hold celebration services in church during the course of the year, e.g. to bid farewell to those leaving for secondary school.



We also have a good relationship with the village school in Albanley and Manley. Although the school is no longer Church of England aided, it too has a Christian ethos. In recent years in the run-up to key Christian festivals we have invited the children from all the schools into church for activities such as the “Advent Experience”.



For several years now the Year 6 Ethos Group in Crowton has been leading an act of worship in church each month for the whole school, to which parents and carers are invited, and members of the PCC provide refreshments. A pattern is steadily evolving of some of the schoolchildren attending the midweek Holy Communion service in “their” church on a Thursday morning.

# WITH SCHOOLS

# IN THE COMMUNITY



In rural villages like ours, isolation among the young, the elderly and the vulnerable is an acknowledged social challenge. We do what we can to combat this and to spread the Good News.

A letter from one of the ministry team fronts the content for a monthly communication from the church. All the content is made available in a printed parish magazine delivered each month to subscribers. Spare copies find their way to occasional visitors and the whole magazine can be downloaded from the church website. Selected content is emailed out to those signed up to various lists, and factual elements such as service times are included in the village magazines that are made available in Acton Bridge, Kingsley and Norley.

In the last year the relevant parts of this content have increasingly been made available online via A Church Near You and on Facebook.

We deliver a Christmas card and an Easter card to every household in our villages and we know that this gesture of acknowledgement is appreciated, even among residents who admit to professing no faith.

There are monthly Coffee Mornings in Kingsley, led by the church, and at Manley Village Hall, led by the community with support from church members.

The Mothers’ Union is strong and active, offering further regular social support.



Numbers for the monthly Meet and Eat lunch at the NCK Centre can top 30; a good number of people attend who are not church members. The monthly walking group is also popular.

We have recently refreshed the pastoral team: volunteers keep in touch with neighbours and friends by phone and may offer a lift to church services or other activities. A small number of volunteers take communion to the housebound and several come together to provide worship each month in each of the nursing homes in our villages.

We rely heavily on fund-raising events to meet our financial obligations. All the events we organise have a dual purpose: strengthening relationships, building community and growing God’s kingdom, and pragmatically helping us meet our parish share. On occasion we hold additional fund-raising events in support of Christian Aid and other charities.

We support our local Foodbank by collecting food and other items at Harvest, Christmas and Easter, and by encouraging parishioners to make a financial contribution. Each year we donate funds, items needed (e.g. clothing, toys) and time to national and local charities working with the homeless and the vulnerable.



# FINANCES

Each of the four parishes has historically enjoyed a different pattern of giving. Each parish has a separate bank account and the financial position and the level of capital outlay in each of the four is different. Each is at a different stage in developing fundraising and giving, enhancing conventional cash plate collections, legacies and donations with options for direct debit and cashless donations using a ‘tap & go’ machine or QR code.

Following meetings between each PCC and guidance from the Diocesan Finance Adviser a financial model was proposed by the last and agreed in 2024 by each PCC. The model is premised on the four parishes’ sharing one full-time stipendiary priest, and each paying their full allocation of 25% of the parish share calculated as theirs. Because each parish is in a different socio-economic banding for parish share purposes, 25% of a share varies from parish to parish.

The table below sets out the projected sums payable. Each PCC has committed to encouraging increased engagement and planned giving from people in the surrounding area to put the PCCs in a position to afford the amounts shown in the table for the six calendar years from 2024.

It is recognised that sustaining and increasing the level of giving to meet these figures will be a considerable challenge, so the post currently offered is for an initial period of three years, renewable thereafter. If the financial position improves as described, the expectation is that the post will be renewed at that point, and in due course be made permanent.

## Parish Share Planned Contributions 2024 to 2029

### Events, Assumptions & planning strategies

- 1 Inflation ignored for this analysis. Requests will be made for donors to consider increasing planned donations
- 2 The parishes plan to utilise card readers allow donors to pay by debit/credit card
- 3 Following guidance from the diocesan Digital Giving Adviser, the PCCs will add Planned Giving to the standing agenda to adapt and utilisethe strategies in the Church of England document 'Generous Church Check Up'
- 4 The PCCs have created QR links to encourage online donations & gift aid
- 5 The plan below anticipates that increases in donated income will follow the appointment of a vicar

### Planned Parish Share contributions 2024 to 2029

CHURCH	Estimate sum payable in 2024	Out reach & Engagement with wider Parish 2025	Incremental increases in Parish Share contributions following appointment of vicar wef 2026	2027	2028	2029
Norley	£20,264.76	£20,476.00	£21,742.00	£23,429.00	£25,200.00	£26,792.00
Crowton	£22,423.92	£22,400.00	£22,600.00	£22,750.00	£22,900.00	£23,096.00
Kingsley	£10,600.00	£11,978.00	£13,535.00	£15,295.00	£17,285.00	£19,401.00
Alvanley & Manley	£12,200.00	£12,400.00	£12,700.00	£16,200.00	£20,000.00	£23,097.00

# FIND US

St John's Norley  
Norley Road  
Norley  
WA6 8NE

Kingsley Church  
Hollow Lane  
Kingsley  
WA6 8EH

Christ Church Crowton  
Station Road  
Crowton  
CW8 2SA

St John's Alvanley  
Manley Road  
Alvanley  
WA6 9BZ

