

## Parish Profile of St Elizabeth's Ashley



### Our history

Ashley St. Elizabeth's Church was built in 1880, and has a beautiful stained glass window, and carved wooden pews. The building remained largely unaltered until 2015, when an opportunity arose to add an extension containing a kitchen and toilet.

At the same time, we had a major fundraising exercise, and were able to install a gas fired central heating system, fit carpets throughout and high-level lighting to supplement the original wall lights. The effect has been to make the building warm and welcoming.

The opportunity was also taken to remove several rows of pews at the rear of the church, giving space for community events and informal meetings. This area is known as the Ashley Centre. In addition, ageing trees and shrubs were removed from the gardens surrounding the church, so this lovely building is more visible to all who pass by.

We now have a multi-purpose building ideally suited to the superb rural location in which it is situated, and this is often remarked upon, particularly by people visiting for the first time.

We are lucky to have a good-sized car park, adjacent to the church, and maintained by the church.

### **Worship at St Elizabeth's**

The Church has one Service each week, on Sundays at 11.00 am. During the last three years we have developed a range of services, which are gradually attracting new faces.

The first Sunday is led by members of the congregation and is titled our Community Service. We are indebted to our last Vicar for his help and guidance in developing this Service, which has given opportunities to lay people to play a full part.

The second Sunday is usually Matins, often led by lay readers from our sister Church – St. Peter's Hale – supplemented by other readers known or recommended to us.

The third Sunday is a Family Communion Service, which for the last three years has been led by our Vicar and his wife. The service is aimed at younger people, but we seldom attract more than three or four families.

The fourth (and occasional fifth) Sundays are traditional Communion Services, and since the departure of our last Curate in Spring 2017, have been taken by a retired priest, who travels from Alsager. He is willing to continue this ministry throughout 2019, if required by the new incumbent.

### **Who we are**

The Church congregation is drawn from a mix of Ashley residents, and others from neighbouring parishes who enjoy the relaxed and friendly atmosphere offered.

Amongst the residents are Dominic and Catherine Jones, Catherine being responsible for **Ashley Centre** bookings. This is not the place to list all, but worthy of note is that the church is well supported by long-established farming families, many of whom gave significant amounts of time to the building of the extension.

Our **Music maestro** for many years has been Keith Munday, who draws each week upon a wide variety of taped and recorded music. Lessons are often read by either Keith or his wife Shirley, supported by Peter Hardern.

In charge of a small team providing **refreshments** after services and social events is Dorothy Watkins. The monthly magazine – Ashley News – is edited locally by Kathryn Wright, often including photographs by Peter Wright. In the last few years Peter has also prepared and printed Ashley calendars, with proceeds being given to St. Elizabeth's.

The sole **Church Warden, and Treasurer**, is Mike Whiting.

The **PCC** meets quarterly after the morning service.

### **Vicar**

Whoever is appointed to be our next Vicar will also be the Vicar of St. Peter's, Hale. At Ashley we fully recognise that the priority must be St. Peter's and when appointing last time, we asked that the new incumbent take one service each month at St. Elizabeth's, and that is what happened.

### **A vision for Ashley**

Elsewhere is the jointly prepared Person Specification for our hoped-for appointee. As regards Ashley, we are beginning to see the benefits of extending and modernising the building. We are slowly attracting new people to the congregation, and the regular social events at the Ashley Centre have resulted in many people coming into the building for the first time.

### **Mission to the community**

Attracting new faces is one thing but keeping them and involving them in the life and witness of the church is another. We would hope that our next Vicar would have the sensitivity and personal skills to encourage and develop those who are relatively new to church life.

### **A training space**

In recent years we have greatly benefited from the ministry of a succession of first class Curates. All of them have said that the informality and warmth at St. Elizabeth's has given them the opportunity to experiment different forms of worship, and make the occasional mistake. This informality has also been greatly helpful in encouraging lay members to step forward and take the Community Services.

### **A community space**

The use of St. Elizabeth's as the Ashley Centre has given us many community opportunities. The Centre has hosted a wide range of social events, ranging from concerts, storytelling evenings, speakers and the United Christian choir who filled the Centre last year. We are constantly looking for new ideas for our evenings – usually on Thursdays – and later this year



we are having an Antiques Valuation evening with the well-known auctioneer Adam Partridge. These events are multi-purpose having a modest but significant fundraising element, but far more importantly trying to make clear that the church is there for all, and not just for the holy and religious.

This dual use of the building offers the new Vicar more

occasions to meet people, than would usually be the case in a relatively small church. Accordingly, it would be very helpful if they had the social skills to make the most of these occasions.



Another major chance to meet people is the annual Rose Queen Fete, usually held in May, and very well attended. The funds raised by the Fete are given wholly to St. Elizabeth's and are greatly appreciated.



In conclusion, all that needs to be said is that whoever is appointed as our new Vicar, they will have the wholehearted support of us all at St. Elizabeth's.