

The Benefices of  
**Norley, Crowton &  
Kingsley and  
Alvanley & Manley**  
A Parish Profile





# INTRODUCTION

We are a collection of committed, faithful Christians of all ages and a range of churchmanship, four rural parishes (in two benefices, serving five villages) together seeking a new incumbent to minister among us.

Norley, Crowton and Kingsley (NCK) have been a united benefice for many years. The neighbouring parish of Alvanley & Manley has previously been served separately by a part-time vicar. The regular congregations in all four parishes are warm, welcoming and open, full of people who want to grow closer to God, embrace all comers - whatever their story - and share the Good News through word and action.

We recognise that we live in times when faith is not always on the agenda, yet we have been heartened in recent years to see relationships flourish when we as church have made the effort to connect with our neighbours, young and more mature. All five villages are growing, with new housing developments and new people coming into the area: we feel there is real potential here, and are praying for a collaborative and strategically-minded, Spirit-led leader who will help us prioritise, refresh and reinvigorate our efforts.

We have good links with our primary schools, a nucleus of young Christians eager to share their joy in living in Christ, and a host of willing and gifted volunteers of tried and tested faith: there is much to build on.

## *We pray ...*

*... to be led and renewed by the Holy Spirit  
... to be a constant and bold witness for Christ in our communities  
... to be welcoming and to see our churches filled with life, hope and joy  
... for these villages to be places where we go with God together into the future  
... that God will show us how to pass on the kingdom to new believers of all ages  
... to enact God's plans, not plans of our own making  
... for the church to have impact for good in our villages  
... to be a beacon of light for Christ*

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

**5**  
churches

**4**  
Parishes

**3**  
church-aided  
schools

**1**  
associate  
minister

**1**  
reader

**1**  
pastoral worker

# We are praying for ...

**Someone who loves God and loves people, and who is**

- secure in his/her faith with a clear vision and spiritual depth
- passionate about sharing the love of Christ with rural communities, whether or not s/he has previous experience of rural ministry
- approachable, pastorally sensitive and caring, able to relate to all sorts of people
- a good communicator, preaching with clarity and relevance for today
- sensitive to existing traditions of worship and able to embrace diversity while leading change
- keen to build up community spirit and links with other churches
- able to listen and discern the way forward, to prioritise and to delegate as appropriate
- committed to helping us grow as effective disciples of Jesus and as witnesses to the love of God in our everyday lives
- encouraging of the use of gifts in all aspects of ministry
- energetic, dynamic, with a good sense of humour

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!



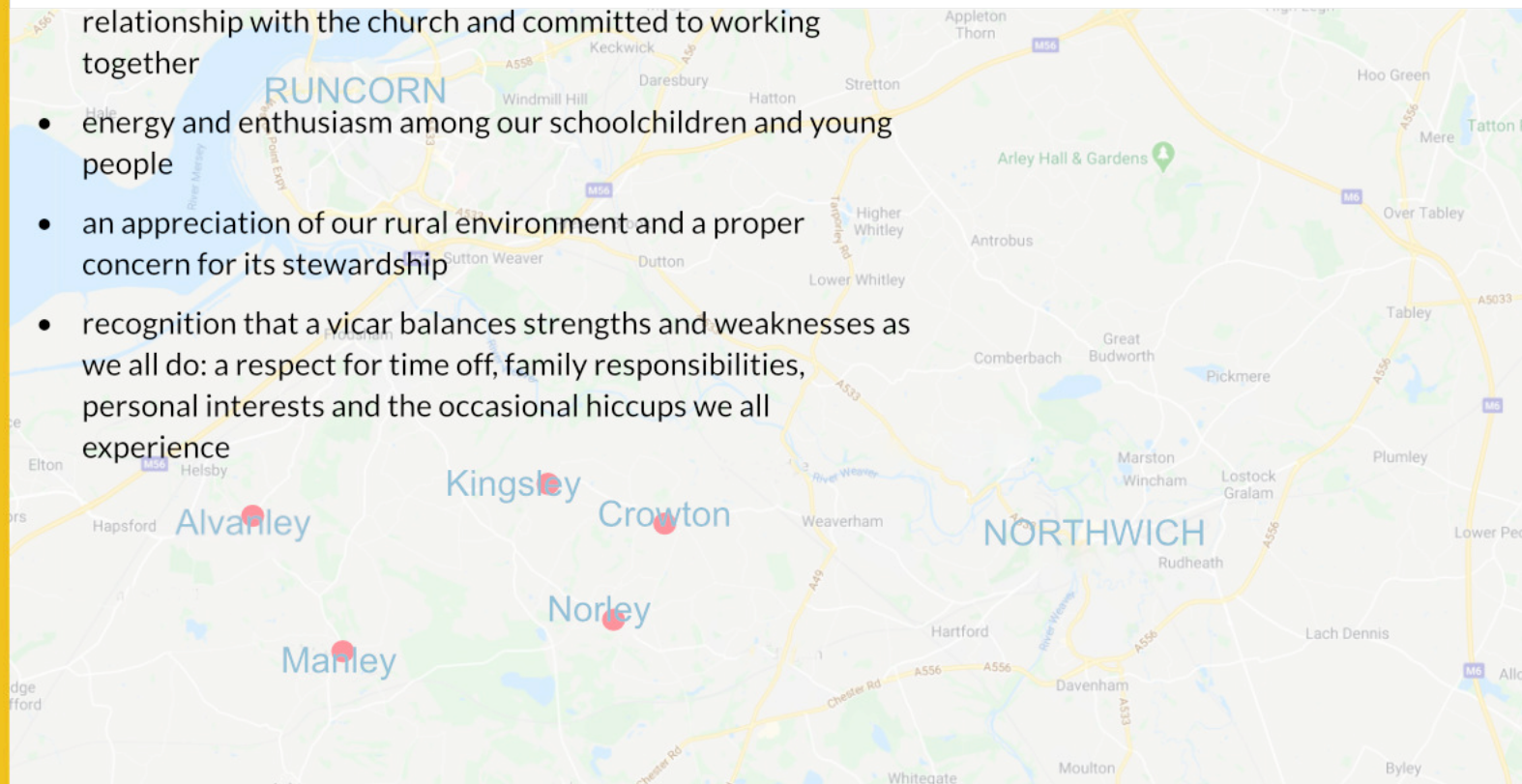
## **Our children and young people said...**

We would like someone who

- will look after 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



- a warm welcome at all times
- 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
- strong relationships and growing networks within our village communities
- four unique rural parishes, each cherishing its individuality, and all collaborating - usually fruitfully if sometimes with creative friction! - to help build the kingdom of God
- eight experienced wardens, four 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 our three church-aided schools, also head teachers and staff committed to a Christian ethos, welcoming of a close relationship with the church and committed to working together
- energy and enthusiasm among our schoolchildren and young people
- an appreciation of our rural environment and a proper concern for its stewardship
- recognition that a vicar balances strengths and weaknesses as we all do: a respect for time off, family responsibilities, personal interests and the occasional hiccups we all experience



**Norley, Crowton, Kingsley, Alvanley and Manley lie about 12 miles east of Chester, close to Delamere Forest and the ancient market town of Frodsham. The villages nestle in farmland along quiet country lanes yet are easily accessible from the M56. Motorways, national rail links and airports, Liverpool and Manchester are all within easy reach.**

**Kingsley** (c. 2000 residents) is the most demographically diverse of the villages. Ecumenical links with the 'Hurst' - the Methodist church - are strong. As well as its pub Kingsley offers a doctor's surgery, Post Office, chemist's, a supermarket and other services, and a wealth of community, sporting and other groups. Of the two primary schools, one is church-aided, with 80 children on roll. It received an 'outstanding' classification at the most recent SIAMS inspection.

**Norley** (c. 2000 residents) boasts a small shop, pub and church-aided primary school with 90 children on roll. The village hall, opposite the Methodist church, is a lively community hub, with an excellent children's playground. Delamere Park, a self-contained estate with its own community centre, constitutes a potential mission field.

Christ Church is at the heart of **Crowton** (c. 465 residents), opposite the pub and near the church-aided primary school and village hall. Blessed with incomers, Crowton is still a farming community. The church-aided school has 79 children on roll, almost all from outside the village.

In **Alvanley** (c.480 residents) the church stands at the heart of the village next to the village hall, primary school and The White Lion pub, which is well patronised by locals and visitors. The village hall is well used by local societies and clubs, for private hire, and by the church, and the village has a thriving cricket club. The local primary school is run as a Federated School with Manley Village School and has approximately 70 pupils, 12 of whom live in Alvanley. There are also 70 pupils at Manley Village School with 17 living in that village. Alvanley is just one mile from Foxhill, the diocesan Retreat Centre.

**Manley** (c.620 residents and part of Alvanley & Manley Parish) boasts a small daughter church, a village hall hosting local clubs and societies as well as private functions; and Manley playing field, where the church's biennial Spring Fair takes place. On the edge of the village is Manley Mere, a watersports centre and adventure trail.

There are two good state secondary schools with sixth forms in the neighbouring towns, 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 care for the elderly.

Within a 10-mile radius, there is a wide range of shopping, retail and leisure facilities, also museums, galleries and other tourist attractions and major annual county shows. The countryside around all the villages, including Delamere Forest, is very popular with nature lovers, walkers and cyclists.



Church is, of course, primarily a community, not a building, but given our wish and need to come together, we are blessed with four Grade II listed buildings, all built of red sandstone in the 19th century.

Each parish church has an open burial ground – Kingsley's for ashes only. A small, red brick church also serves the village of Manley; it has no churchyard. All the buildings are in a good state of repair and the grounds are well tended.

All four churches have a sound amplification system, reliable heating and a working organ. Those in Norley, Crowton and Kingsley all have a screen and projector and an electronic keyboard.

Within each village we also have access to a village hall or community centre and various primary school buildings.

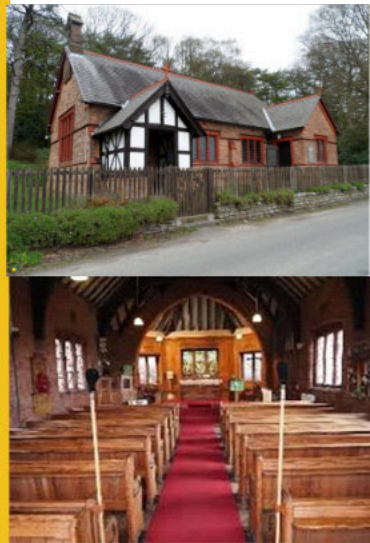
Known locally as "The Cathedral of the Forest", **St John's Norley** seats around 250 and has 3 war graves in the churchyard on the route of the popular local commemorative WWI wildflower walk. It has a large car park, shared with the NCK Centre.

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

Seating about 200, **St John's, Kingsley** has a sink on site and the church room with toilet and kitchen facilities are just a step across the car park. Plans to re-order the church are in hand.

**St John's, Alvanley** is the parish church of the two villages of Alvanley and Manley. It seats up to 200 and there is access to a toilet in the village hall next door. Its graveyard contains around 230 graves with room for about 30 more. It has one grave of a Canadian WWI soldier whose history has recently been researched.

**St John's, Manley** was built as a mission church in 1906. It seats up to 80 people. Funerals and baptisms are rarely held there and it is not licensed for weddings. Music is provided by piano and CD and the building is small enough not to need an amplification system.



**Christ Church  
Crowton**



**St. John the Evangelist  
in Alvanley**



**The Vicarage** sits behind the church in Kingsley village, within walking distance of the local shops and schools. It is a modern 5-bedroomed detached house with gas central heating and double glazing. There are 3 reception rooms, a large dining kitchen, 2 bathrooms, a downstairs toilet and cloakroom and two utility areas. An Aga wood-burner heats the domestic hot water as well as supplementing the central heating. Outside are a large attached storeroom, a garage and a shed. The large garden is well stocked with lovely views across open countryside.



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



**St John the Evangelist  
in Kingsley**



**St John the Evangelist  
in Norley**



In all four parishes we strive to provide a warm welcome to everyone, whatever their background. Church has a cheerful, friendly atmosphere; after services, people stay chatting over refreshments for a long time!

The patterns of worship set out in this section reflect the way that worship is currently organised in Norley, Kingsley and Crowton, and separately in Alvanley and Manley. Both benefices recognise that the appointment of a new incumbent to minister across the four parishes will necessitate a review of worship to ensure that the overall pattern is manageable within available ministerial resources. This will be an early priority for the new incumbent and the PCCs.

### Services, festivals and occasional offices in Norley, Crowton and Kingsley

Lay people are active in every aspect of church life. For services, they will read lessons, lead prayers, serve chalice, carry out sidespersons' duties, provide refreshments, and generally clean, prepare and tidy up.

At family services, the children are keen to serve: reading Bible passages, working the technology, contributing to prayers and in speaking about their faith. During the sermon in our joint weekly Communion services, volunteers lead Kids' Activities on Sundays (KAOS – aka Sunday School, the name devised by the children!) to help them learn in ways appropriate for them.

We are blessed with a ministry team comprising an ordained Associate Minister, a Reader, a Pastoral Worker and a Lay Worker oriented predominantly to ministry among younger people and young families. The team is active in all three parishes and represents a range of churchmanship. It usually meets each week for prayer and to support the wardens and three PCCs in planning and coordinating activity.

We have on occasion had a stipendiary curate training with us, and in the last ten years have sent five parishioners for ordination. We currently have four lay people pursuing different kinds of ministerial formation. Each church has two wardens and a loyal PCC. The PCCs generally meet independently every quarter; once or twice a year the three meet together.

Worship in the NCK benefice had evolved over 10 years to provide a wide range of service styles. After 8 months in vacancy we reluctantly ceased offering a service every Sunday in each of our 3 churches; instead, our congregations now come together each Sunday morning in one church for our current pattern of formal weekly worship.

Regular attendance is 50-60 for our 10.00 am Holy Communion services and monthly Family Morning Worship, 10-20 for other services. (We see larger congregations for major festivals, such as Harvest and Remembrance Sunday: in December 2019 our carol service and Christmas Eve family Crib Service each had congregations of c. 180.) Leaders robe or not at their discretion. We follow Common Worship lectionary on most Sundays, occasionally diverting into a theme.

Holy Communion is led once a month in each church using Common Worship in contemporary language. BCP Holy Communion takes place once a month at Crowton. Morning Worship is at Kingsley each month, usually led by a lay person. 5th Sundays are always different: e.g. a prayer labyrinth, with worship followed by lunch.

Sacred Space is a non-liturgical meditative act of worship held on the first Sunday of the month at Crowton. Sung Evening Prayer (BCP) is held on the second Sunday of the month at Norley. Mid-week Holy Communion (CW) is held each week on a Thursday at 10.00 am in each church in turn. Seasonal service booklets are used other than for family services and Sacred Space, when any text is projected onto a screen, and BCP Holy Communion, read from the prayer book. We have an organist in each church and CDs for back-up, and for family services we have a band who lead a variety of traditional and modern songs.

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 with occasional offices.

In vacancy we have supported 4 candidates at 2 separate confirmation services.

### A&M Services

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday

10.00 am First Sunday Worship; Alvanley

6.30pm BCP Communion; Alvanley

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday

10.00 am CW Communion; Manley

6.30pm BCP Evensong; Alvanley

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday

10.00 am CW Communion; Alvanley

6.30pm BCP Evensong; Alvanley

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday

10.00 am CW Communion; Manley

6.30pm BCP Evensong; Alvanley

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday

10.00 am CW Communion; Alvanley

6.30pm BCP Evensong; Alvanley

### Services, festivals and occasional offices in Alvanley and Manley

Average attendance at morning services is around 20, and we have a large number of supporters who will help with activities. We have no licensed lay leaders. Members of the congregation read both Bible readings and lead intercessions. Four assist with the chalice.

Our tradition is central churchmanship. Sunday morning services alternate between Alvanley and Manley. Evening services are all at Alvanley.

There is a small core of worshippers who attend services at either church; a number of people only attend at Alvanley. A short service of the Word with simple liturgy, 'First Sunday Worship' is for all ages, and sometimes attracts Baptism families.

Music is generally played on the organ. For Evening Worship and the few morning Communion services when an organist is not in attendance we use CDs. Festivals such as Harvest, Remembrance Sunday, Carol Service and Christingle are surprisingly well-attended: over 160 at our last Christingle.

For CW (Common Worship) Communion, we have printed service sheets that change with the seasons of the church year. For BCP Communion in the evening we use a simple liturgy on a service-sheet.

### Occasional Offices

#### A & M 2018 and 2019

Weddings	6
Funerals	5
Baptisms	4

#### NCK 2018 and 2019

Weddings	17
Funerals	28
Baptisms	26

### NCK Services

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday

10.00 am Family Holy Communion; Norley

6.30 pm Sacred Space; Crowton

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday

8.30 am Holy Communion (BCP); Crowton

10.00 am Family Morning Worship; Kingsley

6.30 pm BCP Sung Evensong; Norley

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday

10.00 am Family Holy Communion; Crowton

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday

10.00 am Family Holy Communion; Kingsley

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday

Worship together – special service/other event

#### Thursdays

10.00 am Midweek Holy Communion (CW); NCK in turn





## Adults

In the NCK Benefice, all our ministry is rooted in prayer: weekly prayer meetings and a monthly contemplative meditation group take place. Occasionally, we open a church for a 24-hour period of prayer. As part of Thy Kingdom Come, we deliver a prayer card to households in our communities and we use returned cards as a focus in our prayer time.

A Home Group is usually held each week in the NCK Centre, and 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.

We hold Room at the Inn each month at the village pub in

Kingsley: a faith-based discussion with our Methodist friends; and each year, we celebrate Harvest on the Farm together.

From time to time, members of the church enjoy a residential weekend together at a Christian retreat centre. A visit to Israel took place in 2019.



## Growing in faith

## Young people

In Alvanley and Manley we have a good relationship with our two federated village schools. Previous vicars have gone into each school regularly to lead collective worship. Some have served as governors. Although they are no longer Church of England-aided, the schools have a Christian ethos and come into our churches for their special services at festival times.

In the NCK Benefice the church is closely involved in the three church-aided primary schools. With our Methodist friends we take it in turns to lead collective worship each week in each school. The children are involved in worship in church



at major festivals, such as Harvest and Remembrance, and for their own celebrations. Our head teachers embrace the Christian ethos and work happily together, and with our ministry team. Norley church hosts the primary school Christmas production and Crowton holds an annual village summer fete jointly with the school, celebrating a Rose Queen service on the following day.

For six years, until February 2019, we supported a full-time remunerated youth worker in the NCK benefice. The strategy and resources for our continuing mission among families, young children and youth will be a significant

initial priority for the person God sends to minister among us.

At present, in addition to provision for our young people during Sunday worship, volunteers lead Messy Church once a month after school in Crowton Christ Church School for 5-6 families; KidsZone is held once a month in Norley for some 20 children in Years 1-5 - with stories, key verses, songs, discussion groups and games on a specific theme; and Breathe, the 'youth group' sees up to 25 young people (Years 6+) enjoying fun and faith discussion together in the NCK Centre each Friday night.



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, build relationships of trust, and spread the Good News.

The church in Alvanley and Manley produces a monthly community newsletter and delivers it to every house in the parish. The church, Parish Council, schools and village groups advertise and report on their activities. Information about church activities is included in the village newsletters delivered monthly to each household in Norley and Kingsley. The church monthly magazine is delivered to subscribers in the NCK benefice. We are already considering together how we may all best exploit these means of communication in our communities.

We all have strong connections with our village halls – five in total - members of our congregations serve on committees and help with activities. At Manley village hall the church runs a monthly drop-in coffee morning with seasonal refreshments. Up to 20 people usually come and enjoy socialising.

Numbers for the monthly Meet 'n' Eat lunch at the NCK Centre can top 40; and as with the annual Harvest Lunch at Alvanley Village Hall, a good number of people attend who are not church members. Alvanley and Manley have very good links with The White Lion pub and hold a Christmas meal there every year.



We all rely heavily on fund-raising events to meet our financial obligations and all the events we organise have a dual purpose: strengthening relationships/building community and growing God's kingdom, as well as making a contribution towards our parish share.

Crowton Summer Fete is a major annual event: it brings together the school, the church and the village in a community-spirited afternoon and usually raises some £3-£4000.

Manley Spring Fair has grown over 25 years into a popular May Bank



Holiday event, attracting people from a wide area and is the biggest of our fund-raising activities; in 2019 we had over 1000 adults plus many children. The whole community is represented with a great range of activities and entertainments. Sponsorship from a local firm and a 7K Fun Run helped to bring last year's income to £6,000.

The fair is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to pull together but because it is such a lot of work, we have recently decided to make it biennial and put other smaller events into our calendar such as a Village Brunch, an Open Garden Trail and a Family Funfest. In a similarly pragmatic move, Crowton has recently pruned its annual Christmas Fair in favour of a series of more modest events offering home-produced goods in return for donations. In Alvanley a very successful flower festival on the theme of favourite hymns was held in Autumn 2018.



The NCK Benefice regularly holds themed learning events and series: in 2014 we held an ecumenical Dementia Awareness Day for 100 delegates; during Lent 2017 we hosted a Gravetalk Cafe series for 30-40; and in January 2018 we held a series on the

role of music in worship. We have held a rural trades day, and we have invited in Christian theatre groups, choirs and other musicians, and Christian guest speakers. During Lent 2018, we displayed the Hartlepool Knitted Bible in Norley church and plans are underway for events to celebrate Christ Church Crowton's 150th anniversary in 2021.

We run an Alpha course in most years and are holding a course again in Spring 2020 to help encourage and equip parents in bringing up their children in the Christian faith.

Thy Kingdom Come has offered the impetus in both benefices for study groups, original and imaginative prayer stations, and days where the church buildings have been open for prayer, with refreshments for visitors.

In the NCK Benefice we have a series of regular social support groups:

- a small, very active Mothers' Union
- a Pastoral Visiting Team (who take communion to the housebound and hold a service each month in each of the nursing homes in our benefice)
- a weekly Knit and Natter group
- 'Afternoon tea with a twist': our school children join us and residents from local nursing homes, for a chat, activities, and a short act of worship

Each church has a collection point for Foodbank, and each year we donate funds, useful items and time to a range of local charities including Christian Aid.

