



NESTON PARISH PROFILE 2022

Neston is a big parish (c15,000 souls) with bags of opportunity for an energetic, development-minded incumbent who will work with us to grow something special in this changing world. We think this is fertile ground for spiritual and missional growth, and, as an Anglican parish, seeking prayerfully to be refreshed, look forward to a priest who will see it the same way.

Sample of the Hope Card on which this Profile is based

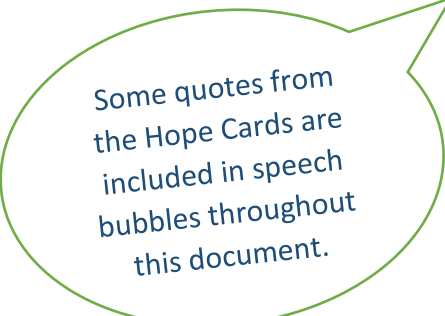
<p>HOPE CARD</p> <p>Where will we be in five years' time?</p> <p>The Parish of Neston, with its three churches, in Parkgate, Little Neston, Ness, and Neston itself, is looking to the future.</p>	<p>As part of our search for a new Vicar, we'd like to hear from the whole community, people who come to services and those who don't Easter and Christmas people People who use our buildings, People who meet our ministers, seeking help or perhaps through weddings, baptisms or funerals or events like Remembrance Day, the Village Fair or Ladies Club Day. It's not only about the buildings and the services. Children, young people and all, what do you hope Neston Parish might become for you?</p>
<p>HOPE CARD</p> <p>Write (children can draw) your personal hopes in the space on the right of this card and return it. There will be boxes in each church or you can just post it through the letter box or give it to anyone you know from the congregation.</p> <p>From: The Churchwardens for the Parish of Neston, Parish Office, The Neston Centre, High Street, Neston, CH64 9TZ Email nestonparishoffice@gmail.com.</p>	<p>Please return this card by 3rd April 2022. My hope for the future of the Parish of Neston is:</p> <p>Signed: Name/Age/Organisation (Optional)</p> <p>Personal information will not be published. Replies will be analysed to help us decide what to say.</p>

Executive Summary

To be read in conjunction with the Fact Sheet, the Hope Card Report 2022 and the Annual Accounts 2021.

Neston, the market town itself and the surrounding villages, each with a distinct character, is a freestanding, settled, socially-mixed community in a beautiful area, with good local schools and services, and a wonderful place to live and serve.

- **Neston Parish is a going concern.** Services and activities have continued to be delivered much as usual, insofar as feasible during Covid, and strengthened thereafter. There has even been some innovation. A small but committed number of volunteers have seen to that.
- **Much has been achieved in accounting and money management** in recent years, as well as the oversight of physical assets, including the three churches and other properties, enabling the PCC to keep control.
- **There are funds in reserve for development and for repairs and maintenance,** thanks to historic giving and recent legacies. However, like many others, this Parish finds running costs exceed regular giving which will have to be addressed if reserves are not to become depleted.
- **The three places of worship are well-kept and are well-placed** to reach further into their surrounding diverse communities at a time when the Church is talking about new ways of 'doing church'.
- **There is scope for creative development** because the Parish is not over-invested in outreach and community nor in younger people. There is plenty to do and we feel called to do it.
- **The PCC and Ministry Team are working well together** producing this Profile and look forward to working well with our new incumbent. There has been a high degree of consensus between them and the Parish with growing confidence in the future.
- **This Profile is informed by consultation including responses to Hope Cards.** We asked members to say what they would like the Parish to be like in five years' time and there were over 100 returned with 322 'Hopes' expressed. There has been a lot of discussion



Some quotes from the Hope Cards are included in speech bubbles throughout this document.

and we have taken our time. Everyone has had the opportunity and the PCC and Ministry Team has worked on the analysis of findings which will form our development agenda. The 'Hope Card Report', which has been accepted by the PCC as a statement of priorities is appended. The process has opened our hearts to God and we feel affirmed by the quality and quantity of the response.

The incumbent we need

We recognise the nature and scale of the job. This needs to be someone with a track record in collaborative team work and effective delegation. Inspiration, co-option and encouragement are essential if it is to be do-able. Being able to get people to do things is not only essential but also a path to growth and belief as we see it.

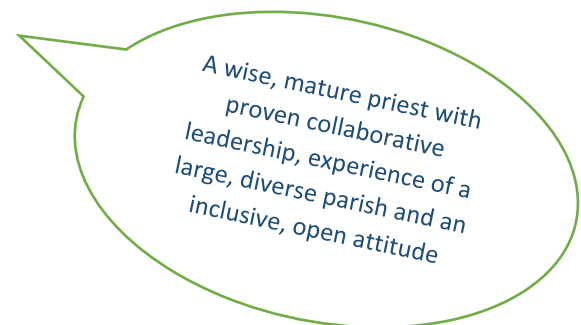
Some of the Hope Card responses recognised the reality of scale and the temptation to seek an incumbent who will be everywhere and can do everything, including references to and a sketch of a saint, complete with halo. There's no denying there are expectations but there is some solid support and we do want to work on priorities, recognising that incumbents are only human and Rome was not built in a day.



There is a comfortable 4-bed vicarage built in 1985 with a garden and pleasant outlook, adjacent to the Parish Church. We believe it essential that the incumbent takes proper time off, weekly, and including for holidays, personal spiritual development, education and training. Travel and other expenses are paid against a budget to be agreed.

We seek an incumbent who can lead and grow this Parish in spirituality whilst, as PCC Chair, working with us, can fully embrace the financial and administrative requirements that come with scale and charitable status.

Whoever it is needs to be comfortable with different forms of worship and differences in theology. This Parish already provides a range of services that accommodate different preferences and traditions and there is scope for new forms that attract a different demographic whether in our churches or elsewhere.



*A wise, mature priest with
proven collaborative
leadership, experience of a
large, diverse parish and an
inclusive, open attitude*

Person Specification

We seek an ordained priest, with evidence of continuous ministry development, and leadership on safeguarding; an incumbent who will work with the Churchwardens, PCC, Ministry Team and others

A caring, listening, approachable leader who can work collaboratively with people and who can demonstrate:

- **Effective leadership of teams – either in a complex parish or organisation – with wide-ranging objectives.** Includes:

- Has creative and innovative ideas that can inspire, energise and enthuse people with a vision for the parish, and can help people to use their spiritual and practical gifts to bring the vision to life.
- Business management – including planning, organising, motivating and delegation
- Leadership of people through times of change and growth – e.g. in worship, teaching, mission.

*Ability to
inspire people
to get involved*

*From a sacramental
tradition, prepared to
follow the
conventions, different
for every church*

- **Application of the main worship, teaching and preaching traditions and of leading different congregations within the Church of England.** Includes:

- Understanding different missional activities that are used in the Church of England and applying them as appropriate

- **Engaging with people, communicating clearly and confidently with them in formal and in personal situations, to be able to teach and lead missional activity for people inside or outside the church.** Includes:

- Managing difficult situations, resolving them with sensitivity
- Encouraging people to live out their faith in daily life, Monday to Saturday and not just on a Sunday

*Patience to
listen
Cares for
everyone*

About the Parish

The Parish of Neston lies on the Wirral peninsula at the north-west tip of Cheshire. To the west lies the salt marshes of the Dee Estuary which is of international scientific significance and beyond that the Welsh border. It is the only sea-facing community in Cheshire and has landscape of Special County Value. To the south west is the Deeside Industrial Area in Flintshire. To the north and east is the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral with road, rail and ferry links to Liverpool across the River Mersey. The town of Ellesmere Port and the industries of the Mersey Valley lie to the south east. The city of Chester is ten miles to the south connected by a poor bus service.



Neston centre, with its Friday market, (Charter 1728) is classified as the 'key service centre' for surrounding suburbs and settlements, including Burton and Willaston, not in the parish. Parkgate, once a C17 Irish ferry-port and C18 sea-bathing resort, is now a significant visitor destination. Little Neston, with its history of coal-mining was in at the very start of the Industrial Revolution. Ness retains its agricultural feel and village hall, as well as the well-known Liverpool University Botanic Gardens.

It is a settled and well-defined place with a broad social mix of comfortable people and others described as 'hard-pressed' living in social housing. Reduced opportunities for younger people and a growing, economically inactive section of the population, is slowly changing the demographic balance.

Neston has a distinctive identity and tradition going back many years. There is a regard in the community for the Parish Church and expectations that it will be there for people, while the two 100-year-old daughter churches have their own local characters, outreach and potential.



The People

Neston is a
lovely place
to be

The number of people living here has changed little over the past three decades due, mostly, to the fact that there is very little building land available. Settlements are entirely surrounded by Green Belt and the marsh. Historic employment traditions and social class still define many families' sense of place while incomers, attracted by the expansion of in the 1950s and 60s when much social and housing for sale was built, now form the majority. A high proportion of homes are owner-occupied (76%), there is a shortage of terraced and semi-detached homes and of 'starter' homes, and the private-rented sector is small.

This is an ageing population, due for the most part to people growing old rather than inward migration. Outward migration of young people and families unable to find affordable homes is also a factor.

Employment

There are no big employers in the Parish. An Aldi distribution depot and the High school are probably the largest. Small hospitality, retail and service businesses provide most local jobs. Otherwise, people commute to remote locations in Wales, Merseyside and Cheshire, almost entirely by car. Parkgate's growing popularity as a visitor destination provides work in pubs, restaurants and shops. An emerging bar/café culture in Neston town centre, with a growth of service sector businesses, and supermarkets, has gone some way to replacing the employment opportunities provided once by traditional shops.

Social

Neston is a place of contrasts. While about 60 per cent of the population is relatively comfortable, for about 40 per cent, mostly living in areas of social housing, life is more of a struggle, as demonstrated by the data for health, education and income which evidence higher scores for multiple deprivation.

There is a large, lively voluntary sector with clubs and societies that cater for all ages and interests. On the sporting front, Neston Nomads Football Club is a force to be reckoned with while summer coaching takes place at the Neston Club (tennis, hockey, and cricket). Hip & Harmony promotes music and dance. The Little Actors Community Theatre and Neston Drama Group does the 'amdram'. Classical music and jazz appear at the Annual Music Festival. Scouting and Guiding are also well represented.



They come together in events such as Remembrance Sunday, the Christmas Celebration, Ladies Club Day, the Big Lunch in Stanney Fields Park, and the Village Fair, which reinforce community identity.



About the three churches

There's been a Christian church in Neston from Saxon/Norse times. Today, there are three churches: the Parish Church in the centre of the town, and two others, both founded as mission churches around the same time (1910-15), one, St Michael's, to serve the poor mining community at Little Neston, the other, St Thomas', to serve the fishing and visitor communities at Parkgate. Today they serve residential suburbs.

Each church's contribution to the pattern of worship in the parish is described below and the physical aspects are detailed at the end of this Profile.

Parish church



The Parish Church, dedicated to St Mary & St Helen, is Grade II-listed. The first stone church being built in the 1100s. As well as regular worship and special services, the church is used on civic occasions, for Ladies Club Day, for Remembrance, for concerts and exhibitions, and by schools, as well as social and other gatherings at the West End.

St Michael's

Licensed in 1913 as a mission church for the mining community of Little Neston, and rebuilt in modern style in 1991 as a community church, St Michael's is designed for use in various ways, both secular and church-related with a number of meeting rooms and facilities. As well as regular worship, rooms are let to community groups on a regular basis. Pre-Covid, Christmas and Easter Experience events have been provided to local schools and they are to be restarted. Schools have used the building for curricular activities.



St Thomas'

Built in 1843 by Congregationalists, it is known affectionately as the 'Fisherman's Church'.



The Parish began renting it as a mission church for the then-fishing community of Parkgate in 1910 and bought it in 1917. As well as regular worship, St Thomas' is used for concerts, exhibitions and by local organisations. Pre-Covid, Christmas and Easter Experience events have been provided to the local school and they are to be restarted. Schools have used the building for curricular activities. St Thomas' has its own committee and two Deputy Wardens, appointed by the Incumbent, are responsible for its affairs.

Church Tradition

The centrality of the Eucharist is probably shared by most, but so is the importance of the Word. Historically Neston has been labelled 'liberal catholic' but we doubt that many people would be able to classify the Parish in such terms these days, let alone expound the underlying theology. It is a tolerant community and has always welcomed the ministry of women and is not overheating on issues such as same-sex marriage. There are those who like the 10.45 tradition of robes, processions and sung responses but, equally, those who prefer different forms of worship are catered for. However, we are not so much 'middle of the road' as recognising the value of variety. On balance, we like it that way and do not seek to affiliate to any of the 'political' classifications that divide the church elsewhere.

Variety
throughout
our churches

Pattern of Worship across the Parish

Happy and joyful
worship that will
make new people
want to stay

The Ministry Team, aided by visiting clergy during the Vacancy, is sustaining a near-normal programme of worship. It comprises a non-stipendiary assistant priest (2 days a week), a Reader, another Reader who serves for half the year, a Reader in training, a Reader Emeritus, a licensed Pastoral Worker, a lay worker, who take services and perform related duties. Both Churchwardens and a Deputy Warden from St Thomas' are also members.

Together they are responsible for arranging worship in all three churches and reporting to the PCC.

Seasonal **Common-Worship** liturgies are used. This is a developing situation as we recover from Covid and the Hope Card responses suggest that it needs review, especially the engagement of younger generations. Attendances are mostly determined by geography and, at the Parish Church, personal preference. There is little crossover between congregations except for the United Eucharist on the fifth Sunday of the month. Discussions have taken place about audio-visual installations in all three churches.

The Parish Church has a Said Eucharist at 8.00 am which caters for those who prefer an earlier quiet service. It attracts around 20 regulars. The 10.45 service at the Parish Church is more traditional in its use of vestments, ritual and music. It attracts 30-60 people. The 10.45 has been live-streamed on YouTube and Facebook since the start of Covid.

There is also a Said Eucharist on Wednesdays at 1.30 pm including a monthly healing service and another with input from the Mothers Union; weddings, baptisms and funerals take place as required. The church is open on weekdays for private prayer and is often used by people from the town.





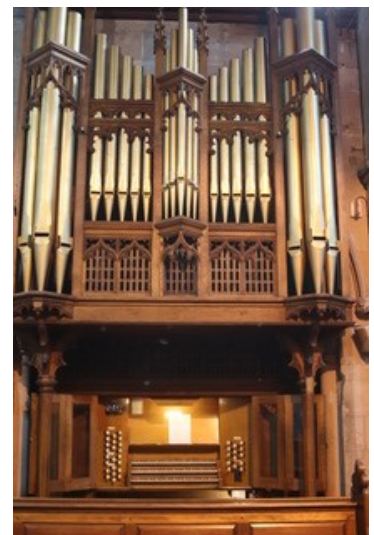
St Michael's is returning to four Sunday services after a period of being bi-weekly. From September, this will mean a Sunday Praise Eucharist with visiting clergy and three lay-led Sunday Praise services, all at 9.30 am. The 'Praise' format was introduced with a view to encouraging family worship. The regular congregation of about 15 includes children attending Sunday Club running in parallel. Children and accompanying adults take part in some of the service.

St Thomas' has four Sunday services a month at 9.30 am. Two are Eucharist (pre-Covid there were three) with visiting clergy and two take various forms led by lay people, including Sunday Praise/All-age and Café-style 'Come and Have Breakfast'. These may include drama and activities with the intention of attracting a different generation. It is hoped to re-start Taizé-style reflective services, with live music. Weddings, baptisms and funerals take place as required. The congregation usually numbers 20-30.



Other Worship Activities

- **United Eucharist**: Every fifth Sunday, congregations are invited to join a United Eucharist at 10.00 am at the Parish Church. No other services take place that day.
- **Weekly Prayers**: Every Friday, there is a short half-hour prayer meeting on Zoom at 5.00 pm. Lay people take it in turns to lead. It is an area for development.
- **The Guild of St Luke and St Raphael**: The Guild explores healing ministry, operates a confidential prayer network and organises a Eucharist with prayers for healing on Wednesday, once a month at the Parish Church. A further service for healing and laying on of hands will recommence in the autumn during Sunday Eucharist once a month at the Parish Church and at St Thomas'. The Guild organises two quiet days each year which will also be restarted later this year.
- **Music**: The Hope Cards identify an interest in developing music, especially music likely to involve and attract younger generations. Currently, the Parish Church has a paid organist who also coaches the adult choir and plays at St Michael's when required. St Michael's also has a volunteer organist. St Thomas' relies on recorded discs.
- **Bells**: There is a peal of eight bells at the Parish Church rung



on Sundays and at celebrations; also available for weddings and funerals. Four bells were cast in 1731 and four in 1874.

St Thomas' has a single bell given in memory of a local man drowned at sea.

- Residential Homes in the Parish are offered prayer, worship, Communion and general chaplaincy services, provided by the Ministry Team.
- Church at home. We have a system, developed during Covid, which ensures that people unable or unwilling to attend in person, receive weekly mailings either by email or by post, including to people in residential care. Home Communion is available on request.

Membership and attendance

We have 201 people on the current Electoral Roll.

The average adult Sunday attendance for the whole parish in 2021 was reported as 90, plus 5-7 children. Easter Communicants for the whole Parish in 2021 totalled 112.

To see families join us,
attracted by the love of
God we show each
other and our help for
the whole community

The YouTube streaming of the 10.45 service over the last couple of months records 40-60 views per service although we do not know whether there is double-counting nor how long they watch for.

A more up-to-date picture is provided by this snapshot of 2022 attendance at Easter and the month of May. You can see that Easter numbers and the average attendance is up on last year, probably as a result of post-Covid returns.

Sunday Service	17/4 (Easter)	1/5	8/5	15/5	22/5	29/5 (United)	Attendances Total - May
0800 SMH	26	22	15	22	20 ^a	90/6	79
0930 St M	30/9	10/8	5/5 ^b	14/5	3/4 ^b		32/22
0930 St T	42	22	26	26	22		96
1045 SMH	60	38	43	37	39		157
1000 SMH	-	-	-	-	-		90/6
TOTAL	158/9	92/8	89/5	99/5	84/4	90/6	454/28

Note: During this period St Michael's had two services per month. Sunday Club met four times. Children attending are shown after the slash.

^a Estimate; ^b No service today;

The Diocesan Annual Return asks for a breakdown of the ages of worshippers but we have no way of knowing it for sure. Estimates point to a preponderance of over 60's, few under 40 and a handful of under 10's.

Pastoral Care

There has been a long-standing pattern of informal pastoral care in the Parish. During lock-down we put together support groups of 6-8 people so that every member of our congregation had a regular phone call from a person they knew for a chat and any necessary sign-posting to practical help. We would like to develop a more formal, properly resourced and trained pastoral support team within the Parish to provide contact and companionship for those in need.

Caring for one another higher on the agenda

Church organisations

All the activities listed below are managed and led by lay people.



Neston Mothers' Union is a Branch of Mothers' Union in Chester Diocese which is a Registered Charity (Number 221214). It currently has *34 members*, and meets monthly at the Parish Church for the Wednesday Eucharist service, afterwards they enjoy fellowship and refreshments in the West end and is open to visitors. There are occasional speakers. Our members participate in local and diocesan projects (the 'Virtual Baby Scheme'; the AFIA Family Holiday Scheme) and fundraise for the worldwide work of the Society. Mothers Union is a

grassroots organization with a global vision

The MU is a significant force in the Parish, rallying to support other events including Stay and Play, the Village Fair, Christmas Fair and other craft sales. They provide Lent Lunches with home-made soup after Stations of the Cross.

Knit and Natter is an open social group for up to 20, meeting fortnightly. Members make items for charitable purposes, recently baby blankets for the local maternity unit, baby jumpers for an African Mission, woolly hats for the Mission to Seafarers and Toys for Tragedy, to be given out by fire fighters to children who have lost their toys.



The Parish of Neston

The Adult Choir, nominal strength of 14, leads the singing and provides occasional anthems at the 10.45 Sung Eucharist, as well as weddings, funerals and civic occasions as required. It is coached by the organist, Daniel Wakefield.



CAFE (Care and Fellowship for Everyone) is run monthly in the Parish Church. Its aim is to offer a safe place for older people to meet with other people, to play games together such as Scrabble, Rummikub, Dominoes, or have a go at painting; or just sit and chat. It is free to all, open to church goers or not; we hope we can in some offer a way of combatting loneliness. Games are used so that people can come along on their own and join in, and make friends along the way.

Oasis is a monthly group run at a café close to the Parish Church. It is a safe place for those who are recently bereaved and to meet and chat with a cup of tea or coffee and cake. The hope is that the group will make new friendships along the way. It is open to all



Bell-Ringers Group rings at the Parish Church. They will be at the heart of the fund-raising effort if it is decided to go ahead with proposals to install a new bell frame and retune the bells.

The Parish of Neston

Stay and Play is a popular open activity for under-5s and their parents and carers, held on Zoom or in the local park during Covid, but now back in the Parish Church on Friday mornings 9.15am to 11.15am on Friday mornings in term-time. Attendance usually averages around 20 children (there 46 on the books) plus their parents or carers. Our programme includes crafts and early years learning activities. We have refreshments for adults and children. Storytime is much enjoyed by the children. It is a biblical story told in a way they can understand. This is followed by children's action songs and a prayer. We also befriend the parents/carers in a relaxed atmosphere. At Christmas we have a nativity and party, and also had a special party for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee



Two GIFT groups remain of an original seven at the outset. The acronym stands for 'Growing in Faith Together' and they are autonomous, lay-led house groups of 6-10 people meeting monthly with programmes that usually involve Bible-study, prayer and social activities. The potential for house groups and their relationship to spiritual development and pastoral care is one for the future.

Aspirations

The PCC, working with the Ministry Team, has identified key short-term areas for development, based on the Hope Card Report. Longer term plans await the new incumbent. Short term priorities might involve the following, perhaps in the next couple of years:

- Simply rallying the congregations so people feel more encouraged, hopeful and united. Talking prayerfully about change and identifying opportunities for action in positive ways which engage with people's hopes.
- Teaching and organising learning at all levels to help people explore their faith.
- Identifying what can be done now, in respect of worship, music, social activities and community work that exemplifies a change of gear, especially where children and families are involved. Use of our available development funds as seed corn finance.

The encouragement of children and young people is the way forward

- Spending more time on mission and less on administrative tasks.
- Bringing forward a younger generation of active people.
- Improving income, including planned giving, and introducing annual budgeting.

Take the Gospel message beyond church walls to be seen as a presence in the town

United, rejuvenated, diverse yet inclusive congregations, motivated and equipped to reach out in humility to wider community as they seek to restore and connect individuals and families with the love of Jesus Christ;

The Hope Card Report attached identifies longer term priorities which we have been led through prayer to understand are crucial for the Parish to thrive so we would like to build on growing openness to change to develop a forward-looking parish mission plan.


Growing and deepening Faith

Identified as an area for development some time ago, we believe a systematic approach that creates organised opportunity is long overdue. We acknowledge the dedication of our team of ordained, licensed and lay ministers and others who take on teaching roles. However, we would like to see a more structured approach involving learning activities, including courses at every level, for all ages. To that, we would add training in specific expressions of ministry such as visiting, pastoral care, safeguarding, end-of-life care or children's ministry.

Vision for mobilising and equipping lay people through training and support


Growing numbers

The worshipping community needs to grow and younger generations need to hear a call to pick up the baton if the Parish is to survive to achieve its principal purpose 'to build up the kingdom of God for everyone in Neston'. We recognise that activities that touch non-churchgoers happen now but the short-term impact on numbers is hard to assess and there is a degree of urgency. Taking into account the age structure it does appear that unless younger people join and volunteer over, say, the next five years, the Parish will be in difficulty. We believe the positive vibes that have emerged from the last six month's dialogue and the Hope Card exercise allows us to trust that it is God's will for that not to happen. So we see no reason why, with enough faithfulness and diligence, we might not be blessed to make a difference.



A youth music hub to enable them to play/perform at their own service

Children, Families and Young People



Genuine emphasis on children and young families

Of all the Hope Card responses this theme was the most prevalent. Sunday Club at St Michael's will continue in the autumn and Sunday Club at St Thomas' will reopen. The need for generationally-appropriate worship is recognised, and we hope for progress after the disruption of Covid. Groups like Mothers' Union have potential if they can develop a younger age profile. The Stay and Play toddler group is an example but it is the only one. We would like to develop faith-orientated activities that appeal to young people and young parents. That is not to take anything away from the need for more exposure to the wider community, for example non-churched young people, but we do need to build the church community at the same time.

Resources

The Hope Card Report recognises a need for leadership to be supported by other resources if the Parish is going to be able to manage change effectively. That could mean additional, experienced personnel, ordained or lay, possibly specialist in a priority development area, at an early stage.

Church and Community

An inclusive and welcoming presence at the heart of the community

The eight wedding bookings so far in 2022 for the Parish Church and St Thomas' is encouraging. Wedding preparation is offered. So far this year we have had 25 Baptisms and more are planned. Preparation is offered and the Mothers' Union gives a Children's Bible to infants and an anniversary card after two years. Funerals form a significant element in this Parish's ministry. Recently bereaved are offered the Oasis social group.

Ordained and lay ministers link to schools, taking assemblies and other activities, and schools have taken part in events in our buildings although the Covid hiatus continues. This a priority area for development.

Formal engagement by the Parish in outside organisations and any kind of community outreach (which is not to say individuals may be there already) is largely an area for development.

The Parish Church is still, for many, a civic institution and the incumbent is respected as a civic leader. That means an annual Civic Service, Remembrance Day, a service for Ladies Club Day and visibility at public events eg the town centre Christmas Celebrations. St Thomas' provides an open Harvest Supper and an outdoor Carol Concert for the village.



The Parish is a member of Neston and District Churches together and takes its turn hosting services and other events. It has not, however, despite the work of some individuals in respect of things like Christian Aid and days of prayer, played much of a part and we would like to change that.

Engagement with mission, home and overseas, is an area for development.

Expand interaction with the town's institutions

Governance

On the one hand, during the Vacancy, the PCC is functioning well, meeting monthly out of necessity, ensuring that the Parish continues to operate nearly normally. On the other hand, it is largely reactive and we recognise that the longer term requires a less stressful system able to take a wider view and plan ahead. There are seven elected vacancies on the PCC, and two ex-officio for Deanery Synod, which need addressing. So does better differentiation of the roles of the incumbent and other officers, with schemes of delegation, and systematic accountability, in order to get business off the PCC agenda. The post of Parish Administrator is vacant and, by default, much policy and administrative responsibility is carried on a goodwill basis by the PCC Secretary. We are blessed by the dedication of the individual involved but it needs to change.

People of middle years step forward to take leadership roles so vibrant new ideas and relevant worship activities can evolve

Communication

As well as leadership, unity and effectiveness depend on communications in this large, complex, parish. We can improve simple reporting systems which must be well-planned in order to avoid excessive bureaucracy. Effective external communications, projecting an image of our faith and what we do, are also vital. Everything needs to maximise the use of technology, especially so if the aim is to communicate with young people?

There is a weekly pew sheet, 'Prayer and Action', a website www.parishofneston.org and a Facebook page @parishofneston which all need reviewing.



Churches will be one due to good communications

Finance

The Parish is strong in capital. It has significant assets in the Neston Centre site and the Ringway property. It has a Vision Fund available for development work, preferably mission, worship and pastoral. Also, the PCC has recently received two significant legacies that make it possible to repair and maintain the Parish Church, with a significant sum in reserve invested.

On the other hand, core expenditure has exceeded regular income for many years. Despite a successful appeal in 2020, that continues. Judicious use of reserves and occasional windfall donations has kept the deficit under control but, this year, we might be approaching the threshold for substantive action to reduce spend if it were not for fresh income from the invested legacy, and using some of the, otherwise restricted, capital reserve on running costs. Doing that does, of course, reduce what is available for projects. For the detailed picture see the attached Accounts.



A secure financial footing that does not depend on windfall legacies for core running costs

Rather like the situation for administration, the Parish is dependent, for financial management, on an Honorary Treasurer (who is a Chartered Accountant), and on the same PCC Secretary (who is also a Reader).

The accounts are managed in line with the law and best accounting practice and the PCC is provided with monthly reports. The PCC collectively, including the incumbent, is currently responsible for financial oversight. The Hon Treasurer is not a Trustee. We look to setting up a finance sub-committee and team as a priority.

The same Hon Treasurer has, by default, taken responsibility for updating deeds and leases, involving the Diocese and Charity Commission, and engaging specialist lawyers.

This pattern, of reliance on individuals for key tasks, repeats across the Parish, and is not a comfortable one.

Buildings and Land

This section deals only with the physical aspects of parish properties, their condition and management. How they are used is described elsewhere. Overall, all our properties are in good order with a planned repair and maintenance programme. Like other aspects of parish life, it is dependent on a skilled Asset Manager, currently one of the Wardens, who, with a reducing team of volunteers, is responsible for oversight and maintenance of all physical assets, land and buildings.

There are booklets describing each church and its history in more detail, listed in the Fact Sheet.

The Parish Church, which is Grade II listed, has a nave and two side aisles (rebuilt in 1875) dominated by fixed pews seating about 300 souls. The west end has been adapted, with a kitchen, for use as a shop, meeting place and assembly area. There is a Falklands Memorial Chapel, interesting stained-glass windows, a C15 font and a display of Norse/Saxon grave furniture. In front



of the chancel steps, rostra allow west-facing celebration and serve as a stage for performances. The C15 tower is sound but the bells and the bell frame need attention if they are to stay in use which will require external

funding. Keeping the building wind and water-tight and warm is a constant drain on parish resources. Access will be improved by a new ramp and doors to be funded through a legacy. The graveyard is closed and Cheshire West and Cheshire Council is responsible for maintenance. The town's War Memorial is located in the graveyard.



St Michael's, located at a key crossroads in Little Neston, is a modern 1991 rebuild, with a defined worship area seating approximately 70 souls, within a larger, multi-use space, and with meeting rooms, kitchen and car park. Moveable screens allow the worship area to be enlarged when required. St Michael's is a useful building. It is in generally sound condition but some fabric issues are being addressed.





St Thomas', also Grade II listed, looks like the non-conformist chapel that it once was, built in 1843, complete with unusual petiolated cast iron window frames. There is a large multi-use worship area, gallery and tiny kitchen cupboard, which features movable chairs and tables that allow multiple configurations. It has good disabled access including a lavatory. Worship usually takes place in the round with a centrally-placed altar table. Theatre-style, sometimes used for weddings, funerals, entertainments and

functions, it can seat around 100 souls. The building is in good condition. The churchyard has some old graves but is not now used for interment.

Remarkably, having being closed for sixteen years, the building was reopened in 2010 by the Bishop of Chester, after a successful community campaign raised a large amount to secure the fabric and reorder the interior.

Other properties

The Parish has two properties that do not have direct religious purposes but generate income.

The Neston Centre site, adjacent to the Parish Church is a large area comprising the Neston Centre itself, car parking and Comrade's Field. It was acquired in 1919 by the Parish for community purposes (there was an 'Old Hall', tennis courts and football field).

- The Neston Centre built originally as the Parish Hall, has been converted to small offices and let commercially. The Parish Office occupies one unit. Tenants have continued to be hard to find and, given repair costs, the financial benefits have been variable. That, low occupancy, whether it would be more useful as a church hall, and the question of whether the capital value of the whole site is fully exploited, is a current issue. Minor structural issues are being investigated.
- Comrade's Field to the rear of the Vicarage, is what remains of a larger area, so called because the Comrades' Club, predecessor of the Royal British Legion, had a hut on the site and used the football pitches. It is now let as rough grazing and used for the Village Fair.



The Ringway residential property, bought originally with a view to housing a curate in an area of social housing, is currently let commercially. Approximately two thirds of the capital represented, and income, is reserved for the housing and education of a curate should that eventuality arise. The remainder accrues to general funds for the Parish.