



St. John's Church

High Legh

Parish Profile

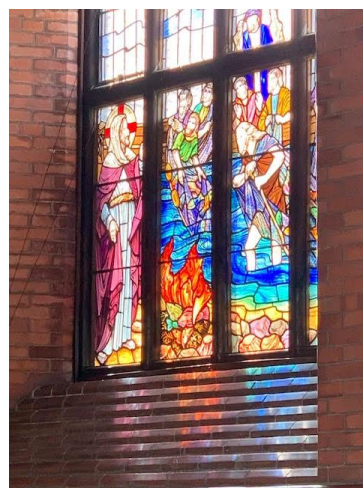
www.stjohnshighleggh.org

 @stjohnshighleggh

Hello from High Legh!

Who we are

We are a very hospitable church with a strong focus on our parish and local community. We believe that our place within our local community is extremely important. We would like to build on this so that we ensure that we are serving our local community in an effective way for the times that we are all living through now. We would like to work to develop as a church so that we continue to be embraced within our community as a relevant beacon of hope, light and joy in the years to come.



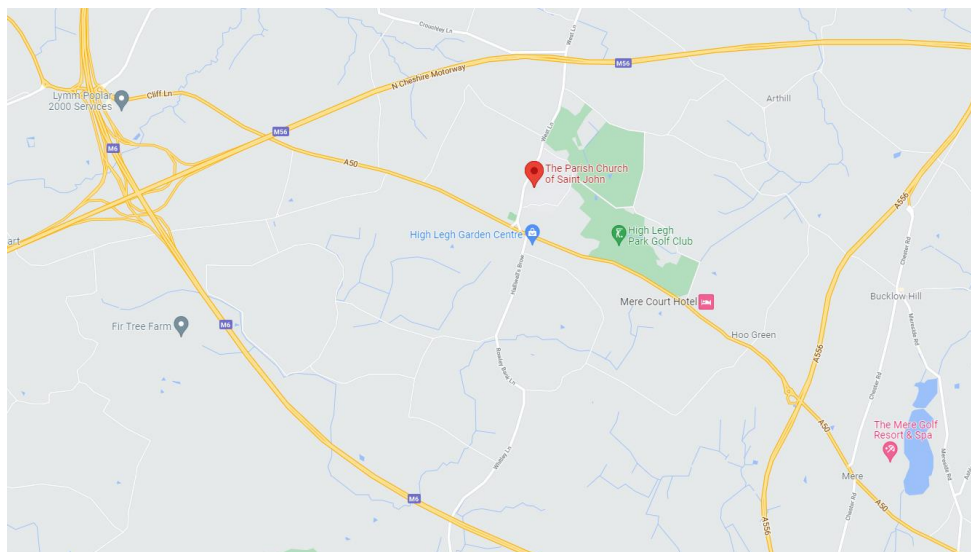
Where we are

We are a rural parish in the Northwest of England situated within easy reach of major cities including Manchester, Liverpool and Chester. We are roughly equidistant from Knutsford and Warrington.

In some ways our community is quite diverse. The wider parish is populated with farmers and others concerned with agricultural and related occupations and businesses. As we have excellent road transport links there are also housing developments which are popular with those wishing to commute to cities such as Manchester, Liverpool and Chester. We are roughly 20 minutes by car to Manchester airport.

High Legh, although widespread as a parish, would still describe itself as a village. There is an active community association and parish council. The population, around 1700, has remained reasonably static for the last 30 years. There is a broad age range within the parish, although St. John's

congregation at present is predominantly made up from the older generation of the community.



What we are looking for

We are seeking a minister who enables and encourages people to grow and develop their gifts and talents to support the life of the church to the benefit of all – those already in our congregation and those in our wider parish community.

We are praying about the future and know that we need to make some changes in order to continue to be relevant and to serve our community as effectively as possible as ambassadors for Christ, especially in the light of the pandemic. We have resources in terms of people's talents and gifts; we need help to channel these to best effect and to inspire others to join us and use their talents and gifts to further the ministry of Christ and the church within our community.

We know that this may be somewhat challenging, as we all find change difficult. However, we are seeking someone who will challenge, nurture and inspire us; someone who can lead our ministry, bringing new ideas and innovative thinking but who can manage change sensitively, with a sense of clear direction.

We have a burgeoning lay ministry and we need someone energetic with a sense of spirituality who can be a supportive leader to enable our team to develop. We see our lay ministry as a strength at St John's and, going forward, as a way of supporting a part-time vicar by 'sharing the load'.

We would love to find someone who can communicate theology appropriately and effectively, with good interpersonal skills, bringing imagination, innovation and vision to our parish and the way that we communicate the gospel. This person will be visible, inspiring our congregation and welcoming our wider community, who values people and what they can bring to help further the Kingdom of God in High Legh.

Our vision for the future

We are praying about growing our church. By that we mean a church that is benefitting those around us, both spiritually and physically through imparting and representing the gospel of Christ. We want to make the love of God known to all we meet through living lives that reflect our worship.

What we can offer

Enthusiasm! Whilst our congregation is not huge and our age demographic is generally higher, we are very enthusiastic as a congregation. There are lots of skills on offer and we make a good team. We have a heart for our community. We know we need to make changes going forward and we are praying that we can be open to those changes.

We think our church building is very pretty internally and externally and, thanks to good stewardship, the building remains in very good repair. Most recently we have upgraded our electrics and light fittings in line with the latest Quinquennial Inspection Report and Diocese Eco initiatives. We also have a very versatile church room attached to the church which is a real blessing and is also used for various outreach groups and events.

We have a spacious and well-located vicarage and there are very good schools, road transport links and local amenities nearby (See below for more details).

Our Church as a Worshipping People



Our worship pattern has changed due to Covid but, traditionally, we have held a eucharist service on three out of four Sunday mornings using the Common Worship liturgy and alternating between a Family Service and Café Church on the second Sunday of the month.

We have a small, but enthusiastic choir. Although we don't at present have a regular organist, our congregation loves to sing hymns and really missed it during the time we were unable to do so.

A BCP service was held at 8.30am once a month and on any fifth Sunday in a month and a 6.30pm evensong once a month but these ceased at the start of the Covid pandemic and there are currently no plans to reinstate this. Our plan is to reintroduce Café Church.

We are also open to more flexible worship patterns going forward in order to help us to develop new ways of worshipping that are intended to appeal to a broader section of our community.

During lockdown we launched a telephone service, and this continues to be an integral part of our ministry at St. John's, enabling those who are unable to attend church in person to join in with worship, strengthen their faith and enjoy fellowship with others and feel very much part of our congregation. We are open to and indeed, actively seeking, other ways to draw those in our community into our church family. This does not necessarily mean that they attend church on a Sunday morning.

We have been used to facilitating bible study groups and smaller prayer meetings during the week. Covid has interrupted these, but our Wednesday morning prayer group is up and running once again and we hope to be able to re-establish study groups going forward.

Although this time has been challenging for all of us, we recognise that it has presented new opportunities and we would welcome someone who can help us to continue to reach out to our congregation and to our community in creative ways.



STRENGTHS AT ST JOHN'S

Outreach

Whilst many activities have been curtailed due to Covid-19, we have been able to renew many of our activities and even introduce new ones. Hospitality is a big strength of our ministry and often has a part to play in many of our outreach activities.



Each month we host a community parish lunch; a coffee, create and chat session; a crochet club; and we recently introduced a weekly group for pre-school children and their carers, Little Acorns, which is very popular and continuing to grow.



We have a thriving events programme. This successfully engages many in our community who are not regular worshippers at St. John's, It also raises funds to support the work of our church and funds to support charities here at home and abroad.

Since lockdown has eased, we have been delighted to hold:

- Seasonal Barbecues
- Afternoon teas with a speaker (most recently the Chaplain to the Northwest railways)
- A Gin tasting event

We also engage with partnership activities including:

- Community Sunday afternoon teas in the village hall
- Community Association events, such as the Fun Day, Christmas Treasure Hunt and High Legh Dog Show



In recent months we have invited the community to partake in a Pet Service, a special Remembering Service for those who have been bereaved, and a Climate Change Service.



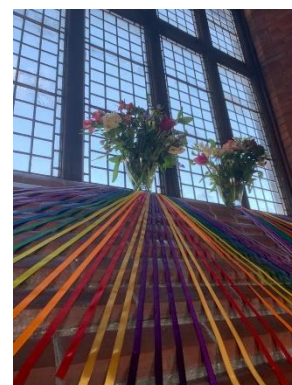
We have good ecumenical links with our local churches through Churches Together. This has included 'Open the Book' for primary school children.

For the past 10 years we have participated in World Day of Prayer and host it every 8 years in rotation with 7 other churches in the Lymm area. The services seek to bring together women of different races, cultures and traditions in a yearly day of prayer and to offer financial support through offerings.

Mothers' Union has also been an important activity associated with our church.



This year we have been supporting the Hope Centre, a community hub in Partington, both financially and with items for their food pantry.



Lay Ministry

Historically this has been a particular strength of our community and congregation. Although our congregation is not particularly large, we believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in our church. Over the years we

have had a number of individuals who have discerned a call from God and attended Foundations for Ministry, the Chester Diocese initial course in exploring a calling, and then moved on to Pastoral ministry training, Reader training and ordination.

Currently we are blessed with a licensed Reader, licensed Pastoral Worker, a Reader in training, an individual following the discernment process for ordination and another on the Foundations for Ministry course.

We are seeking a minister who enables members of the congregation to explore, grow and develop their calling and their gifts to the full for the benefit of all.

Pastoral Ministry

We have a pastoral care group and much of our pastoral care is centred around the older members of our community, many of whom live alone. Our capacity has been stretched through lockdown, but we have endeavoured to maintain this ministry as far as possible, without the normal activities that are usually in place to support those individuals, such as our midweek Celtic prayer service, monthly community lunch and other groups.

We also know that there is much pastoral care that is unacknowledged. Many members of our congregation continue to be there for others in our community as part of living out their Christian faith without it being part of an official outreach or ministry.

We acknowledge that there will be unmet need in our community in terms of pastoral care, simply because of the people who fall under our radar. We would like to address this and would welcome new ideas and suggestions for how this could be achieved.

Our Digital Offering

During the pandemic an online pre-recorded service was made available every week via our website and on YouTube until churches re-opened fully. From January 2021 until churches were able to re-open there was also a weekly service on Zoom which was shared with the other churches in our United Benefice, with breakout rooms for coffee and a chat afterwards.

In the absence of being able to hold our Christmas services in the way that we are used to, we created a recorded [Community Carols and Readings](#) involving members of the local community and local business owners who would not normally attend our services.

We have a [website](#), Facebook page and keep our 'A Church Near You' page up to date.

We realise that we need to refine our digital presence and find ways of reaching our community more effectively in an online environment.

We would also like to be able to find ways of being inclusive for members of our congregation who are unable to attend church in person but would be able to join us digitally. Our telephone service is one way we have done this.

Links with other local organisations



As well as being part of Churches Together in Lymm and District, we have strong links with the High Legh Community Association, High Legh Primary School, the Parish Council, Mothers' Union and the High Legh Community Observatory.



AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Youth Ministry

We do not have a flourishing youth ministry. Our ministry tends to be centred around the older people in our congregation. As we are a rural parish, we also try and support those working in any areas that reflect that rural setting.

However, our parish also has two housing estates with many families and a well established primary school, so there is scope for development. We already have a good relationship with the primary school who visit our church regularly for their celebrations such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas.

Up until the Covid pandemic we have had some success with Storytelling Service and Messy Church. We had also started a midweek group for very young children and their carers, Little Acorns. This has now resumed and is growing.

We are seeking a minister who could see opportunities to encourage and enable those in our community who may have gifts and talents in this area to grow their ministry for younger people in our parish in meaningful ways.

Effects of the Pandemic

Whilst the pandemic did help us to become more flexible and find new ways of coming together as a church community, our congregation is still not back to the numbers we had pre-pandemic. We realise that there are many reasons for this – some still do not feel comfortable to return and others may have found alternative ways to worship. We would welcome a minister who will help our church to develop ways to be relevant to our existing congregation and also to those in our community seeking a relationship with God.

OUR CHURCH IN ITS CONTEXT

The building

Our church is situated on a quiet avenue, set back from the main road. It is very beautiful internally and externally and has been used in the filming

of a number of mainstream television shows over the years. The present building is the third to be erected on the site and was built in 1893. It is brick built with the upper part timber framed with rendered brick infill panels

There is a car park which can also be used for local events. The church grounds are very well kept and spacious and can also be used to support events.

As has been stated, the building has been very well maintained and is equipped with wifi. Due to the pandemic, we are now able to offer contactless payment. Indeed, during the pandemic, we maintained payment of our parish share, although with no events possible, we have dipped into our reserves. We hope to be able to restore these going forward.

The Parish

Our church is set in a rural parish with a lot of outlying farms, homes and small businesses. There is a concentration of housing in the immediate vicinity of our church. Whilst our church congregation is predominantly older, with many longstanding members, there are a lot of families in the village. There is a thriving primary school and a very good High School in Lymm, with High Legh being in its catchment area.

In High Legh we are blessed with a Community Association and Village Hall with a Bowls Club attached. There is also a thriving pub, garden centre, tennis club, golf club and a community observatory.

It is a vibrant community in which St. John's has always played a major part. We very much hope and pray that we will be blessed with a minister who can enable us to continue to play our part in village life whilst demonstrating a real heart for God and his Kingdom in High Legh.

