

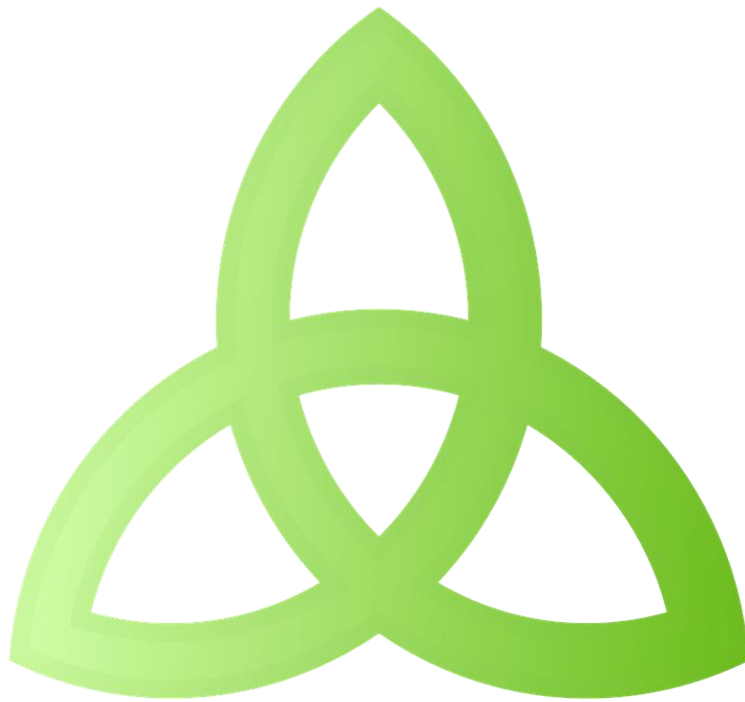
The United Benefice of Astley, Tyldesley & Mosley Common



St Stephen's

St George's

St John's



THREE IN ONE AND ONE IN THREE

Together with God; by God; in God: for God

**WELCOME TO THE UNITED BENEFICE OF
ASTLEY, TYLDESLEY AND MOSLEY COMMON**

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ARE YOU *PASSIONATE, PURPOSEFUL AND PRINCIPLED* ABOUT WHAT YOU DO?

MISSION Then you will be ready to work with us to set some goals for your first three years with us.

We seek to **PLAN**; set **OBJECTIVES**; and **ASSESS** progress in the following areas:

- ✚ Achieving growth through our work with our local primary schools.
- ✚ Taking the opportunity when large numbers of people attend occasional offices, school events and other gatherings.
- ✚ Finding new ways of church to reach out to the people in the many new houses in our patch.
- ✚ To jointly support **OUR Mission Church on Shakerley.**

INTERNAL

- ✚ Achieve single Parish status.
- ✚ Have a plan for increased income.
- ✚ Establish a solid financial base for the single Parish to be able to effectively work for all Team activities.
- ✚ To demonstrate a collaborative approach to all our outreach, mission and ministry.

These aims will be underpinned by our agreed **VALUES AND VISION** for our Team going forward.

**IF THIS APPROACH APPEALS TO YOU THEN:
THERE'S NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME
TO JOIN US!**

WHY?

- ✚ We are a 'team' IN FLUX – a Team more in name only despite being in existence since 2006. Our three PCCs are committed to becoming one; our Strategy and Policy Group have taken the lead in this journey.

We need - leadership through this time of structural development.

- ✚ We are all managing major premises issues and progressing plans for our buildings. These involve reviewing our needs; developing new ideas; considering possible future moves – change is all around us.

We need - support and guidance through this period of change most of which we see as being for the better.

- ✚ We have seeds and green shoots for the future – Shakerley Mission Church; Stepping Up; Places of Welcome; Café Church.
- ✚ Our social justice and community engagement offerings need better resourcing.

We need - help to move forward and integrate these developments sharing ideas, skills, personnel and places.

- ✚ We are committed to serving our long standing members, whilst encouraging new growth.

We need- wisdom and guidance in handling these matters - which are not straightforward.

- ✚ We are committed to our local schools and are trying to create better ways of working together, guided by our head teachers. We see this as a major missional and growth opportunity.

We need -leadership committed to taking this work forward.

- ✚ Sometimes, there is a sense that we are at the edge of the diocese and disconnected from central thinking and developments. We need reconnecting and help to interpret current trends and priorities that better allow us meet local need and mission.

We need - someone who can link into the wider church life of the Leigh Missionary Community, Deanery and Diocese and beyond and bring it back to our local church community.

- ✚ We are committed to learning how to get the best out of a new leader; offering support; encouragement; critical friendship - helping you to get the best out of us!

We need - someone who is open to the development of a collaborative approach to our church life – using the Local Ministry Team as a model.

- ✚ We are at a point of needing radical, major change - sometimes our localism can get in the way of this objective.

We need - assistance to clarify and progress our vision for the future together.

- ✚ We are coming together now to foster best opportunities for growth; to serve the purpose God has set before us; to be a spiritual presence in our team communities.

We need - direction and leadership to move us forward - some of us are keen to realise the potential of coming together whilst others have concerns and fears about the future especially the potential for losing local identity and practices.

- ✚ We reject the managed decline that has been a feature of our recent past and seek to grow through innovation; new experiences; experimentation; and seeking new possibilities. Giving God the ownership not ourselves, however good our ideas might be!

We need – to learn to work better together – to be drawn closer together – and TO BECOME THAT which we say we want to be!

We need – YOU - if you feel called/drawn to join us in shaping the future of the Christian offering in our Team area.

OUR VALUES

We come together bringing HOPE, LOVE and SERVICE for everyone from our God.

We come together to:

- ✚ Ensure a Christian presence in our area for a better future
- ✚ Help others come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.
- ✚ Share our resources, abilities and experience.
- ✚ Address the needs we see around us.
- ✚ Serve our members and those who live, work and visit our neighbourhoods.

We come together to be purposefully missional; TO -

- ✚ **TELL:** To proclaim the Good News of Jesus. How can they call (to God) if they have never heard!
- ✚ **TEACH:** To learn more about Jesus, our saviour; to learn to love him more; passing this love on to each other and to others as we are told to do. Sharing this love marks us out as Christians.
- ✚ **TEND:** To serve our local community and the community that stretches right round the world. To respond to known need by loving service. We want to bring hope, care and joy into everyone's life by our words and actions.
- ✚ **TRANSFORM:** To challenge injustice and violence pursuing peace and reconciliation. Jesus engaged with those at the edge of society; the poor; the hungry; the down trodden; the excluded; those without a voice. We recognise these people are our neighbours and may need our care.
- ✚ **TREASURE:** We must strive to protect the integrity of all creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

WHO ARE WE?

- ✚ **We are a United Benefice** – established in 2006 bringing together the parishes of Astley, Tyldesley and Mosley Common within the Leigh Mission Community and Deanery in the Diocese of Manchester.
- ✚ **We are a developing team of clergy and lay leaders** – Initially, the ‘team’ was perceived as solely clergy members. We now see that ‘team’ encompasses all who are connected with our places of worship.
- ✚ **We are moving closer together** – The historical differences, both societal and theological less marked as we become closer in the Team.
- ✚ **We share a common commitment** – the three PCCs are now committed to work toward a single parish, reflecting and serving our local needs.
- ✚ **We have established a new Strategy and Policy Group** – created in July 2023 to facilitate team development. It comprises of churchwardens and agreed lay representatives and clergy from our churches. **We anticipate a new Rector will be committed to work with the S&P Group as it evolves.**

Our local ministry team



Rev Debbie



Rev Cath



ALM Nick



Rev Angela



Reader David



Reader Mike



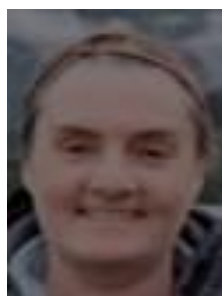
Rt Rev Jonathan



ALM Iain



Reader Shane



ALM Sarah



Reader Keith

Personnel

Team Rector – one full time post - vacant.	Team Vicar – half time - 3 year interim post until 2026.
Pioneer Minister (Church Plant).	A self-supporting Minister in Secular Employment.
1 Self Supporting Minister with Permission To Officiate..	
1 Reader	3 Readers Emeritus with PTO.
3 Authorised Lay Ministers (ALMs) Community Outreach and Social Action; Prayer and Spirituality; Children and Families ministry + one in training 2024, Ecology and Creation.	
Clergy and Readers work collaboratively across the Team, with the ALMs mostly working in the part of the team that supported them in their training.	

What do we offer YOU?

We want the best from you and recognise your need for consistent support from us.

With this in mind, we offer:

- ✚ An **excellent location** with easy access to transport links, local townships, heritage and cultural opportunities etc.
- ✚ **Desirable accommodation**, finished to a high standard within a few hundred yards of one of our schools and church buildings.
- ✚ Support with **ministry expenses**.
- ✚ Dedicated administrative and management support from our **team clerk**.
- ✚ **Supportive Clergy** Chapter, Mission Community and Area Dean.
- ✚ **Caring PCCs** supportive of the pathway to a single benefice.
- ✚ Well managed **welcoming schools**.
- ✚ **Encouraging** local authority members and officers.
- ✚ **Vibrant** communities and neighbourhoods.



Team Clerk Susie

Safeguarding

The team is totally committed to Diocesan and National policies and procedures for the protection of those at risk of being abused.

Our 4 main safeguarding values

- **Concern for** the health and wellbeing of all church members.
- **Concern for** the behaviour of individuals in church that might affect the wellbeing of members.
- **Concern for** our own behaviour towards others in church.
- **Concern for** church activities where the wider public are welcomed.

Challenges and opportunities

- **Baptism Ministry:** Baptisms are in high demand in our team area. In general, services are held separately from Sunday morning services – often large numbers attend, with many people unfamiliar with church and its ways – is this a problem or an outreach opportunity? We do offer immediate families support via ‘Stepping Up’; but the bulk of people who come are ‘one offs’ – what do they take away with them?
- **Funeral Ministry:** In 2023, Tyldesley hosted three funerals with over 500 mourners. Despite these high numbers, very few family members return for church services or other activities. How can this be turned from a problem into an opportunity? Funeral ministry within the team is complex, with preparation, pastoral care and practical arrangements taking up considerable time and emotional energy. Much of the practical work is undertaken by the team administrator. Other than fees, very little financial support is received from mourners at funerals.
- **Digital Resources:** - Our ‘on line’ presence and use of digital resources needs reviewing, improving/updating and managing consistently. We are trying to link our individual presence on ‘A Church Near You’ website into a ‘team’ presence; or if this is not viable, create a new team website. We need guidance to get the best out of the fast developing digital age.
- **Ageing Congregations:** In common with other churches, we tend towards an older membership. Many of whom avoid change and hanker after how churches and services used to be. Many suffer from ill health and a significant proportion did not return after the Covid-19 pandemic. Pastoral care at home and in the community has been difficult to manage due to time and energy constraints.
- **Opportunities for engagement at large events:** We get large numbers at Christmas Carol services; Easter, Mothering Sunday; School

services and celebrations, Funerals and Baptisms – all are opportunities for mission and potential discipleship, but we need to work out how to consistently engage with these large numbers of people attending.

- **Work with children and young people:** Children are the future – we are committed to developing our working partnerships with local primary schools and see this as a major challenge and opportunity.
- **Developing a collaborative ministry:** We know our future depends greatly on working together at all levels and believe this needs to be demonstrated by the way we allocate and monitor responsibilities and share duties and tasks between clergy and lay leaders.
- **Rota challenge!** Growing churches need to be open every week for potential new comers – we are exploring new ways of ‘doing church’ which enables this to happen with greater in-put across the Team from our ALMs, who need to be given support and encouragement to develop some of the ideas they have gathered from their training – they are the most recently trained and hence, exposed to modern thinking and approaches.
- **A single parish** - Old Parish boundaries do not represent the social developments of the last 25 years + and we all need a better understanding of the ‘local’ within a Parish with just one boundary.

Who are we – the people – the data

- ✚ We started looking at our attendance data in 2023, to help the Strategy and Policy Group base decisions and practice on facts not wants and desires.
- ✚ Going back to 2015 it is clear that like many others we have been part of the national trend of declining attendance on Sunday mornings. This was exacerbated by the Covid pandemic.
- ✚ From autumn 2023 we have begun to see signs of a small but persistent growth, which has continued, especially at St John’s where there has been a continuous increase in Sunday service numbers.
- ✚ Bucking the general trend, we have areas of more sustained growth in the Stepping Up project; the Mission Church on Shakerley estate; St Stephen’s ‘Thursday not Sunday’ monthly services.
- ✚ Special services for schools produce large numbers at Christmas in particular but also at other times through the year – see our challenges!
- ✚ Notice of the vacancy has not affected attendance figures at all.
- ✚ Moving forward to opening all churches every week brings opportunities to try new ideas and styles. BUT some folk valued the opportunity to go to sister churches and get to know their congregations when the rota meant not being open every third week.

Inward and outward facing services

- Recognising services as inward or outward facing has enabled us to make decisions affecting the rota i.e. outward facing services are missional hence important so Mothering Sunday/Harvest may need to be in all three churches – it is when people are looking for church activity.
- Inward facing services i.e. Christmas Day serve our tradition and the needs of our ‘regulars’ – the challenge is do we try to attract people to them or not?

QUO VADIS?

By God’s good grace we find ourselves preparing for change and getting ready to commence on a new and exciting chapter in the life of our TEAM. We seek a leader who will shepherd us forward into a new era, serving God, our local communities and our church members.

THE AREA WE SERVE

- ✚ The three parishes cover the old ‘Tyldesley Urban District Council’ area, which since 1974, has been part of Wigan Council – the second largest of the ten Greater Manchester authorities.
- ✚ Steeped in history from farming and early industry in the form of cottage spinning and weaving. Its past is framed by early industrialisation powered by the growth of deep level coal mining.
- ✚ Transport ‘firsts’ shaped, and continue to impact on the area:
 - The Bridgewater Canal, the first ‘industrial highway’, runs through the south, mirrored by
 - The Liverpool – Manchester Railway, the world’s first ‘inter-city’ passenger train line.
 - A century later, the ‘Liverpool, East Lancashire Road’ opened as a modern inter-urban highway, and more recently
 - The ‘Leigh Guided Busway’ has improved public transport significantly.
- ✚ As the traditional industries disappeared, the area has continued to grow with post war housing estates and more recent speculative development on both former industrial and greenfield sites bringing new housing and changing the nature of the area. There is now a mix of housing including many modern detached houses and apartments, with one large ‘needy’ estate (see Shakerley Mission Church for further information), traditional terraces, and pockets of social housing around the area, (Mosley Common has a significant colony of supported accommodation for older people.) Some households face challenges related to ‘cost of living’ financial pressures.
- ✚ The families moving into these developments are often new to the area, commute to work outside the area, use out-of-town shopping malls and

supermarkets, and bypass the traditional town amenities. Many of them work from home giving rise to new ways of life. They see the area very much as 'up-and-coming', a vibrant place to live, with lots of new trendy bars and restaurants and good schools for their children.

- ✚ Significant investment to improve the look of the centre (over £3million) has been made into Tyldesley's 'conservation area', within which St George's Church stands. Church members have had a substantial involvement in these improvements and continue to contribute to our town centre vision.

GREAT TO GET TO AND FROM

- ✚ There is good access to the local motorway network making places such as the Peak District, Yorkshire Dales, Snowdonia and North Wales, and the Lake District easily accessible. Southport and Blackpool are within an hour's distance by car.
- ✚ The 'Busway' traverses the team area giving easy access to the city and our local towns. Our nearest rail link is in Atherton accessing stations in Wigan and Manchester for the West-coast mainline and cross-country services.
- ✚ Manchester's International Airport is just a £45.00 taxi ride away!

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

- ✚ The new RHS Bridgewater Gardens, attracts many visitors providing a place of leisure and relaxation; the Lancashire Mining Museum at Astley Green, a scheduled monument, has the last remaining pit head gear and engine house, as well as a narrow gauge railway; Dam House, a 16th century fortified house, with tea rooms; a heritage area being developed around Tyldesley transport interchange, and Astley Point, a modern eating venue.



Shakerley



The Mission Church was established formally in 2023 and is led by our Pioneer Minister Rev Cath Eccles, who had been a curate in the Team for the previous three years.

The People

- ✚ Our congregation average, since January 2024 is 26, of whom normally 11 are children.
- ✚ Like the other services in the Parish, attendance numbers increases for special services and festivals – such as Easter or Christmas.
- ✚ The Sunday congregation at Mission Church comprises a diverse group from the local community, including families with young children and a few older residents. It's heartening to witness regular attendees becoming more engaged and actively participating in the church's activities. Over time, these familiar faces have evolved into passionate advocates, promoting and supporting the Mission Church's vision.

Mission Church Activities

- ✚ The Mission Church's program focuses on sustainable growth to serve the needs of the local community. It provides accessible worship opportunities through a tailored liturgical service, engaging all-age teaching, dedicated prayer times, and uplifting worship songs. This approach allows the community to experience and connect with their faith in various meaningful ways.
- ✚ **Messy Mission** - A monthly 'Messy Church' group engages children in an intentional Christian theme through crafts, action songs, prayers, and blessings in a fun environment.
- ✚ **Prayer Walks** – Our weekly prayer walks are an opportunity to tangibly demonstrate Christ's love. By walking, praying, and engaging with residents, we aim to be a light in the community and spur spiritual and social transformation.

- ✚ **Mission Children's Group** – Our children's group meets weekly, focusing on a different intentional Christian theme each week. The session for preschool aged (0-4) children incorporates prayers and blessings, laying a foundation for spiritual growth and understanding of biblical teachings in a nurturing environment.
- ✚ **Community Meal** - in collaboration with the local Community Interest Company, Merly's Kitchen, Mission Church hosts a weekly community meal that is free and open to all. This initiative not only provides a much-needed resource for those facing financial difficulties but also serves as a valuable social gathering for residents of the estate. It offers an opportunity for neighbours to come together, share a meal, and engage in meaningful conversations, fostering a sense of community and support. From this people come to request prayers for them and their loved ones and, remarkably, these events have sparked a renewed interest in faith, leading to numerous enquiries about baptism.

Music in worship

- ✚ Our approach to music preserves cherished traditions but also incorporates engaging action songs and lively melodies that captivate children's attention and encourage their active participation. By catering to various age groups and preferences, our music ministry fosters a vibrant and inclusive worship environment, where all can connect with the divine through uplifting melodies and meaningful lyrics.

Worship space

- ✚ Currently all Mission church activities are based in Shakerley Community Centre, at the heart of the estate.

Finances

- ✚ Mission church is currently financially supported by the St. George's Church PCC as part of their responsibility for mission in the community.
- ✚ The Pioneer Minister is funded centrally by the Diocese.



Established in 2016 by our Ordained Local Minister, Rev Angela Dand, leadership is from her supported by other Team clergy and church members.

The people

- ✚ **Stepping Up** was set up as our church's response following baptism, to help families keep the promises they make, on behalf of their children in the baptism service.
- ✚ **Monthly gatherings**, now based in St Stephen's school hall on a Saturday afternoon have grown, surviving the pandemic by going 'on-line'. There has been some overlap with Sunday services but this is where new meets old and is not necessarily an easy path.
- ✚ Some children who started attending as babies are now in Reception & Years 1,2,3 & 4.

Activities

- ✚ **Services** have a basic framework of a Bible story, teaching, prayers, a worship song, related craft, sharing food and having fun.
- ✚ **Stepping Up** is flexible and aims to reflect changing needs, as well as ensuring provision for new babies, toddlers and pre-school children.
- ✚ **Average attendance** – Sessions September 2023 – July 2024 average attendance 28 children and 26 adults - mums, dads, grandparents etc.

Developments

A small group of parents have come together with the clergy leads to start planning future activities and share the organising of Stepping Up. They are keen to help recruit new families by direct contact.

- ✚ Parents are seeking a slightly more formal structure to the service which is being responded to.
- ✚ Parents + children are becoming more involved in event content.
- ✚ All age craft!
- ✚ Social action – doing something for charity.
- ✚ Fund raising - for Stepping Up and missional giving.
- ✚ Advertising - what we do.

Finances

- ✚ Stepping Up currently runs at nil cost to the Team. Costs are met by sponsorship by various folk and increasingly by parents.



St John's



The people

- ✚ We are a most welcoming church and everyone who visits remarks how friendly we are.
- ✚ We have a tradition of bible based evangelical worship with a mixture of hymns and modern worship songs.
- ✚ Our congregation is gently aging, although we have some families with young children who attend regularly and recently we have seen a growing attendance of younger people of mixed ethnicity.
- ✚ We believe we are a close fellowship whose members support each other, with at least 90% of those on the electoral roll taking an active part in the life of the church.
- ✚ We provide support and encouragement for those actively seeking their ministry.
- ✚ Over the last few years with the building of many new houses we are receiving more families into our regular Sunday worship services which are showing signs of sustained but gradual growth.
- ✚ We have two ALM's, one in Prayer, Liturgy and Worship and Eco-Church and the other in Children's Work and Liturgy and Worship – their licences are to the Team as well as our church.

The Wardens



Marjorie



Andrea

The Church

- ✚ The church was opened in 1887 and although there have been some changes to the building the main structure is now 137 years old.
- ✚ In 1970 we created a lounge at the back of the church, which has provided a very useful space for social occasions as well as wider community use. In 2008 the lounge, kitchen area and the toilets, including disabled, were refurbished.
- ✚ The main worship area was reordered in 1992.
- ✚ Repairs and maintenance around the church and its grounds are managed by a monthly working party.
- ✚ There is a group who organise social fundraising events, such as concerts, to raise money for the Restoration Fund to support the upkeep and use of the church building.
- ✚ St. John's have developed the land north of church to provide footpath access from the new housing through to the main road and are planning educational resources and a wellness woodland.

Worship

- ✚ Our Sunday morning service has on average 35 - 40 people attending. This increases with special services and festivals.
- ✚ Our café church is one of the growing elements of St John's Church. The informal nature of the service allows people to participate in ways that may not be there in a more formal setting, promoting fellowship and friendships.
- ✚ The style of worship is a mixture of traditional hymns and worship songs. We have a singing group that is able to lead the musical accompaniment for the services.
- ✚ We have a Sunday School with committed leaders.
- ✚ Prayer Ministry is offered after the Sunday service. We have held a successful Bereavement Course over the last three years.
- ✚ There are two Readers with Permission to Officiate, based at St. John's, who take an active part in leading services at St John's and across the Team.
- ✚ There is a long standing Bible Study group that meets regularly throughout the year.

Messy Church

- ✚ Eleven years ago we began 'Messy Church' which has been very successful.
- ✚ Messy Church takes place in the school hall on a Friday afternoon as soon as school finishes.
- ✚ The sessions are held roughly once every half-term and this continues to strengthen our links with the school community.

Mission Links

- ✚ St John's has links with overseas and local mission. We have supported two organisations in India and one in Croatia.
- ✚ The church supports the 'Barnabus project' in Manchester, which works with people who are homeless and vulnerable living on the streets of the city;
- ✚ We also support the Children's Society's 'Safe in the City' Project and Safe Families
- ✚ We continuously act as a collection point for food for our local Food Bank.

Community connections

- ✚ There is an area of social housing in Mosley Common and a complex of sheltered/retirement housing consisting of flats and bungalows, known as 'The Rowans'. The Team Vicar regularly takes a Communion service in the lounge at the Rowans.
- ✚ Currently over 1000 new houses are being built on fields adjacent to the church. We see this as a challenge and a hope.
- ✚ Many of our members volunteer in the community either regularly or for single events.
- ✚ We support Team Events both social and worship throughout the year and enjoy fellowship with the other churches in our team.
- ✚ In recent years we have enjoyed Team Weekends at Scargill House near Kettlewell. Yorkshire.
- ✚ We are a Fair Trade Church.
- ✚ Recently we attained an Eco Church Bronze Award and are now working towards the Silver Award.
- ✚ St John's is a member of 'Churches Together in Boothstown', having strong links with the Catholic, Methodist and another CofE Church, in the next door Mission Community. Regular services and activities are shared together.

Finance

- ✚ Our income for 2023 was £52,853.85 and our expenditure was £53,455.75. We strive to 'balance the books' each year as we have few reserves. Our income increased in 2023 as social events took place to raise money for our Restoration Fund. This money is banked into our main account.
- ✚ Planned giving for 2023 was £21,450.00. This was similar to that amount given in 2022. Most people give directly by banker's orders, a few use the envelope scheme and some give cash.
- ✚ On-line payments via banker's card is available, when necessary.
- ✚ IN 2023 we paid £19,000.00 to Parish Share which was 83%. Of the total requested.
- ✚ As part of our commitment to St John's School we pay their School Insurance.
- ✚ Other money raised is through donations, gift aid and fund raising events. A copy of our Financial Report is available.

St John's Primary School

- ✚ The church school predates the establishment of the church, being built in 1822 as a Sunday school; and it is here that the church services were originally held.
- ✚ The school has a strong Christian ethos and the Team Vicar is an ex-officio governor of St. John's School.
- ✚ The school is a Voluntary Aided School with very close links to the church.
- ✚ Occasional assemblies are led by the Team Vicar and every term the children come to a service in the church. In addition various year groups visit the church throughout the year as part of curriculum work.
- ✚ The school is currently rated good with some outstanding features, (Ofsted 2023) and several members of the church are on the Governing Body.
- ✚ St John's Church was instrumental in establishing St. John's Day Care Centre over two decades ago which is now under the management of the school. This provides a Breakfast Club, Nursery, After School Club and Holiday Care.
- ✚ As part of our commitment to St John's School we pay their School Insurance.

Community

- ✚ Involvement in the community is a fundamental aim of St. John's Church.
- ✚ We were involved with the Government funded Catalyst Project which led to the establishment of our regular weekly coffee morning, Come And Meet Everyone (CAMEO) held fortnightly; and a, well supported, Toddler Group, that is held every week during term-time.
- ✚ Several members of the church are leaders of a weekly 'Be Well' walk for Wigan.
- ✚ We are a 'Place of Welcome' – weekly 'coffee mornings' attract a wide range of local people not just church members. We see this very much as having mission outreach potential.
- ✚ At the request of local community members, we will be reviving 'Mosley Common in Bloom' which will contribute to the mental wellbeing of the community.
- ✚ Members of the congregation volunteer to assist with the School Fair at Christmas and in the summer.

Internet and the future

- ✚ The website is updated regularly providing an up to date calendar of events and information about services and other events.
- ✚ We have a social media footprint on Facebook promoting both Team and Church activities.
- ✚ We have developed a Messy Church Facebook Community as a Fresh Expression of St. John's
- ✚ We are looking to linking in with 'A Church Near You'.



St George's



Our People

- ✚ The growth and decline in the church mirrors, to an extent, the growth and decline of our traditional industries – cotton and coal. Historically, the population and the village was self-sufficient and turned to church and chapel for much of their social and recreational needs and the lay leaders from the churches and chapels took their responsibilities into local governance, first as a Local Board and latterly as an Urban District Council.
- ✚ Since the 1960s a period of decline has been experienced with numbers attending services slowly reducing, with a marked acceleration in the 21st century until the Covid-19 pandemic forced temporary closure.
- ✚ Several older members of our congregation have not returned to regular services since then. We attract most people to our Communion services, but a more disparate group to Café Church and other services. In common with many churches, we are maintaining our ageing congregation who yearn for the traditional church life. We do have some younger families to nurture and up to a dozen or so children, some of whom we 'share' with the Mission Church at Shakerley.
- ✚ Key lay leaders take on multiple tasks within the parish. Many of our previous 'leaders' are now in their 80s and older and should not be expected to take on the responsibilities they once did; newer parishioners need nurture and coaching to take on church duties. We particularly struggle to attract volunteers prepared to take on leadership roles.
- ✚ Our PCC members are diverse with a range of backgrounds and experiences and have tried to focus on fundamental manageable issues.
- ✚ We are good at responding to social justice issues and have concentrated on ensuring our welcome and hospitality is enshrined in our work with asylum seekers and other vulnerable people, our '**Place of Welcome**', our '**Tuesday Teas**', and our support of 'Shakerley Community Partnership'.
- ✚ Our churchwarden is also an ALM with a community ministry and is now exploring 'Mission and Discipleship' with the diocesan lead. We have a second PCC member engaging in an ALM 'Ecology and Creation' elective; who also acts as our 'Eco-Church Champion'.

- ✚ We have a growing programme of community engagement events including a series of brass concerts, a monthly live music programme (funded by Wigan Council and partnered with a local music venue), and a desire to build on these initiatives.

The Warden



Iain

A Place of welcome

- ✚ In 2017 St George's joined the 'Place of Welcome' Network. Before 'lockdown', between 25 and 35 attended each week, then a virtual Place of Welcome was maintained for a few months. There has since been significant growth and over 70 people have been recorded. Donations more than cover the costs of hot and cold drinks, a range of toasted goods and fairly regular celebration cake. This ministry of welcome and hospitality has stimulated a remarkable degree of pastoral care amongst these 'members' who 'look out' for each other throughout the weeks.

Tuesday Teas, Tuesday Together & Warm Space Initiative

- ✚ 'Tuesday Teas' was originally a response to the cost-of-living crisis - a simple cost-free weekly meal for all those who attended. It attracted families predominantly those with children in our primary school. The highest number of meals provided was over 70, but more normally between 30 and 40. As the numbers of available food preparers from church dropped, several of the 'mums' took up the challenge and contributed by bringing in prepared food.
- ✚ Church has limited space and equipment for food preparation, and we had trouble in containing children to specific areas for eating. Craft activities and some basic teaching around festivals was difficult to provide consistently, and clearing up and subsequent additional cleaning was becoming burdensome. Prior to the team rector leaving, the decision was taken that a weekly meal would be no longer manageable when he left the team.
- ✚ A new monthly activity '**Tuesday Together**' including more supervised teaching and activities, as well as the meal has commenced. This has been supported and is proving viable, but with significantly fewer attendees.
- ✚ Our Warm Space initiative was unsuccessful – despite church being open with refreshments available for two additional 2 hour periods during the week, for a month, no one turned up!

Our story

- ✚ St George's is in the middle of bicentennial celebrations! Sensitive to the needs of Tyldesley, the Church Commissioners promised £17,000 to build a church and Thomas Johnson, the owner of the Banks Estate, gave the land on which to build it the church building itself was completed November 1824.

- ✚ St George's Chapel was consecrated in 1825 by the Bishop of Chester. A further 22 years would elapse before the Diocese of Manchester was created and Tyldesley was granted 'Parish' status in late 1829.
- ✚ In 1847 the first public clock in the village was erected on the church tower, whose spire rises 150 feet a prominent local landmark seen for miles around.
- ✚ Later in the 19th century, the original Church was extended and significantly remodelled internally. Changes and improvements were made from time to time up to the 1960s, when a fire significantly damaged the roof and led to partial closure and services being held in the adjacent parish school.
- ✚ It has been calculated that with the occasional offices and our care and hospitality and music offerings, between 5000 and 6000 people enjoyed fellowship in St George's church between January and December 2023. Our challenge is how can we use these contacts as a way of bringing these folk into 'church'.
- ✚ We are asset rich with a large 'Grade 2 listed' building, albeit with significant structural problems and in great need of substantial internal reordering, An architect-led feasibility study has been completed that outlines our needs and a financial appraisal constructed that suggests an affordable way forward. An application for a faculty for reordering has been prepared, but we are expecting this may be delayed until an incumbent is appointed.

Our Finances

- ✚ Our traditional income is not meeting our budgeted annual expenditure; however, we are blessed by a significant investment that brings in around £30,000 in annual interest payments.
- ✚ A copy of our Annual Reports, including a financial report is available. Our annual expenditure exceeded our income by over £36,000.00 in 2023. Our Parish Share was paid in full; and we supported Shakerley Community Partnership to the tune of £20,000.
- ✚ We will be helped by architects and consultants to apply for grant funding for our fabric repair and restoration needs.
- ✚ We are about to launch a 'Friends of St George's' fundraising charity to help with restoration costs.

Our churchyard

- ✚ During the first lockdown of March 2020, the churchwarden was approached by a local resident wishing to plant a few bushes to add colour to the churchyard. Four years later, and thanks to the hard work of a platoon of volunteers, we now rival the RHS Bridgwater Gardens!
- ✚ All is not perfect, and some issues raised by the architect need to be addressed. The impact on passers-by has been tremendous and our volunteers engage in pastoral care as a matter of course; and many have contributed financially and by donating shrubs and plants.
- ✚ These obvious improvements stimulated our eco-champion to steer the PCC through the application process for a bronze award and to the submission for a silver 'A Rocha, Eco-Church' award. Updates are given in each month's parish newsletter as well as encouragement to readers to address their own lifestyles and become more environmentally friendly.

Our Mission Church 'plant'

- ✚ The Shakerley estate is an integral part of St George's parish.
- ✚ Tyldesley Urban District Council set aside the old family-owned estate as an area for social housing development. building 800 mainly family accommodation with some one-bedroom flats and 'sheltered' bungalows. The estate has been left 'out on a limb' with one road on and off; housing policy changes during the 1980s; recent local authority financial and service cutbacks; and dubious lettings policies have led to poor community esteem.
- ✚ Only one shop remains from the original parade, the pub has been demolished and the estate Church of England school was closed 2008.
- ✚ The estate lies within the top 15% of the deprivation index. Various attempts have been made by church groups to establish 'church' on the estate with little success.
- ✚ Many of us prayed and a new ministry, based around welcome, hospitality and food and starting with relationship building via baby and toddlers groups has evolved into The Mission Church - Shakerley. Initially this work was developed by the Team Curate who now leads the Mission Church as a Pioneer Minister, funded by central church resourcing. (SDF).

St George's School

- ✚ Our parish school, St George's Central CE Primary School and Nursery, is a 'Good' school with outstanding pastoral care and community involvement.
- ✚ The main building on the site of a previous Victorian 'Mission' school has just celebrated its 25th anniversary.
- ✚ There is a separate nursery for 2yr olds in Shakerley, complementing that on-site for 3yr olds.
- ✚ A Forest School development is still fairly new in a fenced copse at the rear of the main school.
- ✚ As well as 'our' school, we also enjoy good relationships with two community primary schools in the parish and a large high school; with whom we regularly partner for musical events.
- ✚ Foundation governors authorised by PCC are in the majority at school, although we have a vacancy that we are struggling to fill. Governors carry out their responsibilities conscientiously and visit to engage with staff, children and their families regularly, particularly supporting sports and community initiatives and the Forest School and Eco Council. Governors are prominent at special activities and are well supported by other parishioners. Both School and Church support events on the Shakerley estate.
- ✚ The Head Teacher, leadership team and staff group are actively supportive of church. Within the Atherton and Tyldesley school consortium, our three church schools work well together and see closer ties with church leaders being important for future progress.
- ✚ School classes visit church regularly to explore its rich interior features and to consider and understand its historical importance and its current place in our town.

- ✚ Children and families take part in 'festival' services throughout the church year and school leaders arrange special services in church such as for school leavers. We want children (and their families) to be familiar and comfortable coming into church.
- ✚ We see children being involved in any developments – nothing about us without us! We want to be part of caring for the children of our Parish and see developments with school essential in pursuing this aim.

Our future

- ✚ **Working closer together** – developing stronger links with the Team members; sharing ideas and developments; learning how to collaborate to serve our localities and communities.
- ✚ **Integral to our work** is supporting the mission community. Contributing to and learning from each other how we can grow discipleship, develop sustainable children and young persons' ministries and contribute to 'growing'.
- ✚ **Working with school** – is where our future lies. We seek to build on existing strong links with our primary and secondary school. Especially important is the shared work with the primary schools across the Team.
- ✚ **We are keen to** – create a single Benefice out of the three existing parishes and see this as the way forward in meeting our obligations under the five marks of mission in our neighbourhoods.
- ✚ **Building fabric** – as an historical church there are immediate building related issues to be addressed – the Spire; reroofing: clerestory windows; parapets etc.
- ✚ **Re-ordering of the church interior** – plans are ready to go and form a major part of our way forward offering both a modern ministry setting, shared community space and a major performance resource for the town. This is a priority for us.
- ✚ **Preparing for the Future** – following the proposed interior re-ordering of the church, we have further plans to build new additional facilities that can be used by our community as well as our church family.
- ✚ **Place of Welcome** – is limited by our current facilities and within the re-order and potential extension we seek to build on an already thriving hospitality ministry. We believe that welcome and hospitality is at the centre of our community initiatives and is valued by our friends, neighbours, with or without faith.
- ✚ **Music** – has always been a key element of St George's and we wish to build on current practice with local and national musicians to develop a 'music ministry' – another way of creating opportunity for out-reach and mission ministries. We have much experience of music performance and see developing our 'performance space' possibilities to further our overall mission objectives.
- ✚ **As a church** – we believe we should be at the forefront of community engagement and local transformational activity.
- ✚ We are conveniently situated with easy access to the Greater Manchester and northwest motorway network but at peak periods congestion can be problematic.



St Stephen's



The People

- ✚ There are 92 people on our Parish role with average weekly attendance of 30.
- ✚ There are some positive signs that we have turned the corner in falling numbers and the need to be ready to welcome new people is recognised.
- ✚ Attendance numbers increase when including special services and festivals – especially around Christmas and Easter.
- ✚ The Sunday congregation, in the main, consists of retired and gently aging folk. Most who have been very active members over the years in all sorts of ways, and are now more in need of support than offering it. It means there is a lot of experience and views of what should happen.
- ✚ Growth is what we say we seek but many are comfortable trying to maintain what has traditionally been seen as the church activity.

Signs of hope

- ✚ **Stepping Up** - pre-pandemic growth in Astley centred on the excellent work with post Baptism families as parents undertook to bring their children in a Christian way so we undertook to support them. (See previous for more information)
- ✚ **Thursday not Sunday** – offers a monthly communion service open to all – congregations welcoming 10-22 folk; gathering in the Meeting Room attached to the main church building.
- ✚ **School and us** – we are blessed in the welcome that the Head and Governors of school have offered us. We see our future being very much intertwined with theirs. (See later section for detail).
- ✚ **Café Church** – a relaxed approach to sharing the Word in a café style setting. We are exploring how we can be better at outreach using this new format.
- ✚ **Place of welcome** – 'coffee mornings' – run monthly on a Saturday morning as a social gathering opportunity and outreach. Unintentionally these gatherings have become an opportunity for charitable giving with an average £150.00 being donated to charities nominated by attendees.

Music in worship

- ✚ After Covid we brought together elements of our Music Group and traditional choir to provide a mixture of old and new for Sunday morning services.
- ✚ We are committed to live music as a preferred option.
- ✚ Café church is more relaxed with a chance to be more inventive musically.

Moving out of the church building

- ✚ RAAC in the building meant we had to stop using the main building in 2021.
- ✚ Moving out of the church building posed a number of challenges which we have had to meet – and go on doing so.
- ✚ Gathering in school has been positively welcomed by the congregation.
- ✚ Like school the church was totally accessible with no access issues; accessible toilets and flexible seating.

St Stephen's PCC

- ✚ There are 14 members on the PCC which is chaired by the Team Rector plus ex-officio members of clergy with PTO and Emeritus Reader.
- ✚ We have one member on the Deanery Synod.
- ✚ Much of our work has been focused on issues related to the church building.
- ✚ We are also in the process of coming out from under this heavy cloud.
- ✚ We are totally supportive of the development of a single Parish/PCC within the current team area.
- ✚ We see that a joint PCC will enable us to make better use of resources, ideas and facilities.
- ✚ We are committed to being an active local Christian presence reflecting the needs of the geographical/social area we serve.
- ✚ We THE PEOPLE are the church not the building!
- ✚ As a PCC we very much see our role as being supportive of the leadership, whilst holding a 'critical friend' approach to plans and changes.
- ✚ We want to be part of any future changes for the future and for the better.

Officers - Church Warden

- ✚ At St Stephen's we have one Warden who covers many roles!



Elaine

The buildings

The church

- ✚ There has been a physical Christian presence in Astley since 1631. The current building is the fourth incarnation built subsequent to the destruction of the earlier church by arson in 1961.
- ✚ Due to RAAC we have not been able to use the main building for 3years.
- ✚ The future of the church building looks increasingly bleak – we are in discussions with the Diocese about a way forward.
- ✚ We have for three years been able to use the school hall thanks to the Governors and Head Teacher.

Ellesmere Street

- ✚ 'Ellesmere Street' this is the old school house on land given by the Duke of Ellesmere.
- ✚ For many years was the centre of local scouting and guiding.
- ✚ The PCC took back full possession of the build in January 2024 and currently have a leasing arrangement with two fitness groups. The rent covers amenity and insurance costs and provides a small income for the PCC.

The Meeting Room - (Church Hall)

- ✚ Built onto the main building as the vestry area it has been rebuilt by the Parish following a fire and used regularly by church and school and has proven a highly valued resource area.
- ✚ We seek to retain this element of the premises on the site whatever the future of the main building is.

Finances

- ✚ Income currently matches out goings – **increased giving is a challenge!**
- ✚ Giving reflects the decline in numbers attending and the level of giving. Many of our congregation are retired with consequent limited incomes.
- ✚ Most people pay directly by standing orders but there are a few who still give cash directly or by the 'envelope' scheme.
- ✚ We have had special arrangements concerning meeting our Parish quota taking into account costs relating to the building and legal expenses.
- ✚ On-line payments via bank card is available.
- ✚ We are hosts to a system whereby all clergy expenses, including housing costs, are paid by St Stephen's with a system of reimbursement from the other two churches Treasurers.
- ✚ **Mort's/Whalley Charities** - two local endowed charities set up in the 18th century to support the work of the Vicar of Astley and provide support for 'the poor' of the area. The Trustees have always had close links to the church with the Rector currently filling the role of Chair.

Other activities

Men's Group

- ✚ This long standing group, for men, meet monthly at The Union Pub.
- ✚ The annual dinner reaches out to some of the younger more peripheral members of church.
- ✚ The annual Family BBQ raises funds for their chosen charities i.e. Mission Aviation Fellowship; Air Ambulance; and Helping To Support People – a local support service for people needing assistance with food and material goods.

Mother's Union

- ✚ Mother's Union is also a long standing group attached to the Diocesan branch. It holds a monthly meeting which include a short service run by members, a speaker and refreshments.

Astley Memorial

- ✚ In 2019 the 'Friends of Astley Memorial' was formed resulting in the creation of a memorial to the memory of all from Astley area who gave their lives whilst on active military service. The annual service of remembrance held at the memorial is an increasingly well attended event led by members of the Local Ministry Team.

St Stephen's CofE Primary School

- ✚ The school was built at the same time as the church building – opening just ahead of the church. Services were first held in the school hall which doubled as parish hall. With the appropriate Bishop's licence, marriages were also conducted. Our move into school has historical precedence!
- ✚ Historically the PCC and congregation have participated in the school primarily as governors. Weekly school services were held in the church building attended by available parents and grandparents. Since the building closure these services have been held in school led by the Rector or other members of the Local Ministry Team.
- ✚ There is a strong alliance between school and our Stepping Up services has many children who were brought to Baptism are now peppered through the year groups of school.
- ✚ The Head Teacher – Jill Southern – has been extremely supportive as we moved from the church building as has the Chair of Governors.
- ✚ We are currently in discussion with school to develop – including such things as the 'Open the Book' scheme – a Diocesan initiative which we hope will involve all primary schools in our team area.
- ✚ Local primary heads in our Team area all work closely together and with the Team we hope to build upon.
- ✚ Good education is what frequently attracts people to move to the area..
- ✚ School has greatly missed the church building having used it regularly for whole school services; school concerts; and special events. They also had access to the meeting room and vestry which gave them extra space 'outside' of school!

Appendix

YOUR HOME – THE RECTORY – A SNAP SHOT



Built early 1990's –
on a small estate in Astley



Entrance hall leads to a
lounge/dining area with
dividing doors &
your office + cloakroom



Easy access
to schools



Good
neighbours

The kitchen & utility room

Good for small
meetings



On bus
route

The 4 bedrooms – one with en-suite + family bathroom



More details on application.....

