

0.5 Priest in Charge for the Parishes of the Mid Churnet Valley

The Locality

Would you like to work in the Churnet Valley, a most beautiful area situated at the southern end of the Peak District? It benefits from being relatively 'undiscovered' and its lovely small villages are quiet and well-spaced in a rural countryside of hills and valleys. It is a wonderful place to live. People are friendly and welcoming to 'incomers' and the level of crime is very low.

Locally the Moorland towns of Leek, Cheadle and Biddulph along with Uttoxeter have their individual characteristics and supply a choice of schools, supermarkets and small independent shops. We are also blessed with a range of local businesses offering services and trades. The area is not cut off from the major conurbations of Stoke on Trent, Manchester, Derby and Birmingham, and there is good access to both the M1 and M6. There is a railway station in Stoke and a small station at Blythe Bridge.

The area's main medical provision is at the Royal Stoke University Hospital with smaller general hospitals at Stafford and Macclesfield. There is a walk-in facility at the Haywood Centre in Stoke on Trent, a daytime A&E facility in Leek and numerous General Practices.

The Role

We would like to welcome a Priest in Charge to join our experienced and dedicated team of volunteers. The Benefice currently has one Reader and one other in training. Each church has a committed PCC together with members and volunteers who organise and serve on rotas, sides person duties, intercessions and Bible reading. Provision of flowers, cleaning, grounds maintenance and fundraising events are also carried out by the congregations and villagers.

We are looking for a new priest who:

- is a good communicator and leader who will lead and work with our teams of active helpers.
- will bring energy and new ideas to grow our small congregations.
- will actively participate in our schools and develop relationships with young people and families new to the area.
- has the personal and social skills to relate to the elderly, the sick, the socially isolated and those who are new village residents and to be an approachable and friendly face at our community events.
- will enjoy driving on our winding and hilly country lanes in all weathers. Bus services between our churches are non-existent!
- is enthusiastic person and IT literate!
- is keen to live in and be part of our community.

Benefice overview

The Mid Churnet Benefice consists of five Churches, governed by three PCC's:

- 1) St. Werburgh's Kingsley
- 2) St Mark's Foxt with St Mildred's Whiston
- 3) The Associated Parish of Holy Trinity Oakamoor with St John's Cotton.

The parishes support each other's activities and the wardens have a close working relationship, sharing a WhatsApp group and meeting together at least every other month. All our churches currently meet their parish share.

RECTORY

There is a large 1950's Rectory situated in its own extensive grounds in Kingsley, with beautiful views from its elevated position at the rear. On the first floor the property has four double bedrooms, a small office and separate toilet and bathroom upstairs. The spacious ground floor entrance area leads to a cloakroom and toilet and three large reception rooms, two of which have patio doors to the rear lawn. The third is a working office which enjoys independence from domestic quarters. The kitchen/diner has a pantry and inner passage to the utility room and garage.



WEEKLY SERVICE PATTERN

During the vacancy there has been no reduction in services and no reduction in attendance. Morning Worship is led by lay members of the congregations and PTO's are engaged for services of Holy Communion which are of broadly central tradition with vestments worn.

The current service pattern has been maintained.

Week no.	8.30 am	9.30 am	11.00
1		Cotton HC Foxt MW Whiston MW	Kingsley HC
2	Foxt HC	Oakamoor MW Whiston HC	Kingsley HC
3		Oakamoor HC Foxt MW Whiston MW	Kingsley MW
4	Foxt HC	Whiston HC	Kingsley HC
5 th Sunday	HC Service rotates around the Benefice in turn		

Average number of occasional services						
	Weddings	Baptisms	Funerals	Average Sunday attendance	Electoral role	PCC numbers
Kingsley	5	14	32	22	60	10
Foxt	1	4	3	13	52	9
Whiston	2	2	3	11	14	
Oakamoor	1	1	3	7 Service fortnightly	9	7
Cotton	2	1	1	6 Service fortnightly	9	
Av annual TOTALS	11	22	42	53 av.		

THE PARISH OF ST WERBURGH'S KINGSLEY

The parish includes the village of Kingsley, Kingsley Holt, parts of Kingsley Moor and Froghall, with over 1,600 inhabitants. The area is mainly dedicated to farming. Nearby local industries include JCB and Alton Towers.

The parish has two pubs, one in the village of Kingsley Holt and the other in Froghall. Post Office facilities are offered in the Village Hall in Kingsley by a visiting postmaster. There is a convenience store in Kingsley High Street which has supported Church and Village activities in recent years and a service station with a small convenience store at Kingsley Moor. However, Cheadle is situated only a ten-minute drive away and offers all the usual amenities. There is also good access to Derby, Ashbourne and Stoke-on-Trent.

Our Church dates from the early 13th Century and may have replaced an earlier church on the same site. More recent changes in the 19th century added the Nave, the Chancel and Vestries. In the late 20th century

a kitchen and toilet was added at the bottom of the tower and the bells were removed, retuned and rehung in a stronger frame

Originally a school was attached to the Church but in 1872 a new school was built off Holt Lane, Kingsley, and these buildings have been altered, extended and upgraded over the years.

Worship

We have a reputation for being a welcoming, caring and friendly Church and these qualities are reflected in our worship. We worship in broadly traditional style and previous incumbents have worn vestments, a practice we hope will continue.

Choral music has played an important part in the life of our Church, and in recent years we were fortunate to have a robed choir of up to 14 members. The choir members now sing with the congregation but still come together for special events. There is no current full-time organist but we have access to a local organist who is keen to promote the choir.

Bells are rung before Sunday morning services from an active group of ringers.

The average Sunday attendance is around 22 and this number has remained constant over recent years, with an electoral roll of approximately 60.

The congregation takes an active role in Church activities with pre-baptism visits, leading morning worship, intercessions, reading lessons and assisting with the chalice at Holy Communion.

Church Organisations

We have an active Parochial Church Council of 10 members which meets at least every other month. The PCC members organise several fund raisers in addition to organising social events where practical. We have an efficient and conscientious PCC secretary and a Gift Aid Secretary who supports the Treasurer.

The bell ringers meet for practice on Tuesday evenings and ring each Sunday where possible

We are fortunate that several members of our Church are dedicated to arranging the flowers donated to the Church week by week by members of the congregation.

There is also a small group of cleaners who keep the building in good order. Our Church has a Mothers' Union with strong involvement at Branch, Deanery and Diocesan levels. We have a member who attends diocesan meetings and members are encouraged to attend 'All Members Days'. There is a small Toddlers Group which meets on Wednesday mornings. We hope to extend these services in the community

A Benefice Lent Course and an Advent Course are held every year.

The congregation supports the local Foodbank.

We have recently developed plans to provide a community room, improved kitchen, toilet and storage at the rear of the Church with the intention of more involvement in the community with toddlers groups, opportunities for small groups and for parents after school meetings. The plans have been drawn to initial review levels and await DAC approval.

Challenges

Growing the congregation in a village which is frequently changing with residents from out of the area coming into association housing or just working out of the area and how best to attract people to come into the Church and see what we can offer.



ST MARK'S CHURCH, FOXT

The beautiful village of Foxtis surrounded by open countryside. St Mark's has the benefit of an excellently managed village hall next door to support our social activities. There is a lively pub, the Fox and Goose which is always there to help us out.

Our church was built in 1838. It is Grade 2 listed and is in very good internal repair. Externally we have just completed (October 2024) work on repairing some pointing, repairs to the small porch roof and repainting of rainwater goods, having received permission to go ahead with List B work from the Diocese. Grants were secured and the PCC, the treasurer and the project manager were in full support of the project which took place during interregnum.

The church is open every day and welcomes passing walkers, cyclists and visitors to the area as well as those attending graves in the churchyard or needing a quiet space for prayer and reflection. Ease of on road parking and the village hall car park next door with its accessible 'open all hours' toilet are welcome facilities for visitors.

St Mark's has a small but active group of 4 PCC members. We have two churchwardens a treasurer and a Synod representative. Additionally, a member of our congregation is the safeguarding co-ordinator for St Mark's and 3 other churches in the Benefice.

We hold a church service every Sunday morning, alternating Communion and Morning Worship. On the 5th Sunday of the month, each of our 5 churches rotate a joint benefice Communion Service which gives our villages the opportunity to get together for worship and friendship. Our small congregation is well practiced in leading Morning Worship and during the present interregnum we have two PTO's who rotate Communion services fortnightly. An organist accompanies Morning Worship, and Communion Services are well known for their enthusiastic unaccompanied singing! Special services which can see our small church packed with families include the Carol Service and Posada, Easter Morning, Harvest Songs of Praise and a Pet Service.

The church building is intermittently used for community choir practice and church meetings. We have a small kitchen area in the vestry and an accessible toilet outside the village hall. We are known for our hospitality.

We have a grounds maintenance manager who oversees a group of volunteers who keep the Churchyard and wildflower areas in good order. We have signed up to the Eco Church project.

Our small regular congregation is able to meet our Common Fund request, and although fundraising slowed down following Covid it is now on the up, with events such as a 'Choir and Cake' event in July and a successful 2 day Flower Festival in September. Popular monthly coffee mornings benefit the church, village hall and local charities. Our Harvest Festival service and auction raised valuable funds and goods to support a local food bank.

Challenges

Foxt is a Village of about 250 inhabitants. We have been fortunate in attracting the regular attendance of a younger family and their dependants in recent months. Other new residents and young families have come into the village but apart from attending baptisms and special services, they appear to have other priorities in life. Growing our congregation and attracting children is something we would like to encourage a new incumbent to help to develop. Visiting the sick is another area where we would welcome support. Although members of the congregation are good at keeping an eye on their neighbours who suffer isolation, some house-bound residents would appreciate a visit from the Rector.



ST MILDRED'S CHURCH, WHISTON

The Church is at the heart of the beautiful small village of Whiston, about 2 miles from the churches of Kingsley and Foxt. As a tourist area, there are several leisure attractions, many opportunities for outdoor activities such as walking, cycling and climbing and good road links to nearby towns.

St Mildred's is a very well maintained and attractive stone building, consecrated in 1910. The space is ideal for a variety of activities having moveable individual chairs, a kitchen and a toilet area. Members of the congregation assist with flowers and cleaning.

The churchyard is large and well kept with plenty of available spaces.

There is good parking in the church grounds, and summer fairs, barbecues, coffee mornings and Harvest Suppers have been regular social events.

Thanks to the small scale development of new houses, baptisms and weddings have become regular events in the church.

The church currently has a small friendly congregation who assist with services and it is able to meet its parish share. There are two wardens and a treasurer who also acts as secretary to the joint PCC with St. Mark's, Foxt. There is a regular pattern of Sunday Services with Morning Worship and Holy Communion alternating weekly. 5th Sunday benefice services rotate around the 5 churches. Up to Covid our Sunday

services benefitted from the participation of about 10 residents and carers from the local care home for adults with mental health issues. We are anxious to rekindle this relationship.

There is good community involvement in the Village which centres around the nearby large and well appointed Village Hall. The children's play area is a recently developed and well-used asset.

Challenges

There is no bus service and no school. The village pub and the Methodist Church closed in recent years.

Although there are new family properties in the village the church has not yet benefitted from increased attendance at Sunday services although the number of baptisms and weddings has increased.

Since Covid we have lost some members, Messy Church and some social activities.

We would like the new incumbent to help us to encourage new church members and grow the church and its role in the community.



HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, OAKAMoor

Oakamoor is a small village located in the Churnet Valley, surrounded by woodlands. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book as having few houses and many trees.

The village has many legacies, both in buildings and landscaping from copper smelting and the Churnet Valley Railway, which is now dismantled.

Holy Trinity Church has a small but faithful congregation, sharing their services with St John's, Cotton. Holy Trinity Church was built in 1832 and became the Parish of Oakamoor in 1864.

The grounds are jointly maintained by the PCC and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

The Valley School in Oakamoor is a thriving Primary school with dedicated staff. The school has services at both Holy Trinity and the Memorial Free Church, also in the village.

Oakamoor is a friendly and caring community, having a Bowling Club, Pensioners Association, an excellent sports ground and one public house, which makes this a pleasant village in which to live.

Between March and November, the area becomes busy as the village lies on one of the main routes into Alton Towers. Although mostly a farming community, there are a number of small businesses including bed and breakfasts and guest houses located in the village. Oakamoor has won The Best Kept Village Competition several times.

The village has a wonderful Village Hall, where Holy Trinity hold their Harvest Supper, Coffee Mornings and fund raising events which are all well supported by the community.

Oakamoor Parish has a population of some 700 people, and we have 9 people on the Electoral Role.

Our average attendance on each of our services is 6-8, average age 60 plus.

Holy Trinity's financial status is good in so far as we are able to meet general expenses and Common Fund request being paid in good time.



ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, COTTON

OVERVIEW

St John the Baptist Church is located at the centre of Cotton, a small rural village situated in the heart of North Staffordshire's countryside. Cotton village is very scattered consisting of a few houses, farms and businesses with a population of approximately 135. The village has a well patronised public house, The Star Inn, and restaurant. Within the boundaries of the village there is also a holiday caravan park where visitors take scenic walks in the area often calling in at the Church and on occasions attend services.

The Church was built by Thomas Gilbert, born at Cotton Hall, and opened in 1795 as a Chapel of Ease for the Gilbert family, who lived at the adjacent Cotton Hall. On 21st July 1932 St John's Cotton Church and Holy Trinity Oakamoor were joined and became the United Benefice of Cotton with Oakamoor. St John's was granted a licence authorising Banns and Marriages on 4th May 1944.

At present Cotton has one Holy Communion Service per month with a regular congregation of five to eight. However for special services, Harvest with Harvest Supper, Christmas etc the congregation can be as many as fifty. New members and visitors are always given a very warm welcome. All services are followed by appropriate refreshments, the church having modern facilities including kitchenette and accessible access and toilet.

St John's has an excellent working relationship with Holy Trinity, Oakamoor, sharing services, fundraising and social events.

FUTURE

St John's is situated adjacent to the now derelict Cotton College. At present this is owned by a property developer who is intending to provide at least 70 new dwellings of various types and sizes on the site. When this development is completed, St John's Church is in an excellent position to provide a valuable village asset able to offer a place of worship and a venue for social activities.



SCHOOLS

There are two CE Primary Schools in the benefice.

St Werburgh's CE Primary School is a flourishing village school situated in Kingsley with close ties to St Werburgh's Church.

A letter school leadership team:

St. Werburgh's CE Primary School is a smaller than average rural primary school with a strong Christian ethos situated in the Staffordshire Moorlands. Situated in the small village of Kingsley, the school has close church and parish links. The school is part of The Moorlands Primary Federation, which currently consists of nine small schools. There are currently 156 children on role; it is a single form entry school where children join us in Reception and leave us at the end of year 6.

St. Werburgh's Church has always had a close and meaningful relationship with St. Werburgh's CE Primary School. Throughout the school year, pupils, staff, parishioners and the wider community come together to celebrate weekly services, both within school and church.

We, as a 'family', celebrate festivals and days of importance, with the children eagerly leading and participating in these services.

The incumbent in place has continually helped guide our children in both understanding the Christian faith and developing their own personal spirituality. Through facilitating Confirmation, taking an active role on our board of trustees, and even joining us to support our nativities and productions, St. Werburgh's Church is an integral part of life in our school.

We eagerly look forward to being part of the church's journey in the search for a new incumbent.

Should you require any further information about the school please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards

Miss N Ainsworth, School Leader
Mr C Casey, RE Lead
Mr J Eccles, Trust CEO

The Valley Primary School, Oakamoor

This is a small rural school situated in the heart of the village and rated Outstanding by Ofsted.

The school shares services with Oakamoor Church and the Lead Teacher has been fortunate in also forging links with the nearby Free Church, with one of the ministers participating in assemblies at school. On occasions the children have visited the Free Church for services.

The school looks forward to meeting our new Rector.

THANK YOU FOR READING OUR PROFILE. WE ARE PRAYING FOR YOU AS YOU CONSIDER WHETHER YOU ARE CALLED TO BE OUR NEW PRIEST IN CHARGE.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU AND A WARM WELCOME IS ASSURED.