

## United Benefice of Criffins with Dudleston and Welsh Frankton



**St Matthew Criffins**



**St Mary the Virgin Dudleston**



**St Andrew Welsh Frankton**

## Contents

<b>Page 3</b>	<b>Foreword from the Bishop of Shrewsbury</b>
<b>Page 4</b>	<b>Foreword from the Archdeacon of Salop</b>
<b>Page 5</b>	<b>Foreword from the Rural Dean</b>
<b>Page 6</b>	<b>Map of the Deanery</b>
<b>Page 7</b>	<b>Context</b>
<b>Page 7</b>	<b>Role Description</b>
<b>Page 8</b>	<b>Person Specification</b>
<b>Page 8</b>	<b>What we can offer you</b>
<b>Page 9</b>	<b>The Church Leadership</b>
<b>Page 9</b>	<b>Our Benefice</b>
<b>Page 10</b>	<b>Discipleship, Vocation &amp; Evangelism</b>
<b>Page 11</b>	<b>The Churches</b>
<b>Page 16</b>	<b>Criftins CE Primary School</b>
<b>Page 17</b>	<b>Church Finances</b>
<b>Page 18</b>	<b>The Vicarage</b>

## Foreword from Bishop Sarah

The Diocese of Lichfield is a diverse, rich and exciting place to live and work. It lies at the heart of England, not just geographically but culturally and socially. There are areas of spectacular natural beauty that sit beside the legacy of centuries of industry and commerce, areas of urban deprivation and rural poverty beside places of aspiration, growth and hope.

What unites us as a Diocese is the invitation to “Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad”. St Chad, the first Bishop of Lichfield, challenges us to humble, faithful and courageous mission in this part of the Midlands and in this generation. We are committed to the mutual flourishing of faithful Anglicans of all traditions, and to welcoming and honouring people of all backgrounds. We are inspired by our Diocesan Vision:

*“As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad, we pray that the two million people in our diocese encounter a church that is confident in the gospel, knows and loves its communities, and is excited to find God already at work in the world. We pray for a church that reflects the richness and variety of those communities. We pray for a church that partners with others in seeking the common good, working for justice as people of hope.”*

We have identified three priorities as we seek to realise this vision more fully: to developing discipleship, encouraging vocation and inspiring evangelism. These priorities help us focus our work in all the varied forms of Christian life in the Diocese, in our parishes, Fresh Expressions, Schools, Chaplaincies and the Cathedral.

The priest appointed to the post of Priest-in-Charge in the benefice of Criftins with Dudleston and Welsh Frankton would be accepting an invitation to join us in this pilgrimage of faith. We will do all we can to support you to grow as a disciple, deepen your vocation and be a confident bearer of the good news of Jesus Christ so that you are equipped and ready to do the same for those with whom you are called to share in ministry. Is God calling you to join us?

+Sarah, Shrewsbury

## Foreword from the Archdeacon of Salop

### *Criftins, Dudleston and Welsh Frankton*

A satsuma is not a small version of an orange and a rural church is not a small version of an urban church. The distinctive vocation of a rural church springs precisely from the fact that it is small. As Michael Langrish put it:

*“Small really can be beautiful. In a big world the small church can remain intimate. In a fast world the small church can remain steady. In a complex world the small church can remain simple. In a noisy world the small church can be a place for listening. In an anonymous world, the small church should be able to call us by name.*

*To achieve such a wonderful calling the rural church concentrates on presence, participation and prophecy.”*

The anchor of the church’s presence is the building. Bishop Redfern said that the building ‘is more important than the Vicar or congregation. The building is dependable, holy and transcendent in a way the (non-resident) vicar and struggling congregation cannot hope to incarnate.’ If so, a major challenge is how to capitalise on the building and take it from being a shrine into a community hub which has something to offer all members of the community, regardless of their faith commitment. Such a move will require patience and determination.

The key to participation is to remain fuzzy round the edges and flexible at the centre. There must be warmth and enthusiasm to welcome those who come for Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals or even for Festivals like Christmas, Easter, and Harvest. There must be occasional activities that are not overtly Christian, but which make space for people to feel comfortable inside the church. There must be a willingness to receive from the community as well as to give to it. Such openness will require careful listening and imaginative, costly innovation.

Prophecy is in great demand in the rural context. The countryside has suffered neglect from decisions taken at Westminster leaving many rural communities stripped of vital services and facilities. The elderly become isolated; the young forced to move out; newcomers often looking for a second home. And then there are all the issues facing the farmers who find themselves forced to the bottom of the ‘food chain’ as supermarkets and other major investors refuse to treat them as equal partners. Not to mention the expensive revolution in agricultural methods required by the climate change agenda. To be prophetic will mean the church acknowledging and engaging with the fallout from these injustices and changes.

So rural ministry offers an exciting and exacting challenge to any minister of the Gospel. That challenge can be met as 0.5 priest because you will not face it alone but with the love, support and collaboration of three dedicated congregations. If such a prospect stirs you then come and see. Come and see if God is calling you to serve Him in these parishes and to share in their work of extending God’s kingdom in their local communities.

Paul W Thomas

## **Foreword from the Rural Dean**

Ellesmere Deanery is a small deanery consisting of 14 churches, split into 4 benefices and 1 single church parish in the small market town of Ellesmere. The Deanery is not far from the Welsh borders and mountain views are visible throughout the deanery. There are also several meres, the largest being at Ellesmere, created by the retreating glacier at the end of the last ice age. The area offers plenty of places to stretch your legs, all of which makes for a great place to explore and enjoy your days off.

The Church has historically been important to these communities and this was seen to still be the case during the recent pandemic, offering much needed support both physically and spiritually. Coming out of the pandemic most churches have seen their congregations return, with new people joining them. As a deanery we have been working hard at maintaining and building connections with our communities and seeking to reach people where they are. We have recognized the challenges of ageing and widely spread communities and the need for good communication. Going forward we are seeking as a deanery to do more together instead of each trying to repeat the same thing across all parishes. We are working at supporting each other with training and resources and the sharing of expertise, so that we are all better equipped to serve God in our communities and to make the Good News of Christ known.

The Deanery Chapter, which includes those with Permission to Officiate meet on a monthly basis for mutual support and pray and occasionally we invite a speaker to these meetings.

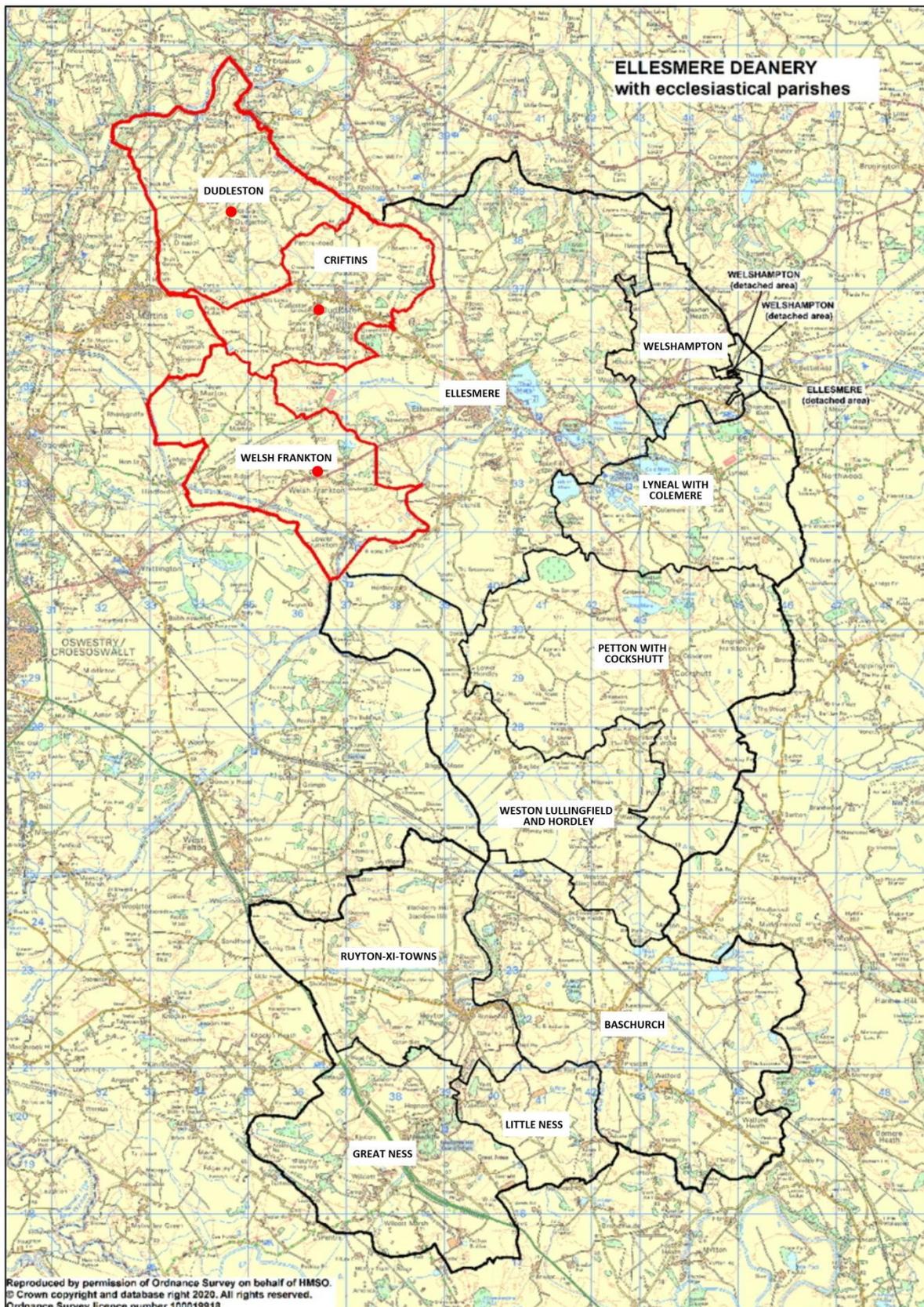
The Deanery Synod meets three times a year where speakers are often invited to address not only the synod but also members of all our communities. We seek to make these meetings informative and helpful to our churches and communities. In 2022 we held for the first time a Deanery Day where we invited the Bishop of Shrewsbury to speak. It was a day of good discussion and conversations where friendships were made and people shared with one another. Many asked for the day to be repeated each year and we are looking at this for 2023.

As a deanery we look to support each other and welcome you to come and join us in this often unknown county of outstanding natural beauty.

Rural Dean: the Revd. Linda Cox

Assistant Rural Dean: the Revd. Pat Hawkins

# Map of the Deanery



## **Context**

The Benefice is situated in the rural idyll of north Shropshire, 2 miles from Ellesmere and about 7 miles from Oswestry and is on the western edge of the Diocese of Lichfield near the North Wales border. It comprises three rural parishes with one church in each village: St. Matthew's in Criftins, St Mary's in Dudleston and St Andrew's in Welsh Frankton.

The 0.5 post is for a priest in charge, with ongoing support from 2 retired priests. The role also offers the opportunity to be involved in the worshipping life of Criftins CE Primary School, (recently assessed by Ofsted and described in a recent SIAMS report as outstanding), as well as being an ex-officio Foundation Governor. See page 16

There is also part time administrative support of up to 4 hours a week (plus a lot of local knowledge!)

## **The Role Description**

### **We are seeking someone who**

- Can communicate the Christian faith in innovative, imaginative, and creative ways
- Can encourage the congregations to effectively witness their faith and build their prayer life and worship
- Is pro-active and can provide us with strong, positive leadership and direction, enabling us to develop a vision for the future
- Can identify the unique gifts of others, encouraging them to develop and flourish both individually and as part of a team
- Shares ministry as appropriate and works collaboratively with others
- Has the ability to inspire and engage families and support the established work with children and young people, including Messy Church, Youth Group and occasional confirmation groups
- Can support the links between the three churches of the benefice
- Is enthusiastic about pastoral work within the local community
- Can further develop the relationship with Criftins C of E Primary School

### **What the children of Criftins School would like**

- Someone who is kind and funny
- A story teller
- Someone who will come and help us learn more about God
- Someone who will listen to and answer our questions
- Someone who will invite us to church
- Someone who will come and do Journey Days with us and have lunch with us

## The Person Specification

### Experience

#### Essential:

- Effective teaching ministry to deepen discipleship

#### Desirable:

- Experience of rural parish life
- Experience of leading school worship and contributing to RE in a church controlled primary school
- Experience of co-ordinating and embracing different styles of worship and mission
- Transferable skills from beyond a church context

### Skills and competencies

- The ability to preach to all ages
- The organisational skills to lead, manage and grow the benefice
- The ability to meet the challenges of the ever changing world while respecting and supporting traditional worship
- The ability to engage effectively with those on the fringe of the church
- An understanding of changing patterns of mission and ministry in the Church.
- The ability to ensure the churches are engaging effectively with the local community
- The ability to engage all ages and spark their interest in the Christian faith

### General attributes:

- An enthusiasm to work in and be part of a rural community
- Effective communication with all ages and social backgrounds within the wider community
- Commitment to church growth
- A healthy approach to managing an effective work/life balance and be a self starter

## What we can offer

- Part time administrative support of up to 4 hours a week (plus a lot of local knowledge!)
- Enthusiastic PCC support
- Prayer support
- Willingness to collaborate
- Respect for days off and holiday entitlement
- Full reimbursement of benefice expenses
- Support for time for ongoing training
- The assistance of a Safeguarding Officer

## **The Church Leadership**

There are 2 retired priests in the Benefice, and also 2 members of a lay mandated ministry team who lead services, usually at Welsh Frankton.

There is a voluntary Youth Group leader who also leads family services at Criftins.

There is a Messy Church team.

## **Our Benefice**

### **Employment and connectivity**

Employment in the area includes farming and related industries, tourism and leisure.

However, because of its good connectivity to road, rail and international airports, and the local railway station at Gobowen, which serves Shrewsbury, Birmingham, Wrexham, Chester and Crewe, only being about 15 minutes drive away, there is a proportion of people who work further afield.

### **Schools**

There are excellent schools in both public and private sectors, including Criftins CE Primary, and Lakelands secondary school in Ellesmere, Ellesmere College, Oswestry School, Moreton Hall and universities at Chester, Wrexham and Shrewsbury.

### **Medical care**

There are GP surgeries in Ellesmere, Oswestry, and Overton and hospitals in Shrewsbury and Wrexham, and the world famous Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital at Gobowen.

### **Amenities**

Although the district is rural, it has several characterful and lively market towns nearby with lots of independent shops. Ellesmere was recently identified as one of the best places to live and is a popular tourist destination attracting people to enjoy the meres, the canals, birdwatching, restaurants etc. It is also well known for its Sites of Special Scientific Interest including the internationally recognised 'Shropshire Meres and Mosses'.

There are libraries in Ellesmere and Oswestry, both offering a lot more than just books!

### **Sporting and leisure**

Locally these including tennis, bowls, badminton, snooker, cricket, swimming, rugby, sailing, football. There are also plenty of opportunities to become involved with local choirs, a community arts group and various other societies.

The area is a good place for walking locally with the Offa's Dyke Path and the Shropshire Way being very near. And within a reasonable distance, the Shropshire Hills, North Wales Snowdonia and the Welsh coast.

There are also professional theatres at Shrewsbury and Mold (both 45 minutes away), so there's something for everybody!

### **History**

If it's history you are interested in: look no further! Old Oswestry Hill Fort and Whittington Castle are on the doorstep and within an hour the historic towns of Chester, Shrewsbury and Ironbridge as well as several National Trust properties.

## Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism

### Activities and programmes

Benefice-wide Lent course including soup lunch.

Fellowship Group.

Also we organise many events e.g. Harvest suppers and lunches, garden parties, quiz nights, as individual churches and across the benefice, not forgetting wonderful afternoon teas run by members of Youth Group!

### Children and youth work:

*Messy Church*, bi-monthly, Sunday mornings at St Matthew's with average attendance of 16 children plus parents.

*Youth Group*, often producing confirmation candidates, meets on Sunday evenings at St Matthew's. There are 12 on the register but numbers vary. It was previously led by the incumbent, assisted by the Youth Leader.

Both programmes are attended by young people from across the Benefice.



**Christmas Messy Church**



**Messy Church in the kitchen!**



**Frontal made by Messy Church**

Schools work: Criftings Primary School (C. of E. controlled) has 99 pupils (4-11)  
See page 16 for details

### Communication

A weekly email is sent out across the benefice, and cascaded by church wardens to those not on email. During Covid this replaced the longstanding monthly Church Newsletter, delivered free to every house in the Benefice. The Newsletter, part funded by a grant from the local authority Parish council, is now gradually being re-established although it is hoped that the weekly message will continue.

All the parishes use Facebook to advertise their services and events.

### Pastoral offices

*Baptisms:* an average of 1 per church each year.

All baptisms are welcomed, preferably in the context of a Family Service. Baptism preparation meetings/visits are made by the incumbent.

*Weddings:* An average of one – two per church each year.

Marriage preparation meetings/visits are made by the incumbent.

The PCCs have a tradition of allowing the re-marriage of divorcees although this would also depend on the views of the priest. We also offer a service of Prayer and Dedication following a Civil Marriage.

*Funerals:* An average of 2-3 per church each year and 1-2 per parish at the Crematorium: all conducted by the incumbent, neighbouring or retired local clergy.



**Benefice Nativity Crib Festival held at St Andrew's**

## **The Churches**

The three churches work as a United Benefice, although each retains its own PCC. Generally all three use a simple interactive liturgy in modern language and all of them have Dementia Friendly status. Dudleston and Criftins are open every day, Welsh Frankton is open on the 1st and 3rd weekends.

<b>Monthly Services</b>	<b>Dudleston</b>	<b>Criftins</b>	<b>Welsh Frankton</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday	Communion <b>9.30</b>	No service	Communion <b>11.00</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday	No service	Communion <b>10.30</b>	Morning Service <b>11.00</b> Lay led
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday	Morning Service or Matins <b>9.30</b>	Family Service <b>10.30</b> or Messy church <b>11.00</b>	Communion <b>11.00</b>
4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	No service	Communion <b>10.30</b>	Morning Service <b>11.00</b> Lay led
5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	Joint service <b>10.30</b> (rotating around the churches)		

## Welcome to St Matthew's, Criftins

The Parish of Criftins is one of the larger villages in the rural area of Ellesmere, with approximately 800 residents. The population is roughly in line with the demographic profile in Shropshire – not overcrowded, and with age ranges weighted in the over 40's bracket, notwithstanding the younger children who attend the school. St Matthew's has 38 people on its Electoral Roll with an average congregation of about 12.

The age profile depends on the type of service: for Morning Service and Communion the majority are over 60, but for Family Services and youth-based services there is a younger profile.

The style of worship is gently traditional with an eclectic mix of influences (Hymn book - Anglican Hymns Old and New) There are services three times a month at 10.30, which include monthly or twice monthly communion, bi-monthly Messy Church, Youth Group, special services for the major festivals, a regular Bible study / fellowship group (meets at a private house). Music is downloaded under licence via a laptop or provided by an occasional organist. There is also a let-down screen for playing videos etc. And teas and coffees are always enjoyed after a service!



**Criftins Carol Service**

The church building, situated just off the B5068 Ellesmere to St Martins road, dates from the 1870's and is in good repair. The versatile seating with a mix of chairs and pews accommodates about 150 people, as well as giving the option of space for hosting Lent courses, meetings, and activities such as Messy Church.



**Criftins Church interior**

There is a kitchen, a WC, and a small upstairs meeting room which is suitable for small groups. The building is kept unlocked through the week for private prayer. There is also a well maintained graveyard and a church field including a wild flower area. Although there is no church hall, Criftins Parish Hall is about 10 minutes walk away and hosts a good number of community events as well as bigger church social events.

## **Welcome to St Mary's, Dudleston**

We are a border parish with a population of approximately 250, with 39 people on the Electoral Roll, and our boundary divides the Dioceses of Chester and Lichfield, the Counties of Shropshire and Clwyd and the Countries of England and Wales.

It is a rural parish and at its centre stands the ancient church of St Mary's, located just south of the B5069 St Martins to Overton road.

Our beautiful church dates back to Norman times but has a Saxon preaching cross which probably stood on the Roman road Street Dinas. Hundreds of years of worship have taken place on this site looking north, south, east and west across the Welsh hills and the Cheshire plain. The church also stands at the centre of the daily life of our parish bringing the community together not just for the traditional seasonal services but to all manner of events, usually involving 'food'!



**Dudleston Church interior**

We meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays and a regular congregation of about 15 attend for services of Morning Worship, Holy Communion or Matins from the Shorter Prayer book, all of which are followed by coffee and a chat.

Our church would be described as traditional but relaxed and friendly. (Hymn book - Hymns Ancient and Modern) Our congregation is regular, ranging in age from 9 to 90. The building is in good order and we have a small kitchen and disabled toilet. We have two organists but would like to expand our sound system to enable us to have recorded music when needed. We have an old, closed churchyard cared for by local sheep! Our newer churchyard which is open for burials is maintained by volunteers.

We do not have our own church hall but use the Parish Hall in Criftins regularly.

The PCC is very active and determined to keep the church going and growing together in faith for the parish it serves.

Our relationship with the other two churches in the benefice is very strong. We had a Jubilee lunch together in June which was a wonderful event.



**Dudleston & Criftins Jubilee Party  
(Criftins Parish Hall)**

We organise a wide variety of events, yes, to raise funds but to also bring the community together which is even more important since the Covid lockdown.

It is always a hot ticket for our suppers, concerts, summer fete or Carols by candlelight.



**Dudleston Garden Fete**

We have very much a team approach at Dudleston, so there will be a very willing and enthusiastic group of volunteers behind you. The vicar won't have to clean the church, wind the clock, polish the brass, or mow the grass in the churchyard! The PCC and volunteers look after the practical jobs and housekeeping in our church.

We also work closely with the other benefice PCC's, a relationship we are keen to maintain and grow.

At the heart of life at St Mary's is a very strong sense of community, if the church was not here there would be no community. Whether you have lived in the village all your life or you have just moved in, anyone and everyone is welcome.

### **Welcome to St Andrew's, Welsh Frankton**

The parish has a population of approximately 250, with 39 people on the Electoral Roll. Our style might be described as relaxed traditional (Hymn book -Songs of Fellowship), with good congregational involvement e.g. readings and intercessions. Our two young adults are currently at university but are very involved with services when at home. Evangelism is quite low key, but nevertheless definitely present.

There are 2 Communion services and 2 lay led services a month, all at 11am. Special services include Baptism Anniversary services with a Bible story puppet show, organised by the Mothers' Union, to maintain contact with baptism families; a Rogation Service in May, a Patronal service on Advent Sunday (with much cake!) as well as a very popular Crib Service on Christmas Eve.



**Welsh Frankton interior**



**Welsh Frankton Baptism Anniversary**

Music is provided by an occasional organist, otherwise CDs or ukuleles if suitable.

The regular congregation is 10-15, with numbers slowly increasing, sometimes supplemented by members of the other churches. Also, since the nearby chapel closed recently, several members have become part of our church family. We are very welcoming to visitors and it is not unusual for everyone to be there long after the service and coffee have finished. Our congregation is always very willing to contribute in practical ways. We are also interested in re-introducing a housegroup.



**Welsh Frankton Harvest Flower Festival**

The grade 2\* church building was built in 1858 and is beside the busy A495 road. It has a sound system, and is fully accessible and a toilet has been installed together with some kitchen facilities. And although there are some problems, there is no outstanding emergency work necessary.

The churchyard is managed for the benefit of wildlife and has been given a gold Churchyard Award from Caring for God's Acre. We have some assistance from the Payback Team (community service).

Although there is no church hall, the Village Hall with whom we have a very good relationship, adjoins the church car park and we are able to have our social / outreach events there.



**Welsh Frankton Patronal Celebration Lunch  
(local pub – The Narrowboat)**



## **Criftins CE Primary School**

Our partnership with the Church is crucial for our pupils to understand the school ethos and its place within the Diocese of Lichfield and its Church of England Heritage. We are a happy vibrant school with strong core values and a passion for every child to understand who they are and the contribution they can make to the world.

We have had a strong relationship with each member of the clergy over the years and they have made an impact on our school through Collective Worship, Church Services, Journey Days and as part of the Governing Body of our Federation.

Have a look at the website and explore to see our children, staff and community at work.

<https://www.criftins.shropshire.sch.uk/christian-distinctiveness/>



**Children from Criftins School exploring St Matthew's Church**



**Criftins School entertain the Community Coffee Club  
(Criftins Parish Hall)**

## **Church Finances**

### **St. Matthew Criftins Finances**

After a period of stringency and special measures, St Matthews has rebuilt reserves, which now stand at c. £20,000 and we will comfortably meet the future Common Fund contribution. (On current reduced rates we pay approximately £5,500 per annum.)

We have a contactless terminal, for donations and, now, post Covid, look forward to resuming our hitherto active and successful fundraising activities. We continue to manage the not inconsiderable costs associated with an open and well visited churchyard. Mowing is done courtesy of a Payback Team, but other management is by volunteer support, and funded by donations or church finance.

### **St Mary Dudleston Finances**

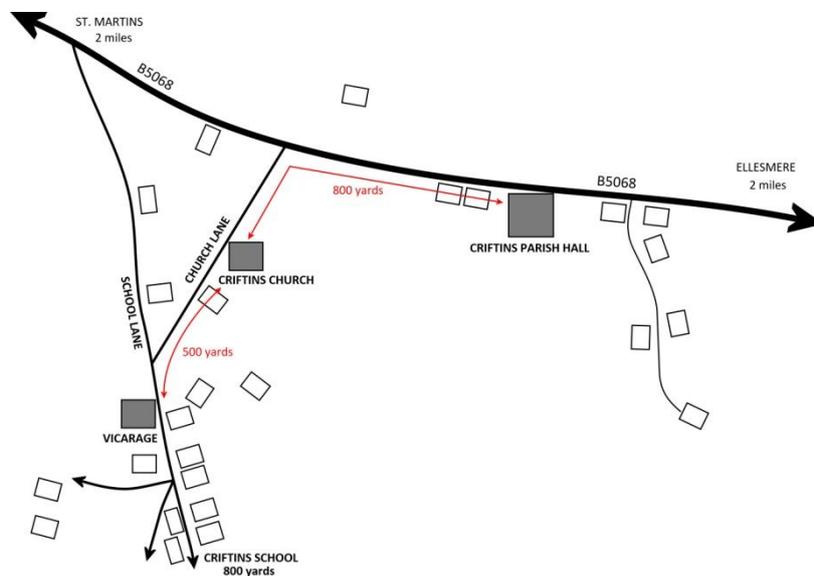
Keeping the money coming in is a constant worry but we have always paid our Parish Share to the Diocese. Despite that we make an annual gift at Harvest time to a chosen charity which in recent years has been a school project in South Sudan. At present our Common Fund contribution is £678 per month and we have a working balance of about £5000 and £1000 in reserve.

### **St Andrew Welsh Frankton Finances**

We are financially sound, generating a surplus of approximately £1600 for 2022. This was in large part due to fees for christenings, funerals and a greater than usual number of weddings, although, post Covid, the regular collections have held up well. Currently we have a working balance of about £7800 and reserves of £22,940. The Common Fund contribution is approximately £9000 per annum and is paid in full. We also make charitable donations to, e.g. the Bishop's Lent Appeal and the local children's hospice, Hope House.

## The Vicarage

The benefice offers a 4-bedroomed family home built in the late 1970s, with garage and gardens, located in Criftins. It has mains gas, full central heating and has recently had a new boiler. The vicarage is a few hundred yards from Criftins church, and a short distance from a vibrant and busy Parish Hall where the Post Office and local Bar are located as well as from Criftins C of E Primary School. Also it is 5 minutes walk from a regular daytime bus route on the B5068 between Ellesmere and Oswestry.



**The Vicarage in relation to Criftins church, The Parish Hall and the school**