

St. John's Alvanley and Manley : Parish Profile

Alvanley and Manley are two small Cheshire villages near to Helsby and Frodsham, easily accessible from the M56 motorway. The parish of St. John's has two church buildings and in recent years has been served by a house-for-duty vicar. In Alvanley the church stands next to the pub, primary school and village hall, at the hub of the village. Manley is a scattered community. The church is on the road between Alvanley and Ashton.

The heading on our notice-boards is 'A Place of Worship Where All Are Welcome'. We want to embrace all comers, whatever their story, and share the Good News in word and action. Building community is a part of that. There are no longer any shops, bus services or obvious meeting-places in either village – but there is still the sense that the church has some of its traditional significance as the 'parish church' at the heart of the neighbourhood.

The Church Buildings

St. John the Evangelist is the parish church of the two villages of Alvanley and Manley. There are two buildings; the larger sandstone church with an adjoining burial ground is in the village of Alvanley and the smaller, red brick church, known at one time as the Mission Church, serves the village of Manley.

St John's Alvanley is a much-loved country church. It was built in 1859 and seats up to 220 people. It has a small pipe organ and an effective amplification system. The heating system is reliable and effective when put on early enough.



The church is in an excellent state of repair and has just received an encouraging quinquennial inspection. It does not have a toilet but the church has access to the toilet in the village hall next door.



The churchyard contains around 230 graves with room for approximately another 30 new graves. It is well maintained by Community Pay-Back. The ancient wall has just been repaired with help from a local grant.

St John's, Manley was built as a mission church in 1906. It seats up to 80 people. Funerals and baptisms are rarely held there and it is not licensed for weddings. The piano is rarely used and the building is small enough not to need an amplification system.



The heating system is effective when put on early enough. The church building is in excellent order and has just had some windows repaired with help from a local grant. There is no churchyard.



The Vicarage is 47, Ardern Lea, a pleasant 1970's detached, 4 bedroomed house with a study. There is one en-suite bathroom, a separate bathroom and a downstairs toilet. New double glazing was fitted when the previous incumbent arrived and the house is now warm and



serviceable. The living room is large and light and is used for parish meetings.

The garden is well maintained with borders and front and rear lawns. The back windows look out on to beautiful countryside. The house is a 5-minute walk from Alvanley church and a 5 minute drive from Manley church. A large Tesco is also a 5-minute drive away in Helsby.

The Local Community

At the time of the 2011 census, Alvanley had a population of 472. Since then, it will have increased a little. As well as the church, the village has a very popular pub, The White Lion, which is well patronised both by locals and visitors; a cricket club with a number of adult and junior teams; a village hall which is well used by various local societies, clubs, private hire, and as a hall for church social occasions. The local primary school is run as a Federated School with Manley Village School and has approx. 70 pupils, 12 of whom live in Alvanley. There is a small estate of 1970s large detached houses and a few newer properties built in the last ten years, but most of the housing dates from many years ago. Alvanley is only a mile from Foxhill, the diocesan Retreat Centre.



As well as the church, Manley, with a population of 614 at the 2011 census, has a village hall hosting local clubs and societies as well as private functions; across the road from the hall is Manley playing field where the church's biennial Spring Fair takes place. On the edge of the village is Manley Mere, a watersports' centre and adventure trail. Manley Village School has approx 70 pupils, 17 of whom live in Manley. Most of the pupils from both schools transfer to Helsby High School at the age of 11. Most of the housing in Manley was built many years ago.

The countryside around both villages, including Delamere Forest, is very popular with nature lovers, walkers and cyclists.



Church Life

We want to provide a warm welcome to everyone, whatever their background. There is a cheerful, friendly atmosphere; after services, people stay chatting over coffee for a very long time!

Although average attendance at morning services is only around 20, we have a large number of supporters who will help with activities. The Electoral Roll is 89.

The church tradition is central churchmanship. Morning services alternate between the two churches. Evening services are all at Alvanley. This is the monthly pattern:

1st Sundays	10am First Sunday Worship	Alvanley
	6.30pm BCP Communion	Alvanley
3rd and 5th Sundays	10am CW Communion	Alvanley
2nd & 4th Sundays	10am CW Communion	Manley
All except first Sundays	6.30pm BCP Evensong	Alvanley

There is a small core of worshippers who attend both churches but a number of those in Alvanley don't attend at Manley. 'First Sunday Worship' is geared towards all ages and sometimes attracts Baptism families. It is a short non-Eucharistic service at which leaders are not usually robed. Alb and stole are worn for Communion services.

We do not have a regular organist; music is generally on CD. We do invite organists for special services such as Harvest, Remembrance Sunday, Carol Service, Christingle. (For a small parish, these are surprisingly well-attended. There were over 160 at the last Christingle.)



Palm Sunday

For CW Communion, we have printed service sheets that change with the seasons of the church year. There is a simple liturgy for First Sunday Worship and a version of BCP Communion on a service-sheet for the evening services. Bible readings are printed on the back of the weekly news-sheet. We have no Readers or licensed lay workers. Members of the congregation read both Bible readings and do intercessions. Three are licensed to assist with the chalice.

We have a weekly discussion group to talk about faith and life ('Wednesday Weekly'). There are usually only 4 or 5 of us.

'Village Links' is a monthly social gathering with a speaker attended by about 15 people, not all church members.

As we have no church hall, all our meetings (including PCC every other month) are held at the Vicarage.

Occasional Offices 2017

Weddings	-	4	(more than usual)
Funerals	-	3	(less than usual)
Baptisms	-	4	



We also had a Confirmation service with 4 adult candidates and 1 being received into the Church of England. (Confirmations have usually been held about every 3 to 4 years). Follow up-meetings have been encouraging and it has been heartening to see new faces over the last year.



A notable event was 'Thy Kingdom Come' week in the spring of 2017 where we opened the church to welcome people to some original and imaginative prayer-stations and served drinks outside in the churchyard.



Community Connections

- The church produces a monthly community newsletter and delivers it to every house in the parish. As well as a letter from the vicar and details of church events, the schools and village groups advertise and report on their activities.
- We have a good relationship with our two village schools. Previous vicars have been going in to each school on alternate weeks to take assemblies. (Some have served as governors). Although they are no longer Church of England, the schools have a Christian ethos and come into our churches for their special services at festival times.
- We also have strong connections with our two village halls as members of our congregation serve on their committees and help with activities.
- The church runs a monthly drop-in coffee morning with seasonal refreshments at Manley village hall for local people. Up to about 20 people from the neighbourhood usually come and enjoy socialising.
- At Alvanley village hall, we run an annual Harvest Lunch which is also patronised by a good number of people who are not church members.
- We have very good links with the White Lion and hold a Christmas meal there every year. In 2017 there were 40 people.

The last two events raise funds for the church as well as bringing people together. We rely heavily on fund-raising events in order to meet our financial obligations and all these events have a dual purpose. They enable us to pay our parish share and they also create opportunities for people to work together, building community identity and strengthening relationships.

Manley Spring Fair

This is by far the biggest of our fund-raising projects and has grown over 25 years into an extremely popular major May Bank Holiday event, attracting people from a wide area; in 2017 we had over 1000 adults plus many children.



The whole community is represented. Local clubs and groups, plus the village schools raise funds for themselves and for the church. A tremendous range of activities and entertainments, sponsorship from a local firm and the involvement of Delamere Outdoor Fitness with a 7K Fun Run helped to bring last year's income to £6,000.



The fair is a wonderful opportunity for everyone together to develop their skills for the benefit of the community but because it lot of work, we have



to pull gifts and local is such a recently

decided to make it biennial and put other smaller events into our calendar such as a Village Brunch, an Open Garden Trail and a Family Funfest.

Finance

In 2016 the weekly giving amounted to £16,715. The diocesan parish share was £19,692, showing the on-going need for fund-raising. Total receipts were £30,880, total payments £34,735. In January 2018 the current account totalled £855 and the deposit account £16983

The Future

We have been encouraged to see some new faces in church in the last year and to welcome those who have been confirmed. We have also been encouraged by the success of our community and fundraising events in strengthening our relationships in the neighbourhood and expanding our network of contacts. We want to build on these encouragements as we face the future.

We feel there is potential for growth but as we are a small congregation with limited resources, we have to make sure we are focusing on what is most important...

Our diocesan GAP 4 initiatives focussed on 3 areas: lowering the average age of the congregation, working with our schools, and creating a website. These remain significant challenges. We do have a presence on the Alvanley Village website but would like to see someone from the church developing our 'church near you' website.

We would like a vicar who can relate to all age groups and all types of people and someone who is pastorally sensitive. We would like preaching that is clear and relevant to today's world and someone who will encourage contact with other churches in the locality. We believe we live in an attractive parish with a warm and

welcoming congregation and local community who are used to getting on and getting things done. There is much to offer someone who wants to share and celebrate the love of God in in the countryside.

Summary of qualities we are looking for in a new incumbent:

- Love for God and for people
- Pastoral sensitivity
- Ability to relate to all sorts of people
- Communication skills – especially in preaching (clarity and relevance)
- Desire to build up community spirit
- Enthusiasm for contact with other churches

Churchwardens:

Mrs. Barbara Penketh 01928 722160 barbarapenketh@gmail.com

Woodland Slopes
Alvanley Road
Helsby
WA6 9PU

Mrs. Shirley McCue 01928 724488 atozlabour@btconnect.com

45 The Rock
Helsby
WA6 9AS