

UNITED BENEFICE OF
ST JAMES THE GREAT, AUDLEY
ST JOHN'S, ALSAGERS BANK
ST MARTIN'S, TALKE



FULL TIME PRIEST-IN-CHARGE (VICAR DESIGNATE
FOR ST JAMES AND ST JOHN'S)

Benefice Profile 2025

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Deanery of Newcastle, Diocese of Lichfield



View of the village of Alsagers Bank

We are churches of ordinary people who know God's extraordinary love; so we want to love Jesus, His word, one another, and our communities

CONTENTS

Welcome to Lichfield Diocese	3
Welcome from the Wardens	4
Welcome from Bishop Rob	4
About the Benefice	5
About the Area	6
Our Vision	7
Benefice Opportunities	7
Benefice Challenges	8
Role Description	9
Person Specification	10
What we Have to Offer	10
Benefice Leadership	11
The Parishes	13
St James the Great, Audley	16
St John's, Alsagers Bank	22
St Martin's, Talke	25

WELCOME TO LICHFIELD DIOCESE

Cradled at the intersection of the Midlands and the North, and the interface between England and Wales, the Diocese of Lichfield is the ancient centre of Christianity in what was the Kingdom of Mercia.

We are rightly grateful for the inheritance we have from our first bishop St Chad that leads us to focus on Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism as we live and serve among the communities of Staffordshire, northern Shropshire and the Black Country.

By answering God's call to minister in the Lichfield Diocese you will benefit from being part of a wide family, mixing with people serving in a variety of contexts – from the grittiest inner-city neighbourhoods of Stoke and the Black Country, to the leafiest rural parishes of Staffordshire and Shropshire, to the sparsest upland communities of the Staffordshire Moorlands and Welsh Borders.

As we embrace the widest spectrum of church traditions – evangelistic to catholic, liberal and conservative, choral and charismatic – as we journey together in mission. As a colleague recently put it, it is our goal to be a 'spacious and gracious diocese'.

It is my determination and that of my episcopal colleagues that your calling to minister with us in Lichfield Diocese will be a time of encouragement, fulfilment, challenge and joy. You will not be alone in your ministry; as part of the wider team our colleagues among the diocesan staff keenly bring their various specialisms both spiritual and practical to offer resource and support as you serve our parishes, fresh expressions, schools and chaplaincies.

Michael
Bishop of Lichfield



WELCOME FROM THE WARDENS

We warmly welcome you to the Benefice of Audley, Alsagers Bank and Talke. We are three different churches with three congregations, but united in our goals. We wish to:

- be true to the bible and preach the gospel to the communities surrounding St James, St Martin's and St John's to further God's Kingdom
- welcome everyone whatever their background, colour or creed into our fellowship
- pray together for our own needs, the needs of the wider fellowship and the world
- serve the Lord using the talents with which we have been blessed
- to enable young Christians to grow in their faith and become disciples themselves



It is a joy to worship at our churches where visitors often remark on how welcome they have been made to feel, and where services often leave us feeling uplifted as well as challenged, educated and encouraged.

Living in the vicarage in Audley itself, if you decide to take up a post in this evolving benefice, you will certainly have all the support that you need to make this village your home.

Life in Audley village is a good one; many locals were born, baptised and raised here, and are still living in the village well into their old age.

We look forward to meeting with you, where we can elaborate more on what is just a brief sketch of what our benefice is.

Josie Knight, Brian Hockenhull and Stuart Howle
Wardens of St James, St John's and St Martin's

WELCOME FROM BISHOP ROB

The Benefice of Audley, Alsagers Bank and Talke is a place of great potential. As churches committed to traditional reformed evangelical principles, they are also rooted in their communities and committed to serve them in Jesus' name.

The challenge for the new Vicar Designate will be to build confidence across the variety of church members through clear biblical preaching and vision, to support the pastoral needs of the church community through a time of great change and challenge among the churches, the nation and the Church of England in particular, and therefore help lead the churches with a renewed vision to uphold and proclaim the life transforming truths of the gospel.



There are strong local networks of support from other +Ebbsfleet Network churches and the local DEF, and as an Honorary Assistant Bishop in the Diocese I am delighted to support the Benefice in its discernment of the next chapter in its story of gospel work, and be assured that you will have my full support in the pastoral and sacramental care for your ministry.

Rt Rev Dr Rob Munro
Bishop of Ebbsfleet

ABOUT THE BENEFICE

The Benefice of Alsagers Bank, Audley and Talke in North Staffordshire was created in 2015. The Benefice currently contains three parishes with combined congregations of around 145 members. The three parishes are broadly conservative evangelical, however, as might be expected, there are a range of theological views represented in the pews each Sunday.

When considering the future of the Benefice after 9 years together, we have recognised that whilst Audley and Alsagers Bank are geographically part of the same community, the folk in Talke more naturally lean towards Kidsgrove. The diocesan plan to move St Martin's, Talke from the current benefice to join with St Thomas in Kidsgrove therefore makes a lot of practical and missional sense. During the current vacancy good working relationships with Rev. Iain Baker at St Thomas have been strengthened. Iain, his PCC and the three PCCs of the current benefice are all supportive of this change and are keen to make it work so that our witness to God's love and grace may be seen more clearly in each parish.

St James (Audley) PCC has formally affirmed the Church of England Evangelical Council basis of faith and passed a resolution on the ministry of women, receiving extended episcopal oversight from the Bishop of Ebbsfleet. While St Martin's (Talke) and St John's (Alsagers Bank) have not passed these resolutions, St John's over many years has worked well with vicars and curates who have held this theological position, and St Martin's will be joining with St Thomas Kidsgrove, a parish who hold similar convictions. Therefore, these parishes are happy to follow the theological convictions of St James and seek a male vicar.

We are looking for a full-time incumbent to join us following the resignation from the Church of England in September 2023 of both our previous Vicar, Rev. Simon Tomkins, and full-time Children and Families Minister and Curate, Rev. Scott Seivewright. To prevent further delay in appointment, we are looking to appoint a **Priest-in-Charge (Vicar Designate for St James and St John's)** while the legal processes for the rearrangement of the parishes are completed. Iain Baker was appointed as Curate-in-charge of Talke on 9th February 2025. During the ensuing transitional period a successful candidate would have pastoral responsibility for the two other parishes, and once reorganisation is completed, he would become the Vicar of the new St James, Audley and St John's, Alsagers Bank Benefice.



ABOUT THE AREA

The benefice currently covers about 2,500 hectares, mostly farmland with scattered woodlands and several former mining villages of varying size on the Staffordshire/ Cheshire border. To the northeast is the beautiful Peak District. The Benefice lies close to junction 16 of the M6 giving excellent road links to Manchester, Birmingham, North Wales and beyond. Similarly, there are also good road links to Nottingham and the M1 via A500/A50. There is easy access to both Crewe and Stoke-on-Trent railway stations with regular services taking 1 hour 40 minutes to reach London Euston.



The benefice has a population of just over 12,000 and is situated in the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme, North Staffordshire. The market town of Newcastle-under-Lyme, with a population of 75,000, lies three miles to the southeast, and this adjoins the city of Stoke-on-Trent (population 250,000). Stoke-on-Trent itself is now less of a manufacturing city and more of a retail service centre, providing major areas of shops, entertainment and sporting activities within easy reach of the benefice. The area is also home to the two Universities of Keele and Staffordshire.

Stoke-on-Trent was recorded as the [12th most deprived local authority district](#) in England (out of 123) in 2019 and [people](#) in Newcastle-under-Lyme have a lower disposable income (£18,723) than the national average (£20,425). However, employment rate is high (86% compared to 77% nationally), education skills are slightly higher than average, and most wellbeing scores are higher than the national average. [Average house prices](#) in Newcastle in January 2024 (£201,000) were 40% lower than the Great Britain average.

Ethnic diversity is low, with 93% identifying as white in [Newcastle](#) and 84% in [Stoke](#). Most of the remainder identify as Asian.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever, amen. Ephesians 3:20-21

OUR VISION

To be a church at the heart of our community, where each parishioner feels welcomed and cherished within our fellowship, we want to see:

- The church at the centre of village life, glorifying God through faithful worship and witness
- Families, in particular, drawn to Jesus through our churches
- God's people nurtured and encouraged in their faith, and equipped to serve the Lord locally, nationally, and internationally

We see a ripe harvest field and are yearning to grow in our ministry and mission. We need someone to help shape our vision and lead us forward.

BENEFICE OPPORTUNITIES

1. [An involved congregation.](#) willing to shoulder the work of the benefice, fund its activities and follow its vision. We are committed to accept and follow the pastoral oversight of the incumbent and are looking forward to working together to build disciples and to make Jesus and his saving grace known.
2. [Supportive fellowship.](#) We aim to be faithful brothers and sisters to each other, supportive in times of need and celebrating the good things together. We try hard to love and include those who are seeking and, as yet, have no faith, and those on the margins of the fellowship, and are aware that there is more we could do.
3. [Good community links.](#) We play an active role in celebrating community events, encouraging people into the church buildings seasonally (for example Remembrance Sunday and Christmas) and for special events (such as a recent gospel concert) that include gentle evangelism. Our aim is to help people see Jesus as a living friend rather than an anachronism.



Audley Remembrance Service 2024 was well attended by many groups and individuals from across the community

BENEFICE CHALLENGES

1. [Leading the parishes through the challenges of local benefice restructuring in a time of uncertainty in the Church of England.](#) The divisions within the CoE nationally have been very much felt locally. Over the last 18 months several long-standing members as well as our vicar and curate have decided in good conscience, that they needed to leave the CoE and their church family here. For those who remain, learning to be family together through these times of hurt and uncertainty is a challenge, and the pastoral reorganisation will bring further change. Whilst the existing benefice could have worked more closely, co-operation across the Benefice is good. It includes sharing preachers and service leaders from St James, joint services, a weekly online morning prayer service, home groups, and YouTube streaming of the St James 10.30 service available to all. Moreover, our Administrator works with all the PCCs and Church Wardens (and those of St Martin's) and is a positive unifying force able to help with issues and feed concerns to each other.



Looking across Audley to the Wedgwood monument

2. [Ageing congregations with a real desire to attract more families and younger people.](#) We have the experience and desire to pass on the Gospel message to younger generations and are ready to build on that. The challenge is to encourage new members, particularly young families, and to seek new ways in which we can bring the good news of God's saving grace to each and every member of our benefice.

3. [An overall decline in numbers is an on-going challenge.](#) While this change in attendance pattern is in part a national trend, it is also a residual effect of Covid and especially some people having chosen to leave following the Church of England's recent decisions. Average Sunday attendance at St James was 90 through 2023, falling to 66 after our clergy left in September. However, there is a significant core of people willing to stay with the Church of England, and the benefice, to speak up for the evangelical truths we believe in. There is thus a strong need for sound Gospel-led leadership to guide and reassure those who are committed and those who are uncertain about the future that Biblical teaching is, and will continue to be, central to the life of the Benefice.

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Discipleship

- Guide the vision and strategy to tackle the benefice challenges listed above
- Lovingly grow disciples of all ages
- Shepherd God's people of all backgrounds and experience
- Address the spiritual concerns of those from differing theological viewpoints
- Encourage a drawing together of the congregations of the benefice
- Coordinating pastoral care for local care homes and the housebound
- Encourage development of gifts and skills within the wider church to grow our ministry and mission
- Support groups within the benefice, such as Mothers Union and St James Tots
- Build the church by extending our outreach into the parishes and beyond

Vocation

- Have a clear calling to parish ministry embedded in the life of the village communities
- Be willing to:
 - Reach out to the lost in our communities who do not yet know Jesus
 - Develop ministry to all ages
 - Recognise traditions but be unafraid to try new things
- Have a heart to train, develop and encourage others in paid or lay ministry

Evangelism

- Develop links within our communities recognising the specific opportunities from being immersed in village life
- Rebuild links with schools in the parishes
- Engage in outreach opportunities to attract families and younger people to the fellowship

PERSON SPECIFICATION

The incumbent will:

- Through personal prayer and study submit to the bible's authority in his own life, and so faithfully teach and preach the Word of God to others
- Affirm the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) basis of faith
- Have experience in engaging and communicating the gospel to children and young people to help us rebuild our families work
- Be able to enthuse, motivate, train and nurture others in their faith and giftings to build up the church across the two parishes and beyond (including supporting a curate or youth worker and others in the church family)
- Be strategic in vision, leadership and time management, and work closely with Iain Baker to strengthen the witness of the church across Alsagers Bank, Audley, Kidsgrove and Talke
- Be a team player; happy to include men and women in varying leadership roles, unafraid of giving direction and of letting others take a lead
- Be approachable, pastorally sensitive, and welcoming to all in the parishes, including those outside the church family

WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER

We look forward to welcoming you into our church family. Our congregations will support you in prayer, practical help, and collaborating in the Lord's ministry and in furthering the gospel. Although we are a diverse group of people, we are united in our support for you in both spiritual and practical ways. We are blessed with a diverse range of skills within our congregations to assist you in carrying out your ministry including: leading, preaching, reading, praying, music, technical expertise, pastoral care, and catering. Administrative support is given by our part-time administrator working in the Benefice Office in the Church Hall of St James, within metres of the vicarage. We also undertake to provide financial support for ongoing training and periods of retreat. We are open to other suggestions which will encourage and allow you to mature as a leader.

The vicarage (1 Wilbrahams Walk, Audley ST7 8HL) is a recently refurbished modern detached four-bedroom house with two good sized reception rooms, toilet and kitchen downstairs, and a spacious study. It has a large garden and detached garage. It is situated on a quiet road (unless you count the church bells) less than 100 metres from St James Church in Audley, and a few minutes' walk to the village shops, health centre, dentist, salons and other amenities. Audley is well furnished with schools. There are several groups for pre-school babies and toddlers, three



The vicarage garden

primary schools, a high school for children up to the age of 16, and an independent school for pupils with additional needs. The closest primary school Ravensmead (rated Good by Ofsted in June 2024) is 0.3 miles from the vicarage. The local secondary school, Sir Thomas Boughy Academy (rated Good in March 2022), is 1.2 miles from the vicarage. Post GCSE pupils can attend a sixth form at Alsager School (rated Good in January 2023) or Newcastle College (rated Outstanding in October 2024), both just a few miles away.



BENEFACTE LEADERSHIP



Donna Wilcox

We have three licensed Lay Readers and a team who regularly lead and preach at services across the benefice. Other members of the benefice are involved in reading the lessons, leading prayers, welcoming people and looking after refreshments.

The benefice has a part time Administrator, Donna Wilcox (currently 24 hours per week), based at the office opposite St James Church and employed by St James PCC. A cleaner is also employed at St James. The administrator's post is supported by a grant from the Christian Workers Trust (CWT). The CWT is a registered charity set up and supported by the St James church family. We take the safety of children and vulnerable people seriously, and have an established safeguarding officer, Ann McCabe. Our benefice website holds our up-to-date safeguarding policy and gives details of the Lichfield Diocese Safeguarding Team and other helpful agencies.



Ann McCabe

In addition to the full-time Vicar, for more than 20 years we have employed a Children and Youth Worker/Families Minister within the benefice, paid for through the CWT. Funding could be available for this post in the future.

We also have the support of several nearby parishes including St Thomas in Kidsgrove and St Andrews in the Westlands whose clergy have also affirmed the CEEC basis of faith; and we have a good working relationship with the local Methodist Churches. There is also an active and supportive fellowship of local ministers in the Diocesan Renew (Church Society) group and the Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship.

Communication

We communicate within the benefice by email with details of services (including readings and themes), other meetings, and news of our mission partners. During the interregnum these are monthly but prior to that they were weekly. This is reinforced by our team of preachers and leaders, and our administrator, being active across the benefice, sharing information and listening to issues. We also have a benefice website (www.jmj.org.uk) which lists all the above information, people involved in the benefice, and acts as a repository for preaching podcasts from St James and links to the Sunday YouTube recordings, all free for anyone to access. The benefice Administrator is also contactable by telephone (01782 722146) and e-mail (office@jmj.org.uk).

Pastoral Offices

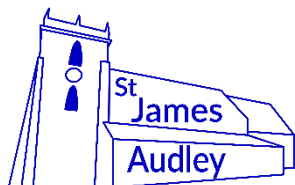
Baptisms are held within the normal services across the benefice. Preparation sessions are given beforehand, either by the Vicar or other members of the fellowship. Thanksgiving services are offered as a way of welcoming families who, following these preparation sessions, do not feel able to make the promises of faith included in the baptism services and are also preceded by preparation classes. In recent years we have joined with St Martin's in Talke and St Thomas's in Kidsgrove on rotation for confirmation services.

Couples seeking marriage within the benefice are also supported by preparation sessions. Funerals are taken by the vicar or a lay reader or sometimes led by a member of the fellowship with particular links to the bereaved. Bereavement Counselling is offered.

Church	Baptisms + Thanksgivings			Marriages			Funerals + Interment of Ashes		
	2024	2023	2022	2024	2023	2022	2024	2023	2022
St James	2 + 0	3 + 3	4 + 3	1	1	2	10 + 1	8 + 4	12 + 1
St John's	0	0	1 + 3	0	0	0	2 + 0	1 + 0	4 + 1
St Martin's	0	0 + 2	1 + 3	0	0	0	7 + 2	5 + 3	11 + 8

THE PARISHES

The new benefice will comprise St James and St John's. St Martin's is also included for information.



St James
Church Street
Audley
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire ST7 8DE

Churchwarden:
Josie Knight



St John's
High Street
Alsagers Bank
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire ST7 8BQ

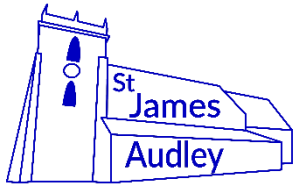
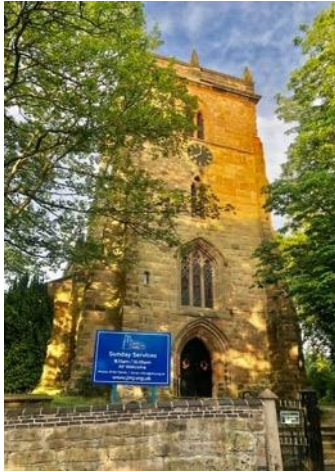
Churchwarden:
Brian Hockenhull



St. Martin's
12 Crown Bank
Talke
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire ST7 1PUT

Churchwarden:
Stuart Howle





Church (Electoral roll)	Service	Style	Average congregation
St James (118)	Sunday 9 am	BCP Morning Prayer	8
	Sunday 10.30 am	Morning Prayer / Holy Communion All-age worship 1 st Sunday in the month <i>Live streamed on YouTube</i>	58
St John's (8)	Sunday 9.15 am	Contemporary Worship / Holy Communion	8
St Martin's (20)	Sunday 6 pm	Evening Prayer	15
Benefice	Friday 9.30 am (Zoom)	Joint morning prayer	7





Carols by Candlelight, 2024

ST JAMES THE GREAT, AUDLEY

Parish Activities and Programmes

For more than fifty years, St James has been led by Vicars who have held an orthodox evangelical position in their preaching and interpretation of the bible.

Discipleship is encouraged by preaching and teaching. We often preach sermons on the same topic across the benefice, with sermon series extending across a number of weeks. These will focus on a particular book or follow a theme and are led by gifted teachers and communicators from within our fellowship. Discipleship is supported by regular activities across the benefice:

- Three active home groups
- Lent and Advent readings and book-of-the-term (we buy a supply and make them available at a discounted rate)
- Periodic seekers' courses such as Christianity Explored
- A vibrant Mothers' Union including regular monthly meetings and trips
- Weekly Tots meetings for local young parents/carers and their children
- Benefice away days

Much thought and effort are made to create a family atmosphere where everyone can feel a sense of belonging and be welcomed and accepted by:

- Holding social events, including men and women's curry nights at one of the two Indian restaurants in Audley and fellowship meals at a local golf club
- Bring-and-share meals to celebrate church festivals and significant milestones for members of the fellowship
- Weekly coffee morning for the local community (run by the Mothers' Union)



St James Mothers Union

- A biennial Christmas Tree Festival where community groups are invited to dress a tree representing their group and along with this a singalong service which sees a church full of mainly non-church folk
- Active engagement of the community in events such as Remembrance Sunday and Christmas that sees the church full (attendance at the main Christmas outreach service in 2024 was 143 but before Covid regularly reached near 300)
- Specific events to engage our neighbours, work colleagues, friends and family and give them the opportunity to consider Christ. Recently we were delighted to host a gospel concert in church where one of our mission partners gave a short talk



Christmas Tree Festival - Dec 2023

Children and Youth Work

Children and young people have been at the heart of the benefice, and what we do has been shaped by helping them to come to faith in Jesus. We currently have few children and young people in the church but are excited to see our St James Tots group thriving. The Tots group have 50 preschool children on the books (plus a waiting list), and they meet weekly in the Church Hall. A recent innovation has been to run the Crib service in Church as part of the last Tots meeting in December. This brings the families into the main building and has been very well received.

In the past we have run for older children and would hope to restart these as numbers allow:

- Weekly Sunday groups
- A weekly youth club
- Holiday clubs, both locally and joining with national events
- After-school clubs



St James Tots at the Crib Service,
Dec 2024



Outreach concert - Dec 2024

Schools work

Until recently, we had a regular presence in the primary schools through our schools' workers and clergy, and we continue to have good relationships with the teachers. Ravensmead Primary School has continued to hold services in the church.

Styles and Traditions of Worship

St James is a complementarian, conservative evangelical church, emphasising Biblical teaching. While individual leaders occasionally use words from other sources that fit with the service theme and type, with oversight from the vicar, we primarily use Common Worship liturgy.



10.30 worship at St James

and songs, from the traditional to more modern, music for worship is provided by a faithful group of musicians including piano/organ, guitar and trumpet, and occasionally music videos.

Refreshments are served in the church hall after the 10:30 service

9.30 am Friday Morning Prayer on Zoom (up to 12)

A contemplative service using the 1662 Prayer Book, bringing together people from across the benefice. It is led by a rota of benefice members.

Services

9.00 am Holy Communion/Morning Prayer

A quiet, reflective said service using the 1662 Prayer Book

10.30 am Worship

Services of Holy Communion, Morning Prayer and All-Age Worship throughout the month. These are lively services suitable for a wide age range. Due to the changing demographic profile of the church we very sadly no longer have regular children's groups, but activity bags are available for any children who attend.

The services are projected onto a screen and service cards are also available. Audio-visuals are provided by a rota of volunteers, and services are streamed on YouTube for those who are away or find it difficult to get to the church building.

We use a range of hymns



Coffee in the Church Hall after the 10.30 service

The Congregation

For many, St James is their local church as they live in the parish. A good number also come from outside the parish, drawn by expository biblical teaching and the theologically evangelical position of the church. The majority of the regular congregation is now age 55 years or above; as families have grown up, we currently have few children and youth. We long for this to change to ensure the continuing mission of the church.

We have a PCC of 11 members, 3 of whom are on Deanery Synod.

Church Buildings

The existence of a church dates to the early 13th century, although the present church is from the 14th century. It was substantially restored in the mid-19th century, in part to the design of Gilbert Scott including a new east window, which was completely removed and refurbished during 1999, mostly funded by the extended Eardley family around the world, who originate from Audley. The church has historical connections to the Delves family and there is a brass depicting Sir Thomas Audley. The tower had extensive repair around 2008. Surveys have shown no major current issues with the church fabric. We have long-term plans for a re-modelling of the internals, when finances allow.



Churchyard

The extensive churchyard around the church comprises tombs, gravestones and a high cover of mature trees, making it a peaceful and reflective space. Maintenance is the responsibility of Newcastle Borough Council although a group of community volunteers, separate from the church, meet monthly during the summer months to tidy up the churchyard.



The churchyard is open for interment of ashes but closed to new burials. A new burial ground was opened in the village in 2011, 500 m away from St James. It is administered by Newcastle Borough Council.

Hall and other Facilities

This is a grade II listed building, built in the middle of the 19th Century as the local school. Extended in 1978, it now has two main halls, one with a stage, with three smaller rooms attached. We have a renovated fully fitted kitchen and an accessible disabled toilet with baby changing facilities (including a wheelchair lift between sections of the hall). Significant structural work was carried out on the Hall roof in 2021/22 and it is now sound.

The hall is used for various church and community activities throughout the week.

Church Finances

St James is a church family who are generous and faithful in their financial support of ministry in the parish. In 2022 we had significant expenditure on the Church Hall roof. We borrowed £50,000 from the Diocese to help fund this. The PCC is committed to reducing the amount outstanding and following our annual giving review and gift day in 2024, we were able to pay off almost £5,200 leaving £6,240 remaining at the end of 2024.

We have consistently paid our Common Fund (Parish Share) in full (£35,525 in 2025) and currently pay this to the Diocese through the CEEC Ephesian Fund. With the exception of 2022 for reasons as outlined above, our income has covered our expenses and we believe that even after the extraordinary expenditure of 2022 we still have adequate, if reduced, reserves. As a registered charity (1134853) our full accounts are available on the Charity Commission website [here](#).

Above everything else, we are a fellowship whose finances are driven by ministry and mission. A priority of our budget is to help make Jesus known in all we do and we currently financially support 4 mission partners (Charles and Frances De Roemer in Belgium with Crosslinks; Luke and Whitney Cawley now based in the UK with Chrysolis; Kip (a former curate at St James) and Rachel Chelashaw in Kenya with UFM; Matthew Leung, our local UCCF staff worker) and 3 gospel-centred organizations (Relume in Stoke supporting women caught up with and harmed by the sex industry; North West Gospel Partnership; Evangelical Alliance).



The Area

The Parish of Audley is made up of the villages of Audley, Bignall End, Miles Green and Wood Lane, serviced by local transport. Audley, being the main village, has a number of shops, hairdressers, restaurants, pubs, and a health centre, dental practice, community centre, Pensioners' Hall and amateur theatre. Audley library, now run by volunteers, is a great asset to the village.

Audley has many groups which make up an active community. For those interested in performing arts there are male voice, ladies and community gospel choirs, a brass band, bellringers, and the Audley theatre. There are scouts and guides for children. For sports enthusiasts we have three Cricket Clubs, a football club, bowling club, angling club, Audley striders running club, a climbing wall and various keep fit classes. There is also Audley Parish Bowmen, a village historical society, arts and crafts clubs with a monthly artisan market, village allotments, and Rotary and Probus clubs. Over 35 of these and other village groups took part in our last Christmas tree festival.

Next door to the vicarage is a residential home for the elderly, which previously was the vicarage for St James. They integrate into the community, regularly attending our coffee mornings, and really appreciate a monthly service in the home, which we would love to reinstate.

St James Church was described as an important cultural asset by a third of respondents in a recent consultation as part of the [Audley Rural Development Plan](#) and 51% felt community spirit and friendliness were one of the best things about living in Audley Rural Parish. (The plan has been produced in response to current Newcastle Borough Council plans for new homes and warehousing site on greenbelt land in the parish.)



A lunch given to mark Bishop Rob's visit, Feb 2025

ST JOHN'S, ALSAGERS BANK



Parish Activities and Programmes

Over the recent past, St. John's has seen many changes and now seeks a period of stability where we long for God's Kingdom to be extended. Being a small church it is our desire to encourage our fellowship to be actively involved in 'Every Member Ministry.' For this to happen we pray for a growing and maturing of our own faith and we long to see an ongoing increase of our numbers. Our challenge is to find ways in which to encourage new members, particularly young families. The PCC acknowledges that Sunday Worship may no longer be top in peoples' thinking and therefore wishes to seek new ways in which we can bring the good news of God's saving grace to each member of the parish. We want to be a church at the heart of our community, where each parishioner feels welcomed and cherished within our fellowship.

In the past we shared Lent Courses and many social activities, including Harvest Suppers, with Halmer End Methodist Church, and we would like to work and worship together with them again. Some years ago, we shared a very successful "Signposts" Mission, and we would be happy to share another outreach mission. Before COVID struck, a small group of St. John's and St James went into the local Residential home The Poplars and held a service for the residents one morning each month. We hope to be able to resume this soon. The PCC acknowledges that change is inevitable, but we pray that these changes are managed in a gentle and positive manner and that in all we do we seek the will of God.

Schools work

We have a Primary school in the village, Alsagers Bank Academy, and weather permitting, the children hold their Easter, Harvest and Christmas services in the church. The challenge is to increase our contact with the school and to find attractive ways to encourage these children to seek to know more of God's word.

Styles and Traditions of Worship

We acknowledge that while we are more traditional in our styles of worship from St James, we all share in one aim and that is to discover the heart of God for our parishes, and to minister to the existing members whilst growing new disciples. We would still like to have a Communion service as often as possible, but we do understand that due to the limits of ordained clergy during the interregnum this is not possible.

Services and Music

On the second Sunday in the month, we have a Holy Communion service taken by Rev. Stephen Pratt, an army chaplain stationed now in Lichfield, and a member of the benefice fellowship. We rely on the preaching team of St. James to take Morning Prayer on the other Sundays and welcome the ministry of women.

We share a joint Remembrance Day service with the Methodist Church in Halmer End, alternating churches. On Christmas Eve we have our Carols by Candlelight service at 7pm and we value that the church is usually full for this service. Our music is taken from Mission Praise and includes both new and traditional hymns.

The Congregation

We are a small fellowship of 8 to 10 adults, but our strength is that we work together and support each other, not only in church but in every way we can. If we have different views, then we can respect the majority decisions taken by the PCC. When future planning is considered, we need to recognise the needs of all our fellowship.

We are committed to bringing God's word to our community with the help of our new incumbent, and we fervently pray that the Holy Spirit's work will make this possible to continue.

Church Buildings

The original church was a tin building constructed in 1875. This was replaced by the present building in 1911 at the cost of £800 and was dedicated on 26th July of that year. A new heating system was installed in 2015. The next Quinquennial inspection is due in 2026. The church has access to toilet facilities in the hall including a disabled toilet. There is a vicarage within the church grounds which is currently vacant and used to house Anglican clergy or members of the Anglican community. This is due to a clause which was included in the deeds when the house was built.

Churchyard

The churchyard is available for interment of ashes but closed to new burials and maintained by Newcastle Borough Council.

Hall and other Facilities

The church hall is presently let on a three-year contract to a Performing Arts Tutor and so is unavailable for church use.

Church Finances

At St John's we have a faithful few who regularly give. We are further supported with regular income from the long-term lease of our church hall to Debbie Sumner at the Church Gallery Music Studio. We are able to pay our share of the Common Fund in full (£4,935). Missionally, we support the Chelashaw family in Nairobi through UFM. Currently our accounts are managed by Kim Benton a diocese church accountant; we are able to cover our costs but have very little in reserves.

The Area

The village of Alsagers Bank is 750 feet above sea level and has amazing views to Shropshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Wales and Lancashire. We cater for both ends of the age range with a Residential Home and a Primary School in the village. There is also a pub, a football field and thriving football teams, both for juniors and adults. There is also a car repair garage. The adjoining village of Halmer End contains a post office, hardware store, village shop and 'The Stute' where activities include a gospel choir, a keep fit class, coffee shop, bowling green and quiz nights. There is also a local general food shop, a Chinese take-away and an Academy Secondary School. The Methodist Church has Rainbows, craft evenings and a children's club.

There are many places to walk and admire the views and many visitors come to admire the sunsets from the pub gardens.



ST MARTIN'S, TALKE (FOR INFORMATION)

The Vicar of Kidsgrove, Rev. Iain Baker, has taken on pastoral responsibility as Curate-in-Charge for St Martin's, as part of the ongoing pastoral reorganisation. (St Thomas, Kidsgrove like St James is a "resolution parish" and has signed up to the CEEC basis of faith.)

Styles and Traditions of Worship

St. Martin's is an evangelical and charismatic church with some conservative traditions. It has a small loyal congregation that has started to grow, and the Electoral Roll currently stands at 20. The congregation consists of people from various Christian traditions including, but not exclusive to, the Church of England, Baptist and Methodist.

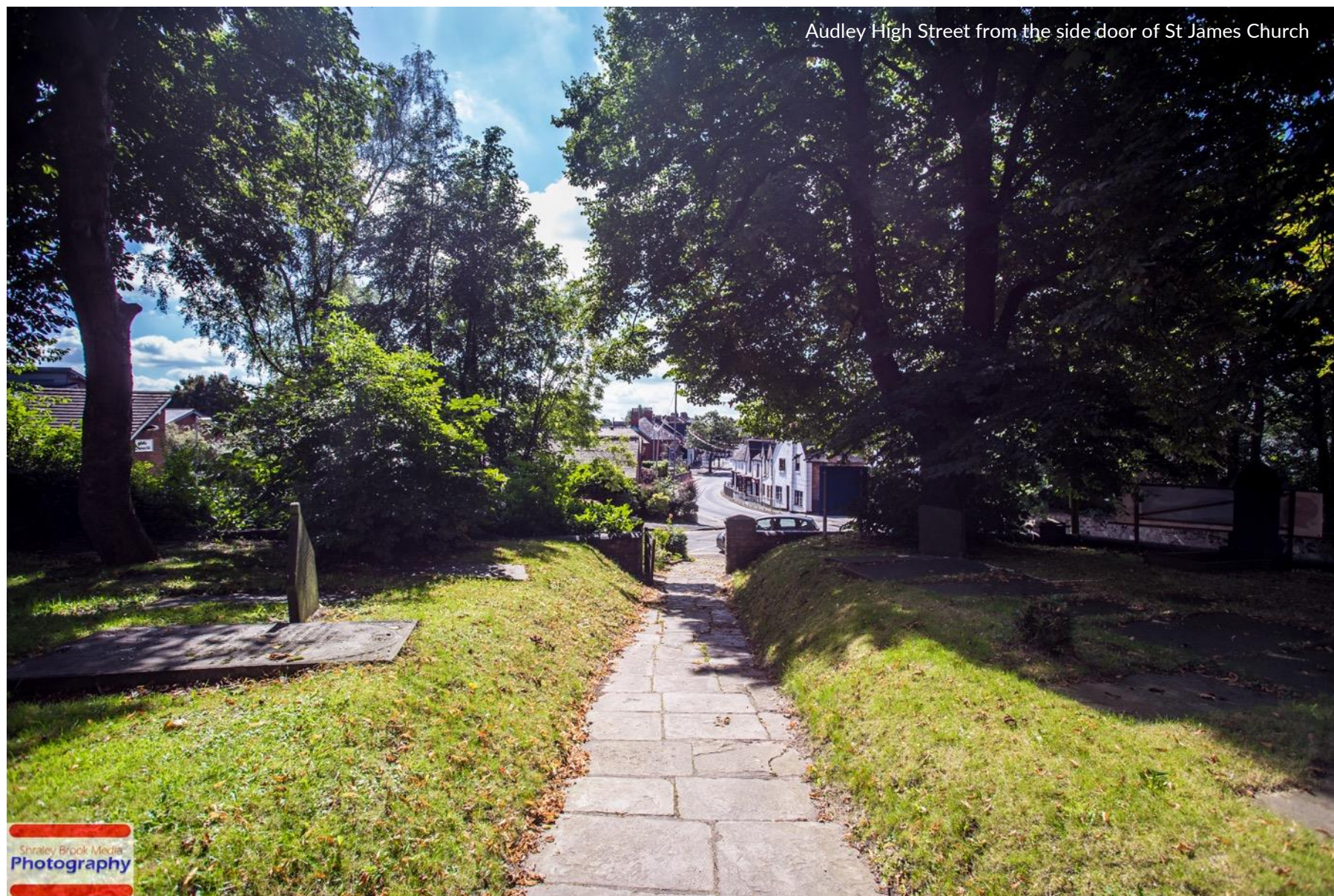


Rev. Iain Baker

The Sunday evening service is relaxed in style, centred on worship using music videos. This is Common Worship with Communion on the first Sunday of every month and Evening Prayer on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th weeks. The service lasts for approximately 1 hour 15 minutes. From time to time the regular evening services are replaced by special ones such as Songs of Praise, Harvest Celebration and an annual Memorial Service.

Church Buildings

The church in its present form dates to around 1833 AD but a worshipping community on this site is traceable as far back as the twelfth century. It is a grade two listed building and has recently undergone extensive interior refurbishment and renovation. The renovation costs exceeded £40,000 the majority of which came from monies raised by the congregation. The church has an adjoining church hall which is both spacious and warm, has a fully functional kitchen, several meeting rooms, and toilet facilities. The hall is currently rented out to generate funds for the church. The churchyard is maintained by the Newcastle Borough Council.



Audley High Street from the side door of St James Church

Photo credits: Shraley Brook Media / Around Audley facebook page by Duncan Richardson / Members of our congregations