Welcome to the parish of St Michael and All Angels, Ashton-on-Ribble with St Mark, Preston

We at St Michael and All Angels with St Mark welcome and accept on equal terms the ministerial leadership of both men and women.

The parish was formed in 1993 when the adjacent St Mark’s church was closed. It is now a United Benefice with St. Mark, centred around the church of St Michael and All Angels’, Ashton.

The church today is a thriving, open and hospitable community for all ages; broadly catholic and liberal with a concern for social justice.

Together we worship God, grow in faith and try to live in accordance with His will.

Together, we seek to build a community that demonstrates the love of God shown to us in His Son, Jesus Christ, whilst respecting everyone’s journey of faith.

Our Challenges and Hopes for the future

With God’s help we hope to….

- Deepen our spiritual life and commitment to God
- Continue to reach out in new ways to the wider community
- Discern the opportunities before us created by the redeveloped church building and church grounds
• Enhance our work with families and our ministry amongst young people

• Explore ways of working more closely with our ecumenical partners in Ashton. Build greater resilience for the future of the parish through the discernment and nurturing of vocation to a variety of ministries, lay and ordained.

• Acknowledge our commitment to the wider Church through our endeavors to pay our parish share

• Explore what it means to be an eco-congregation

• Sustain and develop the monthly Farmers’ Market

• Secure our financial position and ensure the long term viability of the church.

To do this we need a Vicar at St Michaels’ who…. 

• Through personal example and teaching can challenge and encourage us to deepen our spiritual lives and our commitment to the life of the Church.

• Can enthuse and enable lay people to participate in the ministry of the church by recognizing individual gifts and encouraging their use.

• Can motivate and encourage a diverse team through strong but sensitive leadership and delegation
• Is keen to explore opportunities for outreach in the untouched areas of the parish, such as the student community and the developments in the Docklands area.

• Is comfortable with a variety of worship styles, encourages acceptance of other people’s preferences, and will help us to discover new ways of worshipping God.

• Will inspire and involve our Junior Church in worship.

• Recognizes and values the place of music in worship.

• Is a good communicator, able to talk easily with churchgoers and with those in the wider community

• Has a sense of mission and social justice which extends beyond St Michael's into the local community and the wider world.

• Is at ease working with ecumenical partners and local clergy of varying traditions.

• Will help us to look beyond our parish boundaries to explore our commitment to the wider Anglican Church in the Diocese of Blackburn and beyond.

• Has courage, a sense of humour and the ability to improvise.

• Acknowledges the importance of technology within the life of the church and parish.

Over recent years we have:

• Undertaken necessary maintenance of the church and hall, including the installation of new windows in the hall. Refurbishment of the hall and kitchen has been undertaken in 2017.

• Expanded the opportunities available for developing faith: for example, the introduction of a lunchtime group called “Soup and …” meeting once a month where anyone can join in a meal and discuss world events from a Christian perspective. An evening group called “Coffee and…..” has been introduced, with a similar remit.

• Developed our work with young people: Junior Church now has 40 children on the register and a monthly group for young people in Year 7 and above has been started (‘CREW’ – ‘Chat, relax, eat, worship’) We have also continued with a Child Friendly attitude.

• Continued to promote an eco-friendly approach through the provision of a Fair Trade stall and ensuring the use of environmentally friendly products in the church as far as possible. We have also made progress in the continued improvement of the church grounds.

• Worked to develop pastoral care in the vacancy, particularly through supporting the work of our two Pastoral Assistants.
Who we are.

An established ministry team is in place and available to work alongside the new incumbent. This comprises:

- A Reader, who currently preaches once a month and leads CREW.
- A retired priest, currently covering at least two Sundays and two midweek services each month.
- Two pastoral assistants: one has a specific remit to oversee our safeguarding policy and looks after marriage and baptism enquiries; one has counselling qualifications and makes her services available to the congregation. Both share in the ministry of home communion and sick visiting.

In addition, lay support includes:

- Three active and able Churchwardens.
- An active PCC.
- Effective lay involvement in a wide range of church activities.

One area that still needs developing is support for church administration, including help with hall bookings and their management.

We have held 13 funerals / burials of ashes, 3 Weddings and 23 Baptisms in the last 12 months.

Our electoral roll stands at 104.

Current worship pattern:

Sunday services take place at:
8.30am (BCP) with around 8 – 10 attending
10.00am (CW order one) with around 50-70 attending

Midweek Communion (CW order one on Thursday at 10.30am, with around 12-15 attending.)
In 2010 we refurbished the Church building with new doors and seating, a raised platform for the nave altar and refurbished wooden floors. The renovation work included an overhaul of the sound system.

The building can be readily adapted for other uses when not in use for worship, providing both a classic and contemporary setting for a wide range of community and corporate events, seating over 200 people.

We can offer the local community:
- Disabled access from outside and within the building
- Flexible and comfortable seating
- Large stage for performance, with disabled access
- PA sound system and loop system
- Bechstein Grand Piano
- Excellent acoustics
- Ample off and on road parking
- Fair Trade refreshments
- Kitchen facilities

Facilities are open to and frequently used by people of all faiths and no faith. This in itself has opened up positive channels of communication with members of other faiths in the community.
St Mark Chapel

The St Mark Chapel is a comfortable space for weekday services. It contains some furnishings brought from St Mark’s Church when it closed. A small number of people in the congregation used to attend St Mark’s, so it retains an affectionate place in the memory of our older members. The chapel is used for midweek and early Sunday services.

The Parish Hall

The attached Parish Hall was built in 1984 and refurbished in 2017. It has a kitchen and toilet facilities, with a link door to the church, another to the vestries, and external doors leading directly to the car park. It is hired in term time mornings by a thriving Pre-School group, used regularly for meetings of the scouting and guiding groups, and at other times is hired for private functions.

The Vicarage

The Vicarage is a detached brick-built house constructed in the 1930’s. It has a southerly aspect to the front and is set back from the road on the corner of Hastings Rd and Egerton Rd.

The accommodation is on two floors, the ground floor consisting of a vestibule, cloakroom with W.C, dining room, kitchen, utility room, lounge and study. The first floor has four bedrooms, bathroom, and airing cupboard. The windows and doors are white double glazed UPVC.

There is a detached garage to the side of the property and a small garden to the front and side with a secluded patio adjoining the Garden of Remembrance.
The Garden of Remembrance

Between the West End of the church building and the vicarage lies the Garden of Remembrance. Dedicated in 1967, the garden has pathways and seating. Quiet and secluded, it allows for peaceful memory time. Caskets are buried here or ashes interred. Plants and shrubs in the surrounding garden are mainly in memory of loved ones. A book of Remembrance for all buried or cremated through St Michael's Church is housed in the St Mark’s Chapel.

Lay involvement at St Michael and All Angels with St Mark

The Church Wardens

We have three church wardens. They are assisted on Sunday mornings by:

The Sidesperson group

Our Sidespersons welcome the congregation before services, giving a special welcome to visitors and new friends.

The Parochial Church Council
The 10 members of the Parochial Church Council work hard on behalf of the parishioners on local issues. We are meeting monthly during the vacancy, but meet two monthly in normal times unless there are any pressing issues, with sub committees meeting in between. The members are of varying ages and from varying walks of life representing a cross section of our church community.

The Church Choir

There has always been a strong musical tradition at St Michael’s. Our present robed choir of eleven lead the worship at the main Sunday morning service, and also sing Choral Evensong periodically. They rehearse weekly, and visit the Royal Preston Hospital to sing carols over the Christmas period. We are a mixed choir who extend a warm welcome to new singers and are always willing to encourage anyone with an interest in church music. Our choristers are involved in all aspects of parish life from PCC to fundraising and quite often have more than one hat to wear on a Sunday morning. On several occasions during the year our choir joins with the singing group at Ashton Methodist church for joint services.

The three manual church organ was built by the local firm Ainscough some seventy years ago and has been regularly maintained ever since. One of the challenges facing us now is to raise money for its complete overhaul. There is also a grand piano in church which is used mainly for concerts and weekday services in the chapel.

Worship.

St Michael’s has a team of people who serve at the altar on a Sunday, acting as crucifer, deacon, acolytes and servers as required. Behind the scenes there is also a verger/sacristan who ensures that everything is prepared for Sunday and midweek services.

Old and New Testament lessons are read by members of the congregation and there is a small team who lead the intercessions on a rota basis.

Mothers’ Union

St Michael with St Marks’ Mothers’ Union has twenty four members and meetings are held every third Tuesday of the month. We try to choose speakers who reflect the aims and objectives of the Mothers’ Union. Our meetings include speakers on topics both informative and enjoyable and an important ingredient is fellowship. Annually we hold a Deanery Festival and a Quiet Hour, visiting in turn other churches in the Deanery. Our elderly members are remembered in prayer, and are visited regularly.

Social Responsibility Group
Make a difference in Ashton, make a difference in the world: The mission statement of the Social Responsibility Group reflects our church’s green mission to the local community, as well as our Christian response to challenging world issues. We believe in social justice, sustainable development and fair trade, and lead St Michael’s eco-congregation agenda.

- We run a Traidcraft stall each Sunday and promote special Fairtrade events.
- We organise a Farmers’ Market once a month which supplies fresh local produce and ensures that regional producers get a fair price for their goods.
- We support Christian Aid Week and Fairtrade Fortnight.

Eco-congregation

In 2004, St Michael’s became the first church in the Diocese of Blackburn to achieve Eco-Congregation status. The award was renewed in 2009. As members of an Eco-Congregation, people at St Michael’s share a concern for the environment and for social justice, underpinned by their Christian faith, which calls them to celebrate and care for God’s creation.

To this end we have over the last few years:
- Undertaken an environmental audit of our church building and reduced our energy consumption as a result.
- Cared for our church grounds, undergoing a redevelopment of the grounds in 2014.
- Promoted ‘Green Christianity’ and encouraged people in our community to make small changes in their own lives which will make a significant difference to God’s world.
- Supported projects in the Third World.

Hospitality.

Refreshments are always available after the 10.00am Eucharist on a Sunday, thanks to the support of a team of helpers in the kitchen. This complements the ‘ministry of welcome’ that begins with the Sidesperson’s group at the door.

The Kitchen Team

Our Work With Children And Young People
JUNIOR CHURCH

St Michael's with St Mark's has a strong and vibrant Junior Church. We meet at 9.50 alongside the 10am Sunday morning service, in the church hall, before joining the congregation in church for Holy Communion.

There are 40 children on register with an average weekly attendance of 20-25 children and young people, many coming to 80% of our sessions. We have maintained our open door policy and all children are welcome, whether a visitor to the church, a friend of one of our members or a relative of the congregation. Some of the older children like to be "meet and greet" monitors and stand with the Sidespersons at the entrance porch before the service.

We currently have 8 leaders and 3 parent helpers. We are privileged that the parents of our younger children willingly stay and take part in our worship and activities. Junior Church organizes and takes part in All Age Services throughout the year.

They follow the lectionary so our teachings parallel the congregation’s theme. Junior church members bring examples of their learning into the service each week - art work and activities.
etc. and sometimes dramatizations. We use a variety of resources, with the majority from the on-line resource ‘Sermons for Kids.’

We intend to develop a Senior Group to engage our older children in activities deemed more age appropriate and develop their social responsibilities etc. within the church.

In 2015, we saw the introduction of our first Junior Church Ambassador, in place of the long-standing tradition of Rose Queens. Ambassadors will spend the year building up a team of young people who will undertake a project, and represent the voice of young people in the church: they are the church of today, not tomorrow. In the same year we held our first “Light Party” where craft and cooking activities were linked to teaching on themes of Christian living.

Our junior church leaders wear purple fleece jackets to identify themselves during junior church sessions. This was funded by a legacy and the jackets were made by a local firm and blessed in church by our previous Vicar, Jeff.

We have an under 18’s Co-ordinator and strictly adhere to our Safe from Harm policy.

**CREW (‘Chat, relax, eat, worship’ for School Year 7 and up)**

This group for the older children meets once a month. Each meeting lasts around 90 minutes, focusing on a subject (usually related to the church calendar or a topical theme) to engage the young people in discussion. Refreshments are enjoyed and a short time of prayer and worship concludes the session.

**LITTLE FISHES**

This group offers outreach to young families in the area. Little Fishes meets one afternoon a week, allowing babies and toddlers with their parents, grandparents and guardians to come together for a few hours to chat, play and have a cup of tea in a church environment. 2016 sees the 21st anniversary of Little Fishes, in recognition of which a celebration and reunion was held at St Michael’s

**UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS.**

There has been a long relationship between St Michael’s and The Guiding Association. There is a solid band of trained volunteers who lead Rainbows, Brownies and Guides.
There is also a Beaver Colony, Cub pack and Scout group. Many young people have enjoyed the groups and what they offer, and in return they bring young people into the church, which for some will be their first contact with a Christian Community.

We do not actively promote a Christian belief but help young people from all faiths and backgrounds develop their own spiritual path.

There are occasional church parades (sometimes non-Eucharistic) and those that choose to attend enjoy a lively, interactive service.

**Finance And Fundraising**

The Treasurer of the P.C.C is assisted by the Stewardship Recorder who is responsible for Gift Aid and Tax Recovery.

**Current Financial State:**

The Church is working to maintain its Parish Share commitments. We have held a stewardship campaign in 2015 with a view to increasing planned and occasional giving.

**Income and Expenditure:**

Our church’s main income stems from planned giving through both the envelope scheme and bank standing orders. Members of the church on the electoral roll are periodically asked to review their levels of giving, most recently in 2015.

The re-order has enabled the Church to be used as a flexible venue for the local and wider community. It is currently used regularly as a multi-purpose concert venue. It is increasingly used for events by all sections of our Parish and the wider community in Preston generating a recurring income stream.

Additionally, income is generated from rental of the church hall to Little Angels Community Pre-school five mornings a week in term time and from many private functions which are held in our church and/or Parish hall.

**Fundraising**

We have a Fundraising/Events Group who organise events to improve our financial standing. The regular events like Harvest Supper and Wine tasting evening, along with a mixture of events throughout the year, bring in funds to the church whilst providing an outreach opportunity.
Where we are: Diocese, county and city.

The Diocese of Blackburn is entirely within Lancashire.

More than a million people live in the 900 square miles of Lancashire between the Irish Sea and the Pennine Moors, in the fourth largest shire county. The variety of scenery and settlements in central north-west England makes it 'England in miniature' and the village of Dunsop Bridge in the Ribble Valley is officially the exact centre of the British Isles.

Accessibility is one of Lancashire's assets. The west coast mainline connecting London and Scotland runs through Preston alongside the M6 motorway and internal road connections place few communities more than an hour’s drive apart.

Airports at Liverpool and Manchester connect the north-west to European and global destinations.

The variety of scenery, from coastal bird sanctuaries, wild moorland and market town to historic cities, often surprises those unfamiliar with Lancashire. Just over the boundaries are the cities of Manchester and Liverpool and the tranquillity of the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales.

Lancashire’s industrial prominence expanded from wool under the Tudors, through cotton with the full development of the industrial revolution. Textile transport – with associated coal and limestone – spurred the growth of the canal system with the 141-mile Leeds and Liverpool canal, passing through the area.

The City of Preston is situated at the head of the Ribble Estuary about eighteen miles from the mouth of the river which enters the Irish Sea between the resorts of Southport and Lytham. It is close to the M6 [the Preston bypass was Britain’s first stretch of motorway] and also has direct motorway links with Blackpool, Manchester and East Lancashire.

Preston is a multi-faith society enjoying good inter-community relations. The city celebrates the diversity of its culture with a Caribbean festival in May and the Preston Mela in August. In parts of the eastern side of the city the ethnic population is around thirty percent, but it is considerably lower in Ashton.

The City of Preston has many fine historic buildings, including the Harris Museum and Library [1893], described by Pevsner as ‘the finest Greek Revival building in the world’, and the Roman Catholic church of St Walburge, which is within the former Parish of St Mark and has Britain’s third highest spire, designed by Hansom [of cab fame].

The city is a major shopping and commercial centre, there is an outdoor covered market selling local produce including locally produced Lancashire cheese. An annual pot fair is held towards the end of August.

Preston’s Guildhall and Charter Theatre provide a variety of entertainment from regular visits by the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra to visits from touring London shows. Preston is within easy reach of the beautiful countryside of the Lake District and Yorkshire dales [45-60 minutes], the Forest of Bowland [20-25 minutes] and the Ribble Valley.

For football fans, Deepdale, the home of Preston North End, is only a couple of miles away. The team has had a successful run in recent years, gaining promotion to the Championship last year and finishing this year in mid-table.
Our parish records are deposited in the Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston. PR1 2RE. A re-inspection under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure was carried out in May 2003.

Ashton-on-Ribble has a strong industrial heritage but today is largely a leafy suburb on the west side of the City of Preston. The parish occupies the south eastern part of the former township of Ashton and includes Preston Marina, based around the historic Albert Edward Dock, which has been comprehensively redeveloped for residential, retail and business use.

Ashton is a suburb with housing ranging from small terraced houses to large Victorian or Edwardian villas. The former St Mark’s area, being very close to the ever-expanding University of Central Lancashire, contains a very large private rented sector with student bed-sits and shared houses.

The parish is well served with a major supermarket, local shops, a health centre and dentist surgery. There are two large parks in the area: Ashton Park and Haslam Park. Part of the Preston Guild Wheel footpath and cycleway runs through the parish along the docks and riverbank. This provides a full 21 mile circuit of the City of Preston.

CHURCH LOCATION - At the junction of Tulketh Rd [ A5072] and Egerton Rd. Ashton-on-Ribble, PRESTON
From the M6 Junction 31. Follow the A59 towards PRESTON, turning onto the A5085 at the first roundabout, by the cemetery (signed for Deepdale retail park, Hospital and Riversway / Docklands).

Continue on this road for approximately 3.3 miles to its junction with Tulketh Road (A5072) by St Andrew’s Church and Primary School: turn left at the traffic lights. St Michael’s Church is just under half a mile on the right, at the junction with Egerton Road.
The joint Palm Sunday Walk & service with Ashton Methodist Church and Sacred Heart Catholic Church