1. Summary

After working together for a couple of years, the benefices of Marsden and Slaithwaite with East Scammonden formally united on 1st December 2018. Within the family of the benefice, each of the three churches serves distinctly independent communities. We are looking for our first incumbent to guide our ministry and influence our strategy for the future.

2. The priest we want

We are looking for someone who will:

- Have a vision for further outreach into the community and church growth
- Be comfortable with, and enabling of, the laity, in working together to provide worship in a variety of styles, and a range of services both formal and informal which will enable individuals, families, and the community to develop and share faith in the manner with which they are comfortable
- Help us to develop our worship in new ways that reach out effectively to existing communities and open up new opportunities with communities with whom we don’t currently interact
- Be able to help devise and work on a long-term strategy for our newly united benefice, and the parishes within it
- Have collaborative leadership and be able to develop individuals and groups of people spiritually and in ministry
- Have pastoral sensitivity and be able to work collaboratively with other Anglicans and with other faith colleagues

We expect our minister to be realistic about the time they can give to parish work, and that they will take proper rest days and holidays. We hope that they will build partnerships with laity and neighbouring clergy so they do not feel the parish rests on their shoulders alone. We will support them in their personal development, CMD and reading.
3. About the Parishes

St Bartholomew’s church is in the centre of the village of Marsden. Slaithwaite is served by St James’s parish church in the village, with Shred Mission Church ministering to a rural community within the parish. The benefice is at the western end of the Huddersfield Deanery, in the Huddersfield Episcopal Area of the Anglican Diocese of Leeds.

The parishes are at the head of the Colne Valley on the edge of the Peak District National Park. The villages grew from isolated farming settlements through the industrial revolution, when water from the surrounding moors provided power for the mills. They are increasingly dormitories for Leeds and Manchester, aided by good road and rail links to both cities. While most of the population live in the villages the bulk of the parish areas is farm and open moorland, dotted with reservoirs supplying water to the Huddersfield area.

The villages are vibrant and thriving, with about 4,500 people living in Marsden and a further 3,800 in Slaithwaite, mainly White British in ethnicity. There is a mix of families, some who have been in the area for generations, some who have been in the village for a few years, and some newcomers; all are made to feel welcome in the community. There are many light and service industry businesses in the villages, including chemicals, engineering, and furniture making. In recent years the villages have seen a steady growth in small bespoke businesses – offering residents and visitors a variety of shops including florists, craft shops and an art gallery. The restored Huddersfield Narrow Canal runs through the middle of Slaithwaite on its way to the country’s longest and highest canal tunnel at Marsden. Combined with well-established restaurants, wine bars and local breweries, the villages are wonderful places for the locals to live and attract many visitors and tourists.

Marsden has separate Junior and Infant & Nursery schools. Neither are attached to the church, though we have close links with both. Slaithwaite has three junior and infant schools, one of which is a Church of England school. Pupils make regular visits to church for Christingle and Nativity services. Harvest Festivals and educational visits also bring parents into the churches parents who would not
We asked the local C of E primary school what qualities a new priest should have – and they responded enthusiastically. Here are just a few of their comments. They would welcome someone who:

- listens to everyone’s opinion
- is good role model
- is kind and calm
- is compassionate
- is welcoming and inspiring
- makes church interesting (particularly for children!)
- is fun and really good with children
- would stop in the street and talk to you.

Both villages have brass bands. Slaithwaite is the home of the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir and Slaithwaite Philharmonic Orchestra. There are Scout groups, Brownies, Rainbows and Beavers in both villages, as well as nurseries, pre- and post-school clubs. Marsden Parish Church Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society stages three well-attended shows each year, and the Yorkshire Avalanche Dodgers perform an annual sell out pantomime over 10 days. There is a swimming baths and leisure centre with gym at Slaithwaite. Community organisations arrange a “Cuckoo Day” village festival in April and a Jazz Festival over a weekend in October in Marsden; Slaithwaite puts on a biennial “Moonraking” festival. The National Trust Marsden Moor Estate and Canal and River Trust Visitor Centre also attract visitors.

Village community co-operatives have taken over running Marsden Mechanics Institute (public hall and library) and the Civic Hall in Slaithwaite. There are many other local initiatives including artisan bakeries and co-operative greengrocers. Other organisations include the Mikron Theatre Company, football clubs, cricket clubs, tennis club, golf club, bowls clubs, dance school; Conservative, Liberal and Socialist clubs; Royal British Legion, Freemasons and many restaurants and pubs, and two microbreweries.

The wide range of organisations challenge the churches to develop partnerships with the many groups in this vibrant community, whilst shouting with a distinct voice of our own. Villagers, even those rarely seen inside, regard the buildings as ‘the village’s
church’. The church building in Marsden is the largest public venue in the community (within the Deanery it is second in size only to Huddersfield Town Hall). Other churches in the parishes are the United Church in Marsden and the Methodist and Roman Catholic churches in Slaithwaite. “Churches Together” in the Colne Valley maintain ecumenical links.

4. About the Church

4.1 The Church and its people

Our service pattern and liturgy changed a couple of years ago enabling closer working between the two parish churches. The Sunday services are in contemporary language. Parish Communion is at 9.15am at Marsden, with Junior Church alongside in term time. Parish Communion in Slaithwaite takes place at 11.15am. Average attendance in both churches is around 25-35 with average attendance at Junior Church of around 6. On the first Sunday of the month there is simpler Eucharistic All Age service, at which baptisms may take place. Home communion is also offered as needed, as is baptism and wedding preparation.

Shred mission church hosts a monthly Family Communion, and a large Sunday School on other Sundays. It serves and is supported by a close-knit community who hold excellent social events.

Our Tuesday 9.30am Holy Communion service at Marsden has grown over the last few years to around a dozen attending, and has developed a social lunch club following on afterwards. Every second Wednesday at Slaithwaite there is a worship, prayer, lunch and discussion group called Oasis.

Marsden follows a slightly “high-of-middle” tradition, clergy robing for services (chasuble and alb for communion). Incense is occasionally used at Festivals. Slaithwaite is more “low church”. The organist at Marsden is supported by a robed choir of four persons at the main service, and a music group leading worship at All Age services.

The electoral roll for Marsden currently numbers 102 (some of whom are housebound). 61 are on the roll in Slaithwaite. These are mainly middle-aged and elderly, with a few younger people.

At Marsden, there is a Lay Reader, Verger, bereavement visitor, and Junior Church

▲ Wedding at St James's, Slaithwaite
leadership team. There is also an organist, a music group and a band of ringers. Slaithwaite has an organist.

There is a willingness by some laity to take on occasional talks/sermons, leading house groups, developing the worship music, and building links with community groups and schools. Under previous incumbents laity were involved with leading non-Eucharistic All Age services.

There are no people employed by the parishes.

A flavour of our church communities can be found on their Facebook pages:

St James Church Slaithwaite
The Shred Church
Marsden Parish Church (St Bartholomew’s)

4.2 The Church and the Community

During 2018 at Slaithwaite we conducted 6 baptisms and there were 2 confirmations. There were 4 marriages held in the church. 8 funeral services were held in the church, plus services conducted in the local crematorium for a further 6 parishioners.

At Marsden we conducted 7 baptisms, 7 marriages and 9 funeral services. 1 of our church family was confirmed during the year.

The vibrancy of village life poses a challenge to our churches when engaging with the community. Most social needs are already met by local groups, and new activities must be distinctive and well-run to attract attention and custom.

St Bartholomew’s recently completed a five-year commemoration of the First World War, “Marsden Remembers”. We engaged with the Royal British Legion and local History Group to research the 150+ village men who gave their lives in the conflict, ensuring they
were remembered and prayed for on the centenary of their death. A Heritage Lottery Fund grant enabled us to produce a book of remembrance, and the exhibition was opened and closed with well-attended services at with the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, marching band and parade led by the Legion and uniformed organisations. This brought closer links with the community we would hope to build on.

St James’s also used the WW1 centenary to build community links, researching the history of servicemen from the village. A cascade of around 4,000 knitted poppies, one for each man fallen from the Huddersfield area, drew visitors’ attention. St James’s participated in the local art festival, and has put on a well-attended Christmas Tree festival for a number of years.

Both churches host annual carol services/concerts, and Christingle services, which draw in families from our villages and surrounding areas. We host Harvest and Christingle services for the local schools, and the three Slaithwaite schools use St James’s for their Nativity plays.

An energetic retired priest in Slaithwaite takes assemblies at the C of E school and has been leading the Wednesday ‘Oasis’ group. Communion was held regularly at the elderly persons’ home in Slaithwaite, and home visits and communion to the housebound as needed. In Marsden “Marsden Kids Club”, an independent after-school club, uses our hall during term-time. One of the churchwardens visits the housebound as part of her ministry.

There are ecumenical links in both Marsden and Slaithwaite. We share worship with Marsden United Church (combined Methodist and URC) twice a year, and occasionally with Slaithwaite Methodist Church.

4.3 The Church Buildings

St Bartholomew’s, Marsden was built in the English Gothic style between 1895 and 1898, with the addition of its baptistery and tower bringing it to final completion in 1911. It replaced an 18th Century Church, the outline of which is visible opposite the present main entrance. It has a large nave and contains many examples of fine
craftsmanship, most notably its 17 stained glass windows, its mosaic floors, carved oak reredos and rood screen, carved stone pulpit and font and an excellent Binns 3-manual organ.

The Parochial Hall in Marsden lies to the west of the Church. Built in the 1920s, it is the focus for most church social and fundraising activities. The rent it generates currently covers running costs, and it is a useful venue for church and public activities. It houses the main catering and toilet facilities for the church.

St James’s, Slaithwaite is Georgian, built in 1789 with a later tower and sanctuary. The building is smaller than Marsden, but with galleries can seat more people. At the back of the church is a lounge with kitchen and toilets which seats about 60. The East End has a Venetian window depicting the Good Samaritan. There is a church office integral to the building.

Issues to attend to include the tower at Slaithwaite and the mosaic chancel floor and improving drainage at Marsden. In both churches the PCC have plans for remedial action in hand. We’re exploring funding and grant opportunities to enable the works.

Shred Church at Upper Slaithwaite is a mission church with a thriving Sunday School and monthly Holy Communion Services and a very active social calendar. It is situated in a quaint two-tiered chapel with attached hall.

As part of an initiative to make use of empty properties for social good, Marsden vicarage is currently being used by a partner charity to provide housing. Slaithwaite vicarage will be home to our next minister, and is undergoing some refurbishment work. It is a modern brick-built house, double glazed, with two reception rooms and a separate office/study, four bedrooms and an integral garage. The vicarage is adjacent (though not directly next door) to the church, on the corner of Churchwood Close and Station Road. It is centrally located in the village, a couple of minutes’ walk from the station and shops.
4.4 The Church and its finances

Slaithwaite paid 88% of its Parish Share in 2018 and Marsden 53%. We are looking to build our giving as we grow our congregation, which in turn will help our finances overall.

Along with the traditional collection plate, an increasing number of our church members make their regular contribution by monthly standing order, and many use the planned giving envelopes.

Whilst giving directly to the church has been falling over the last few years, our members have been generous in their mission gifts.

Clergy expenses are paid in full.

Our full Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2018 are attached.

5. About the wider context

On 1st December 2018, the benefice of St Bartholomew’s Marsden was united with Slaithwaite and East Scammonden. This formalised the arrangement started under our previous minster, with the two parishes working closer together. Service times and liturgy had already changed to accommodate this. We would look for further ways to build our relationship whilst responding to the individual needs of our parish.

We would welcome a priest of either gender ordained by any Anglican bishop as our next minister.
We are also part of the Churches Together in the Colne Valley, with its monthly service and social time.

We have been willing to share worship with the Colne Valley “Cluster” of Anglican Churches – an informal group within the Deanery (consisting of Marsden, Slaithwaite, Golcar, Longwood, Crosland Moor and Linthwaite) was formed a few years ago. Having shared worship with other Anglican parishes in the recent past we recognize the value of sharing ministry with neighbouring parishes in the valley.

There are proposals to combine the deaneries of Huddersfield, Almondbury and Kirkburton in the near future. It is hoped this will achieve better support and dialogue between parishes and their clergy in this area.