March 2019

Dear Colleague

**Interim Priest-in-Charge, Slaithwaite and Marsden**

Thank you for your interest in this exciting new post. As you will see from the accompanying documentation, Slaithwaite and Marsden are two places with a rich heritage and a great future, and we are looking for someone very special to help lead the mission of the churches in these parishes.

Both communities are set in the Colne Valley, in the folds of the Pennine hills and with beautiful and dramatic countryside on their doorstep. They offer great cultural and social opportunities and are experiencing something of a renaissance with the development of significant new housing, and being within easy reach of Huddersfield, Leeds and Manchester.

The congregations of these churches are fairly small, but together we believe they have great potential to reach out, to serve their communities and to grow both numerically and spiritually. Their small size, combined with the constraints that the Diocese faces in terms of finance and clergy numbers, mean that under normal circumstances we would only be able to offer them a part-time priest. However, I believe that there is great potential for growth in these two parishes, under the right creative leadership, and for that reason I have decided (and the PCCs have agreed) to make a **full-time interim appointment**, initially for three years, with the possibility of an extension for a further three years.

It is my belief that with the help of the right kind of person, these two churches can make a much greater impact, taking their place once more at the heart of their communities. For this to happen, however, the new priest will have to be out and about among the wider community for much of their time – probably around half of it – helping to build bridges and trust with people who at present have little time for the Christian church. They will also need skill and empathy to establish strong relationships with people from all kinds of backgrounds and spiritualities.

This is a great opportunity for the right person. It will require someone who can work creatively with the two congregations supporting and challenging them to explore new ways of mission and outreach, and at the same time making connections with people who would at present never dream that the Church could have anything to offer. There is great energy among the people of Slaithwaite and Marsden, and I know there would also be real goodwill towards a priest who is willing to engage with and support the people and organisations that make up these two places.

May the Holy Spirit guide you as you discern whether this could be God’s call to you.

*Jonathan*

Bishop of Huddersfield