

St Paul with St Luke Parish Profile



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The Trustees Report and Financial Statements for 2023 &2024 may be obtained by
emailing carolvague@gmail.com



A message from the Bishop of Chester

Thank you for looking at this post in Chester Diocese. Whatever the Lord has for you, I want to assure you of my own prayers and a deep gratitude that we might get to partner together in this part of the Lord's work.

I have spent ages trying to capture the enormity of the privilege I feel in getting to serve the people of this diocese, and my words cannot bear the weight of that calling. This community of communities ranging from the very richest to the very poorest and the deepest rural to the most industrialised and urban is amazing. The diocese holds together in a shared sense of call to be 'Together in Christ Sharing Hope'. We have a deeply held vocation to serve the 1.5 million inhabitants who have no meaningful connection with a community of faith, and share the feast which has been shared with us in Jesus.

In Chester Diocese this is always going to be worked out locally first and foremost: no-one met Jesus through a Diocese! Lives are changed in parishes, chaplaincies, and new expressions of Christian community, when people are invited in kindness and grace into transformative encounter with the love of the God who made them. Together we focus on our broad strategic aims so that those who know they are the people of God can serve all the people God calls in their everyday living.

We are utterly committed to safeguarding, because every person matters to our God and Saviour more than we know how to express. This is also why we welcome applications from every background for posts in this diocese. We are learning how to do all of this as guest rather than always as host, as we partner to serve the world to which we are sent.

If God is calling you to serve with us, I rejoice! Come, roll up your sleeves, and get stuck in! If the call is elsewhere then be assured of our gratitude and earnest prayer that the Lord will lead and provide in all things.

Please do pray for us, too – the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

+Mark

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Parish of S. Paul with S. Luke, Tranmere. We hope that this Parish Profile will provide you with an insight into the life of our church, our strengths, and our aspirations for the future as we look to grow our church in this disadvantaged area of Birkenhead. We hope, also, for a Priest to engage effectively with the South Indian community of the Wirral, involving them in the life of the church; as well as supporting the work of the new Diocesan Racial Justice Officer.

LOCATION



The parish of S. Paul with S. Luke, Tranmere is situated in the diocese of Chester, the archdeaconry of Chester, and the deanery of Birkenhead.

Birkenhead is on the Wirral Peninsula, a roughly rectangular peninsula about 15 miles long and 7 miles wide, on the west bank of the River Mersey, opposite the city of Liverpool and separated from North Wales by the River Dee. Two road tunnels, a railway, and a ferry provide excellent connections with Liverpool, whilst the railway and the M53 Motorway both connect with Chester.

We are fortunate to be within easy reach of beautiful countryside: Country Parks at Thurstaston and Eastham; the seaside at New Brighton and West Kirby; and of course the hills of North Wales. Birkenhead itself has a medieval Priory, a number of shopping precincts, the oldest municipal park in the world, and areas of redeveloped dockland and, within easy reach, two art galleries: the Williamson, and the Lady Lever at Port Sunlight.

The Wirral contains both affluent and deprived areas. The more prosperous areas are largely located on the west and south of the peninsula, while the poorer and more heavily urbanised areas are concentrated to the north-east, around the built-up district of Birkenhead. It has been identified that there is an 11 year gap in life expectancy between those living in the east of Wirral and those living on the west side.

THE PARISH



The parish is geographically located on the east side of the centre of Wirral, opposite Liverpool, (as indicated above) and is made up of parts of the geographical areas of Tranmere and Rock Ferry. It was formed in 1971 by the amalgamation of St Paul's and St Luke's Parishes and currently has a population of 11,979 (2021 census). It is on the outskirts of Birkenhead and is part of the Birkenhead parliamentary constituency. (*Pin indicates the position of the Church & Vicarage buildings*)

The parish has some parts with very high indices of multiple deprivation. Wirral, as a whole, is ranked as the 60th most deprived (out of 326) authority in England with Tranmere and parts of Rock Ferry being in the 3% most deprived local areas of the country. Residents experience deprivation in terms of income, health and disability and education and skills. By having an incumbent in place, we will be better positioned to reach out and include everyone in our community.

We pray a Priest can be appointed who shares our commitment to inclusivity, social justice, and spiritual growth. With the right leadership, St. Paul's with St. Luke's can continue to be a beacon of hope and support for the people of Rock Ferry and Tranmere for many years to come.

There is a strong sense of community in the area. People see the church as belonging to them and support many of the groups, social and community events that use our Hall (see below)



THE CHURCH BUILDING

St Paul's Church has been a cornerstone of the Rock Ferry/ Tranmere community since before it was dedicated in 1857, (built in 1855) faithfully serving the spiritual and social needs and proclaiming the love of Jesus in our parish for almost 170 years. We currently serve a population of just under 12,000, many of whom are facing significant challenges due to the high levels of deprivation and health inequalities in the area. Despite these challenges, our congregation remains deeply committed to our purpose and is eager to continue our vital work.



The building, which is grade 2 listed, has a 140 foot spire, making it a continual reminder of a church presence in the area. It is visible from many parts of the neighbourhood, including the railway line and Victoria Park (see left)

The tower clock strikes the hour between 7am and 11pm. It is still wound by hand twice a week – one way of keeping fit!

Recent external and internal inspection on the spire (Sep 2025) by a firm of Steeplejacks involving ropes, ladders, a drone, and thermal imaging camera identified approx £20K as necessary and plans are underway to address this.



The Church Interior is kept clean and tidy by our remarkable cleaner volunteers but is in need of redecoration.



It has: the first Rood Screen in Chester Diocese, erected in 1910 and extended in 1922;



Trinity 2024

A unique stained glass East window (installed 1924) of the 4 Archangels Michael, Gabriel, Raphael & Uriel; and a winged Reredos which may be closed, for example during Lent.



Lent 2024

THE VICARAGE

The Vicarage is a modern 4 bedoomed detached, double-glazed house built in 1991, next to the church. On the ground floor, it has a lounge, study, spacious modern kitchen, dining room, and wc/cloakroom. It has four good sized first floor bedrooms, bathroom with shower over bath and a further shower room.



There is a large garden to the rear and spacious off street parking with a double garage. The Vicarage is within walking distance of Tranmere Urban Village, which includes a large supermarket, and Library and has bus and train links into Birkenhead, Liverpool, and Chester. Some windows and doors, together with the alarm system, have been replaced this year.

OUR WORSHIP

We see ourselves as an inclusive church of liberal catholic tradition with the Eucharist firmly at the centre of our worship and church life. As we seek to meet with Christ and be changed by his presence we use Common Worship and the variety of liturgy found there. We follow the lectionary throughout the year, and celebrate the feasts and festivals of the church year. There is a gospel procession, and incense on high days and holy days.

We provide printed copies of the Bible readings each week using Redemptorist sheets together with a weekly news sheet, which includes prayer requests, either on the back of the Redemptorist sheet or separately.

Attendance at church services has grown a little in the past 2 years, and particularly in the last 6 months (currently between 30 & 40 on a typical Sunday) with the average age having reduced noticeably as we have welcomed a number of families. In 2024 we gained 7 new members to the Electoral Roll bringing the total to 50, of whom 22 are living outside the parish, many only just outside the border. The majority on the Electoral Roll attend regularly on a weekly or bi-weekly basis if dependent upon shift patterns.



A significant and encouraging recent development has been the arrival in the area, the parish, and the church of Christians from South India, chiefly from Kerala, and also from other parts of the globe including Africa, the Philippines, and France.

Arrowe Park Hospital has recruited 380 South Indian nurses, doctors and carers, and others have come to work in the health and care sector in other locations. Most of these come from Christian backgrounds, being members of CSI, Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, and other denominations, and St Paul's has been glad to welcome those who have joined in our worship. They have become valued members of the church family and one has become a member of the PCC and helps as a deputy Church warden. We hope to encourage others to do the same.

It is anticipated the Priest will encourage our current diverse congregation, made up of a variety of cultural backgrounds, as well as exploring ways to engage with the South Indian Christians from across the Wirral.



Lady Chapel

A short, quiet, said Communion service is held during the week in the Lady Chapel. We have been experimenting with the timing of this since returning after the various lockdowns.

There is a strong desire to expand the weekly services to enable more people to attend.

Our small, but perfectly formed and growing, congregation is adaptable – it has to be - as a variety of services have been used throughout the Church Year, in Advent, Christmas, Lent, Harvest, Dedication, Remembrance and All Souls' and has included a Carol Service, Christingle, Crib/Nativity Service, Stations of the Cross, Taizé, Healing, Foot Washing for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday liturgy, Lighting of the New Fire for Easter Eve etc.

Currently, our worship is supported by retired Priests, a Licensed Lay Reader, a retired Reader with PTO and a Pastoral Worker. Christ Church Hr. Bebington also helped out until September 2024.

Members of the congregation read lessons, and offer Intercessions.

We have good links with local churches, joining together for eg. World Day of Prayer.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

There is an increasing need to establish appropriate sessions for children during parts of the service. Worksheets are currently provided each Sunday. We have started training the older ones to become servers, and would also like them to start reading lessons, or become intercessors.

Baptisms usually take place at a separate service on Sundays at 12pm. An option for during the 10am Sunday service is offered but only rarely taken up. Our policy is to offer baptism to anyone living in the parish or with a connection to the parish, - there is a need for better follow up with parents.



in

SCHOOLS

There are 3 Schools in the Parish. Well Lane & Bedford Drive are mixed Primary schools for ages 3-11. Prenton Girls is a single sex Secondary School for ages 11-16.



There are good links with Well Lane School formed by the clergy of Christ Church Bebington over the past 3-4 years. Classes from the school visit St Paul's during the year to learn about the building and what is in it, sometimes using a number of "stations" where members of the congregation speak to them. Prior to Easter 2024 some of our congregation joined a team from Christ Church to present to two classes in the School Hall the "Easter Experience" which is usually held in Christ Church's building.

Both the Reception class and KS2 pupils are due to visit in the next few weeks.

COMMUNITY ROOMS

The main Community Hall was originally built in 1972/3 and totally refurbished in 2023 with a new kitchen & storage room built within the original footprint together with new roof, floor, insulated walls, windows & doors, electrics, plumbing, and heating. It is situated alongside the church and connected to it through a communal porch, which also leads to a further Hall space and toilets.



The main area, measuring approx. 16m x 7m is used for church functions, including (but not limited to) Sunday post service coffee, Harvest or Dedication lunch, & a weekly Community Café. The Community Connectors from Involve North West attend the Community Café to be available to meet with any who need help or assistance.

Fund raising events include Summer and Christmas Fairs, and monthly Saturday Coffee Markets with Refreshments, Cake, Tea & Toast, etc. and items for sale.

These events have been crucial in supporting the church's mission and sustaining our operations, providing not only financial support but also opportunities for fellowship and community engagement.



Sunday Coffee

The Hall has also been used for agreed periods of time by a variety of community groups throughout the week, including Majorettes*, Tanuki drummers*, Tai Chi, Tai Kwando*, Dog Training by The Dogs Trust, and hired out for some private parties. It provides not only a very useful meeting place for the groups but also a regular income to support Church funds.



There is a small meeting room set up in what used to be a Choir vestry which is used for smaller meetings & groups eg Al Anon*, & craft. This was used as a *Warm Space* for the community during the winter of 2022/23 and was well used. The *Warm Space* was transferred to the main Hall this winter as it is easier to heat and has better access.

**Community Groups are charged a reduced rent as part of our giving.*

There is another medium-sized hall at the back of the church, originally built in the 1920's, considered to have possibly outlived its usefulness and requires specialist demolition as there is, unfortunately, asbestos present. This is currently used mostly for storage. The link corridors between the Halls also lead to ladies, gents, & easier access toilet & baby changing, together with the old kitchen, again, currently used for storage. Plans for a new toilet block need to be considered in the future.

RENTAL PROPERTY

The church owned the original Curate's House in the Parish which was let out for a number of years. It was put up for sale in late 2022 and, on completion of the sale, part of the proceeds was put towards the refurbishment of the Hall to supplement the grants and donations received. A larger house (which already had a tenant) was purchased with the remainder, which provides a useful monthly income.

STATISTICS - 2024

Electoral Roll 50, of whom 22 live outside the Parish

Usual adult Sunday Attendance 30-40

Usual Sunday Communicants 30-40 including 2 children

Child attendance 2-7 in age range 4-12

Easter 2024 attendance 44 adults, 7 children

Age range of attendance 4-80+ more than half are in the retired age group.

There are 4-5 families with young children (aged 4-12) who attend when their work patterns allow.

Baptisms 2022 – 9

2023 – 18

2024 – 13 (to Sept)

Confirmations 2022 – 0

2023 – 0

2024 – 1

Weddings 2023 – 1

2024 – 0

Funerals in Church 2022 – 4

2023 – 8

2024 – 3 (to May)



Some of the congregation after the 2024 Confirmation Service

OUR PRIEST

Like all churches, St Paul with St Luke's is on a journey. Our previous Priest-in-Charge was part time and in post for only three+ years to April 2024. Under his leadership and enablement much has been achieved but there are challenges still to be met. Although the parish is not currently able to meet its parish share, the diocese is committed to developing the ministry here, so it is making the new Priest-in-Charge role full time. It is for an initial period of three years, at which point the post will be reviewed. Provided good progress is made over that period, the diocese would envisage renewing the post for a further three-year period at that point. The role is challenging, but, for the right man or woman, it has great potential.

As the idea of everybody being welcome at St Paul with St Luke's church is very important to us, we want to welcome everyone to be a part of our community regardless of their disability, economic power, ethnicity, age, gender, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality. So our new incumbent should feel comfortable working with a diverse congregation.

As the Eucharist is the centre of our worshipping life, St Paul with St Luke's is looking for someone who will lead its congregation in prayer and worship, and will nurture and encourage its spiritual development.

Specifically, we would like to see someone:-

- With a commitment to maintaining and protecting the Anglo-Catholic tradition of worship with the ability to foster a prayerful atmosphere which meets the needs of every member of the congregation and encourages them to develop spiritually.
- Who will enable the new parts of our congregation to flourish, connecting with South Indian community groups, welcoming new people into the church and enabling people of all backgrounds to play a full part in its life and leadership.
- With experience of enabling churches, chaplaincies, or schools to engage missionally with diaspora communities.
- Who is committed to collaborative leadership to grow and encourage our journey
- Who is theologically 'open' and will encourage a lively and questioning faith
- To be a familiar presence in the community, actively engaged in pastoral care and community issues, and will help and lead us in growing our outreach in our community
- Who will show the way to grow the links already in place with our community & primary schools
- Who can draw on their own life experiences with a mature faith and is faithful in prayer
- Is open, honest, and approachable
- Who will encourage the congregation in living out the Christian faith in everyday life – Monday to Saturday and not just on a Sunday
- Who will foster a good safeguarding culture in the parish

In addition the new incumbent will be encouraged to:

- Play a wider role in the diocese, supporting the work of the new Racial Justice Officer, in areas appropriate to the incumbent's skills and experience. For example, they might support other churches as they connect with diaspora communities, or work with the Department for Ministry in fostering vocations to lay or ordained ministry from GMH communities.

What we offer to our new Priest in Charge:

- A willingness to grow and expand
- A welcoming, non-judgemental, and supportive church fellowship
- A beautiful church in which to worship
- A pleasant, spacious vicarage to make your home
- A caring community who see clergy well-being as a priority
- Willingness to assist in developing outreach mission to the community

BIRKENHEAD DEANERY

As Rural Dean for Birkenhead, I look forward welcoming the new priest-in-charge to the Deanery of Birkenhead. Many of our churches share similar contexts and challenges for mission and ministry and there is much that we can and do learn from each other as we work together. We benefit from being a supportive, friendly deanery with good relationships between churches and leaders, but also value the ongoing support offered by churches from outside the deanery as we share in God's work in this place, as I know St Paul's has from Christ Church Higher Bebington. In churches where resources can sometimes be a challenge, we value the opportunities available to work collaboratively, offering mutual support and encouragement as we seek to grow God's kingdom here. God is doing great things in Birkenhead, a town where much is changing, and we look forward to welcoming a new member to the team, to be rooted in St Paul with St Luke's and the great work developing there but also sharing in the life of the wider deanery ministry here.

The Rev Paul Bentley, Birkenhead Rural Dean

CHESTER DIOCESE

Over the past two years the diocese of Chester has been clarifying its vision and strategy. The headline for the vision is that we are a diocese 'Together in Christ, Sharing Hope'. We are a diocese that exists to bless the 1.5 million people of the diocese who do not know Christ. In pursuit of this we are aiming to grow healthy missional churches, enabling people in leadership and ministry so that they can reach every corner of our communities. This means, in particular, that we want to connect with a wide range of ages and ethnicities. The ministry at St Paul's reflects these desires – it is a church working creatively to reach children and young people, building relationships with the South Indian community, collaborating with other churches and organisations and doing this in a distinctly catholic context.

The Rev Peter Froggatt, Chester Diocese Director of Outreach