

St John's Church hensingham

Church Information



St John's outdoor service, summer 2024

Our church vision: discipleship

In Spring 2025, we will be launching our new church vision, 'Passionate Disciples'. Through a process of consultation, prayer and PCC consideration, we want to make **discipleship** the focal point of church life. We believe that a focus on the activities of the church will lead to a lack of desire to serve or share the gospel with others. Many Christians find themselves plate-spinning and running on empty as they look for the next strategy to see results.

We believe that only by remaining in Jesus and His Word can we produce fruit for God's glory (John 15:7-8) so we are excited to grow as His loving disciples. It is, therefore, a strategic decision to have an Associate Vicar who is gifted in discipling others as we believe that growing disciples is Jesus' strategy for changing the world.

Sunday Services

9.00am - Holy Communion:

a more traditional service with regular attendance of 30 adults

11.00am - Family Service:

with children's groups and a usual attendance of 125 adults and 30 children

08.30pm Zoom Prayer meeting

with around fifteen adults attending (meeting in-person on the first Sunday of the month)

As well as our Vicar, Licensed Clergy Person (volunteer) and Lay Reader, we have a number of preachers from our church family on our preaching rota. Our Clergy and other members of the team also preach regularly in our Mission Community churches (see Parish Information section). We also encourage our mission partners to preach when they visit.

We have a small team who act as 'baptism befrienders', carrying out baptism preparation with the clergy and a team of vergers for our baptism services. We prepare families to have infants baptised, according to our Baptism and Thanksgiving Policy (on our website). Families attend two sessions of teaching and discussion using the Essentials materials and must attend church. Where parents remain unsure of their faith, we encourage a Thanksgiving service instead. We also see weddings and funerals as gospel opportunities with local families.

Ministry Work at St John's

We have several midweek & Sunday groups that focus on different ages and interests but all share a common purpose of bringing people closer to Christ and discipling them. It is a blessing we have such a large number of volunteers helping to run these groups. When recruiting leaders and helpers, we follow the Safer Recruitment practices laid out by the Diocese of Carlisle.

Youth groups

On Sundays during the 11.00am service, the children leave part-way through:

- ❖ **Adventurers** (3-7 years) - a mix of crafts, games and Bible teaching.
- ❖ **Springboard** (7-11 years) - aimed at preparing older children to be part of the full church service once they reach secondary school age, with crafts and Bible teaching

At other times:

- ❖ **Explorers** (7-11 years) - meets on a Tuesday evening in the church hall and mixes games with Bible teaching, aiming to reach those in the parish who do not attend on a Sunday.
- ❖ **Pathfinders** (11-14 years) - meets after Explorers on a Tuesday evening and follows a similar format. Both groups are very well attended.
- ❖ **CYFA** (14-18 years) - runs on a Monday evening in the church hall for those aged 14-18 (school years 10-13). A mix of games and Bible study, it aims to help the young people be prepared for a lifetime of following Jesus. We regularly have 15 young people attending.

Other groups:

Living Room (20s & 30s) - meets weekly to study the Bible and build a community of believers in their 20s and early 30s.

Bible Study Groups - Six groups meet weekly throughout the area. Study material is chosen by the church leadership.

Chinese Bible Study - a further group meeting bi-weekly and studying the Bible in Cantonese, as well as conducting outreach among the Chinese community in West Cumbria

In recent years:

Discipleship Course - a year-long study course limited to approximately 5 members at a time, this provides a much deeper level of study into Christianity for those it is considered would benefit from it.

Theology Breakfasts - We would like to resume this. The group met approximately monthly on Saturday mornings for a cooked breakfast followed by an exploration of different theological topics, with a wide variety of speakers.

Church Apprentices

St John's has a history of appointing apprentices with a particular focus on addressing the great gospel need in West Cumbria. As part of that programme, one-day-a-week training at North West Gospel Partnership is included. Evangelical Bible-teaching churches are rare in this area so training new church leaders locally aims to address that need.

Pastoral Visiting Team

Our visiting team of six people is part of our wider pastoral work and they continue to support those in our church family who are unable to attend services regularly due to ill health or age related restrictions. They also support the clergy by attending visits with them, as required.

Church Leadership & Organisation

Parochial Church Council (PCC)

St John's PCC is made up of members of the clergy plus elected members from the congregation. It meets a number of times a year to ensure the orderly running of church business, particularly with respect to allocating and approving church expenditure. For the 2023 financial year, church income was £241,000. (2022 income was £232,000)

The PCC voted unanimously to give its parish offer to the Diocese through the Ephesian Fund. While we have a good relationship with our Diocese, this was to stand with other churches nationally over the Prayers of Love and Faith. The PCC also voted to prohibit these prayers to be used at St John's.

Standing Committee

The Standing Committee has the authority to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. It is composed of the clergy, the church wardens, the lay reader, and the treasurer. The PCC secretary acts as note taker on behalf of the PCC.

Other Staff Members

Paid roles (are all part time):

- ❖ Church Coordinator (18 hours)
- ❖ Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Debt Centre Manager (16 hours)
- ❖ Apprentice (currently vacant)

The PCC has resolved that St John's is a two-minister church. The Associate Vicar, whilst an office holder of the Diocese is funded by the parish and this arrangement will continue.

Many others work behind the scenes to contribute to life at St John's.

Church Buildings

The foundation stone of our church building was laid in 1911. The church building and attached hall are generally in very good order; we have a rolling maintenance programme determined by the quinquennial inspection and an approved budget to cover those areas of work. Recent improvements include new LED lighting and a new audio/video system, with modifications to the chancel area to improve usability.

Our church hall which can seat 150 (in addition to a lounge seating 25) was built in 1989 and is linked to the church via a foyer.

St Andrew's Vicarage is a modern 4 bedroomed house on a pleasant street and has kindly been made available for the Associate Vicar for 5 years, due to the fact that St John's does not have a vicarage available.

Apart from our Sunday services, the hall is mainly used midweek by our various children's groups and becomes a great venue for our regular bring and share lunches. The lounge also doubles up as the church office.

Parish Information



Community

Whitehaven is an historic Georgian port on the Irish Sea coast with its previous commercial port now converted to a marina and we have easy access to the tourist town of Keswick (25 miles) and the city of Carlisle (35 miles).

The parish is large with many surrounding private and social housing estates. The adult population is approximately 5,000 with a slightly higher than average proportion over the age of 65.

The area has a 2.2% unemployment rate and the main employers are Sellafield Ltd and its associated supply chain businesses, the local authority and health authority.

Our church is in the Diocese of Carlisle, the Calder Deanery and the East Whitehaven Mission Community.

As a congregation, we are significantly more diverse than the parish as a whole, with a large number of our church family from backgrounds including Chinese, West African, Iranian and Eastern European. Our desire is to work to integrate these different groups more coherently into our fellowship.

Mission Community

We belong to the East Whitehaven Mission Community which includes St. Andrews Mirehouse, St. Bridget's Moresby and the new independent church 'Church on the Moor' in Cleator Moor. Our clergy and other members of our preaching team regularly preach at the other Mission Community churches. We all come together in fellowship at events such as Ash Wednesday, Lenten Studies, and Theology Breakfasts. Paul Kerry is the ordained Minister of St Andrew's and St Bridget's. Paul studied at both Oak Hill Theological College (undergraduate) and Wycliffe Hall (postgraduate). He was previously Curate at Houghton and Kingmoor Churches in Carlisle.

In addition to his role at St John's, the Associate Vicar will have responsibilities towards our Mission Community partner churches (in particular St Andrew's as detailed in the role description).

Church on the Moor

Following several years of prayer and preparation, in September 2022 a new church was established in the nearby town of Cleator Moor by a number of St John's congregants with the full blessing and support of the PCC and wider church family.

The church is not Anglican but it is part of our Mission Community. The Church on the Moor is fully independent of St John's and is a member of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) & Medhurst Ministries.

Community Outreach

Schools Outreach

We have a strong working relationship with Jericho Primary School built up over the past seven years. Our clergy take 1 or 2 assemblies per term and also receive invitations to speak with classes and hold special services for Harvest, Easter and Christmas with the school also attending for a carol service in the church. Our other local primary school, Hensingham Primary School, also had a carol service in the church this year and has weekly assemblies.

We also maintain links with the Northern Inter-Schools Christian Union (NISCU) who work in schools across Cumbria to introduce young people to the gospel.

Seniors' Outreach

We have a monthly communion service in Johnston House, a 10-bed sit sheltered accommodation house and Walkmill Gardens, a 20-flat retirement sheltered housing unit. We coordinate monthly communion services for The Gables, a residential care home where

clergy from the local wider community have been invited to take a special Easter service in addition to a successful carol service.

Each Christmas, we hold a Seniors' Party for around 75 senior citizens from our church and the local community where we gather together for an afternoon tea, entertainment, carol singing and a short talk on the Gospel.

Children's Outreach

Each Spring since 2014, we have run an annual four day 'football school' holiday club for 50 - 60 children (7-11 years) at our local Sports Academy. The event has attracted children from the local estates as well those from our own church. The programme uses a mixture of football skill training with Bible study and an opportunity to share the gospel during the day, and also to the parents at the awards evening on the final day.

Evangelism Outreach

We have used the following resources in our evangelism outreach: Christianity Explored, Hope Explored, Essentials, Outreach UK resources, Good News Newspaper and Pocket Testament League pocket bibles and testimonies and we are about to launch Word 121 with our CAP befrienders (see below) and their clients. We also are blessed to have access to various Lenten and Advent daily reading studies written by clergy, including previous curates, with whom we have close links.

Family Outreach

Christmas Unwrapped is our main outreach event which is held in the church hall and open to church family and the local community, with crafting activities, an indoor bouncy castle, carol singing in the church, refreshments and a short talk on the meaning of Christmas.

For the last few Christmases, small groups have sung carols around the streets of a local estate over a four night period for which we have received lovely feedback from the residents.

Social Outreach

St John's is the lead church and accountable body for the local Christians Against Poverty debt centre - CAP Whitehaven. It was formed in 2013 within a partnership of 5 other local churches: St. Andrews, St. Bridget's, New Life Church, Emmanuel Church and Woodbank Community Church. The centre comprises a Debt Centre Manager, a Debt Coach, befrienders who work alongside them and a host of volunteers who regard themselves as evangelists who provide debt relief. Within the framework of St. John's Church policies, procedures and working practices this includes arranging debt management plans, providing CAP Money budgeting courses, weekly food support through FareShare and pastoral care. Our desire is to not only bring release from the debt of financial hardship but

release from the debt of our sin through the sharing of the Word of the saving work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus.

Gospel Partners

We value our partnerships with other missionary organisations, locally, nationally and overseas.

The PCC has resolved to set aside 10% of our annual income for our missionary giving with the missionary allocation split 1:3 between social and evangelism respectively.

We currently support:

- ❖ **The Leprosy Mission** - which seeks to bring about transformation across 30 countries breaking the chains of leprosy and empowering people to attain healing and dignity.
- ❖ **Lamb Healthcare** - relieving poverty, sickness and disability by providing healthcare and education in Bangladesh.
- ❖ **Albanian Evangelical Mission** - who share the gospel by supporting Albanian Christians and publishing scripture in Albanian
- ❖ **Mountain Springs** - a small fellowship of believers who bring the good news to places which have a strong Taliban culture and tradition.
- ❖ **European Mission Fellowship** - Supporting Romuald Lasnes in sharing the Gospel by planting churches across Paris.
- ❖ **Crosslinks** - Supporting our local missionary family, the Walkers, as they lead an Anglican Church in Mendoza, Argentina.
- ❖ **Christians Against Poverty (CAP)** - who provide free debt help to those in need across the UK including our own debt centre CAP Whitehaven
- ❖ **UFM** - supporting Ben and Liz Griffin and family as they partner with 100Fold to share Christ through mobile technology.
- ❖ **Anglican Mission in England** - establishing Anglican churches outside of the Church of England.
- ❖ **Northern Inter Schools Christian Union (NISCU)** - providing children and young people with knowledge of the Christian faith.
- ❖ **Cumbria Christian Youth Camp (CCYC)** - joining together the excitement of learning about Jesus and enjoying the outdoors into a Christian summer camp.

Our congregation responds promptly to support world disaster appeals.

Appendix

Our theology

As members of the Church of England within the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, we affirm the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, of which the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion are a general exposition. Standing in the Reformation tradition, we lay especial emphasis on the grace of God—his unmerited mercy—as expressed in the doctrines within the [basis of faith](#) of the Church of England Evangelical Council and the two paragraphs from CEEC Constitution 4.1.1 & 4.1.2. Please note that 4.1.2 upholds an orthodox position on human sexuality.

In March 2023, the PCC of St John's voted for the second time to pass a resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests to receive provision in this area. This brings us under the pastoral oversight of the Bishop of Ebbsfleet as well as the Bishop of Carlisle. We therefore require that the Associate Vicar, along with our Vicar, 'holds that God has created men and women equal in their essential dignity and human personhood, but different and complementary in function.' While we are complementarian, we believe that this is a second order issue. We hold a view of Christian headship that means we rejoice to work with those who believe differently to us. This past year, our Vicar has shared with the church his desire to cultivate positive complementarianism that acknowledges everything women *can* do, rather than simply what they cannot. You can read this [here](#).