

PARISH BROCHURE

Team Vicar (0.5) – Parish of St John and St Luke, Bilton, Harrogate

Introduction

The parish is situated on the northern edge of the spa town of Harrogate in North Yorkshire, in the deanery of Harrogate, and the Archdeaconry of Richmond & Craven in the Ripon Episcopal Area of the Diocese of Leeds.

St John's, large and Victorian, has over 200 people on the electoral roll and a regular Sunday attendance of 80+ adults at the main service.

St Luke's meets in the former church hall and has nearly 60 people on the roll and a regular attendance of 30+.

Our parish is the largest in terms of population in the Archdeaconry and as part of Harrogate Deanery plays an active role in a supportive network of churches.



Our Vision ***BELONGING TOGETHER IN CHRIST***

Our shared history as St John's & St Luke's is relatively recent, but the story of our two churches joining together is a prayerful partnership of complementary Christian communities. We want to invite everyone in our parishes into this joint, distinctive witness to God's goodness in Christ, and through what we say and do to communicate our conviction that Christianity changes lives, calling us to respect difference, have the courage to be different, and discern what it takes to make a difference.

We believe we're called to look outwards, that working alongside our neighbours we can help to make Bilton even better and be a blessing along King's Road.

For us Belonging Together in Christ means that as we share our stories and in doing so affirm our God-given diversity, we aspire to be welcoming spaces in which all can learn from one another, and we aim to be especially encouraging of children and young people in their spiritual growth.

In John's Gospel Jesus acknowledges his disciples as friends (John 15:15); in Luke's Gospel his disciples finally recognize the risen Christ as they break bread together (Luke 24:30-31). Christianity offers a personal spirituality, but it is also expressed in conversation and realised in moments of encounter; we find belonging in Christ but are challenged to see Christ in one another and hopefully find a home from home in our church communities. It's not always easy, and we might sometimes need to find ways to disagree well, but we seek to be there for one another as an extended church family. Fundamentally, we believe in the benefits of Christian community and advocate for this as a gift that we can share.

Whether commitment is lifelong/lapsed, faith is being explored for the first time, someone's perhaps feeling a pull back to something known before but somehow lost along the way, attending alongside family, or simply wanting to carve out some space and time to think and try to make sense of it all, we're here for everyone.



Café Carols

Our hopeful welcome extends beyond our two churches, via our congregations and groups into our local area - as Church of England parish churches we seek to give everyone places to belong together, and this includes people of all faiths and none.

In terms of our services, we embrace a variety of worship styles, with music led at St John's by both our choir and band, and the band and supporting musicians at St Luke's. Our liturgy is both formal and informal, incorporating opportunities for the traditional and the contemporary, the charismatic and the contemplative. While most people probably tend to belong to one church in particular, there is significant overlap in our churches, congregations and groups and we do encourage people to feel able to attend both churches and switch between depending on which service is on offer and which style of worship happens to be preferred.

More information can be found on our website: www.stjohnsandstlukes.org.uk

**Discerning direction
and shaping a post to look intentionally outward**

Following on from the appointment of a new Rector (licensed June 2025), we've been in a period of prayerful and proactive discernment; the PCC have identified three key priority areas to explore as we seek to respond to God's call for us in the season ahead:

*Welcome and Community
Children and Young People
Learning and Discipleship*

We're seeking to affirm our shared identity across two churches, several congregations, and a less traditional expression of faith, as well as supporting those groups that we consider part of our extended family of Christian communities.

The Team Vicar role would intentionally complement an already well established and friendly team of ministers (Team Rector, Children & Young People's Chaplain, Reader, and retired clergy) and committed and collaborative laity, including supportive churchwardens.



Friendly Churchwardens

We're seeking a colleague who will add capacity and innovate, help us to be more outward looking, can be pioneering within a parish context, and who has a heart for building and maintaining relationships – a pastor(al) evangelist!

We especially wish to support those on the margins within our parish in their Christian journeys and so the Team Vicar would be freed up to focus on supporting more informal entry points, encouraging pathways to growth in faith, and ensuring continuity of care as newcomers integrate more fully into our communities as we follow Jesus.

A particular area of missional need is our engagement with families who attend primarily to assist Church of England school applications. We have really good links with Richard Taylor Primary School, and St Aidan's High School too, but how we integrate and encourage this significant constituency within our community remains both a challenge and an opportunity.



Well caffeinated Staff Meetings



Rev'd Matthew, Deputy Churchwarden Martin, Richard Taylor School Headteacher Mrs Crisell on Welcome Sunday

Deputy Churchwarden Martin says:

"As parents one of the things we've always valued about St John's and St Luke's is the genuine welcome children receive and, as they grow, the considered approach to children's ministry.

Much of this, particularly at St John's, goes hand in hand with the work of our church primary school, Richard Taylor. Like our churches, the school – recognised in a recent SIAMs report as a place where Christian vision is central to every aspect of school life – plays a key part in the lives of children, their families and the wider community. It is a privilege as a parent, foundation governor and deputy churchwarden to see both the ties between these communities and the opportunities to deepen them.

Developing these already healthy links offers a very real, and very exciting, opportunity for the church to realise its vision of outreach in Bilton, of helping those of all ages to grow in relationship with God and to be a place where people can genuinely belong together in Christ."

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We're keen to hear from candidates about what God might be calling them to, and how that could speak into our context and those priority areas we've identified so far.

Alongside being part of the team leading Sunday worship across both churches, and partly depending on days offered, we'd anticipate that (subject to ongoing reflection and review) the Team Vicar's objectives would be as follows:

- **Build links with school qualifying connection families (primarily but not exclusively at St John's)**
- **Bring a fresh pair of eyes, and help plan and share in leading well established Café Church at St Luke's (2nd Sunday)**
- **Play an active part in monthly Monday First worshipping community, helping discern its next steps and encouraging lay leadership, and get to know Wednesday Thirst (if available midweek)**

Café Church Coordinator Rev'd Judith reflects:

"Café Church is now into its third year and takes place on the 2nd Sunday of the month at St Luke's. It offers a wonderful opportunity to meet in a relaxed setting and as a truly all-age gathering. There is a real sense of being family together.

People sit round tables, coffee and pastries are served part way through and enjoyed as we discuss the theme for the Sunday, usually based on the lectionary reading for that week.

With some questions to get people talking, we have a chance to talk about how we live out our faith and to think about how what we encounter in the bible makes a difference to how we live.

We try to use different ways of approaching the bible – we've had a bit of drama, we've used a clip from 'The Chosen', we've had different people read. Café church gives us space to meet with God and one another in a different way. Prayer can be based round 'stations' or led in other creative ways.

We've started to put paper tablecloths out and encourage people to doodle on them. We provide things to fiddle with - playdoh and puzzles. There are wordsearches and colouring sheets based on the theme so there is something to cater for all ages.

Café church is well attended, people find it easy to invite friends along or bring family members who don't usually come to church. We have sung worship too, with our wonderful band. Different people help with setting up, providing the refreshments, publicity and also planning.

I really value being able to serve St Luke's as part of the Café church team."

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Depending on capacity, when the week allowed the postholder *might* also:

- attend monthly joint coffee morning at St John's Church Hall (2nd Saturday)
- support dementia friendly Wellbeing Café (Wednesday pm, St Luke's)
- Oversee lay led joint services on 5th Sundays (signpost to training, assist preparation, provide support, supervision, and feedback)

Overall:

- Model team-building and help us to continue to reflect on how we affirm our joint identity, faith and fellowship across two separate but 'happily married' churches!
- Play an active role in staff team
- Take time to listen to the different communities and discern areas for outward-looking growth and development

The welfare of the postholder is of paramount importance to us, and especially given this is a 0.5 role, we'd not be anticipating more than 2.5 days a week plus most Sundays (on duty, or at least attending worship to get to know the communities) – there would be flexibility around other commitments (including another role, which might sometimes necessarily take priority in terms of hours worked – and vice versa, for example probably more in parish during Advent/Christmas and Holy Week/Easter), and we'd seek to safeguard your work-life balance (attendance at meetings outside of the post's remit would not be expected). We're seeking to build strategically and sustainably in the season ahead.



*Monday First Team at
Dene Park Community Centre*

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Monday First feedback (July '26):

What do you like about Monday First?

Natural, simple, well planned

The variety of people who come, singing together, the interactive,

clear and simple message, sharing faith in a relaxed way.

To be with people and share God's word.

That is the only time I can listen to God's word

It uplifts our spiritual needs in Jesus Christ

Lack of formality, the talks. It is very friendly and of course, all the people.

A little more about our parish, churches and communities

Serving our Communities

We have a number of successful, lay volunteer-led initiatives which are good opportunities for loving and serving our wider parish community. Below are a selection of the things that members of our church family are involved with:

Thirst - A weekly coffee morning in our wider parish community at the Community Centre on the Dene Park estate off Woodfield Road. It is run by 4-5 volunteers, mainly from St John's and St Luke's, and aims to reach what is, in many ways, a neglected area of Harrogate, through provision of refreshments and providing a space for people to chat, share problems and, we trust, catch a glimpse of the love of God through the contact made. Around 25-30 people attend each week, not including helpers.

Three of the leaders have been part of the local 'Greenhouse' gatherings, a support group to encourage the development of Fresh Expressions in local churches. They, along with a small team from St John's and St Luke's, launched **Monday First**, offering a monthly informal hour-long worship session over tea and coffee (and, of course, cake), based in the Community Centre, open to all in the Dene Park area and beyond.



Our monthly Coffee Morning is also a firm (fundraising) favourite!

Wellbeing Cafe – Based at St Luke’s, this was established to provide a welcoming space, with the offer of soup and a roll or tea and cake, for anyone in our local community who might appreciate a friendly, safe space to meet and make new friends. Although open to all, the cafe especially caters for those who may be suffering with dementia or another condition. On average, 20-30 people attend our regular Wednesday afternoon sessions, as well as a variety of trips and special events, and new faces arrive regularly. The café is run by a strong team of 15 highly valued volunteers.



Wellbeing Café Team

About the Parish

Location

Bilton (population approx. 18,000) has grown from a small village described in the Domesday Book, and is now part of the spa town of Harrogate. The ecclesiastical parish stretches from the beautiful Nidd Gorge to near the town centre, which boasts a park, a theatre, 2 cinemas, gyms, supermarkets and numerous pubs, cafes and independent and chain shops. The cities of Leeds and York are within easy reach by rail, there are direct trains to London every day and the A1 is less than 30 minutes’ drive away for easy access to both the north and south of the country. Local bus services are also good and there is even a regular bus service to nearby Leeds-Bradford airport.



Community

The population of the parish is significantly white British with a large proportion of owner occupiers, and 64% are of working age (18-65). However, this general picture obscures significant pockets of difference:

- In the Woodfield, Dene Park and New Park areas of the parish there are pockets of deprivation e.g. at one school nearly a quarter of children receive free school meals.
- The Woodfield and Dene Park areas have a significant number of one-bedroom properties where loneliness and isolation are clear issues.
- The St Luke's area has a higher proportion of lone parent families in rental accommodation.
- The parish deprivation rank is 7326 (1=most deprived parish in the Church of England, 12,382=least deprived, C of E database, Oct 2023)

The parish has one doctor's surgery, a thriving cricket club, a social (formerly working men's) club, three pubs, a community library and a mix of small independent shops and cafes. There are also three community centres. Meanwhile both St Luke's Church and St John's Church Hall host uniformed organisations and a range of other community groups. A daily children's preschool uses St John's church hall, which is available for hire for one-off or more regular events.

Other churches in the parish include Catholic, Methodist and United Reformed churches, and a Free Church, but there is no other Anglican presence in north Harrogate, an area which has grown substantially in recent years, and has a number of new-build housing estates.

There are six primary schools in the parish, including Richard Taylor C of E Primary School, with which there are already strong links, and where the Team Rector is one of the Governors. There is also a Pupil Referral Unit. The five state secondary schools in the town lie outside the parish, including St Aidan's C of E High School, which many children from our churches attend.

A former primary school in the parish is being developed to build a new school for children with autism and is due to open in November 2026. We see the new school as a possible way of engaging more with our local disabled community.

Our Buildings

St John's Church was consecrated in 1857 and is a grade II* listed Church with a seating capacity of up to 300. It is light and airy, and has a flexible worship space, thanks to the replacement of pews in the 1960s with moveable chairs. Disabled access is facilitated by internal and external ramps. In the last 10-12 years both the main body of the church and the tower have been re-roofed, new lighting has been installed both inside and along the church driveway, and AV facilities have recently been upgraded. There is a useful meeting room in the space that was once the chancel, which is great for PCC and other meetings, Alpha and for children's groups on Sunday mornings. The parish office is also situated in St John's. There is a small kitchen and a single toilet which has disabled access. St John's has a large churchyard which, although not officially closed, is only open for interment of ashes. It is well maintained by church volunteers. There are extensive grassed areas either side of the drive, maintained by the Local Authority.

St Luke's Church was constructed in 1959/60 as a church hall and converted to become St Luke's Church Centre, with the first service taking place in 1974. St Luke's has seating capacity for up to 140 and the structural condition is good, with recent works undertaken including a new AV system, new lighting and the refurbishment of the kitchen. The church centre is used for 'Ignite' (our Church Youth Group for secondary aged children), our Wellbeing Café (for the isolated and those with dementia), 'Little Fishes' (a weekly term-time parent and toddler group), Café Church (a monthly service aimed primarily at families with young children, part of our pattern of services at 10.30), and is also home to two Rainbows groups. As with the church hall at St John's, St Luke's is available for hire to local groups or for one-off events.



Our **Church Hall** at St John's, built in 1897, is grade II listed and used by the church on Sunday for our younger members. Monthly coffee mornings have been taking place over many years on Saturday mornings with all proceeds (often in the region of £600+) going to named charities and projects. The church hall is also used by the community, including a children's preschool group Monday to Friday, and in the evenings it hosts Uniformed Organisations, dance clubs, and various other users. It is also available for private hire for one-off events and celebrations.

The Rectory/Vicarage sits adjacent to St John's and was purpose built in the early 1970s to replace a Victorian vicarage on Bilton Lane.



The Team Vicar's House is owned by the Diocese and lies less than a mile from St John's in one of the newer housing developments.



Our Services

St John's		
First Sunday	9.00	Holy Communion
	10.30	All Age/Parade Service
	12.30	Baptisms
Second Sunday	9.00	Holy Communion
	10.30	Holy Communion
Third Sunday	9.00	Holy Communion
	10.30	Morning Worship
	12.30	Baptisms
Fourth Sunday	9.00	Holy Communion
	10.30	Holy Communion
Fifth Sunday	9.00	Holy Communion
	10.30	Joint Service at St John's or St Luke's
Wednesdays	10.30	Midweek Holy Communion
St Luke's		
First Sunday	10.30	Holy Communion
Second Sunday	10.30	Cafe Church
Third Sunday	10.30	Morning Worship
Fourth Sunday	10.30	All Age
Fifth Sunday	10.30	Joint Service at St John's or St Luke's

Wednesday Communion – This service (St John's) has a regular attendance of around 25 communicants and, with the coffee, cake and chat that follow, has developed a good community feel over the years.

Morning Prayer – This takes place Mondays to Thursdays from 9-9.20 am (St John's) and has a small but regular attendance.