

St John

The Evangelist

A New Vicar for Little Thornton



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1. Letter from the Bishops

Thank you for showing an interest in a post in the Diocese of Blackburn.

Our Diocese is passionate about the renewal of Parish life. We have a profound belief in the power of the Gospel to transform lives and communities and expresses a firm commitment to maintaining clergy numbers and investing in the mission of the local church. We therefore seek clergy with a personal faith fiery enough to make new disciples for Christ, with a sincere commitment to the Parish as the heart of the church's mission and with the resilience and courage to bring growth and renewal to local churches. We don't want superheroes. Rather we are seeking authentic, prayerful priests of all traditions who share our passion for confident proclamation and generous service.

What's more, you would be coming to the Diocese at a fascinating time of our Centenary in 2026, themed "All for Jesus". We are in the midst of a major process of listening to God and listening to our County as we discern where God is calling us next, a process that will result in a new strategic vision that will last until 2033, the 2000th anniversary of the Resurrection.

We have also recently been successful in obtaining a grant of £25.5m from the Diocesan Investment Programme run by the national church. This will enable us to:

- Offer a transformed pattern of ongoing training and support to clergy, including sabbatical leave as an expectation for all rather than a treat for the few
- Deploy 30 'Ignite' youth and children's workers to parishes around the Diocese
- Invest in urban areas through expanding the M:Power course for urban leaders, employing 18 Urban Pioneers and re-imagining Christian life in areas of particular challenge.
- Expand our Diocesan Renewal Programme which has led to an average of 6% growth in RWA in participating parishes.

We are a Diocese that is united in defying the declinist mindset that has taken hold of so much of Western European Christianity. Through a firm belief in the power of Jesus Christ to change lives combined with strong pastoral ministry and imaginative developments such as new local congregations, we are seeing growth in churches of all traditions. Strong relationships with our amazing family of 191 schools (95% of whom benefit from practising Christian Headteachers) provide another springboard for mission.

As a Diocese we do all we can to love and treasure our clergy. Our programme of Annual Conversations means that every licensed priest has a 90 minute conversation with a Bishop or an Archdeacon every year about their vocation, wellbeing and spiritual life.



*The Bishop of Blackburn
The Rt Revd Philip North*



*The Bishop of Lancaster
The Rt Revd Dr Jill Duff*



*The Bishop of Burnley
The Rt Revd
Dr Joe Kennedy*

We have appointed an Assistant Archdeacon to advise on clergy wellbeing and we work hard to create networks that enable clergy to belong and find mutual support.

Those in their first incumbency are offered especially focused support. This includes participation in a two year Start of Ministry course, advice and care from a mentor and the oversight of our two outstanding Start of Ministry officers.

Lancashire has been described as “The World in One Diocese” and we can offer a vast diversity of parishes. We serve the most deprived communities in the United Kingdom on the Fylde coast and in East Lancashire as well as remote countryside. We are not immune from the particular challenges to ministry provided by an increasingly secular culture and a divided Church. But what brings us together is a profound and shared love of Jesus Christ and a passionate desire that all should know him, and in knowing him find life.

We really hope you enjoy reading this profile and that it provides all the information you need. If this particular post does not feel quite right, please do get in touch about other parishes in the Diocese that are vacant.

Most importantly of all, please be assured of our prayers as you discern the will of God for the next stage in your ministry.

2. Welcome to St John's

After the appointment of our previous incumbent as Archdeacon of Blackburn, the Bishop of Lancaster would like to appoint a new Vicar who will guide our church family into the next season of mission and growth.

At St John's, we are a vibrant and growing church family, committed to deepening our Christian faith and living out our mission to **share God's love with all in Little Thornton and beyond**. We are proud to be a diverse and inclusive community, welcoming everyone in Jesus' name.

Over the past nine years, we have worked intentionally to make our church building a true community hub, a place where faith and fellowship meet everyday life. Our facilities now provide flexible spaces for a wide range of activities, from exercise classes to uniformed organisations, and are in regular use throughout the week. Worship remains at the heart of our life together, with two to three services each Sunday and a midweek communion on Thursday mornings. To make our worship space more adaptable, we have begun replacing some pews with chairs, creating a setting that is both welcoming and versatile.

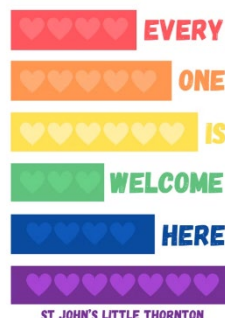
Faith formation is central to our vision. A growing number of Homegroups meet weekly during term time, offering opportunities for prayer, study, and mutual support. We have been encouraged by the confidence and enthusiasm of new Christians within our congregation, and recent initiatives such as the Alpha Course have run at capacity, helping many take steps toward confirmation.



Our ministry team, both lay and ordained, is passionate about serving the parish and looks forward to the leadership of a minister who will inspire through Biblical teaching, nurture discipleship, and empower others to lead. Together, we seek to be a church where faith flourishes, community thrives, and God's love is shared generously with all.

At St John's, we take safeguarding and environmental responsibility seriously. Our committed Parish Safeguarding Officer ensures we fulfil all safeguarding obligations. Alongside this, we are proud to have achieved the Bronze Eco-Church Award, reflecting our dedication to caring for God's creation, a key national priority for the church as it moves toward the ambitious 'Net Zero by 2030' target.

***“St John's is a friendly,
welcoming and inclusive church.”***
(Congregation Survey 2025)



3. The PCC's Vision for the Future

"Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain." (Psalm 127:1)

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St John's is a dedicated and welcoming team of around twelve members. Known for being friendly, inclusive, and forward-thinking, the PCC plays a vital role in guiding the life and mission of our parish.

We warmly invite any member of the church to consider joining this group, which meets six times a year to prayerfully and practically oversee both the everyday and extraordinary aspects of parish life. While our meetings address important matters, they are marked by a positive, collaborative spirit and a shared commitment to the future of St John's.

Our Mission:

"Sharing God's Love with all in Little Thornton and beyond."

Following our call to pray for growth in faith and commitment throughout 2025, we look forward to celebrating the Diocesan Centenary in 2026. We will continue to pray for new and deeply committed followers of Jesus of all ages, and for us to create opportunities for spiritual growth across generations.

St John's is blessed with retired clergy and two Licensed Lay Ministers who have made this their spiritual home. Building on this strength, we are committed to expanding our worship team and providing training for lay members who feel called to lead prayers, homegroups, and Bible readings. Our goal is to equip and empower every member to serve with confidence and joy.

We, God's people in the parish of St John's Little Thornton, seek to proclaim the good news of God's love by enriching the quality of our worship, by endeavouring to draw more families to the life of our church and by meeting the pastoral needs of our community.

In order to achieve this mission, we are focussing on the following areas:

- 1. Welcoming Families in Church:** St John's is a growing parish, with 600 new homes being built within walking distance of the church. As Scripture reminds us, *"Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already ripe for harvest!" (John 4:35)*. We believe this growth presents a rich opportunity to welcome new families into our fellowship.



Children are warmly welcomed and celebrated in our worship and our established Seekers group. At all-age services, they are invited to gather around the altar and participate in the liturgy, helping them grow in faith through active involvement. In the past year, we have introduced a Fresh Expressions service at 4pm on Sundays, a relaxed, family-friendly gathering where all ages (and even pets) are welcome. This Spirit-led initiative is drawing a growing community, and we are committed to nurturing its development.

Our mission is to create a space where families of all ages feel truly at home. We recognise the importance of nurturing the spiritual growth of children, young people, and parents alike. To support this, we are exploring family-friendly seating areas, dedicated children's spaces, and regular all-age worship services. By fostering a welcoming environment, we hope every family finds their place in our community and feels valued in their faith journey.

"That all of them may be one." (John 17:21)

- 2. Growing Disciples:** We are deeply committed to making disciples of Jesus by creating opportunities for people to grow in faith and community. At St John's, this happens through a variety of vibrant groups, including popular home and prayer gatherings, as well as our recently well-attended Alpha and Youth Alpha courses.

These initiatives reflect our prayerful response to the needs of our worshipping community, and we are encouraged by the growth we have seen as a result. Our mission is to help every individual take the next step in their journey with Christ, challenging ourselves and one another to deepen our faith and live as devoted disciples of Jesus.

- 3. Strengthening Pastoral Care:** Our Pastoral Team faithfully visits those unable to attend church due to ill health or other circumstances, ensuring they remain connected to the life of St John's. We are committed to strengthening this ministry by raising awareness of its vital role and encouraging more people to support and participate in this work.

Hospitality is central to our mission. After services, particularly on Sundays, people gather for refreshments, and many have come to faith through the warm welcome and fellowship offered here. Looking ahead, we aim to deepen relationships through faith and friendship by hosting more intergenerational social events, such as our New Year Party and Harvest Supper.

Our mission is to share God's love through practical care and meaningful connection, creating a church family where everyone feels valued and supported.

"One of the things I value the most about St John's is the support from the clergy and congregation, actioned through faith at its heart."

(Congregation Survey 2025)

- 4. Charitable Giving and Witness:** At St John's, generosity is at the heart of our mission. Each year, our Harvest Offering supports Street Life, a charity serving the homeless in Blackpool. In addition, we maintain a collection point at the back of the church for essential items, which Street Life collects regularly.

Our commitment to giving extends beyond our local community. Through *World Vision*, we sponsor two children, helping to provide education and hope for a brighter future.

These initiatives remind us that giving is an integral part of our Christian witness, and we aim to continue and expand this work.

We also encourage all members to join the *Parish Giving Scheme*, which helps make our income predictable and ensures that giving is proportionate. By being good stewards of our resources, we can be generous in our support of ministries that transform lives.

Our mission is to reflect Christ's love through practical generosity, supporting those in need locally and globally, and fostering a culture of faithful stewardship within our church family.

- 5. Stewardship of Buildings and Grounds:** At St John's, we take great pride in the care and condition of our church buildings and grounds, which stand as a visible sign of welcome in our community. Much of this work is carried out by dedicated volunteers, supported by a trusted local builder who has helped us enhance both the interior and exterior of our facilities.



We are currently seeking grant funding to install a ramp that will make our entrance more accessible for all. Looking ahead, we plan to improve vehicular access at the rear of the property, creating a tidier and better-drained space for practical use.

Our grounds are lovingly maintained by a growing team of volunteers—practical people who enjoy working together and sharing friendship over coffee. There is something for everyone to contribute, and every effort helps us ensure that St John's remains a beacon of faith and community in Little Thornton.

Our mission is to steward our buildings and grounds in a way that extends Christ's welcome, creating accessible, beautiful, and well-kept spaces where people can encounter God, grow in faith, and belong.

Above all, we aim to remain a warm and inclusive church family, open to all. We look forward to welcoming a new vicar who will share this vision, build on our strengths, and challenge us to step confidently into the future with faith and hope.

4. The Parish and Wider Community

Little Thornton is a popular village situated on the Fylde and Wyre coast, in Lancashire, about 4 miles north of Blackpool and 2 miles south of Fleetwood. It is an area with fabulous views, wonderful walks and excellent local food. To the west of the Wyre you can find stunning beaches with unspoilt coastlines and to the east unforgettable landscapes in the Forest of Bowland, an area of outstanding natural beauty. The Wyre area has been voted as one of the top ten places in the North West of England to live.

The village of Little Thornton was first mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086. It has grown from a sparsely populated agricultural village to a population of about 9,000. This figure is set to increase further with new developments of mixed residential housing in the area, which will see around 600 new homes built. With the growth of our local population, especially new families that are moving into the parish, we feel there is a real opportunity at St John's to support our growing community and bring people together in the presence of the Lord.

The Parish

The Parish of St John's has a small but busy high street with a small supermarket, pharmacy, café, shops, salons, estate agents and a theatre ([Thornton Little Theatre](#)) just over the parish boundary. There are a number of bars and gastro pubs alongside a host of other restaurants and take aways.



The Parish contains one secondary ([Millfield Science and Performing Arts College](#)) and two primary ([Baines Endowed VC Primary School](#) and [Stanah Primary School](#)) schools, for which there is a good deal of Church of England support and contribution led by our Children's Champion at St John's. Our JAFFA (Jesus A Friend for All) club is popular at Baines Endowed, and both Stanah and Baines welcome vicars into school to

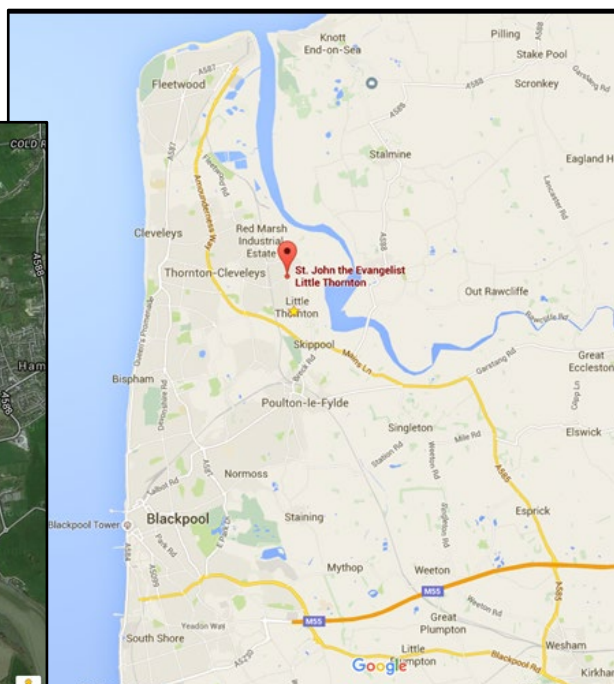
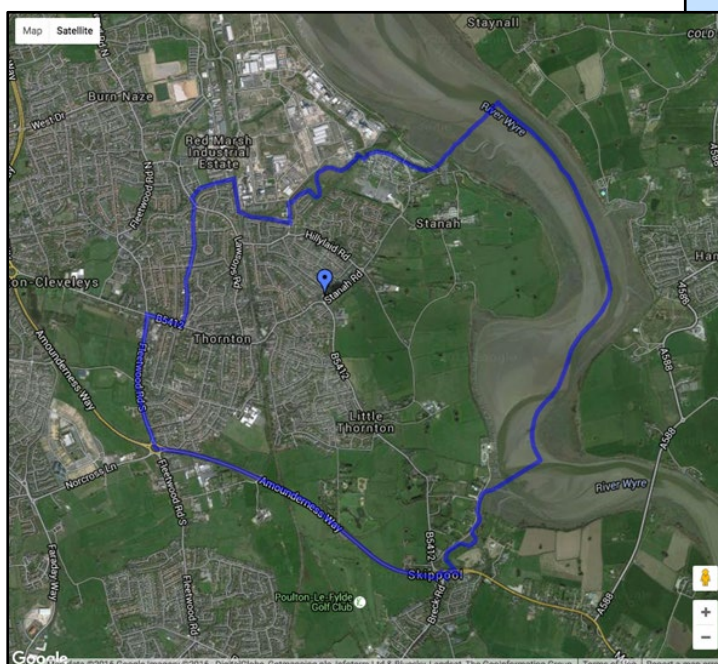
lead assemblies on a regular basis. Previous incumbents have also been on the board of governors at Millfield High School. The Parish has two care homes (The Briars and The Conifers) to which we at St John's have close links. Members of our church community offer support and contribute to activities and events here.

There is also an award winning Green Flag Country Park ([Wyre Estuary Country Park](#)) within the Parish together with residential and holiday parks, riding stables and the Blackpool & Fylde Yacht Club (which supports around a hundred council-owned moorings for leisure boats).



Where to find us

Maps taken from [Google Maps](#) or the [Diocesan website](#).



The Parish of St John the Evangelist is excellently located to take advantage of the wide variety of attractions that are on offer around the north west of England. With good links to the M55 motorway, cities such as Lancaster, Preston, Manchester and Liverpool are easy to visit. The neighbouring town of Poulton le Fylde also has regular trains that link directly to the west coast mainline.

The mountains of the Lake District National Park can easily be seen from the parish and can be reached by car in around an hour, making it an easy day trip to explore one of the country's most popular national parks. The neighbouring Bowland Fells, Ribble Valley and Yorkshire Dales National Park beyond also provide a wonderful backdrop to the area.



Parish Demographics

Little Thornton is home to 9,304 people, a vibrant mix of ages and backgrounds. Families and young people make up a healthy proportion, with 15% under 16, while 28% are 65 and over, bringing wisdom and experience to our community. The parish is overwhelmingly British (98%) with a small but valued ethnic minority presence (2%).

Faith remains central for many, with 59% identifying as Christian, though 35% have no religious affiliation, offering us a wonderful opportunity for outreach and welcome. The area experiences medium levels of deprivation (59%) yet is blessed with stability as 79% of homes are owner-occupied, and 18% are rented, reflecting a strong sense of rootedness within the local community.

The parish demographics below are taken from the 2021 National Census. A link to the parish dashboard is [here](#). Since the 2021 census the parish has experienced substantial residential house building. As our community grows and new families settle here, we see exciting opportunities to share God's love, build connections, and create a thriving parish where everyone feels at home.

| PARISH DEMOGRAPHICS | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Population (2021 census) | |
| 9304 | |
| Age Spread | |
| 0-4 | 4% |
| 5-15 | 11% |
| 16-64 | 57% |
| 65+ | 28% |
| Ethnic Mix | |
| British | 98% |
| Minority Ethnic | 2% |
| Faith Mix | |
| Christian | 59% |
| Other religion | 0% |
| Of no religion | 35% |
| Deprivation Index | |
| Medium deprivation (59%) | |
| Housing Mix | |
| Owner occupied | 79% |
| Social/Private rented housing | 18% |

5. Our Church Community

Our Worship at St John's

St John's is a diverse and welcoming church, embracing a broad spectrum of worship styles, from traditional to contemporary, and is reflected in our musical choices! Many of our services are recorded and live streamed on our [YouTube channel](#), allowing members of our congregation to join in with services from home or wherever they may be in the world.

Our services include:

- **Holy Communion from the Book of Common Prayer** at 8:30 a.m. on the third Sunday of each month
- **Family Communion** every Sunday at 10:00 a.m., featuring our choir and organ accompaniment. Our Seekers and Little T's Rise and Shine groups also run during this time, starting in church at the beginning and coming back into church to receive communion or a blessing.
- **Praise Service** at 4:00 p.m. on Sundays, beginning with refreshments and followed by approximately 30 minutes of worship. This service is a more relaxed, child and dog friendly service.
- **Holy Communion** (said) every Thursday at 11:30 a.m.

All who love Christ are warmly invited to receive communion and share in the fellowship of worship.

“St John's provides many ways of developing people's faith and love of God.”

(Congregation Survey 2025)



| Church and Services | | |
|---|---------------------|-----|
| Electoral Role | | |
| Year | 2025 | |
| Number | 99 | |
| Occasional Offices, Celebrations, etc. | | |
| Baptisms (2025) | 14 | |
| Weddings | 1 | |
| Confirmation (2025) | Adult Candidates | 0 |
| | Under 16 Candidates | 0 |
| Funerals (2025) | in Church | 7 |
| | at Crematorium | 18 |
| Average weekly attendance (2025) | 80 | |
| Festivals | | |
| Easter (one Sunday Service) | Communicants | 75 |
| Christmas (Crib Service and Midnight Mass) | Communicants | 103 |

Our Ministry Team

Our ministry team, both lay and ordained, is deeply committed to serving the parish with faith and joy. The team is led by Rev'd Kathryn Sperring, our Assistant Curate, who will complete her curacy in February 2026. She is ably supported by a team which includes five retired Clergy, two Licensed Lay Ministers and one Authorised Lay Minister. We also have a team of church wardens and their assistants.

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Assistant Curate | Rev'd Kathryn Sperring |
| Retired Clergy | Rev'd Mary Day Rev'd Tom Maidment Rev'd Diane Weaver Rev'd Carol Wilkinson Rev'd Mike Hartley |
| Licensed Lay Ministers | Margaret Warburton and Judith Robson |
| Authorised Lay Minister | Ian Loveland |
| Church Wardens | Ian Loveland and Judith Robson |
| Assistant Church Wardens | Collette Taylor and Dave Vickers |
| Occasional Preachers | Lesley Slack and Christine Maidment |

Children and Youth Ministry at St John's

Seekers

Our Seekers group welcome all school-age children every Sunday morning during the Family Service. Beginning in Church, then returning for Communion or a blessing, the children enjoy a close relationship with the congregation, who in turn gain so much joy from seeing what the children have been doing as they are encouraged to share their crafts and activities.

“There is a real love for children – nurturing them in their journey.”

(Congregation Survey 2025)

We are passionate about nurturing the faith journey of our young people and it has been encouraging to see several older Seekers children join our recent Youth Alpha course, deepening their understanding of God's love.

At our Celebration Services, families often play an active role by leading intercessions, reading Scripture, and

assisting with the collection, helping worship feel truly inclusive.

Throughout the year we've hosted children's activities at our church fairs, a Pancake Party, and a New Year celebration for our church family. In the summer holidays our 'Allsorts' activities bring joy and fellowship through tenpin bowling, games, and movie mornings. At Christmas, knitted stars and angels carrying messages of hope are hung around the parish by our young families, and our tradition of the Three Kings visiting parish families creates a sense of community and celebration. The LolBear Theatre Company's pantomime, "It's a Boy", was a highlight this year, filling the church with laughter and reminding us of the true meaning of Christmas.

We are keen to encourage new young families and children, so we've recently launched Little T's Rise & Shine, a group for pre-school children, meeting on Sunday mornings for Bible based sensory activities. It's early days, but we already see God's Spirit alive and buzzing in this ministry.



St John's Little T's Playgroup

Our playgroup meets every Wednesday morning during term time and is blessed with a wide range of toys and craft materials. Each week follows a biblical theme, with a story and craft activity, and friendships flourish over coffee and biscuits. A lively sing-along rounds off the morning, creating a joyful atmosphere for children and parents alike.

We are grateful for our dedicated team of leaders and helpers who have a heart for children's ministry, with our Children's Champion, Margaret Warburton, guiding these ministries with vision and care. The PCC and congregation offer strong support and encouragement for all our work with children and young people.

A Community Rooted in Prayer

*"Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good.
His loving devotion endures forever." (Psalm 136:1)*

Prayer is at the heart of life at St John's. One lasting blessing from the pandemic is our daily Morning Prayer on Zoom, which takes place at 8:30 and 9:30 a.m. each day. The church is also open on Tuesday afternoons for Evening Prayer, offering a quiet space for reflection. Earlier this year, all four of our Homegroups engaged in a study on prayer, based on Pete Greig's book 'How to Pray', deepening our understanding and practice of prayer together.

Prayer shapes our fellowship in many ways: members of the congregation lead intercessions each Sunday, prayer walks take place around the parish during the summer, and the church remains open on Thursday mornings alongside our Oasis Café for those seeking a peaceful time of prayer.

Thriving Homegroups

Over the past three years, our Homegroups have grown to four vibrant communities. Meeting on different days and times, some in homes, others in church, they stay connected through WhatsApp and share life together over refreshments. Studies are chosen by common consent and have included themes such as The Lord's Prayer, The Ten Commandments, and Women in the Bible. Groups generally meet during term time and enjoy social events that strengthen friendships and faith.

Choir and Music at St John's

*"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord and rejoice
in the God of our salvation." (Psalm 95:1)*

Music is an integral part of worship at St John's, enriching our services and drawing us closer to God. We are blessed with an enthusiastic robed choir of around 14 choristers, affiliated with the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM). The choir leads congregational singing each week and offers a beautiful anthem during worship. For special occasions and concerts, additional voices from the congregation often join to create an even fuller sound.



Our choir also plays a vital role in life events, frequently enhancing music for weddings, baptisms, and funerals. We are fortunate to have a team of three highly skilled organists who bring their own unique style to our superb three-manual Makin organ. Our repertoire is varied

and extensive, embracing both traditional and contemporary music, from Bach and Rutter to Townend, Getty, and Farrell, following suggested hymns and anthems for each occasion.

Concerts at St John's



Music at St John's extends beyond worship. Each month, on the second Wednesday, we host concerts that have become a cherished part of our community life. Performances have included Fleetwood Choral Society, Thornton Cleveleys Brass Band, The Phoenix Big Band Sound, local organists, and choirs. These events not only support fundraising but also strengthen our connection with the local community, offering the joy of live music close to home. Visitors often comment on the exceptional acoustics of our church building, which make every performance a memorable experience.

Coordinator of Music: Colin Noble
Organists: Michael Payne, Helen Rogerson

Discipleship Courses: Alpha and Youth Alpha

"Make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19)

At St John's, we are committed to helping people explore and deepen their faith. Our Alpha and Youth Alpha courses provide a welcoming, informal setting where participants can ask questions, share experiences, and grow in their understanding of the Christian faith. These courses often lead to confirmation for those who feel called to take that next step.

We are grateful for the generosity of those who support Alpha through donations of time, resources, and home-cooked meals, expressions of love that make these gatherings so special.

Pastoral Care and FAB (Friends Around Bereavement)

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)



Our Pastoral Team of seven members is dedicated to offering care and comfort to those in need. A key part of our ministry is supporting the bereaved. We send cards at regular intervals following funerals, reminding families that they are loved, prayed for, and never forgotten. Each card includes our contact details and an invitation to FAB (Friends Around Bereavement), a monthly gathering that provides a safe, friendly space for sharing and healing.

In addition, we visit the housebound, participate in the All Souls service, and host reflective events such as Grave Talk sessions and our recent Blue Christmas service, designed for those who find the festive season difficult. These gentle, prayerful spaces allow people to experience God's comfort and hope.

Our team works closely with the Vicar, ensuring pastoral care remains central to parish life.

Pastoral Team Coordinator: Denise Payne

The Flower Guild

Led by Janet Swain, our Flower Guild is a self-funded group that brings beauty and joy to our worship space. They arrange flowers for special occasions and decorate the church for major festivals, creating an atmosphere that reflects God's glory and celebrates life's milestones.

“There are many groups that contribute to the wellbeing of members of the parish community.”

(Congregation Survey 2025)



Parish Groups and Activities

St John's is blessed with a vibrant network of groups that foster fellowship and community. Below is a summary of some of the groups not mentioned in other parts of the profile:

- Guiding and Scouting: Rainbows, Brownies, and Guides are affiliated with St John's and continue to grow under enthusiastic leadership. We also host a thriving Scout group, including Squirrels, Beavers and Cubs, believed to be one of the largest in Lancashire. All uniformed organisations are encouraged to join us in worship, strengthening the bond between faith and community.



- Thornton Ladies Club: TLC was set up 18 years ago and continues to meet every month with our focus being to celebrate all things female. They continue to grow and enjoy new faces on a regular basis.
- Men's Group: an informal time together to enjoy a chat, a pint, and a good dose of fellowship. It's a chance to build friendships, share stories, and support one another in a welcoming environment outside the church setting.

6. The Church Buildings

St John's Church

St John's is a much-loved church at the heart of Little Thornton, with its buildings and gardens lovingly maintained by a dedicated team of volunteers. Today, the church and its grounds are in excellent condition and serve as a vibrant hub for our community.



Our story stretches back to 1925, when the first stone was laid for what is now the church hall. At that time, the hall was our main place of worship. The current church building was consecrated in 1961, and since then, it has stood as a cherished space for prayer, fellowship, and celebration.



In recent years, we've undertaken significant improvements to ensure St John's remains welcoming and well-equipped. These include replacing the organ, installing a new roof, and renewing the frames of our beautiful etched windows; projects made possible through the generosity and commitment of our church family.

We've also embraced technology to enhance worship and outreach. Our upgraded audio-visual system includes additional lighting around the altar and choir stalls, three large screens for digital participation, and high-quality cameras for recording and live-streaming services via [St John's YouTube](#). These broadcasts allow those unable to attend in person, locally or further afield, to join us in worship, supporting our mission to **"Share God's Love with all in Little Thornton and beyond."**

The Community Hub and Church Hall

At St John's, we are blessed not only with a modern church building but also with our original church (the current church hall), now transformed into a vibrant Community Hub. This historic building, which celebrated its centenary last year, underwent a remarkable renewal following a major fundraising initiative launched in 2021, the Jubilee year of its construction, and during the height of the pandemic.



Unable to host traditional fundraising events, we turned to press releases and door-to-door communication across the parish to share our vision. The response was extraordinary. Through generous donations, grants, and in-kind contributions, we converted outdated and unused spaces into a state-of-the-art facility that now serves our growing community.

“St John’s provides a safe place with wide open doors.”

(Congregation Survey 2025)

refreshments, PCC meetings, or support groups for cancer, bereavement, creativity, Bible study, and psychotherapy. Slimming World even meets here every week of the year!

Our newly insulated and eco-friendly hall is in high demand, hosting weekly table tennis, adult dance sessions, chair yoga, and, starting January 2026, monthly disco afternoons. It remains central to church life, accommodating toddler groups, children’s Sunday activities, and annual events such as Spring and Christmas Fairs, Burns Night, New Year celebrations, and Easter breakfasts.



Beyond regular use, the Hub welcomes a wide range of one-off bookings; from GCSE revision sessions and polling stations to community sales events. Recent figures suggest an annual footfall exceeding 17,000, reflecting its vital role in parish life.



The Hub is overseen by a dedicated Management Committee, meeting three times a year and including the incumbent and PCC members. We remain committed to improving accessibility and sustainability, having already secured grants for insulation and new windows and doors. Our next priorities include replacing the roof, upgrading the car park, and enhancing disabled access - plans for which funding applications are already underway.

Our Community Hub stands as a beacon of welcome and connection; a place where faith, friendship, and service come together to enrich lives and strengthen the heart of Little Thornton.

The Vicarage

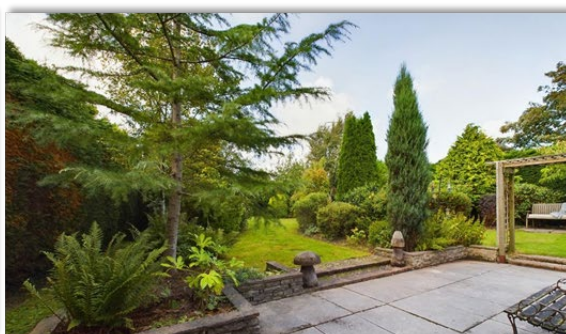
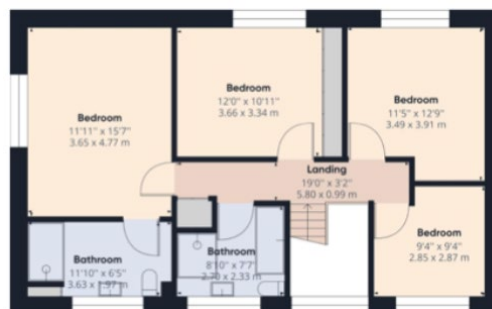
St John's is blessed with a beautiful, modern vicarage that offers both comfort and space for family life and ministry. This extended, detached home features four well-proportioned bedrooms, two bathrooms, and two welcoming reception rooms, alongside a dedicated vicar's study - perfect for quiet reflection or parish work. A light-filled conservatory adds to the sense of openness, while a generous driveway and double garage provide ample parking.

To the rear, a large, mature garden with trees and shrubs creates a peaceful haven for relaxation or entertaining. The property sits in a tranquil cul-de-sac in Thornton, just half a mile from St John's Church, a pleasant 10-minute walk, and is only a short drive to local amenities, including Thornton Village shops and services. Families will appreciate its location within the catchment area for highly regarded primary and secondary schools, making it an ideal setting for ministry and home life in a welcoming community.

Ground Floor



First Floor



7. The Church Finances

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

We are delighted to report that St John’s finances are in a strong and healthy position. For the past seven years, we have paid our Parish Share in full, and we have recently made the final payment for 2025 as well. This reflects the PCC’s commitment to prioritising Parish Share after gaining a clear understanding of what it covers. Teaching on Stewardship and Parish Share has also been shared with the wider congregation, though we recognise there is more to do in this area.

Our congregation supports the ministry of St John’s through a variety of giving methods:

- Regular Giving
 - 27 households give through the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS)
 - 24 households give via Standing Order
 - 2 households use the Envelope Scheme
- Other Contributions
 - One-off donations through PGS
 - Collection plate offerings
 - Card reader payments

Fundraising Activities

We host many events throughout the year, with our Spring and Christmas Fairs being the most successful for fundraising and community engagement. These events bring together new and familiar faces, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

Our monthly concerts are also very popular, showcasing a variety of performers and attracting full audiences. A few years ago, the admission price was reviewed and increased from £5 to £8 to help cover rising utility costs. Guests also enjoy refreshments, with donations gratefully received for a cuppa and a biscuit!

Income from Facilities

A significant source of income comes from hiring out our newly refurbished Community Hub, which includes the Church Hall, Church Lounge, and modern facilities. These spaces are regularly used by:

- Uniformed organisations: Brownies, Rainbows, Scouts, Squirrels, Beavers, and Cubs
- Community groups: Yoga, Pilates, Slimming World, Dance classes, Table Tennis, Seated Exercise
- Specialist services: 1-to-1 Counselling
- Educational use: Revision sessions for local schools

The Church Hall and Lounge are also popular venues for private parties, both children's and adults, and are often booked for family gatherings during the Christmas season.

Mission Impact

Our financial stability enables St John's to focus on what truly matters: **sharing God's love and serving our community**. By meeting our Parish Share commitments and generating additional income, we can maintain our church buildings, invest in technology for worship and outreach, and support ministries that nurture faith across all ages. This strong foundation allows us to be generous in mission, welcoming new families, hosting community events, and creating spaces where people encounter Christ in practical and meaningful ways.

8. Our Links into the Wider Community

At St John's, we are a welcoming and outward-looking church family, dedicated to living out our mission: "To share God's love with all in Little Thornton... and beyond."

"St John's is a church that does its very best to love and welcome everyone."

(Congregation Survey 2025)

As our parish grows, with new family homes being built and a significant older population, we remain committed to meeting the needs of our community. Central to this is our vibrant Community Hub, which, alongside our Church Hall, hosts a wide range of activities for all ages. From social gatherings to faith-based programs, these spaces help us meet people where they are in their faith journey

and create opportunities for connection and spiritual growth. Many children engage with church life through the thriving Scout and Guide groups that meet regularly in our hall.

St John's is proud to be a founding member of Churches Together in Thornton, and we value the fellowship this brings. We actively participate in joint services and initiatives, including the much-loved Easter Sunrise Service at Wyre Estuary Country Park, a beautiful occasion that draws people from across local churches. Our outreach extends further through prayer walks, hanging knitted angels around the parish, and Christmas carolling in the village and in local supermarkets.



Education is another vital part of our mission. We enjoy strong relationships with local schools (Baines Endowed, Stanah Primary, and Millfield High School) through regular assemblies, seasonal services, and visits to St John's. Our JAFFA Club (Jesus A Friend For All), led by our Children's Champion, meets weekly at Baines Endowed, offering Key Stage 2 pupils a space for worship and friendship. We also maintain links with Oak Tree and Marmalade nurseries through monthly visits, and we are regularly invited to participate in Eucharist services at [Saint Aidan's Church of England High School](#), attended by many young people from our parish.

Beyond our local community, the PCC sponsors two children through the World Vision programme, giving our congregation, especially our younger members, an opportunity to learn about global need and the transformative power of charitable giving.

"St John's is a real community where Christ is at the centre of all we do."

(Congregation Survey 2025)

9. Who is God calling?

We have been praying about the kind of vicar who will next lead our church, and we trust that God is preparing someone with the right gifts and heart to serve here. In particular, we hope for a vicar who will boldly lead us in mission, helping us reach new people with the gospel and inspiring our whole church family to grow as disciples who share God's love in Little Thornton and beyond.

Who is God calling?

- A **spiritually grounded, prayerful and compassionate leader** – someone who has a deep love of God and a reliance on the Holy Spirit. This person should value both the beauty of traditional Anglican worship and be open to creative and informal worship expressions for all ages, so that our services can speak to a wide variety of people.
- Someone with a **sense of humour**. We are a fun-loving, welcoming community with a mantra that 'we don't take ourselves too seriously, but we take what we do seriously!'.
- Someone with an enthusiasm for, and commitment to, **growing an inclusive church** where all feel welcome.
- Someone who is **dynamic** with an **enthusiasm for mission** and ministry.
- Someone with a passion for **family and youth ministry**, and **pastoral care**.
- A leader who is a **good organiser** and a ready **listener**, who can **empower others to serve** the parish through volunteering their talents.

10. What We Can Offer

St John's is a lively, inclusive church family committed to sharing God's love with all. The church is centrally located within the parish and offers a 'heart of the community' feel. Our new incumbent will be warmly welcomed by our whole church community and will be very ably supported by the large number of people that volunteer their time and talents to live out our mission for St John's within Little Thornton and beyond.

Our new incumbent will benefit from:

- A supportive, hardworking and forward-thinking PCC, with two dedicated church wardens and an experienced Secretary and Treasurer.
- A highly committed Parish Safeguarding Officer who ensures that our volunteers complete the necessary DBS checked and that our safeguarding responsibilities are met with diligence and care. We work closely with other churches, offering advice where

needed and organising in person training events to help maintain the highest standards of safeguarding across our wider church community.

- Lots of support and help to develop the worshipping life of our community, including retired clergy and licenced lay leadership.
- A large group of volunteers that assist in running the many church groups and activities on offer at St John's.
- A highly skilled music team, including organists and a popular choir, who together enrich and lead the musical dimension of worship at St John's.
- Being financially stable. We have met our Parish Share for the past seven years and have reserves to help in the development of our mission and outreach.
- Support from the PCC for training and spiritual retreats. We also recognise and value the importance of a vicar's day off and work hard to protect this time.
- Fantastic facilities including our Church Hall and new Community Hub. Our buildings and grounds are well maintained with the help of volunteers.
- A large, modern vicarage, located in a beautiful location.

11. Diocesan Vision 2026 and Beyond

Vision 2026 had an agenda for growth agreed by the Blackburn Diocesan Synod in 2015. It challenged our parishes to be healthy churches that transform their communities as we look ahead to our diocesan centenary in 2026. It also laid out four ways in which this over-arching goal could be achieved: Making Disciples, Being Witnesses, Growing Leaders and Prioritising Children and Young People.

In the Diocese of Blackburn we are inspired by confidence in the Gospel and are ambitious in our desire to make new disciples for Jesus Christ. We are committed to mutual flourishing, to maintaining clergy numbers and to investing in training for new curates.

In the last year, the Diocese has embarked on a major programme of listening to God and our communities as we discern when he is leading us next.

Our Centenary Prayer is:

Heavenly Father, in our Centenary year
we rededicate ourselves and our Diocese to you.
Send the Holy Spirit to give us confidence in our witness,
generosity in our service, and love for our neighbours,
that your Church may be renewed and many come home to you,
through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

You can find out more about our Centenary year by visiting our website:

[All for Jesus: Centenary of Blackburn Diocese in 2026 | The Diocese of Blackburn](#)

12. Clergy Care and Wellbeing

- Clergy are invited to participate in an 8 year annual programme to keep ministry fresh and vital. This includes periods of sabbatical and regular retreats.
- We offer an Annual Conversation in which every licensed priest spends 90 mins with a Bishop or Archdeacon discussing ministry and wellbeing.
- Ongoing theological training and teaching is offered through our partnership with Emmanuel Theological College. Clergy receive free access to a theological library of 22,000 books and regular seminars.
- Annual Diocesan Clergy Study Days and an occasional clergy conference seek to provide opportunities both to keep ministry fresh and to build relationships with colleagues.
- We offer first incumbents a mentor and participation in our Start of Ministry Programme.
- All clergy are entitled to an uninterrupted rest period of 24 hours in each period of seven days and one additional rest period of 24 hours in each month, and in the remaining weeks of the month to take a rest day and a light day.

- We offer a Clergy Assistance Programme. More information about this can be found on our [website](#)
- We have a great property department, who will do their best to ensure your house works for you and your family and is well maintained.
- We have a beautiful diocesan retreat house in the grounds of a ruined Cistercian abbey, where clergy are welcome to have personal reading days for a modest charge (you can book in for lunch or bring your own).
- We encourage all parishes in vacancy to consider how they will 'pastor' and support their new priest. The diocese has an anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy.
- If you are looking for a spiritual director or a mentor we have an excellent Warden of Spiritual Direction and networks of people with whom we can put you in touch.
- We are always looking for ways for clergy to mix apart from work – including reading weeks, regular hospitality, a cricket team and a clergy walking group. Further suggestions are welcome.
- We offer free counselling to clergy and their families through the [Inter Diocesan Counselling Service](#) and our own Diocesan counsellor.
- Clergy Wellbeing is overseen by the Assistant Archdeacon for Clergy Wellbeing, Canon Neil Kelley. In addition our Dean of Women's Ministry, the Revd Lucie Lunn, offers support and care to female clergy in the Diocese.



Whalley Abbey Centre for Christian Discipleship and Prayer