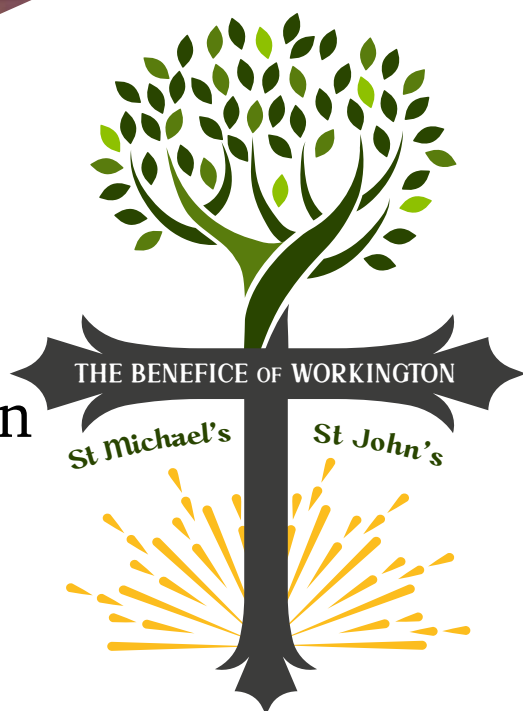




# Rector of Workington Parish Profile 2025



# Rector – Benefice of Workington

## Introduction from the Acting Bishop of Carlisle

Thank you for your interest in this exciting role in the Diocese of Carlisle. The Diocese of Carlisle is committed to the God for All vision. Launched in 2015, it is underpinned by a commitment across four denominations in Cumbria (the Church of England, Methodist Church, The Salvation Army and the URC) to see God's Kingdom flourish across the county. The vision is based on four values:

- **Follow Daily** (helping each other to follow Jesus more closely);
- **Care Deeply** (listening to our communities to serve them and to challenge injustice);
- **Speak Boldly** (sharing our faith in Jesus in everyday ways); and
- **Tread Gently** (seeking to sustain and renew the life of the earth).

Mission Communities are the way in which the Church in Cumbria seeks to live out the God for All vision. They are deeply collaborative groupings of churches- between denominations, between clergy and laity, and between different communities- working together to proclaim afresh the gospel to each generation, faithful to its tune but improvising together to create new melodies for our place and time.

We are looking for clergy who resonate with this, who love God and love people, who will look outwards into the community in mission, help people grow in faith and who will enable the faith and gifts of all. If this stirs something in you, we'd love to hear from you.

+Rob Penrith  
Acting Bishop of Carlisle





# Introduction

Workington is a town situated on the west coast of Cumbria, where the River Derwent flows into the Solway Firth. The population now is about 30,000, with local wealth generated largely through retail and local industries, including the port of Workington, in a regional centre of local government. Historically, Workington was a vibrant mining town where the steel industry flourished, making most of the railway tracks that still criss-cross our country. The town boasts excellent primary and secondary schools. Despite the levels of poverty that are evident in the streets around both churches, this is a strong and resilient community with deep roots in the past, and a strong social heart.



The town is served by a number of churches, drawn together into Workington Mission Community, and the relationships locally are extremely strong, including the Roman Catholic and Anglican priests, local United Reformed Church, Methodist and New Frontiers ministers. Weekly fellowship and monthly informal business meetings are held to coordinate and plan shared worship and mission activity. The Mission Community is led by the Revd Dominic de Mattos, the Rector of Harrington and Distington.







St Michael's and St John's Churches are the two central Church of England places of worship within the town, and on 1 January 2024, they became the Benefice of Workington, having been through a process of drawing together under the leadership of the Very Revd Dr Frances Ward and the Revd Dr Peter Powell, who retired in September 2024.

Together the parishes have celebrated their strengths and grown together in witness to Christ. The worship is liberal Catholic in expression, the social life and fellowship is strong and vibrant where the nurture of children and young people is a priority. We excel in growing greener, going for gold, having received A Rocha silver awards in the last year. The churches are beginning to explore further what being an inclusive church means. Pastoral care is at our heart, with a great many baptisms each year (about 60 across both churches), and numerous funerals – all opportunities for growth and discipleship.



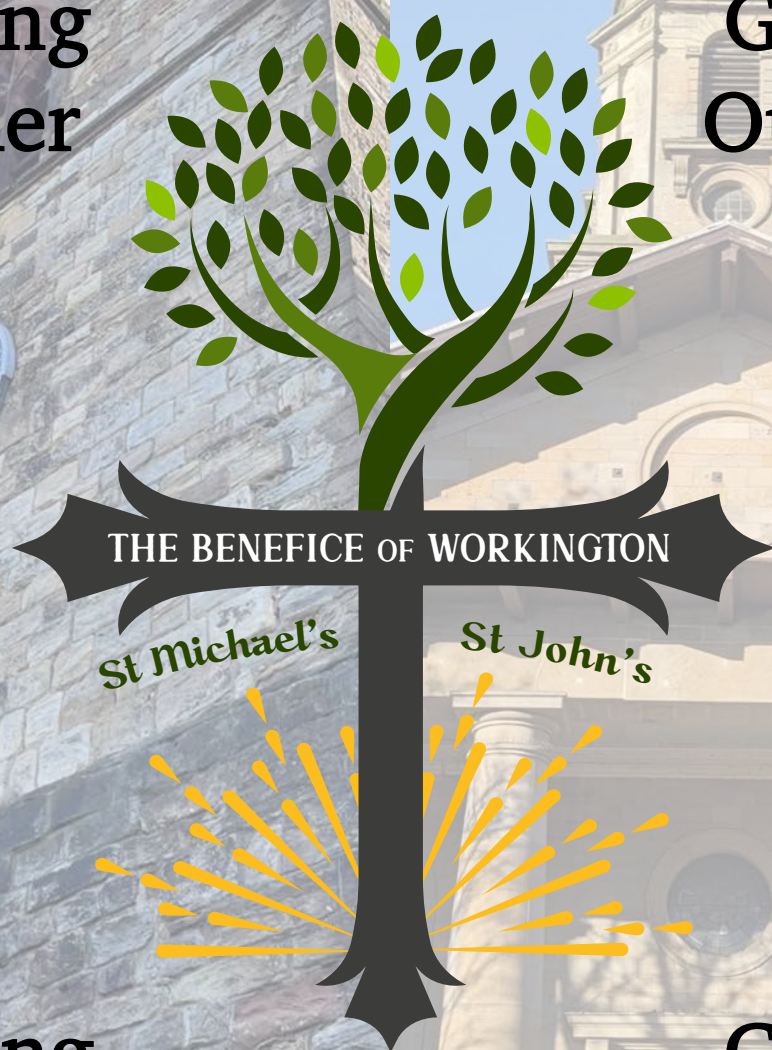
Together the PCCs and congregations have developed a vision that co-ordinates with the Diocesan vision of Follow Daily, Care Deeply, Speak Boldly and Tread Gently. We seek to grow closer to God, grow greener, grow younger, and grow outwards into the town.



# Our Vision

Growing  
Greener

Growing  
Outwards



Growing  
Younger

Growing  
Closer to  
God



# Growing Closer to God

Both churches in the Benefice of Workington value their traditions of Eucharistic worship at the heart of their corporate life as the Body of Christ, with the sacrament reserved in each church. The clergy invariably wear vestments of alb, stole and chasuble for the Eucharist, with choir dress for other services. The worship is conducted with a warm and solemn dignity that is inclusive and strives to be filled with a sense of God's presence and holiness. The beauty of our church buildings enhances our worship.

We use Common Worship, with the occasional BCP choral evensong, and the pattern on a Sunday begins with an 8 am service of Holy Eucharist at St John's, a Parish Eucharist at St Michael's at 9.30 am, Parish Eucharist at 11 am at St John's (both these services have Sunday Schools too). Baptisms usually happen on most Sundays just after noon at either church. There is an evening service on most Sundays, which pattern includes a healing service, art and compline, songs of praise, the offering of incense and evening prayer or evensong. Incense is offered at the Parish Eucharist at St John's on a monthly basis. Numbers attending worship are usually about 40 at each of the main services, and fluctuate with a loyal following on other occasions.

During the current incumbency there has been a growing emphasis on discerning vocations, and this has resulted in the formation of two new Readers and a Lay Pioneer Minister who are actively fulfilling these callings. Others are exploring their call, supported by the incumbent and the 'God for All' vocations discernment team.

Musically, there is a small orchestral group that plays at St John's, and both churches enjoy the playing of excellent organists and there is an aspiration for more regular choral support. They also relish good preaching and there is a real heart to grow closer to God in prayer and praise, and extend the welcome of Christ to all comers, seeking to fulfil the great commandment to Love God and Love Neighbour.





## Growing Younger

With excellent lay leadership, including a significant number of working or retired teachers, both churches offer weekly Sunday Schools and 'Tots' groups, Messy Michael's once a month and a weekly youth group, which has a Young@Heart Eucharist once a month on the third Thursday evening. Our churches host the local uniformed organisations and support their work with children and young people. Our priests have served as governors in some of our local five primary schools, which welcome the engagement of the church for festivals and carol services, and to 'Experience Easter' and 'Experience Christmas'. We have hopes of establishing prayer spaces in schools, and building on the open door of the Academy, where the offer is there to help with the R.E. curriculum.



The town of Workington has a long and rich history of music performance and drama, with many of our congregations and children involved. There are great opportunities for the development of choirs and to develop work with young people. In 2024 four of our young people were confirmed, alongside three adults.





# Growing Outward

Both churches take seriously their role to serve the town and environs of Workington, and congregation members work and witness in a wide range of ways in the workplace and socially. The Town Council and Royal British Legion are very supportive and regularly invite the clergy and churches to lead or participate in civic occasions, such as Armed Forces Day, Remembrance, and the Mayor-making. Over the last year St Michael's has hosted the West Cumbrian office of Safe Families

(<https://safefamilies.uk/>).

St John's Choir have sung this year with our German visitors, at Christmas, for the Tenebrae service and for weddings. We support the town twinning project with Selm, Germany and last year welcomed 40 townspeople from Selm, who joined us in St John's for a combined concert of choirs, and also were taken to Carlisle Cathedral to sing for the public there. St. John's brings an affirming presence to the local Ward Residents' Association, building help and support from the wider community and councillors for our events and activity. We recently received and laid up the British Legion Ladies' Section Colours in church, and hosted the annual Civic Service. Occasional offices (baptisms, weddings, funerals) are seen as a positive opportunity for outreach and connection, and pastoral visits and services are regularly undertaken in local Care Homes. Our churches support the Trussel Trust's 'North Lakes Foodbank' and members of our congregation are regular volunteers at the Workington centre.

Excellent outreach happens through the uniformed organisations and schools of the Benefice, where clergy regularly take assemblies in the five primary schools; Workington Academy would also welcome greater engagement.





# Growing Outward



Both churches have a large, warm community hall which enables us to welcome a wide range of community groups, toddler and carers, uniformed organisations, local community choirs, a youth drama group, fitness and wellness activities, and to provide warm spaces with soup lunches and coffee and chat.

The buildings have excellent acoustics, so are popular venues for performances: in the last year these have included choirs, steel band, a male voice choir, a brass quintet and a concert pianist.

Community engagement is encouraged through regular shared social and fundraising events, welcoming all comers. From treasure hunts to Ceilidhs, Garden Parties to race nights, Caribbean evenings to Murder Mysteries, the list goes on!

We support the National Heritage weekend and gallantly take on the theme of the year, and our “cake churches” (see below) definitely confirmed our commitment!

We are currently exploring how best to extend our welcome publicly through open doors to all who seek Christ, however they might be ‘labelled’ by others.



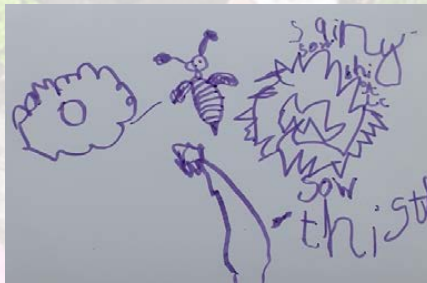


# Growing Greener

Having attained A Rocha Eco church silver awards in both churches, we are currently 'going for gold', and continue to build on great opportunities to engage and partner with community groups and organisations beyond our church membership. Last year St John's Explorers designed and constructed the framework of a bug hotel, which was installed on ['Big Help Out Day'](#) involving children from our Junior Church. Our churchyards are increasingly being recognised as a valuable resource for work with schools and the community, and we're keen to develop the scope of school involvement. Both have created 'Planting for Pollinators' wildflower meadows, supported by [Cumbria Wildlife Trust](#).



We planted a hedge which flourishes, supporting wildlife and small birds at St John's, and St Michael's now boasts an orchard in its church yard, at least twelve new trees, raised beds and wild flower areas.



***Count on Nature*** drawings by a member of our Sunday School



# Growing Greener

We have established the observation of Rogationtide in early May with a shared parish walk through the green spaces of the town. Workington's '[Green Space Friends](#)' (our pioneer project) began by running occasional all-age events, including [Churches Count on Nature](#) and [Great Big Green Week](#). A registered [RHS 'It's Your Neighbourhood'](#) group, it now also operates weekly 'to improve Workington's green spaces for nature and people' in a local neglected garden area and St John's Churchyard. Membership has grown with local people who have no church affiliation, and we hope to see this expand.

Our buildings are both large and consequently high carbon emitters, but our efforts towards Zero Carbon have achieved successful LED change over, and St Michael's being awarded a detailed Energy Audit. St John's was nominated by the Diocese for a Zero Carbon Demonstrator Project to redesign the church energy system. Although not successful in Phase 1, 'Quick Wins' funding has supported the installation of modern electrical underpew heating as a pilot.





# Our History

## St Michael's Church



St Michael's is the ancient Parish Church of Workington and has been a place of worship since before the twelfth century, as evidenced by the list of Rectors that dates from 1150; however it is probable that Christians have lived and worshipped here as long ago as the seventh century. The building stands prominently on a hill overlooking the town and harbour. Devastated by fire in 1994 that drew widespread sorrow and support across the town and region, a stunning job was done to rebuild (including extensive archaeological interest, with work continuing with English Heritage North West and Cumbria's Archaeological department). Viewed from the churchyard the external countenance of the current building is that of a Victorian Grade 11\* listed structure, re-built after a previous fire in 1884. However, on entry, the visitor is blown away by the excellent interior that has been beautifully designed and executed to be truly a church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It displays outstanding contemporary stained glass and furnishings, giving a modern, light, bright, and airy church, with central pews and seating in the side aisles that give flexibility of use to provide for a variety and wide range of services. The Lady Chapel is a place of wonder and delight. Those who worship here are constantly reminded that we worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The church now incorporates a conference centre that provides a well-used resource for local businesses and organisations, groups and associations, generating income for the church, and staffed by church volunteers. There is also a shop and office, and a large footfall through the church each week.



# Our History

## St Michael's Church

Michael's also boasts an enthusiastic group of bell ringers, ringing each Sunday morning, and for the major festivals. The Ringing Room is equipped as a Simulated Training Centre. There is also a magnificent set of nineteen handbells, lovingly restored after severe damage in the 1994 fire, and now regularly used for events.

The history of this church serves the present, a vital and vibrant witness to the living traditions of faith in this place, with a strong focus on ensuring the church continues to introduce people to Jesus into the future, for generations to come.

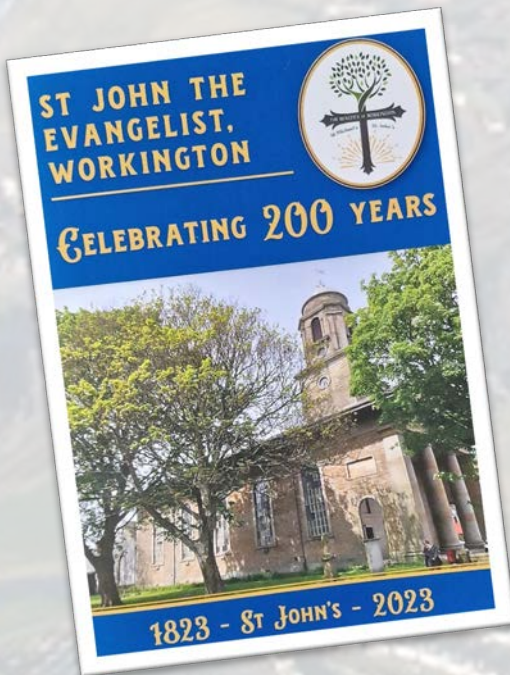




# Our History

## St. John's History

The church of St John the Evangelist was built to mark the victory of the battle of Waterloo, to serve Workington's population, which had grown exponentially in the preceding century. The building was designed by Philip Hardwicke and is a copy of St Paul's in Covent Garden and is highly regarded as architecturally distinctive. Consecrated in November 1823, we celebrated two hundred years of worship and service with our bicentennial festival last autumn, drawing many visitors who commented on how beautiful and prayerful the place is, with a real sense of peace and presence.



There have been two major interior reconstructions, in 1904 and 1930-31, the latter by Sir J Ninian Comper, who elaborated the Neo-Classical style with a magnificent gilded Baldacchino that gives a real grandeur to the sanctuary. Worship is enhanced by the naturally light interior and the acoustic which serves our musical tradition well. It can accommodate a large number of people through use of its pews and balconies and is well used by local schools for concerts and services.



# Our History

## St. John's History

When it has been open for heritage events, local people have enthused about the local history that is evident, including a renowned collection of World War One Dead Pennies.

The portico is a local landmark; a valuable plaza for steel band performances, serving outdoor refreshments, displaying an outdoor crib and sometimes sheltering the homeless. It looks rather forbidding, but once inside, the church embraces all comers with a warmth of welcome second to none.

In 1881 the community hall was built adjoining the church to cater for the needs of the great number of societies, clubs and youth organisations over the years. St John's relishes its history as integral to the town, and the congregation builds on that heritage, giving a strong sense of who the people of Workington are through the ages, serving the town in the present, and hopeful and vibrant as we look to the future.





## Finances and Fabric

Both churches are financially solvent and in good order. Each has held stewardship campaigns and established a pattern of annual 'generosity weeks' which have borne fruit, though the impact of the pandemic and cost of living crisis have been challenging. St Michael's has reserves from the time of rebuilding after the fire, which have recently been consolidated into three streams: Fabric, Mission and General.

Both churches have seen extensive fabric work in recent years and months, with St Michael's receiving attention to its roof and walls in April 2024, and St John's celebrating the renovation of its north aisle windows in 2022, following a substantial grant from Historic England and the National Churches Trust.

Both churches have closed churchyards, with the curtilage and grass maintained by the local authority.

The Rectory is situated next to St Michael's Church. It is a comfortable, easy-to-heat 1970s house with a woodburner installed in 2018, recarpeted throughout in the same year; with four bedrooms, good reception rooms, a spacious garage, and a lovely walled garden, back and front, with wild areas and a wildlife pond. The neighbourhood is friendly and secure, and although signs of poverty are not difficult to see, the presence of the church and clergy is valued locally.





## In Conclusion

The Benefice of Workington is looking for a thoughtful and energetic priest who holds Eucharistic worship at the heart of building the common life of church and community in fulfilment of the commandment of Jesus Christ to love God and love our neighbour, inspired and enthused by the Holy Spirit.

They will need to be able to empower and support the excellent lay leadership of both churches, and enable a growing sense of collaboration between St Michael's and St John's in Christ's service of the town and region.

