

# The Parish of St James' Christleton

## Serving the communities of Christleton, Cotton Abbots, Cotton Edmunds, Rowton and Littleton



The parish of St James Christleton is situated just over 2 miles south east of Chester. The church is situated in the centre of the village of Christleton. There is also a Methodist Church within the village. Over the years the Parish has expanded and continues to do so. There have been 3 new housing developments since the last census and plans submitted for a further development of 50 houses on the site of the College of Law.

Current house prices in the village average £318,890.

There are excellent secondary and primary schools, both rated outstanding at their last inspections and many groups and societies, a village institute, a small shop, public houses and restaurants, hairdressers and a private dental practice. The travelling Library visits the village every two weeks. For other services, villagers must travel to Chester or nearby Vicars Cross or Great Boughton.

The village pond is attractive with a nearby play area, attracting many visitors and the Shropshire Union canal passes nearby providing opportunities for walking and cycling into Chester along a traffic free environment.

The Parish Hall is used extensively by a variety of groups. There is an annual village fete and village show.

## Churchmanship and worship

As a village church it is essential that St James' meets the spiritual needs of the whole parish. We would describe ourselves as liberal occupying the middle ground in relation to our churchmanship.

There are two ordained priests who are parishioners and offer their services at the invitation of the incumbent and a rota of laity who assist with administration of the chalice, leading intercessions and scripture readings.

Services are in the main traditional but we are open to innovation and change, especially in reaching out to those who find it difficult to connect with traditional forms of worship. Other styles of worship, used on an occasional basis, are enjoyed and very welcome.

Although the Church currently may not lend itself easily to a modern style of worship some pews were removed in the past to provide flexibility and this is an avenue that could be considered, at least in part.

The choir and organist robe and vestments have been worn in recent years.



Our pattern of worship is as follows:

	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday
8 am	BCP Holy Communion followed by breakfast	CW Holy Communion	CW Holy Communion	CW Holy Communion	CW Holy Communion
10:45	Holy Communion CW	Morning Worship	Holy Communion CW	Morning Prayer: traditional	Holy Communion CW
6.30 pm	Evening Prayer CW	Holy Communion CW	Evening Prayer BCP	Holy Communion CW	Alternative worship e.g Taize style
Wednesday 10:45	United Holy Communion with CTC	Holy Communion BCP	Holy Communion BCP	Holy Communion BCP	

Refreshments are provided in the parish hall following the 10:45 service each Sunday and in the church following the mid-week service. There is a homemade produce sale on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday

### **Messy Church**

Messy church is on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month between 4pm and 6pm followed immediately by the Crew Youth Group for 10-16 year olds

### **Services with healing intention**

On one or two occasions during the course of the year an intention for healing is on offer alongside the administration of the sacrament at the 10:45 service.

### **Flower Service**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in July an outdoor service is held to celebrate creation and also to commemorate those buried within the churchyard. Flowers are brought to the service during which they are placed on the graves of those no longer visited. The village Rose Queen and her retinue are in attendance.

### **Harvest**

In addition to our traditional harvest festival, in recent years we have held a harvest thanksgiving on a local allotment. This has been led by the youth group and is followed by refreshments (usually made from allotment produce).

Harvest gifts are distributed between the Save the Family Unit at Cotton Edmunds and non-perishable produce is donated to the local foodbank

### **Advent and Christmas**

In recent years, a Christingle service has been held on the first Sunday in December. A Toy Service has always been held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of December in which the Rose Queen and her retinue are in attendance to collect the toys. The toys are donated to the local foodbank for distribution.

In addition to the traditional services, a crib service is held on Christmas Eve for the under 5's and this is followed later in the evening by 'Carols around the Tree' which is an outdoor carol service of very long tradition within the parish. Mulled wine and mince pies are served following this service and our service of Nine lessons and Carols.



### **Music at St James**

St. James' is a member of the Royal School of Church Music and although there is at present no resident organist, we have a number of excellent local organists who play for us. The organ was installed in 1878, fully restored in the 1980's and is serviced regularly – last service January 2017.

Our choir, once a significant group within our church community, is now small and doesn't benefit from a choir master. It is our hope that we will be able to build up our choir once again and enjoy a variety of church music from the traditional to the more modern.

## **Stewardship and Giving**

Due to our socio-economic status we are required to pay 1.25 parish share which places an enormous burden on our small congregation. The level of our parish share combined with a decreasing number of both weddings and funerals mean that we are currently in deficit. The parish hall brings in a steady income but the hall is old and in much need of repair so if it is to continue to be a building suitable for hiring out, money must be channelled into repairs and renovations. In 2017 we were able to fulfil our parish share commitments although we have 2 months arrears from the previous year.

We have recently conducted a parish giving initiative with support from the Diocesan Christian Giving Missioner. We focussed our initiative on the giving of time and talents in addition to planned giving. The outcome at the time of writing has not been fully realised but preliminary figures are very encouraging financially. The offers via the "Time and Talents" of increased involvement by parish personnel is likewise very encouraging.

The management of our resources will continue to be a challenge for the foreseeable future.

## **Outreach and Fellowship**

There is a very active outreach and fundraising group on the PCC with co-opted members. The extensive programme of social events invites many from within the parish but who are not regular churchgoers to join us in fellowship. Events such as concerts, garden parties, apple pressing and bridge drives have all proved to be very popular and have also brought in much needed revenue towards repair, maintenance and refurbishment of the church and the parish hall. A total in excess of £5000 was raised through such events in 2017.

For the first time in recent years St James had a stand at the annual village fete. We ran Messy Church activities and were able to engage with a large cross section of the parish. The feedback from this event was very positive and we intend to make this an annual occurrence. Such outreach is vital for us as despite many new families coming to the parish due to the new housing developments we remain an ageing congregation which is reducing in number.

Currently, Churches Together in Christleton (CTC) visit the primary school regularly to do 'Open the Book' sessions. In recent years St James has had no formal links with either of the schools in the parish so this is clearly a challenge and an opportunity for the future.

There is a 'Save the Family' unit in the parish where families stay usually for short periods whilst more permanent accommodation can be found for them. How we provide pastoral care and outreach to these families is another area for us to consider in the future

## **Our Buildings and Grounds**

The name "Christetone" which appears in the Domesday Book of 1086 suggests that there was a Christian settlement here well before the arrival of the Saxons in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and it is believed (based on archaeological evidence) that there was a church on the site shortly after the Roman occupation of Chester.

The 14<sup>th</sup> century wooden church was replaced by a more substantial building in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the present tower is thought to be from this period, about 1484. The list of clergy is continuous from 1215.

Following the collapse of part of the roof in 1873, a more substantial rebuild of the nave and chancel was undertaken and completed in 1876 – the architect was William Butterfield and the stone locally sourced. Major work was completed on the roof, tower and electrics after a quinquennial inspection in 2000. The bell-tower now has a full peal of bells.

In 2016 extensive repairs were made to the tower necessitating the replacement of some of the sandstone blocks and the old central heating boiler was replaced by two boilers. The latter was made possible by a legacy from a former member of the congregation. In 2017 the tower lighting was updated and new fittings installed.

The stained glass windows are exemplary and include ten Kempe windows – Kempe being one of the greatest influences in stained glass window design in the Victorian era. The lower windows have had Perspex protectors fitted.

The church is listed Grade 2 \* and is in a conservation area.

The last quinquennial inspection was in August 2017 – we await the report – but we believe that the Church is basically in good condition. There is a small area of dry rot around one of the nave windows but a watchful eye is kept on this. We conduct regular inspections of and in the tower, the last being in January. Some ridge tiles on the roof require bedding in – we have received a quotation for the work.

### **The Churchyard**

The churchyard was constructed in a circular pattern in the early Christian era, like some others in the Chester area. It is still an open churchyard with substantial space remaining. At the end of 2017 a new cremated remains area was made as there were few spaces left. A Faculty was granted for this. In addition, there are a little over 4 acres belonging to the church which could eventually be used.

We are awaiting some good weather to effect repairs to the car park wall which has been undermined by closely planted trees. Funds have been set aside to enable repairs to be done and a firm of stonemasons appointed. A public footpath runs along the west boundary wall which is currently under monitoring as there are some old and large yew trees growing alongside.

Since November 2016 the maintenance of the churchyard has been done regularly by the Probation Service Community Payback team aided every month or so by a Churchyard Working Party of volunteers. A lunch of soup and bread and cheese is provided by one of the volunteers and is excellent for fellowship and morale. The success of this venture is evident by the praise given by people walking through the area or visiting graves.

### **The Parish Hall**

The Parish Hall was built around 1885. It was initially a public house, later becoming a Church boys' primary school. It closed in 1974 and has been used as the Parish Hall since. It is run by a Trust and leased to the Church on a long-term peppercorn rent.

It plays an important part in the life of the whole community being the only large building in the parish which can be used for large functions. Messy Church takes place there once a month as does a Community Lunch and it is used by a broad cross-section of local people. It is important in providing revenue for the Church and an ongoing fund-raising campaign to update the facilities is in operation.

The interior has been painted over the summer, courtesy of the Probation Service again, new sanitaryware has been installed in the ladies' toilets, LED lighting has been installed and the current efforts are concentrated on repairing and replacing the old central heating system. We have been fortunate in receiving two grants from local Councillors' budgets to help with this work. Long-term plans for the hall, which is not listed, are being considered.

### **The Rectory**

The Rectory is a short walk from the church and parish hall. It is a modern, detached, four-bedroom house. The garden is manageable and is at the rear of the building. The front is tarmac with parking for several vehicles and it is bounded by a low brick wall. There is a garage.

It has been well-maintained and the decoration is in very good condition. It is centrally heated by gas.

We are not aware of any defects in the structure or fittings.

## **Our Vision: Looking to the Future**

We want to make sure our Church community:

- Is a Christ centred family sharing God's love
- Helps Christians to grow spiritually and in commitment to Christ
- Enjoys enriched worship and fellowship
- Is a witness and example to the community of St James Parish
- Welcomes all
- Is a good steward of our resources

We are working towards meeting our vision by:

- Providing pastoral care
- Engaging with children and parents through Messy Church, Crew Youth Group and Storytelling initiatives
- Building bridges with all users of the Parish hall
- Working alongside the community payback team
- Providing effective communication through different media throughout the community
- Seeking to facilitate ecumenism
- Seeking to recognise our global responsibilities including charitable giving
- Praying in support of each other

**We are looking for a Rector** to help us to achieve our vision, and who will:

- Be a creative and sensitive spiritual leader, acting as a role model within our church community and strengthening the place of Christ within our church family
- Develop their own spirituality and leadership, committed to ensuring that this is a continuous process
- Preach and teach in a way that connects with contemporary life and inspires regular and irregular worshippers to grow their faith
- Deepen the place of prayer within our church community in a way that is inclusive and productive
- Support the lay people currently undertaking a range of church activities and develop others to take on such tasks
- Be a good communicator, relating to a wide range of people, whether they are believers or not
- Be open to and effectively lead change with sensitivity.
- Be a clearly visible presence in the community and active in schools, community groups and with individuals thus developing meaningful links to St James
- Develop effective working relationships and work as part of CTC to extend our joint witness of Christians in the local area, collaborating in ways that benefit the whole community
- Play an active part in the life of the Diocese of Chester so that St James benefits from what the Diocese has to offer.
- Deepen an understanding of generosity in the use of Gods gifts, financial and otherwise, within the community of St James

## Churchwardens' summary

The parish of St James is set in beautiful surroundings with more than 80% of the population owning their own homes. In the last census the majority of the population living within the local authority area described themselves as Christian but this is not reflected in the numbers attending church. Our congregation is predominantly retired despite many young families living within the parish and two very successful schools. There is much work to be done by clergy and laity alike in demonstrating the love of Christ and his relevance in the life and work of all those who live within the parish. The geographical position of our church and parish hall means that we are quite literally at the heart of the community which gives us the opportunity to carry out our ministry of witness and worship in such a way that we are visible to the whole community. The increase in secularism means that the church is seen as less relevant to people's lives and whilst this is a threat to the church it is also an exciting challenge for our church family. Linking with our local community and reaching out to those who come to church either infrequently or not at all must be our main focus for development over the coming years.



