



## Newton-le-Willows

### Church Profile 2022







# The Queen's Jubilee Celebrations



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## A Note from the Churchwardens

The vision of St. Peter's has been to build a church community capable of reaching the community of Newton-le-Willows and beyond with the love of God.

We have grown and evolved spiritually through discipleship courses, bible study and great teaching, while our work with young people has also evolved under the care of our dedicated Sunday School.

As a congregation we have grown in maturity and unity as a church family that provides a welcoming and joyful home to all those that worship with us.

As the main parish church in the Newton Team, we've tried not to lose sight of that vision for a church which reaches out to the community around it, providing a place of welcome and hospitality to people of all walks of life.

Our church is a vibrant, friendly and welcoming place. The worship style is traditional Anglican – where the main focus is Holy Communion, said and sung, using Common Worship. A robed choir and organ provide musical accompaniment with Altar servers supporting clergy. There are several retired members along with many younger families forming the fellowship, creating a lively atmosphere with a willing congregation who are certainly ready to move in new and interesting directions.

Our service pattern provides a variety of services which cater for a wide age range with different needs. The monthly Parade Service encourages all our church family to be involved, including uniformed groups.

St. Peter's would like a Vicar to work alongside the Newton Team to fulfil our church's vision for the future. Our main leadership goals are:

- To lead and challenge in mission, to nurture our spiritual journey in growing closer to God
- To discern and develop the gifts and talents of the congregation
- To motivate and support lay members and be able to manage change sensitively
- To build on the church's presence in our primary school and be willing to take an active role in school worship, school governance and the pastoral care of the children and staff
- To maintain links with other schools in the parish and engage with children and their families
- To maintain and develop the quality of worship and accommodate all styles of worship
- To ensure the continuity of formal and informal visiting

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that, *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

This verse captures something of what we feel God is calling St. Peter's into in this next chapter of our church life – to raise up a community of Christians willing to go out into the world around us as we seek to share God's love.

To lead us in that calling, St. Peter's will need a Vicar who can challenge us as well as nurture and empower us, who can push us out of our comfort zone while building on the strong foundations that have already been laid.

As you read through this profile, we hope that you might prayerfully consider whether God is calling you to take on this key role in the next chapter of St. Peter's long history.

The role is a challenging one, but we know that, for the right person, it has the potential to be deeply rewarding. We are certainly excited about what God might have in store.

*Jim Robb and William Irving, Churchwardens, St. Peter's*

## About St Peter's: who we are and our purpose

St Peter's is a traditional church, which is passionate about living out the Gospel. We believe that God has called us into partnership with Him to see our parish and wider community transformed by His love. In this mission, we are committed to playing our part as...

### A *WELCOMING* Community:

- A church that seeks to be open and accessible to all, inviting everyone to experience God's infinite love and welcome.
- A caring community in which the needs of others are recognised and acted upon.

### A *LIVING & LIVELY* Community:

- A community in which real life is shared, lived out and celebrated.
- Where life in all its fullness (*John 10:10*) is something we work towards together.
- Where worship is marked by a sense of God's presence and life changing power.

### A *SHARING* Community:

- Where life, faith and hope are freely shared and lived out in our wider community.
- An outward looking, mission minded community that cares for the needs of others.
- A church that seeks to live out the gospel message of love, of freedom, of equality and of justice both locally and globally.
- A church where generosity flows in response to God's generosity – where we are all encouraged to give as well as receive.

### A *GROWING* Community

- A church with a desire to know God better, where there is a hunger to engage with the Bible and to grow in prayer and service.
- A community with a desire to learn with and from each other as fellow disciples of Jesus Christ.
- A church growing spiritually and growing in confidence as we experience God working in and through us in his world.

## Our Congregation

There are 203 individuals on the electoral roll of St. Peter's, with an average total Sunday attendance of around 80 (including children).

Church attendance has dipped due to lockdown, this decline in the habit of weekly attendance has effected all the churches in the Newton Team. Creating a nurturing environment of discipleship that includes regular attendance is a key priority for the PCC.

The general demographics of St Peter's reflect the predominantly white, middle-class make up of Newton-le-Willows. The theology of the church is mainstream. St. Peter's is a warm, welcoming, open church, full of people who genuinely want to get to know God better, whatever stage they might be on their Christian walk. We strive to be a community where all people can find a place to call home and a church family that will support them.

## **Our Parish**

We are situated in the North West of England, west of the M6, directly between the cities of Liverpool and Manchester. Many people have moved to Newton in order to start families, as the local schools have a good reputation and the area is surrounded with open green spaces, and the location is ideal for commuting into the cities either by rail or road.

Newton-le-Willows has a population of 22,000 and despite its changing social demographics, driven in part by rapidly rising house prices, it still has a strong sense of community life.

There are several independent shops along the High Street, and the town is well-served by good-quality pubs, restaurants and coffee shops.

There is a traditional open market held once a week in the nearby town of Earlestown. Newton-le-Willows is also home to several churches of various denominations, with ecumenical events taking place throughout the year.

Within the immediate vicinity of St. Peter's Church is the voluntary-aided St. Peter's C of E Primary School which is a feeder school for Hope Academy High School.

## **Our Building**

The church is of course much more than a building, however at St. Peter's we are extraordinarily privileged to be able to worship God in a Grade II listed beautiful building. Its size, height and function as a church make it visible as a landmark building. St Peter's Churchyard is the largest public open space in the High Street Conservation Area.

A church has stood on this site since 1242 though the present building was completed towards the end of the nineteenth century. The church annexe is a later addition providing a small kitchen area and seating, an ideal meeting space for small groups.

## **St Peter's Ministry - What we do, Our Regular Services**

St. Peter's Church hosts two services every Sunday, which take on different styles. At the 8.00 am service we hold a traditional communion service (though at present, this is temporarily suspended). Our second service at 9.30 am, pre Covid, had numbers in excess of 200 in attendance, but these numbers have declined since church reopened following lockdown. Numbers on average for the main service are between 50- 100. A Parade Service is held once a month at the 9.30am service. Over recent years there have been large numbers of confirmation candidates, both children and adults. In addition, we have a Wednesday Holy Communion service at 10 am.

## **Worship Style**

Inevitably, there are always opinions on the music used, with some preferring traditional and theologically rich hymns, and others wanting more modern worship songs. We have a gifted team who make up our small church choir, including a church organist. At Christmas, musicians and singers join with volunteers from the congregation to sing traditional Carols at our 'Christmas Tree Lighting' service.

In recent years, we have struggled with a shortage of able and available worship leaders, having to rely on a small and very dedicated number. God has been faithful and in the past year we have grown several potential leaders, however this area still needs strengthening.

The church is fortunate to have a team of bell ringers who ring out for our second service each Sunday and on request at weddings and funerals. The bell ringers have a strong and enthusiastic team. The Bell Tower was refurbished in 2002 and now boasts a ten-bell peel, which attracts interest nationwide. A newly formed hand bell group has been formed and are currently practising for their first performance.

## **Discipleship and Evangelism**

St Peter's has always been a discipling church and in recent years this has become a key missional priority. Regular Bible study takes place throughout the year and Mission Outreach Services have taken place in the local park along with active participation in community events.

## **Youth and Children**

Young people are very important to us as are our links with our 'uniform' groups.

**0 to 5's - Children and Families Ministry-** At this age children only come if someone brings them, so this ministry is involved with families. The aim is to enable the children and their accompanying adult to gain a real experience of God, meet Jesus, and connect spirituality. Sunday School is at present meeting twice a month, but it is hoped to resume meeting each week as soon as possible.

**School Years 1 to 6-** For this age group, the focus is on understanding the Bible, making friends, caring for each other, encouraging discipleship and creative prayer. Links with the school are vital and regular visits to the church from St. Peter's Primary are planned once again now that Covid restrictions have been lifted. One child recently stated her favourite part about St. Peter's was coming to Sunday School as the lessons are so much fun!

Special services are traditionally held in church by St Peter's School and other local schools throughout the year. St Peter's Primary School invite parents to their Harvest, Easter, Christmas and St Peter's Day services in church. Junior children attend midweek communion each half term and all classes visit for curriculum areas and the Faith Trail.

## **Pastoral Care and Local Outreach**

Pastoral care is overseen by our Team Rector Reverend Chris Stafford, working with a team of volunteers. Holy Communion is offered in the home as and when required. We have a system to provide support and care for individuals with short- or long-term issues and a variety of groups bringing together those in similar situations for mutual encouragement and support, these groups include Bible Study and Mothers Union. Our congregation also regularly donates to the local foodbank.



## **Community Connections**

As a focal point for the wider town, St. Peter's is integrated into the local community at a number of levels. This is particularly true when it comes to the local school. St Peter's Primary School is a voluntary-aided Church of England school with strong links to the church. School places are prioritised for children whose parents have attended church prior to admission to school. The majority of places on the Board of Governors are reserved for PCC nominated governors and the incumbent of St Peter's has an ex-officio position on the governing board. Our next Vicar will be expected to play an active role in the life of the school, acting as pastor to children and teachers alike, and playing their part in the team leading collective worship, the school holds regular services in our buildings. They will also work closely with the Head teacher and other governors, for example in reviewing documentation for Diocesan and SIAMS inspection (the school was graded "Excellent" when last inspected in 2018).

Our new Vicar will be an ordained priest within the Church of England and will have completed their Initial Ministerial Education. Within this role they will have the normal operational responsibilities, they will Chair the PCC and Standing Committee meetings. Hope Academy also has links with St. Peter's, although there is potential for this link to be developed further.

Alongside many other local churches, St. Peter's has supported the work of the local foodbank, since its launch. This collaboration is indicative of the good ecumenical relations in Newton and nearby Earlestown. There are occasional joint services and events throughout the year, including a Carol service in Mesnes Park. As part of its aim of reaching the local community, St Peter's has regularly sought opportunities to host community events. The most significant of these is our annual Christmas fair, which brings many local people through our doors. There is excellent support for fundraising and social events within the church. Church volunteers organise many community events throughout the year including Craft and Gift Fairs, Choir Concerts and a Brass Band Carol Concert.

Like many local churches we embraced the opportunity to celebrate HM Queen Elizabeth Platinum Jubilee by holding a 'Open Day' and 'Celebration Garden Party' with Food served in the church annex with live entertainment in the church garden.

Despite our strong links with our community, we feel we are only just scratching the surface. We now need to be bolder in taking the love of God tangibly into our community, going beyond our buildings to where people live, work, socialise and go about their daily life.

## **Where We're Going - Our prayers for the next 5 years**

As we move forward to a new chapter, we asked our members to give us their thoughts following prayer for the next period of our life as a church community. A number of themes rose to the surface as clear priorities that we believe God has laid on the hearts of our congregation and could form a significant focus for our new Vicar going forward. Many people felt that God is calling St. Peter's to become a real and tangible presence in our community. There is a strong sense that we have reached a time when we need to be more outward-looking, going beyond our church buildings to engage with the daily life of Newton and beyond. Drawing in young adults and older teenagers was another recurring theme. By living out our faith, we pray that we might develop an inspiring culture of testimony, igniting an infectious passion for God, and working with other churches to bring about a revival in Newton. We also hope that through constant prayer we might be equipped with courage to make a difference, to move out in faith, to be more daring, and to expect and receive miracles.

Monitoring attendance and retaining those who come to our services and then fall away, especially young families, is a key priority. We want to draw more people to faith, yet to do this we need to be more creative, going beyond our regular Alpha and Pilgrim courses to where people are, rather than expecting them to come to us. A focus on outreach will require us to inspire, nurture and grow more leaders and volunteers. It is hoped that we will license our first LML (Local Missional Leader) later this year. Improving integration across our age groups and valuing the richness among the generations is vital if we are to grow together, serve each other and deepen relationships within our church family. Above all we want to be led and renewed by the Holy Spirit, encouraging spiritual gifts in one another, praying for, caring for and loving one another so that we become a beacon for God's love and grace across our community.



## **The challenges ahead**

Of course, our hopes and prayers will always encounter significant challenges. As we prayed about where we believe God is calling St. Peter's to be, we also spent time reflecting on some of the challenges. With all the many activities that take place it is important that we keep our focus and not be pulled in different directions. There is always a need to balance commitments with resources, and not allow ourselves to become distracted. Managing our expectations and guarding against a sense of complacency is essential if we are to be an effective witness within our community.

The busy nature of daily life exerts competing pressures both within and outside the church, regular sporting activity on a Sunday morning has most certainly put a strain on our youth attendance. Equipping our church to minister more effectively, to go beyond our comfort zone and to reach out to those in need will require us to be even more supportive of our leaders and our ministry team. We want to grow and not stand still, looking forward with anticipation to what the future will bring.

## **Who God might bring**

When Church members were asked to pray about who God might bring, the following characteristics emerged - that our new Vicar:

- Comes with vision, passion and a hunger to see God's Kingdom flourish in Newton.
- Is a good Bible based teacher and effective communicator, able to lead us into a deeper understanding of God's message and life lived in all its fullness.
- Will be spirit-led and servant-hearted, seeking God's will and ambition for us as a church and in the world.
- Is a skilled enabler with the ability to encourage, develop and release gifts amongst us.
- Has resilience, self-confidence and a sense of humour, comfortable in their own identity and therefore able to work with and lead our exciting and new congregations.
- Shares our emphasis on tradition biblical teaching, whilst also recognising the value in other traditions and styles of worship.
- Will unite us all through love by being approachable and down to earth, with pastoral sensitivity, empathy and compassion for those who might be going through difficult times.
- Has the ability to inspire and relate to Christians and non-Christians alike, drawing those on our 'fringes' into a closer relationship with Jesus and the Christian faith.

## **Appendix 1:**

## **The Vicarage**

*Address:*

8 The Parchments

Newton-Le-Willows

WA12 0DY

Built in 1988, the vicarage is a large, modern four-bedroomed detached house. It has been well maintained and the gas centrally heated accommodation comprises of a hall and staircase leading to four bedrooms (one with en-suite facilities) and a family bathroom. On the ground floor there is a lounge, study, cloakroom, fitted kitchen, utility and separate dining room. There is also an additional rear lounge which has patio doors that lead out to a large, well-kept rear garden. There is a parking area in front of the attached double garage.



Please find attached a copy of our 2021 Annual Report and Financial statements.