

The Church of St. Matthew Perry Beeches, Birmingham



Parish Statement
2025

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Introduction



The purpose of this document is to help potential candidates to understand the nature of the parish of St. Matthew, in Perry Beeches, North Birmingham. It sets out in some detail who we are, our journey to our current position, an honest appraisal of where we are now and our vision for the future.

For many this document will be their first introduction to St. Matthew's, so we have set out our current position as fully as we are able. We hope you enjoy reading the information contained in this statement and will find it helpful for your discernment when considering this appointment.

We hope that the contents of this statement together with thoughtful and reflective prayer will attract the right candidate to take us forward into the challenges of the future.

The Churchwardens, PCC and Congregation of St. Matthews

What we are seeking from our new Vicar

Our mission is to:-

- Increase the profile of St. Matthews within the community as an inclusive, welcoming Church and attract more people to join our congregation.
- Maintain the Anglo Catholic tradition of St. Matthews with the Eucharist at the heart of our worship
- Consider the introduction of new types of service to attract busy families and children to join our congregation
- Strengthen the links between St. Matthew's and the local education establishments to encourage children and young people.
- Support and encourage our Lay Pastors in providing care and support in the community
- Encourage groups that use our facilities to form closer links with the Church.
- Maintain and preserve the Church buildings for future generations.

In order to help us achieve this mission, we are looking for a person who will be:-

- A person of prayer with excellent pastoral skills and a commitment to parish visiting.
- Able to inspire others to seek a greater understanding of the Gospel message.
- Keen to continue lay involvement in ministry at the church and be able to help others recognise their potential for lay participation.
- Hard working and energetic, working with the PCC and the congregation to develop further the church's ministry in the local community
- A good communicator, who can empathise with people of all ages and differing backgrounds.
- Able to provide strong leadership with the ability to delegate where appropriate.

- Able to accept challenges and make difficult decisions through clear thinking and a determination to do what is right for St. Matthews now and in the future.
- Proactive in identifying sources of funding to improve the physical and spiritual fabric of the church and ensure that new initiatives are followed through to a conclusion.
- Able to share a laugh.

What we can offer our new Vicar

The Congregation of St. Matthews will be pleased to offer:-

- A committed and supportive congregation, with the best outcomes for St. Matthews at their hearts.
- A friendly congregation committed to equality and welcoming all.
- A relatively sound financial position with no immediate concerns, but no room for complacency.
- A small group of dedicated volunteers willing to ensure the church and its surroundings are well looked after.
- A well-designed Vicarage conveniently located near the church but not attached to it.
- A striking Church building, well situated in the centre of the parish.
- A warm welcome and unlimited cups of tea or coffee

Consultation with the congregation

As part of the process of writing this Parish Statement we carried out a consultation with our congregation, asking them two key questions

Question 1 **What is your vision for the future of St. Matthew's?**

Question 2 **What are your priorities for a new Vicar and what qualities would you like a new vicar to bring to St. Matthew's?**

The substance of the replies is reflected in the preceding paragraphs and were helpful in developing the profile for our new Vicar. Some direct quotes from the replies are set out in the 'Facts and Figures' section at the end of this statement.

Welcome to Birmingham

Birmingham is a vibrant city at the centre of the United Kingdom. Renowned for its warm hospitality, rich industrial heritage and a thriving cultural scene' Birmingham offers something for everyone. From the many historic buildings to the modern, bustling shopping centres, the diverse culinary delights, to the world-class museums and galleries.

From the iconic canals that wind through the city to the future of HS2 Birmingham is at the centre of a nationwide transport hub.

Birmingham is a city that is proud of its history, embraces its multicultural spirit, and is inspired by its ongoing transformation and innovation.

Welcome to Perry Beeches

Situated to the northwest of Birmingham city centre, Perry Beeches is bordered by the wider areas of Great Barr and Perry Barr, offering ease of access while retaining its own distinct identity.

Perry Beeches owes its identity to the growth of Birmingham in the early twentieth century. The area's name is believed to derive from the ancient Perry family and the beech trees that once adorned the landscape. Rapid suburban development in the interwar years transformed Perry Beeches into the thriving residential hub it is today.

Residents take pride in maintaining the area's green spaces, supporting local schools and fostering initiatives that encourage environmental responsibility.



Birmingham

Although you may never have been to Perry Beeches it is quite likely you will have passed through it, as the M6 Motorway, north of Spaghetti junction passes through the parish. Although the original estate was built just prior to the Second World War there have been many later housing developments, either on infill or brownfield sites.

The area is primarily residential, with a major supermarket at the northern end of the parish, and there are small groups of shops scattered throughout. There are some green spaces scattered around the area, indeed there is a large open grassed area immediately in front of the church, and there are extensive public parks nearby, including the Alexander stadium, host to the Commonwealth games, and Sutton Park, one of the largest urban parks in Europe.

The main “industry” of the parish could probably be described as Education. James Watt College, directly opposite the church, offers a range of vocational courses for 16 to 19 year olds, we have two senior academies, each offering education to over 1,000 11 to 18 year old students.

We have four infant and primary schools at various locations within the parish.

There are excellent local bus links connecting both to Birmingham City Centre and other areas of the wider conurbation, and local train stations at Perry Barr and Hamstead, both just outside the parish.

There is no access to the M6 within the parish, but there is access to the centre of the motorway network just a few minutes drive away. The Tame valley canal also forms part of the parish boundary.

According to the 2021 census the parish has a population of 15,340, living in 6,537 households. Just over 25% are 19 or under and 12% are over 70 leaving 63% between 19 and 69.



Aerial view of the Church

70% of the population are of White ethnicity and those of Asian ethnicity are slightly more than half the remainder.

According to the census slightly less than 50% profess as Christian religion, with 32% professing no religious affiliation.

On deprivation the parish rate just falls into the bottom 20% of parishes across England.

Further details of these and other statistics can be found in the Maps, Plans and Statistics Section at the end of this Statement.

Welcome to St. Matthews



A genuinely warm and unconditional welcome awaits everyone at St Matthew's. A friendly and fun-loving congregation, we are keen to share the generous love of God with others and to grow together in our Christian discipleship.

Worship

The Sunday Solemn Mass is at the centre of our Christian life and fellowship and includes baptisms. Worship is in the 'Modern Catholic' tradition, making full use of vestments, the burning of incense, the ringing of bells and the lighting of candles.

The small Sunday School is present for the majority of the Sunday Mass but leaves for a short period of time for creative work based around Bible stories and prayer. At the end of the service they present their work to the congregation.

We also have a weekly phone in service, welcomed by those who are unable to attend the church.

There is a small Julian Group which holds monthly house meetings for readings and contemplative prayer. Visits have been made by the group to pray and celebrate the Mass at the Church of St Julian in Norwich.

We have a parish pilgrimage to the Holy Shrine of Walsingham approximately every other year and regularly go to the festival of St. Alban.



The stations of the Cross at Walsingham

Links to other Local Churches

We are part of an oversight group with neighbouring parishes of St. John's Perry Barr; St. Paul's Hamstead and St. Bernards Hamstead, with an oversight evening service every week conducted at each parish in turn.

We have good relations with Perry Beeches Baptist Church who organise a food bank to which we make monthly donations.

We have also been proud to host the Midlands Region "On Fire Mission" an organisation promoting the renewal of the spirit through word and sacrament.

Parish History

The parish of St. Matthews Perry Beeches was created just before the Second World War to serve the newly built Beeches Estate. Originally meeting in what is now the church hall the church has continued its journey of faith through the years since then. A new Church was consecrated alongside the original building in 1964 and is still a source of inspiration to all who worship there.

At the laying of the foundation stone for the new building in 1963 the then Lord Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. Leonard Wilson, told parishioners that they were not being provided with `a cosy little place for themselves` but with `a power house for God` where they would receive the strength and courage to do God`s work amongst the community they served. At the consecration service he reminded parishioners of those words and told them that `now the real hard work begins`.

Over the years that followed there have been many successes and the inevitable disappointments but always there has been the total commitment and devotion of the people of St Matthews who, together with the unstinting efforts of parish have sought to take the Gospel out beyond the brick walls of the church into the local community.

In the late 1970's the church opened a Social Club with Bar to better engage with the local community. For many years this was very successful, with many popular community events organised, and managed to bring a small income to the church, and resulted in many improvements to the church buildings. Unfortunately in later years the bar became financially unviable and reluctantly the decision was taken that it should close, to the disappointment of many of the local community.

We also created a Children and Families Worker post, in partnership with two other Birmingham parishes but unfortunately COVID intervened and the project struggled to become established and the position was not renewed.

We can never relax and think the work is done and so now we are looking for a priest who by devotion and spiritual guidance can take us forward and working with us can help us make sure that St Matthews continues to be a `power house for God`.

Church Buildings

The Church of St. Matthews was completed in 1964, designed by the Architects Maguire and Murray in the brutalist style, common in Birmingham at the time. It is a grade 2 listed building built of buff brick and reinforced concrete. It is an irregular hexagon in shape, rising through several levels each level supported by horizontal concrete bands. The height of each wall rises from the baptistery at the entrance to the building to its highest point over the altar, symbolising the spiritual life in its gradual ascent from Baptism to fulfilment in the celebration of the Mass.

The Altar is on a raised dais set in front of the highest wall, which also supports a bell tower. The pews are not fixed in place and are original to the church.

The font is constructed of industrial brick, and there are two organs, one electronic and one pipe organ especially designed for the Church.



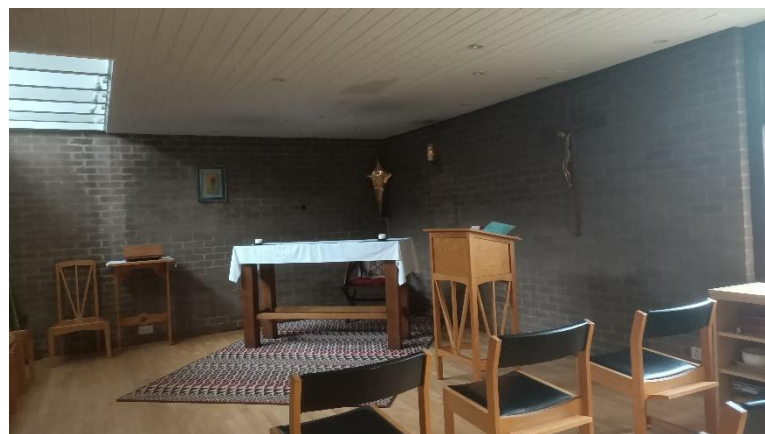
A striking feature of the church is the way sunlight from the windows, which surround the whole church, plays across the walls. This can create a surreal atmosphere, especially when combined with the smoke from the thurible during services.

The church is heated by the original heating system, consisting of high-power blow air heaters in pits arranged around the walls of the church. This is reasonably effective but has very high running costs due to the heavy load imposed for only short periods of time, resulting in high standing charges. The use of these units is now carefully controlled

Entry to the church is through a covered passageway, which also provides access to a small chapel.

There is also a rear door from the car park, leading to the vestry, lounge area, toilets and the rest of the site.

The original church, built in 1939, and used for services until the “new” church was built in 1964 is still in use today for community activities.



The Chapel

There is also a lounge, and a further meeting room and a parish office. These buildings and their use are described in more detail further in the statement.

The whole Church Centre is enclosed by hedges, with two gated entrances. In the grounds there is a small car park and a lawned area with a memorial rose garden.

In August 2025 the PCC received a Quinquennial report for the Church. In addition to minor remedial work the report recommended maintenance and repair of the external woodwork of the Church. Due to the design of the building this requires working at height, and access could prove difficult. The PCC is currently seeking estimates from specialists with a view to identifying sources of funding to help maintain our Iconic building.

Vicarage

The vicarage is located in Beeches Road in the heart of the parish approximately ¼ mile from the church within easy walking distance.

It was built in the 1960`s. On the ground floor is a cloakroom, a shower, fitted kitchen, lounge, dining room and study. Upstairs there is a bathroom with shower and 4 bedrooms. Double glazing is fitted throughout the property. Heating is by means of gas central heating.



A door from the lounge leads out to a small patio and garden area. There is an attached garage with a drive at the front of the premises with off street parking.

People of St Matthews Church Wardens

Janet and Tim have over 7 years serving St. Matthews as church wardens.

Tim is the son of a Non-stipendiary priest and has been attending St. Matthews all his life. He is a well known local funeral director.

Janet has been attending St. Matthews since she moved to Perry Beeches in 1973. She has always been active, particularly in the community side of the Church helping to run the Playgroup, then running a Holiday Playscheme, and for some years was Licensee of the Family Club attached to St. Matthews.



The PCC

The parish has a full complement of PCC and Deanery Synod members. Many members of the PCC have been involved with St. Matthews for many years and are always happy to share their knowledge and enthusiasm.

The Congregation

Although numbers in the Congregation have fallen significantly since COVID we still have 35 to 40 taking communion at our Sunday Service. However, because some members only attend occasionally the total number of people who call St. Matthew's 'their' Church is considerably larger than this.



Like many churches the congregation is mainly made up of people in late middle age or senior citizens, and a number travel from outside the parish to support the church they know and love.

The Curacy

The parish is blessed with a rather unusual Curacy. Brother Martin is a Franciscan Friar, living in a Franciscan House outside the parish, and combines his duties as a Brother with those of a curate.

He has just started the final year of his curacy and can remain at St. Matthews until at least June 2026, a blessing for which all at St. Matthews are grateful.



Lay Reader

St. Matthews has a long tradition of Lay Readers supporting the ministry of the church. Unfortunately our latest Lay Reader moved out of the parish in 2025.

Lay Pastors

We have three Lay Pastors who are trained to pay home visits and take Holy Communion to those parishioners unable to attend services at the church.

Parish Administrator

As well as being a member of the congregation Ann is the part-time paid administrator, treasurer and manages hall lettings. She works mornings, Monday to Friday, from the parish office

Organist

The parish has a regular organist, Neil, who plays at most Sunday services. He makes use of both our organs as appropriate.

Serving Team

There is a robed serving team available for main Sunday services and special services as required.

Sacristan

David, our Sacristan prepares and maintains everything necessary for our church services. He also looks after all the liturgical items and ensures all supplies are available for worship.

Safeguarding

The parish has its own safeguarding officer, Judith, who liaises with diocesan safeguarding officers on all matters relating to safeguarding. She is a member of the PCC and any safeguarding issues are reviewed at each meeting. Our safeguarding policies are reviewed every year and are published on our Web site.

All members of the PCC, Lay Pastors and anyone else involved with vulnerable members of the public are given the appropriate Safeguarding training and this is recorded in and monitored through the Diocesan records.

Finance

The parish is extremely lucky to be generously supported by our trustees, St. Martin's Trust, to whom we are eternally grateful for the help and support they offer us in addition to financial support. As well as funding the incumbent's salary they also provide funds to cover our organist, and other

music related costs, they also cover our current curate's travel expenses, and the salary of the Parish Administrator. They also supply a grant to help with office costs.

Our other main source of income is the Parish Giving Fund, with associated Gift aid. We also have an open plate collection at every service and an envelope system for regular donors who do not donate electronically.

Together with grants and other sources of income, and the rental income for the church hall our total monthly income amounts to about £6,000, although this can vary month by month.

Our main monthly items of expenditure are the common fund payment to the diocese, which we prioritise, heating costs, administrator wages and cleaning costs.

We also have quite substantial reserves amounting in total to some £50,000, some of which is reserved for specific projects.

A summary of accounts for 2024 is included in the Maps, Plans and Statistics section at the conclusion of this statement.

The Church Hall and Community Rooms

Built in 1939 and used as a dual purpose, Church and Community Centre, from its inception. The church hall has been updated over the years so that it remains in frequent use. It is a large space capable of holding up to 150 visitors and is immediately adjacent and linked to the church. In addition to use for a number of



church functions it is available for commercial, community and private hire, including dances, parties and other celebrations.

The hall also has a stage and a fully equipped kitchen area.

Linking the hall to the church is a corridor along which are male, female and accessible toilets on one side, on the other is a servery, a lounge and a meeting room, followed by the vestry and church office.

The hall is used during the week by a number of groups and organisations including:-

- A mother and toddler group
- Slimming World Classes
- Yoga and Zumba groups
- A group for pensioners, including fitness classes, a hot meal and various other activities
- indoor bowling
- Rainbows/Brownies/Guides.

The servery and lounge are used for:-

- refreshments after the morning services on Sunday and Thursday.
- a Friday Café, serving tea, coffee and cakes at lunch time
- monthly book club
- Crafting Days



The Servery and Lounge

Parish Statement

St. Matthews Perry Beeches

The meeting room is used as a practise room for a local brass band and as a local councillor's surgery. It also houses a library of second hand books, available for exchange or purchase.

All the facilities are also used in different ways for one off events such as training courses, children's and family parties and the centre also serves as a local polling station.



During all the school holidays, except Christmas, we run a Messy Church once a week to provide activities for local children.

We also have parish "Fun Days" usually to celebrate national events, such as the King's coronation or the late Queen's jubilee. During these events, as well as other activities, we utilise the churches flexibility by moving pews to one side and hiring a Bouncy Castle for the day.



Enjoying the Bouncy Castle in Church

Our curate is currently leading outreach in the schools, and we have so far been granted 50% funding for a Youth, Children and Families Worker. We have not as yet been able to obtain the remaining 50% funding. We are hopeful that in the future we will secure the remaining funding for this important and valuable project.

Social Media Presence

The parish has a comprehensive, Web site, www.stmatthewsperrybeechees.org.uk which is kept up to date weekly showing service details, pew sheets, photos of events, news of forthcoming activities, etc.

We publish a weekly newsletter, to nearly 50 email addresses, showing the following week's services, forthcoming events and notices. We also have a Facebook page, and include notices of events and other interesting pieces in local Facebook community sites.

In the past we have hand delivered over 3000 Christmas and Easter cards covering every house in the parish, but last year we decided that this was no longer manageable. We did try a commercial leaflet deliverer, but this was unsuccessful, so the current situation is under review, with the hope that a younger, more able congregation would be able to restart this important outreach work.

Charities

The church has regular monthly collections to support the work of a Hospital in Malawi, and we also donate a regular quarterly donation to Embrace the Middle East to sponsor a child.

More locally we have a collection point in church for food donations to help the Food bank run by our neighbouring Baptist church, and we also donate half the income from our Friday morning café to our Baptist friends.

We also have a collection/ distribution point for previously used School Uniforms.

Christmas fair

No description of life at St. Matthew's would be complete without a mention of the Christmas Fair. Held on the last Saturday in November this event fills the Church Hall and all the associated community rooms with the smell of freshly baked cakes, and hot pork sandwiches.

The local community come along to grab a few bargains, and take a chance on tombola stalls, or just have a coffee and a natter, while the children visit Father Christmas.



A good fun day is had by all, and the church members go home exhausted, but pleased with the funds raised for the Church, which has raised around £3,000 in previous years.

Facts and Figures - Consultation

A few direct quotes from the Parish Consultation.

Vision

- "Promote and encourage new visitors to increase the congregation"
- "To retain the current Membership and encourage the missing generation (young families, teenagers and young adults) to attend"
- "To attract families so that the Sunday School could flourish"
- "To grow and prosper, to bring young people into the church and welcome them"

Priorities

- "The ability to listen and to be supportive, with a good sense of humour"
- "Visiting parishioners would be good, especially those who are housebound"
- "Able to work with all parishioners, building good links with the community"

Qualities

- "A bright, lively outlook and a good sense of humour"
- "Delivering interesting sermons"
- "Fundamental understanding of the value of money"
- "Ability to work hard and support our working parties"
- "Musical, patient and speak clearly"

Facts and Figures – Summary of 2024 Accounts

Brought Forward into 2024	£70,473
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Income and endowments from:

Donations and legacies	£63,232
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Income from charitable activities	£29,037
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Other trading activities	£500
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Investments	£416
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Other income	£1,032
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Total income	£94,217
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Expenditure on:

Expenditure on charitable activities	£95,126
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Other expenditure	£1,580
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Total expenditure	£96,706
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Net Income	-£2,489
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Carried Forward into 2025	£67,984
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Made up of

Unrestricted Funds	£40,170
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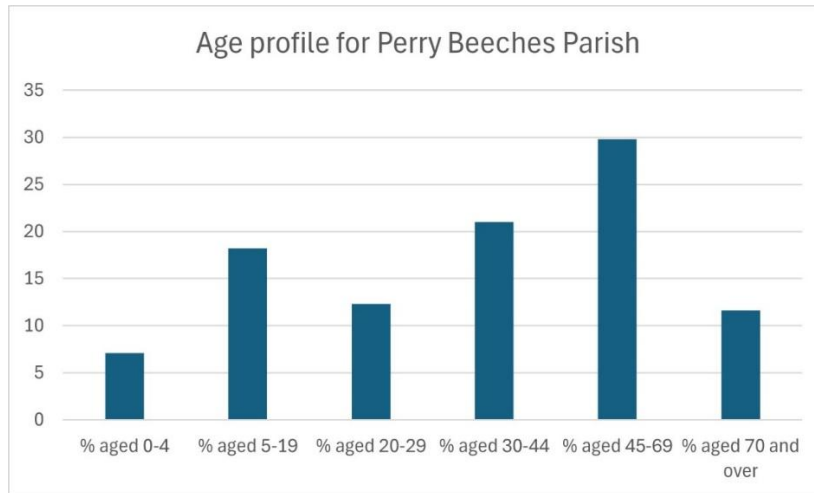
Designated Funds	£12,412
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Restricted Funds	£15,396
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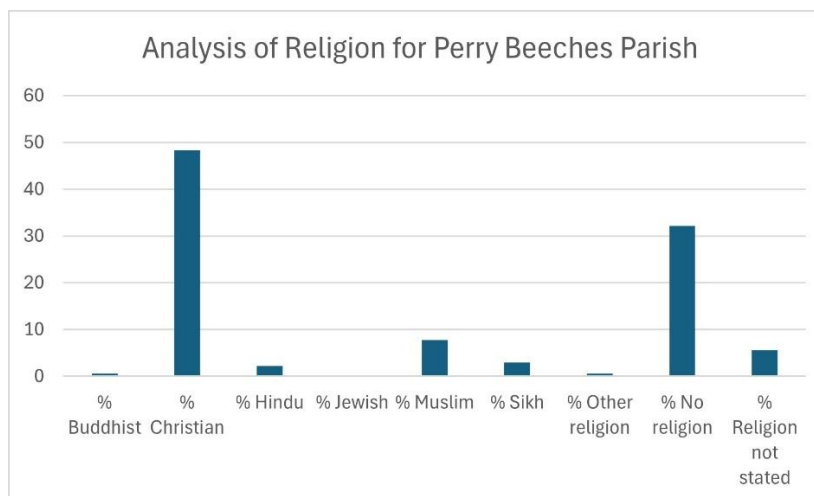
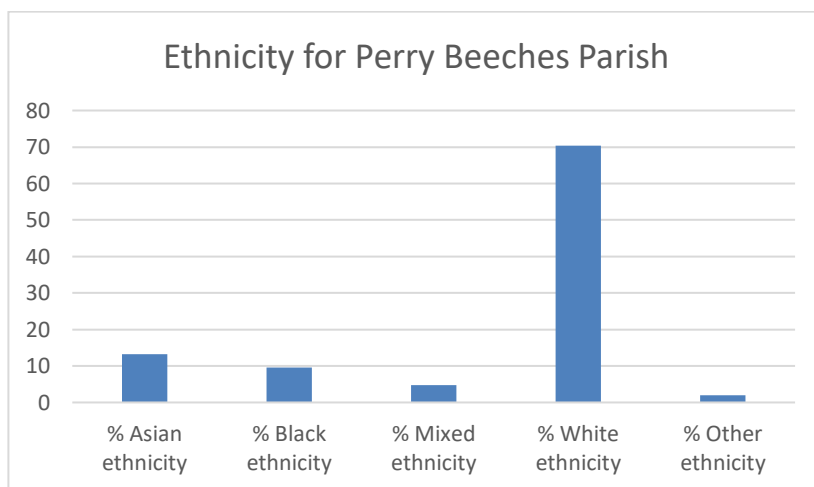
Total Funds	£67,978
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Slight differences due to rounding to the nearest pound

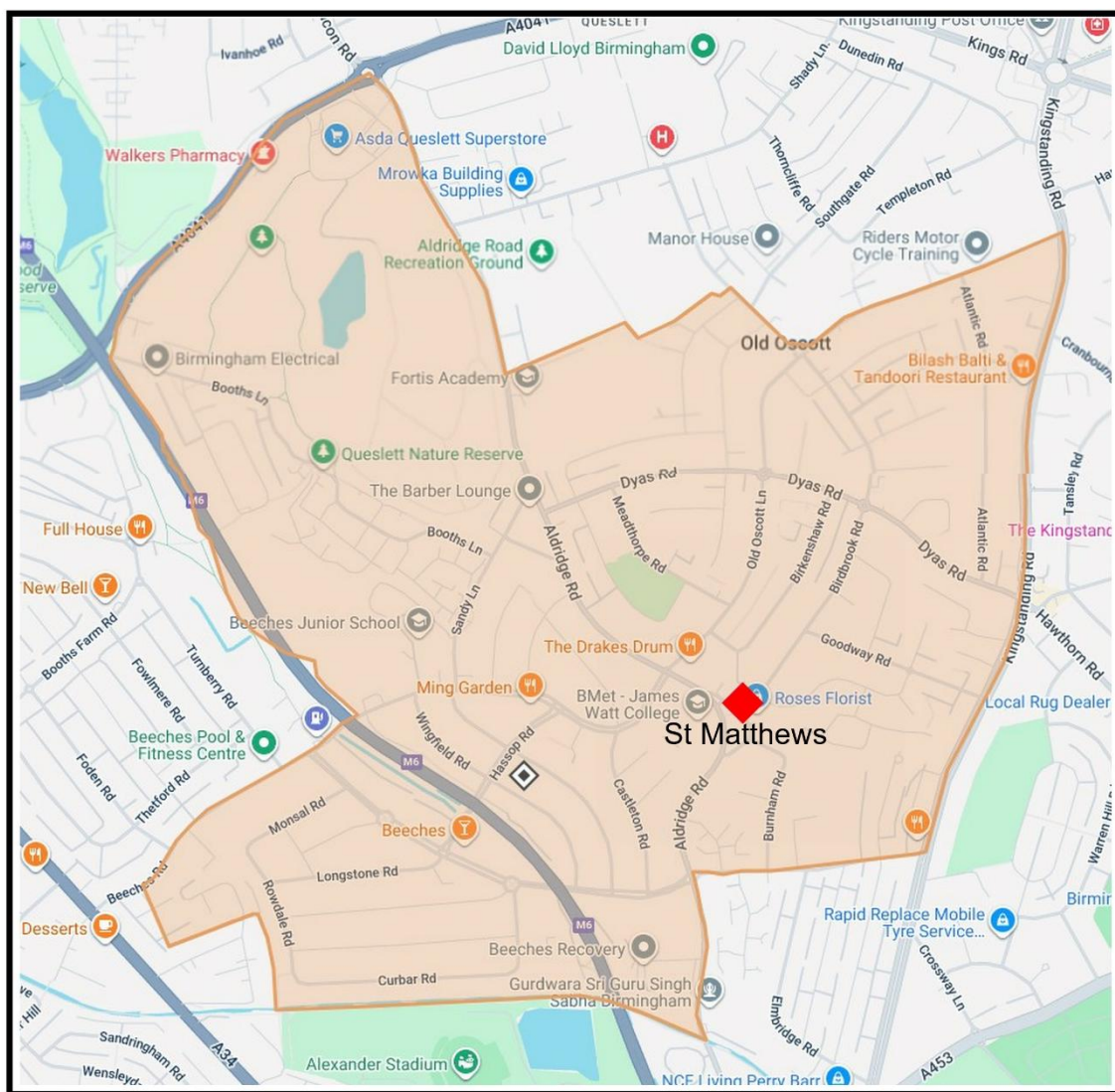
Facts and Figures – Parish Profiles



Taken from
2021 Census
data using the
Church of
England Parish
Map
Information

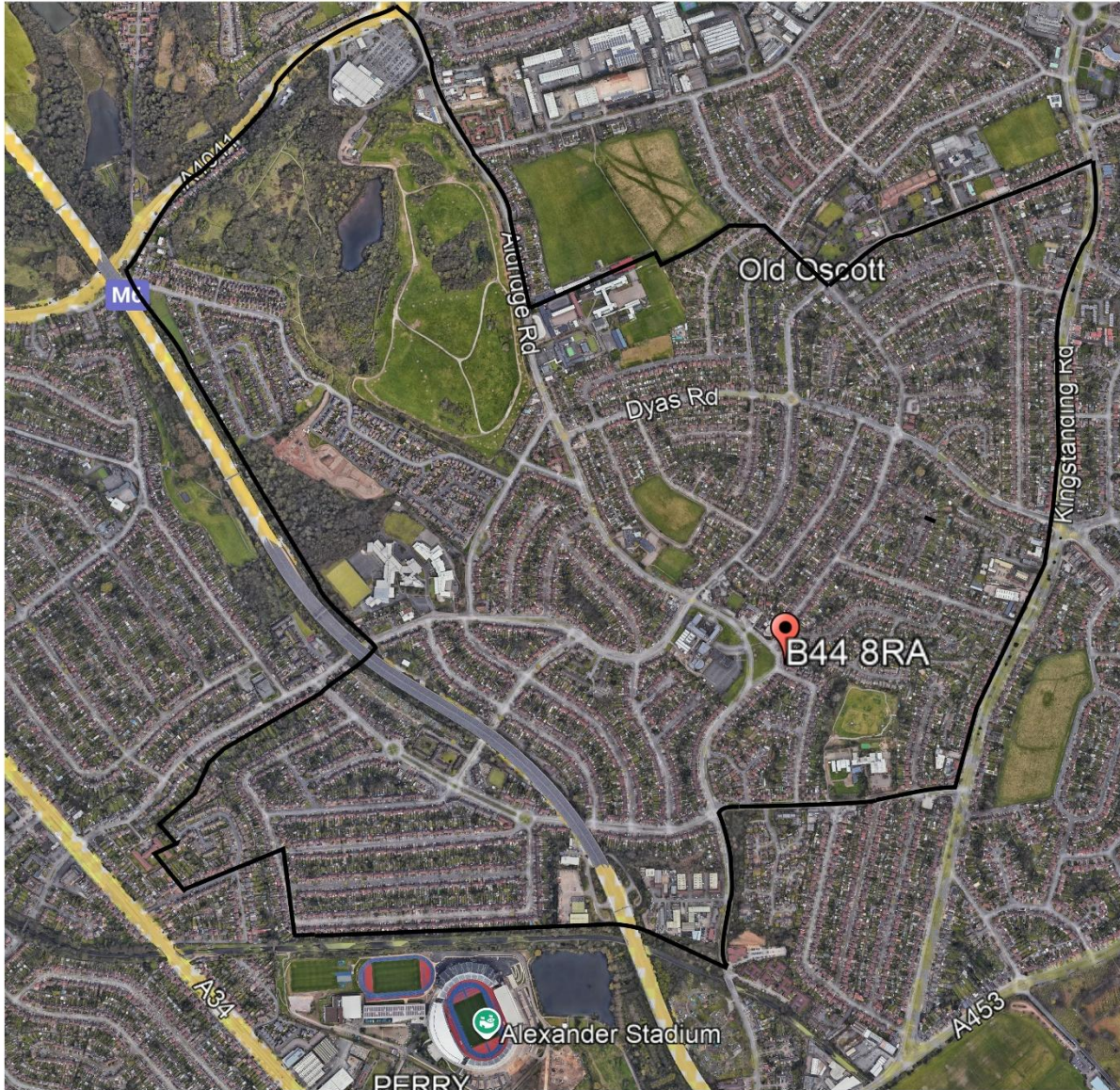


Maps, Plans and Statistics - Parish Map



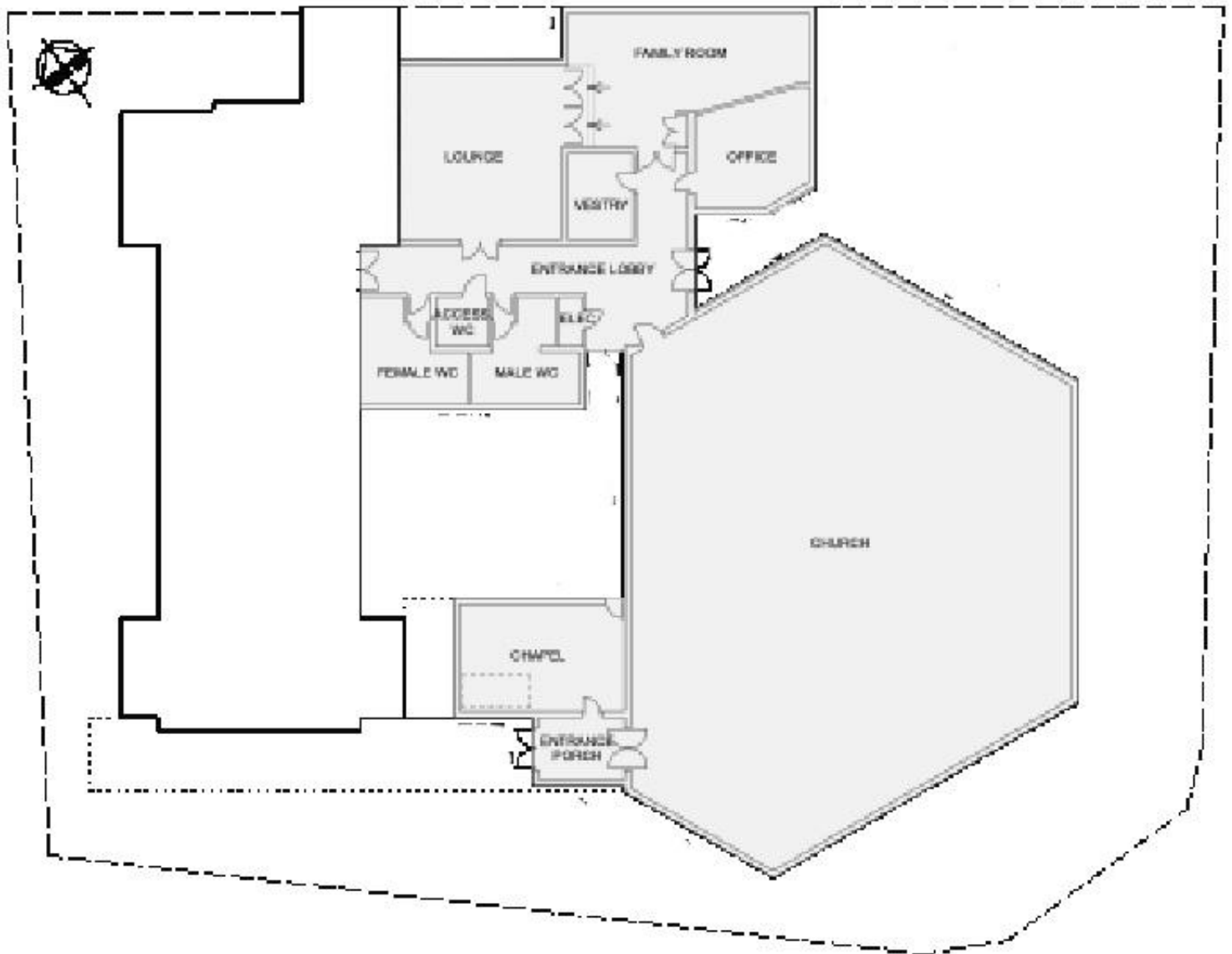
Source:- A Church Near You

Maps, Plans and Statistics – Aerial View of the Parish



Source:- Google Earth

Maps, Plans and Statistics – Floor Plan of Church



Not to scale