

# **The Parish of Christ Church, Eccleston**

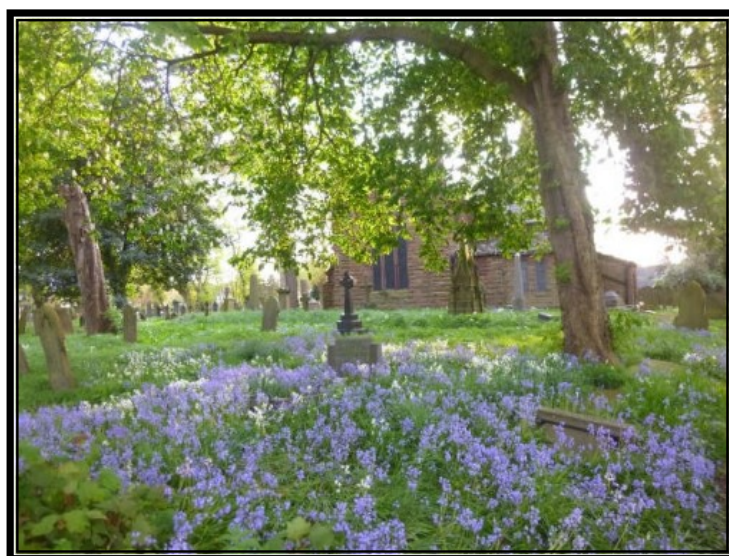
## **Parish Profile**



Christ Church Eccleston is a loving, welcoming and caring church community, and remains well-attended, well-maintained, well-funded churches within the Diocese of Liverpool and St Helens Deanery.



Rev Sonya Doragh is our Team Vicar and lives with her husband and two of her three boys in the newly built vicarage close to the Church.



## Overview of the Church

- Newly re-ordered church building fit for 21st century worship
- Average weekly congregation of 100 people
- Full Parish Share paid annually
- The parish with the largest annual contribution to Christian Aid collections in St Helens
- A PCC of many talents plus countless eager volunteers – ready and willing to serve
- We are beginning to engage better with young families
- We have plans going through a pre-planning process for a usable church hall as the current hall is dilapidated and some distance from the church
- We are open to (and eager for) ‘fresh expressions’, pro-active community outreach and service – we want to make a difference!

As a community we work together to foster a sense of love for Jesus Christ and the people and world around us.



## Our Parish

Our parish is in Eccleston within the borough of St Helens and has dwellings to the East and farmland and a golf course to the south and west. There is also farmland to the north.

The properties are mainly owner occupied and are a mix of semi-detached and large detached houses. There are two small estates of social housing at Trapwood Close and Gillars Green. Trapwood Community Centre is often used by the church for teaching and activities. Private apartments for the elderly have been built in the parish and these are close to all amenities and to the local bus stop.

Within the parish there is a small parade of shops, a small local supermarket, library and two cafes, which is very popular. The doctor's surgery at present shares the site of our church hall and for this a monthly rent is paid to the church. There are plans for the surgery to move elsewhere in September 2018. There is a dental surgery in the parish and another small supermarket has recently opened near to a new housing development.

Eccleston Village Hall, which is close to The Smithy, formerly a blacksmith's workshop and now a heritage centre, is available to rent and there is also the Lester Drive Centre which provides courses and activities for all age groups in the community.

There are two primary schools within the parish. Eccleston Mere Primary is a state school and there is also St Julie RC Primary. Close by is Bleak Hill Primary School, another state school, which is just outside the parish boundary. Children from Eccleston attend all three of these schools which all have outstanding reports from Ofsted. Bleak Hill and Eccleston Mere School have strong links with our church. Two of our children's groups take place in Bleak Hill School and Eccleston Mere is used for activities such as Messy Church. Assemblies are taken in Eccleston Mere school on weekly basis and Rev Sonya is a governor.

De La Salle RC High School is in the parish and there are other high schools within easy travelling distance of Eccleston. Children from Eccleston Mere Primary School and Bleak Hill Primary School transfer to Rainford Technology College, Cowley High School or De La Salle when they are 11 years old.

Carmel College is a Catholic Sixth Form College which welcomes students of all faiths. The college is one of the top 5 Sixth Form Colleges in the country.



## About Eccleston

Eccleston is a suburb of St Helens and had a population of 11,525 at the 2011 census. There have been a considerable number of private properties built since then.

The Lake District, Snowdonia, Yorkshire Dales and cities of Manchester and Liverpool are easily accessible. The train to London takes two and a half hours. The M6, M57, M58, M62 and the East Lancashire Road linking Manchester and Liverpool are all close. The public transport links are very good. There are buses to St Helens but a reduction in service is subject to a campaign to reinstate the full service. There are good train services to Liverpool, Wigan, Warrington and Manchester and thence all parts of the UK.



There are many sporting facilities close to and within the parish. Eccleston Mere is a large body of water used by the local sailing club. There are plans to increase the use of the Mere's facilities for the benefit of the community. The nearby playing fields are used for walking, ball games and the children's football teams. Ruskin Drive sports complex has tennis courts, bowling greens and cricket and rugby pitches as well as a gym with swimming pool. The Parish also includes the beautiful Taylor Park which covers approximately 52 acres, including a substantial lake and is Grade II listed on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

## About our Church and its people

We have 176 people on the electoral roll.

However the age profile is fairly high and we are working on new initiatives to reduce this by encouraging and welcoming young families. We have experienced a number of significant losses as a church family this year, with the death of a number of active members with great faith and charisma leaving a great sense of shared grief.

### The PCC

There are 17 members of the PCC who meet regularly. A standing committee and the minister also meet when needed. There are two Wardens, a Treasurer, a Secretary and a lay vice Chairperson who do sterling work. An away day is usually held annually. This is when we review our mission statement and consider the needs of the congregation and the parish. The PCC has appointed a Safeguarding Officer. We have many hardworking and lively members who contribute to the life and worship of the church. Their skills are many and varied.

### Licensed staff

Brenda Parker and David Anderton are retired Ordained Local Ministers with the Bishop's permission to officiate. Due to ill health David is currently taking a rest from active ministry but hopes to return. Sue Kirkham and Pauline Parr are Licensed Readers, Pauline also acts as vergers for funerals and weddings, as well as taking funerals as part of her wider pastoral ministry.



## About our Church and its people (continued)

### Lay Involvement

There is a collaborative approach to our gathered worship, there are a number of people that lead intercessions, prepare/lead services, do dramas and preach.

In addition to the PCC and officials, others act as vergers, sidespersons, technical support during services, musicians, tea and coffee makers, flower arrangers, magazine editors, gardeners, maintenance workers, cleaners, money counters and bankers, gift aid secretaries, electoral roll officer, children's group leaders, social planners, event organisers, launderers, property managers, Christian Aid organisers, safeguarding officers, helpers with home communions and many other tasks which help to vitalise the church community.



People show their love for Jesus Christ and their church family through their actions. Pastoral care is carried out by the ministers and other members of the congregation. There are strong links with the Trapwood Community Centre which houses elderly people in social housing. A regular communion service is held at the centre.



## What do we like about our church?

### Jean, in her seventies

"As we start arriving the building begins to come alive with a feeling of fellowship and love."

### Lucy, aged 9

"Er..I don't quite know how to say it. I mean there is something for old people and lots for the children."

### Alan, aged 93 (sadly deceased since this contribution)



"I've been coming here since 1947. It feels like home. I've been making things for the building for years."

### Rachel, aged 36 and Daisy, aged two

"Christ Church is a very special place where faith, friendship, fun and humour flourish."

### Jeff in his sixties, ready for tree trimming.

"The love and generosity of Christ Church people is second to none."





# Worship

## Patterns of Worship

### Week 1

10.30am Family Worship with Baptism

### Week 2

8.00am Holy Communion  
10.30am Family Communion

### Week 3

10.30am Family Worship

### Week 4

8.00am Holy Communion  
10.30am Family Worship

### Week 5

10.30am Prayer and Praise Service

Music is provided by: a small music group, an organist or through the laptop and sound system

Children's attendance at special services such as Harvest, Christingle, Mothering Sunday and Father's day is encouraging. Special services for families such as our Easter Eggstravaganza and the Christmas Crib service continue to be popular. However, regular attendance does not comprise many children. We are working with the Joshua Centre to initiate an after-school act of worship for young families and have held a number of parties (pancake day, light party etc) for young families over the last 18 months in anticipation of something more regular.

## Typical numbers attending each service:

8.00am - 15

10.30am - 80

**Monthly Communion at Trapwood: 8 adults**



## **Worship (continued)**

### **Patterns of Worship (continued)**

#### **Tuesday Fellowship - 10 adults**

Tuesday Fellowship meetings take place monthly and this is offered to those who can no longer attend church. The social benefits for these very elderly people are much appreciated and Communion is offered. People attending Tuesday fellowship are collected by car if necessary.

#### **Thursday Fellowship**

Has about 30 mainly older female members who are very friendly and have lively minds. They enjoy speakers on a wide range of topics, Christian, social and environmental, also suppers and outings.



#### **Life Groups**

Over the years there have been Bible study groups that have slowly dwindled in number. Following a change in circumstances for previous leaders and Rev Sonya's illness the one remaining study group stopped meeting. This has created an opportunity to rethink our small groups and early in 2018 two new Life Groups will be starting, each with a monthly outreach (wine tasting for one and craft for the other). This is a substantial change for Christ Church as previous groups were study focused and the Life Groups are much more intentionally mission focused.

## Children's Groups

**AllStars** for children from four to seven years of age is held weekly from 6.15pm to 7.30pm in Bleak Hill School. There are opportunities to sing, talk, play and worship in a lively environment.

**Star Academy** is also in Bleak Hill School at the same time as All Stars. It is for children of junior school age and they too explore the Bible and its relevance to their lives. There is also time for fun games and fellowship.

**YPF** our Young People's Fellowship is for secondary aged children who meet weekly at the vicarage and follow a similar pattern to the Life Groups, with regular invitation social events which have attracted new members. Between the socials the group explore contemporary issues and Biblical themes.

**Messy Church** is held in the hall of Eccleston Mere School. It is a fresh expression of worship for families and their children. At the last session we had 40+ children, 35 parents, as well as 25 helpers.

**A Mums' and Toddlers'** group started in January 2016. This is held in the Church building whilst we wait for our new hall. Most weeks we reach our capacity. This group has been a great help to many parents that would otherwise be isolated.

## Special Worship

In addition to our regular worship, occasional 'special' worship events form part of our outreach:

- Remembrance Sunday Service.
- Commemoration Service for the bereaved on the afternoon of Remembrance Sunday.
- Christingle on Advent Sunday.
- Nativity in December.
- Carols by Candlelight' at Christmas.
- Crib Service on Christmas Eve
- Easter Eggstravaganza service.

## The Buildings

Christ Church is a 177 years old Grade II listed building. In the church is a plaque commemorating Richard Seddon, the first prime minister of New Zealand, who was born in Eccleston.

The church interior is now looking fine after its recent re-ordering. Three rows of pews have been removed to create a more flexible space.



- The spire has been rebuilt recently.
- We have a new brew facility and a new under floor heating system.
- LED lights and a new data projector have been installed.
- A glass screen provides a crèche area for children and families.
- a disabled toilet has been built and the floor has been raised and levelled to remove steps and covered with oak flooring.
- The church, graveyard and garden of remembrance are maintained weekly by a group of volunteers.





## **The Buildings (continued)**

### **The Vicarage**

A new vicarage has been completed in the garden of the former vicarage, it provides our vicar and her family with a comfortable home from which they are able to offer hospitality and host church activities.

### **The Church Hall**

It is in a dilapidated condition and only the lower hall is used. We have used a great deal of our money to reorder the church and rebuild the spire but the congregation are generous in their sacrificial giving, so it is a blessing that funds from the sale of land will be available for us to build a new hall, when planning permission is obtained.

### **Church house**

This is a detached house, which was originally built as a dwelling for the verger on a site in Church Lane a few metres from the church. It is at present rented to a private individual but in the future would provide suitable housing for a curate.

### **The Church Field**

This is behind the graveyard and is a very large open space. This is used by the community for recreation. Some wild flower areas have been developed and at one time it was used for the church gala days. The field has been used to house some submerged drainage tanks for United Utilities .

## **Ecumenical Links**

We have links with St Julie's RC church and a number of joint events were organised:

- A service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- Women's World Day of Prayer and the Good Friday walk of witness
- Carol singing and Easter and Christmas card distribution.

## **Finance**

The church has always paid the full Diocesan parish share and we are grateful for the generosity of our congregation. The Building for the Future fund benefits from regular giving in excess of the planned giving and the loose offerings.

We are currently rolling out the Parish Giving Scheme and are prayerfully hoping that this will stimulate an increase in giving and greater security in our regular income.