

St Thomas Church
Garstang
Lancashire



Ephesians 6:18
praying at all times
in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.
To that end,
keep alert with all perseverance

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Diocesan Vision	4
3. We Look After You	5
4. Executive Summary.....	6
5. The Parish and Wider Community	7
6. The Church Community	10
A powerhouse of prayer	12
Three thriving Home groups	13
Parish Groups and Activities	13
7. The Church Buildings.....	15
St Thomas Church	15
The Vicarage.....	16
The Church Hall.....	17
Car park.....	17
8. The Church Finances	17
9. Our Schools	18
10. Our Links Into the Wider Community	19
11. What We Offer	19
12. Who is God calling?	21

1. Introduction

Dear potential applicant,

Ministry in the Diocese of Blackburn



In the Diocese of Blackburn we profoundly believe in the difference that the Gospel makes to peoples' lives and so have a deep commitment to building healthy churches which can transform the communities in which they are set. We are looking for clergy of all backgrounds and traditions who share our passion for making a difference in the name of Jesus Christ.

'Vision 2026' is a bold and ambitious strategy which presumes that growth is what God wills for his church and which seeks to deliver growth through making disciples, being witnesses, growing leaders and focusing on young people, children and schools. You can read much more about this on other pages.

Our Diocese serves an area of extraordinary variety, from the stunning countryside of the Trough of Bowland to the former mill towns of East Lancashire, from the University cities of Preston and Lancaster to the seaside towns of Blackpool and Morecambe, from elegant villages to Presence and Engagement Parishes, there is something for everyone. We have Parishes of all traditions and are strongly committed to the principle of mutual flourishing. We are also seeking to grow 50 new congregations by 2026 so need people who are gifted as pioneers and evangelists.

If you think that the Church of England is at its eventide and that decline is inevitable, then these pages are probably not for you. But if you believe that all things are possible if we trust God, love his people, pray fervently, preach the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ and work hard, then we would love to hear from you. Even if none of the jobs on these pages seem quite right, get in touch anyway. And please be assured of our prayers as you seek to discern where God is calling you.

+ Julian

The Bishop of Blackburn
The Rt Revd Julian T Henderson

2. Diocesan Vision

Vision 2026 is an agenda for growth and change agreed by the Blackburn Diocesan Synod in 2015. It challenges our parishes to be healthy churches that transform their communities as we look ahead to our diocesan centenary in 2026. It also lays out four ways in which this over-arching goal can be achieved: Making Disciples, Being Witnesses, Growing Leaders and Prioritising Children and Young People.

All that we do as diocese is focussed on the delivery of Vision 2026. To make disciples we are raising levels of prayer, helping regular patterns of Bible reading to be established and encouraging generous giving of time, talents and treasures. To be witnesses, many parishes are setting up new local congregations at different times and in different places to reach out to new groups of people as well as showing God's love in action through projects that meet a local human need. New leaders are emerging as we seek to enable and equip those God is raising up in our midst for lay and ordained ministry. And our focus on children and young people is enabling creative thinking to raise up a new generation for Jesus Christ.



Over 85% of our parishes have a 'Vision Champion'. This is usually a lay appointment and the Champions' role is to encourage and support their parish leaders in pursuing the goals of Vision 2026 in a way that is appropriate for their local community.

Vision Champions from different parishes meet to share ideas and pray together.

In the Diocese of Blackburn we are inspired by confidence in the Gospel and are ambitious in our desire to make new disciples for Jesus Christ. We are committed to mutual flourishing, to maintaining clergy numbers and to investing in training for new curates.

Through prayer we see the grace and power of God who can alone bring renewal and growth. Our Diocesan Vision Prayer is:

"Heavenly Father, we embrace Your call for us to make disciples, to be witnesses and to grow leaders. Give us eyes to see Your vision, ears to hear the prompting of Your Spirit and courage to follow in the footsteps of Your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen."

You can find out more by visiting the Vision 2026 pages on our website:
www.blackburn.anglican.org

Carolyn Barton, Diocesan Vision Coordinator



3. We Look After You

If you come to Blackburn Diocese we will look after you...

- We have a great property department, who will do their best to ensure your house works for you and your family and is well maintained.
- We encourage all clergy to take their full annual leave entitlement, and also to use creatively the overtime we all put in to take an extra day off once each month, to enable you to have a midweek 'weekend' away.



We have a beautiful diocesan retreat house in the grounds of a ruined Cistercian abbey, where clergy are welcome to have personal reading days without charge (bring your own lunch).

Whalley Abbey Retreat and Conference Centre

- We encourage all parishes in vacancy to consider how they will 'pastor' and support their new priest. The diocese has an anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy.
- We have a unique pattern of peer-led Ministerial Development Review, designed by the clergy for the clergy.
- We are setting up a pilot reflective practice group for clergy new in post, in partnership with St Luke's Healthcare.
- If you are looking for a spiritual director or a mentor we have networks of people with whom we can put you in touch.
- We are always looking for ways for clergy to mix apart from work – including reading weeks, regular hospitality, and a clergy walking group. Further suggestions are welcome.



Bishop Philip leads a clergy walk.

4. Executive Summary

St Thomas' is a growing church in a growing town. It is so welcoming that over 50% of the respondents to our recent survey stated that the welcome was in their top three things they love about our church. The demographic of Garstang is changing as more home are built every week. The harvest is plenty, and we are looking for someone to lead us out into the fields.

We seek an inclusive priest who values the diversity of our church family and the parish. Someone who will encourage us to encounter God in both traditional and



What's best about our church

contemporary worship, placing the Eucharist at the centre of what we are. Someone who will be the face of the church in the community through active participation. A communicator who is just as at home in a school assembly as a civic service, bringing Christ alive to young and old. An active, fun person who can roll up their sleeves and join in.

We seek an energetic, joyful and enthusiastic leader who will enjoy being known and loved by the whole community. Someone who plays an active part in the life of our school – a priest who can put people at ease. They will show their love of Christ through action, with pastoral care for the whole flock, developing a pastoral team of which they are at the centre. An open-hearted listener who can just as comfortably sit with a Food Club user or bereaved family.

We seek a teacher to inspire us in prayer and Bible study. A priest who can build on our homegroup and prayer beginnings involving and nurturing disciples wherever they are on their journey. A preacher who can bring us the word of God, challenging us while still making us laugh.

Someone who will delight in seeing God at work in the congregation and in our community. Encouraging us to be witnesses and grow as leaders, transforming our community, shining the light of Christ into Garstang.

Informal enquires can be made to the archdeacon.



What we'd like to happen in the future

5. The Parish and Wider Community

Garstang is a rapidly growing town with a population of around 7000 in the 2011 census. There are many new housing developments which gives opportunities for the church to grow, both in number and with involvement with the community.

Garstang became the world's first fair trade town in 2001, leading the way for over 2000 towns worldwide.

Garstang is a great place to live, work and visit with its mix of historical weinds with contemporary independent shops and cafes along with traditional pubs, Garstang is perfect place for relaxing, shopping and grabbing a bite to eat.



Garstang's market dates back to the early 1300's and is under the guidance of the Town Trust. The weekly outdoor market is held every Thursday. This popular market stretches the length of High Street offering a variety of stalls selling everything from children's clothes to plants and household goods. Garstang also has three supermarkets, a post office, a vibrant library and a large medical centre with 12 GPs.

There is a golf club, two swimming pools and a leisure centre. Garstang has football, cricket and rugby clubs which attract both young and old players. There are also two crown green bowling greens for those who prefer more gentle exercise.

There is a very active arts centre in the old school house in the centre of town which is home to a huge variety of groups including painting, poetry, wine tasting, bridge club and camera club. It is also home to musicians; big band, ukulele and a musical production club.



During the year Garstang holds various community events and the church plays a part in each.

On Whitsun bank holiday, we have our annual Children's festival. This brings the whole town and surrounding communities together. Schools and local groups compete to make the best carnival floats, and the Rose Queens from the local villages, including the our own St Thomas Rose Queen, join the parade. It is a fun family day out. The church has an outreach craft making stall and prayer bench on the playing fields.

In December Garstang hosts its annual Victorian festival. People from all over the region join locals to enjoy an evening of fun. The town centre is closed to traffic to enable everyone to wander safely, taking in all there is on offer. And there



certainly is plenty on offer! There are bands, singers, stilt walkers, Punch and Judy, and all kinds of street entertainment and, of course, Santa himself who arrives in style and sets up shop in his grotto on the High Street. St Thomas Church holds a stall during the festival to raise our profile in the community and raise a little money. We give away to goodie bags to all with details of Christmas services and events.

Isaiah 43:19 Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

Garstang St Thomas hosts the Remembrance service each year. Dignitaries and uniformed organisations parade to church for a service. After the service in church, everyone walks to the war memorial in town for a short service where all the churches join together. This is often led by the St Thomas incumbent.

Early on Good Friday morning Churches Together meet for a Walk of Witness. A cross is carried to the ruins of the local Greehalgh Castle with stops on the way to read the Easter story.



PARISH DEMOGRAPHICS	
Population (2011 census)	
7553	
Age spread	
0-4	4%
5-15	10%
16-64	56%
65+	31%
Ethnic Mix	
British	97%
Minority Ethnic	2%
Other Faith Mix	
Christian	79%
Muslim	0%
Education background of population	
have no qualification	22%
degree level or above	27%
Employment	
lower managerial	23%
administration professional	13%
small employers	12%
Major Employer(s)	
Lancaster University, Lancaster Royal Infirmary	
Deprivation Index	
least deprived	

Child Poverty	
7%	
Main Issues	
Housing Conditions	No
Local Amenities	No
Housing Mix	
Owner occupied	2800
Social rented housing	200 (6%)

6. The Church Community



We are a diverse church with a variety of services, Common Worship and Fresh Expressions.

Before lockdown and the reduction in our services these were, Sunday 8:00 am, 10:30 am and 6:30 pm with an additional shoppers service on Thursday morning to coincide with the weekly market. The 10:30 am and 6:30 pm

services had a choir led by our excellent organist Mark.

Every second Sunday we use the 10:30 service for our All Age worship which brings families into church for an informal service led by the band.

Once a month the evening service was replaced by our fresh expressions Café Church, a contemporary service in the hall with our the band.

Robes are worn by the priest for more formal services but they are not expected for our all age worship or fresh expression café church service.

Currently we are only holding our 10:30 Sunday and Thursday morning services due to a combination of Covid restriction and the interregnum. The intention is to leave this arrangement in place until the new incumbent arrives and the format of services can then be decided by the new incumbent and the PCC.

The Sunday morning service has a Sunday Club for children led by a lively group of volunteers. One of their favourite sessions is baking bread. When they were unable to meet due to lockdown, 'bags of love' were dropped at doorsteps including bread making and cross decorating challenges.



Many of our service are filmed and published on our YouTube channel. We get at least an additional 50 views per video and often more than 200.

We have two churchwardens and a PCC of eleven other members of the congregation. The PCC membership has changed significantly in the past few years and is prayerful and dynamic.



Our retired vicar, Rev Evan has been a blessing during our interregnum, taking our Sunday and Thursday services. Evan is cheerful, energetic (whatever he says!) and wonderful member of our church.



Kathryn is an ordinand who has just completed her first year's training at All Saints Blackburn. She often leads our all-age worship, has preached many times and assists during services. Kathryn is well known in church, running home groups, the Food Bank, overseeing the Children's work and taking a leadership role in the interregnum. She's our cheery welcomer, on the door at most services.

Trevor has been churchwarden for about four years and currently chairs the PCC. He is an engineer and trade union official at the local nuclear power station. Trevor sorts out the technology we use; the audio-visual system, producing the magazine, maintaining the website and putting service on our YouTube account. He also plays keyboard in our band, a job he would happily give up, an act of love for our church.

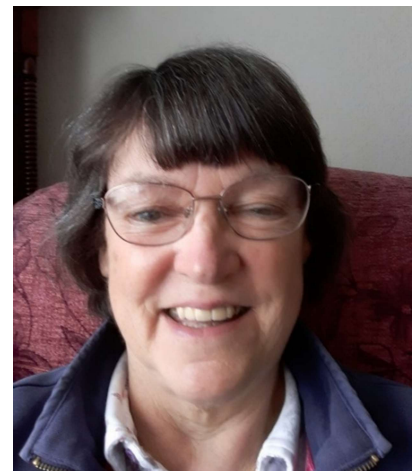


Dave has been churchwarden for just a few months. Dave owns the town sweetshop and has close links with the community. Dave works hard for the British Legion which is a real help when organising the Remembrance Service. Dave looks after the fabric of the church and hall, he is great at getting work done. Dave is always on hand just when you need him.



David is our deputy Church warden; he is also our safeguarding officer. He works for a local funeral director and is involved in scouting. David knows everyone in Garstang and who they are related to – very handy!

Margaret is our treasurer and prayer fountain coordinator. She is also a leading light in many areas of church, especially homegroups and the parish magazine. Margaret keeps us in touch with the older parishioners, she has a heart of gold.



Psalm 127:1 Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.

A powerhouse of prayer

Following teaching at Home groups from Pete Grieg's book *How to Pray*, our prayer ministry is going from strength to strength. In the summer for the last three years, we have held evening prayer walks to pray over the streets of our town. This year they had to be creative and home group members wrote prayers which were put onto cards so individuals and pairs could pray into our town's situation at home or on walks.

The prayer fountain receives requests from church family members and is updated every week by email. Our weekly prayer meeting has been suspended due to Covid restrictions, but members still contact each other and pray together informally.

Pastoral visiting has continued when regulations allow. Pastoral walks, garden meetings and video calls have kept prayer and care alive at STG. This is an exciting area for development with 'pastoral pairs' emerging from volunteer shoppers that helped older church members in lockdown.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit will last.

Three thriving Home groups



Our home groups meet weekly (on Zoom throughout Covid) for Bible Study, exploration, prayer, and fellowship. Recently they have been working through the Diocesan 'Read Mark and Learn' publication and the accompanying videos. They all have WhatsApp groups for prayer requests, encouragement and to keep in touch with each other and share God's work in their lives.

Explorer groups run periodically which feed into home groups. Alpha and The Bible Course have been key features of this.

Parish Groups and Activities

We have lots going on in the church. Below is a summary of some of the groups not mentioned in other parts of the profile.



Second Wednesday Ladies group	Meets monthly for friendship and fellowship.
Mothers' Union	Meets monthly and has continued to meet on Zoom through Covid.
Weekly Youth Club	40 children aged 10-14 yrs. including a 5-minute Bible talk and challenge at the end. (suspended due to Covid restrictions but kept in touch with 'bags of love' delivered to doorsteps)
Outreach Parties	Once a term for two age groups (under 10's and over 10's) with Christian teaching including A Light Party (alternative

	to Halloween) reaching known and new families through our schools and community links.
Open The Book	Assemblies prepared for St Thomas C of E school produced by the Bible Society.
Men's fellowship	Meets quarterly for a meal and a speaker.
Supper Club	Meets regularly for meals and friendship for men and women.
Church Book Club	Meets monthly to support mothers with teenage children.

Our Summer and Christmas Fayres are very popular. We have had ho-downs, bingo nights and all sorts of get togethers that raise funds for church.

CHURCH AND SERVICE		
Patron		
Rev Andrew Wilkinson, Garstang District Area Dean		
Electoral Roll		
Year	2021	
Number	187	
Age Profile of the Church		
0-17	15%	
18-69	50%	
70+	35%	
Occasional Offices, Celebrations etc.		
Baptisms (2019)	21	
Weddings	1	
Confirmation	Adult candidates	2
	Under 16 candidates	3
Funerals	in church	22
	at Crematorium	15
Normal weekly attendance (2019, three Sunday service and Thursday morning	adult	129
	under 16	6
Festivals		
Easter (three Sunday services)	Communicants	186
	Attendance	218
Christmas (Christingle and Midnight Mass)	Communicants	65
	Attendance	314
Our Services		

10:30 Sunday	Common Worship Eucharist
10:30 2 nd Sunday	All age worship
10:00 Thursday	Common Worship Eucharist

**Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing! Psalm 100:1-2**

7. The Church Buildings

St Thomas Church

The church is located at the heart of the town of Garstang. The Chapel of Ease of St Thomas was originally built in 1327 on a site to the rear of the High Street and was taken down and rebuilt in 1770. Once called by All Saints, it became St Thomas' Church in 1848. St Thomas' graveyard was first used in 1849. The church is a solidly built building with a short tower.

We have recently installed a state of the art audio visual equipment, including radio, cheek and lapel microphones, inputs for the band, digital mixing desk, a large screen for the congregation and a large monitor at the back of church for the worship leaders.

Modern dynamic preaching at St Thomas's is easy because of the open nave which is free of pillars or obstructions.



The major works for the last quinquennial have all been completed and money has been set aside for the remaining minor issues.

Normally, the church is open throughout the day so allow parishioners to visit. The churchyard sees a steady stream of local people who attend the memorials to their loved ones.



Our churchyard still accepts burials and interment of ashes. The grounds are maintained professionally and paid for by the people of the parish who donate to a dedicated churchyard fund. The churchyard visitors are a welcome way of interacting with the community and keeping a visible profile in our parish.

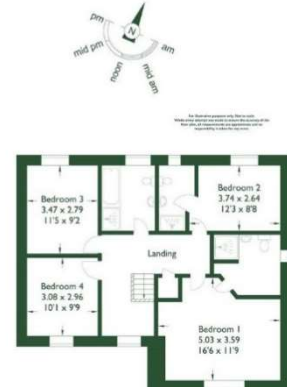
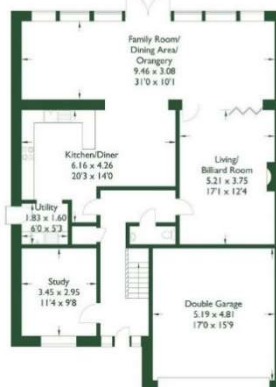
The Vicarage

The Diocese recently bought a new vicarage as the old one was in need of complete renovation. The new vicarage is a beautifully presented detached four bedroom family home with a fantastic rear extension along with gardens to the front and rear. The property is in a highly accessible location yet tucked away in an attractive plot to the rear of the popular residential development. It has four bedrooms and three bathrooms, a study and a downstairs WC. The orangery is a fantastic bright space and allows the reception room, dining area and lounge area to have an open feel giving a superb living and dining space.

There are attractive lawned and bedded gardens to the front, parking spaces for 3 vehicles ahead of the double garage. To the rear there is a decked patio area which is part covered, an expanse of lawn and flower beds along with a water feature and a summer house.



Approximate Gross Internal Area : 179.95 sq m / 1936.96 sq ft
Garage : 24.96 sq m / 268.66 sq ft
Total : 204.91 sq m / 2205.63 sq ft



Ground Floor

First Floor

The Church Hall

The church hall is fantastic! Built about 5 years ago, the large main hall is equipped with a state of the art audio visual system, including drop down screen, high definition projector, radio microphones and microphone inputs for a band. It also has a kitchen, store rooms and a meeting room. It is kept in good order and is easy and economical to heat. It is used for



our informal Café Church service and Sunday Club, as well as providing a home for Youth Club, Food Club and local dance and fitness classes, a weekly RVS lunch and an art school. The hall is managed by a dedicated hall committee who oversee the fabric of the building, bookings, users and finances. The hall provides an income stream to the church. Visiting clergy often joke of 'hall envy', and it's easy to see why.

Car park

The PCC own a carpark opposite the church which is used by those visiting the church and churchyard as well as those who use it for shopping in town. There is a pay and display machine which provides a regular income to the PCC.

8. The Church Finances

The church finances are challenging and the level of planned giving needs to be increased. The amount owing to the Blackburn Diocesan Board of Finance has amassed over a period of 11 years. This is a result of shortfall in Parish Share payments and the cost involved in the development of the new Church Hall. We ran a successful stewardship campaign in 2019 which raised a lot of money but this was mainly in the form of large single donations. We have just begun a new stewardship campaign, working closely with the diocesan financial team. We would like to move to more people giving by standing order rather than putting money in the collection plate.

We raise money through our very popular Summer and Christmas fayres and with fundraising activities throughout the year. More regular features include a bingo night, evening entertainment, stall/tombola on the high street and quizzes

Baptisms are very popular, and although there is no charge for the service, a collection is made afterwards. We have a card reader so people can use contactless payment which is becoming very popular.

There are no large expenses expected, the hall and church are well equipped and maintained.

CHURCH FINANCES		
Finance Returns		
Year	2020	2019
Description		
Parish Income	80,489	122,320
Tax Efficient Planned Giving	38,649	45,374
Amount per person per week	4.73	5.32
Parish Expenditure	93,042	125,059
Parish Share Assessed	80,030	82,762
Parish Share Paid	41,500	68,500
Liability re Parish Share	231,613	193,083

9. Our Schools

In total, we have three primary and one secondary schools in the Parish. One of them is our own Garstang St Thomas Church of England Primary School.



Jim Blakely, headteacher of our school,

“The church has many close links with its school. The oversubscribed one-form entry school is situated close to the church and there are currently 210 children on roll and a team of nearly 30 staff. The school has an “Excellent” judgment in its recent SIAMS inspection (2019) and a “Good” judgement from OFSET (2018). I am very keen to have a close relationship with the church and have really appreciated the contributions from members of the church for many years including Open the Book worship sessions, governors, auditing accounts and general fellowship and support.”

During non-covid times, the church’s Open The Book group lead the school through story telling and activities every week. This energetic group has brought

the Bible to life for hundreds for children, through hard (but enjoyable!) work over many years.

The incumbent at St Thomas church is on the board of governors for our school and attends school once per week. We need to nurture the relationship between the church and the school, and encourage the school to bring the children into church.



10. Our Links Into the Wider Community

There is plenty for children to get involved with in Garstang including the full range of scout and guide units, sports clubs, arts groups, dance and a large local gymnastics school. Our own Friday Youth Club is popular for the older age group who are often less well provided for. It is the one initiative we offer that we never need to advertise!



Although Garstang is mainly affluent a Food Bank is needed and St Thomas's run the only one in the parish. The food comes entirely from donations from the church and community with around 150 donators receiving the weekly 'best to buy' email. We have set up Food Club, which allows users to choose their own food in our hall on a Monday morning. A rota of around 30 volunteers set up and staff Food Club, they

come from our church, other churches in Garstang and members of the community. Many local schools and businesses come together at Christmas to provide vouchers, hampers and gifts for Food Bank households.

11. What We Offer

The town is surrounded by countryside popular with walkers, runners, and cyclists. We are on the national cycle route. The canal and river Wyre run through Garstang, narrow boats and canoes add to the picturesque setting along with water side pubs and trails.

Garstang is a great place to live and work with a vibrant church at the centre of the market town. Our schools are fantastic and form a central part of the community.

St Thomas's is centrally located and offers a heart of the community feel to the church family. We are part of many people's lives with baptisms, weddings, funerals, seasonal services, civic ceremonies and much more. We are there for the day to day and the year-by-year life for the whole town.

Our new incumbent has a revitalised PCC which reflects our congregation. The average age is in the 40s. We have friendly discussion and a supportive, positive faith-filled outlook.

Our organist is very talented and can play anything at a minute's notice! Our choir is a small, mainly older, group of traditional choristers who lift our sung worship. We have a dedicated band complete with guitars, bass, keyboard, flute and drums supporting some fantastic singers. They play for the modern services and have partnered the organ and choir for the big occasions.

We don't currently have a parish office. The administrative roles are undertaken by Jean and Jonathan our PCC secretaries, Margaret our treasurer, Dave, and Trevor our church wardens, David our safeguarding Officer and Kathryn our Ordinand – it's a real team effort!

There is a team for most things: flower team, the brasses, refreshments after services, sides people, intercessors, reading in services, bacon butties after the all-age service, Sunday Club, magazine delivering, all sorts!

Our new incumbent can claim yearly allowance to put towards training outside the diocese or to go on retreat in agreement with the PCC.

Reasonable expenses will be met by the PCC and we recognise the importance of professional development and the need for days off and time out of the parish. Evan our retired minister says *"I am happy to take a service and if you need to bounce ideas off someone to clarify your own ideas or simply need to talk to let off steam it goes no further. A cuppa and a chat works wonders!"*

A churchwarden/clergy weekly meeting helps keep on track of everything including the services, the website, pastoral concerns, and planning. It is also an opportunity to hold the church and the parish in prayer.



12. Who is God calling?

We seek to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to make the Good News of Christ more fully known through worship, service and witness. Growing strong in faith and love we work together to serve and care for all.

These Bible passages sum up what kind of person we feel God is calling to St Thomas's Garstang.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be...eager to serve. 1 Peter 5:2. A priest who shepherds the flock, pastorally gifted.

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. Deuteronomy 6:7. A priest who can teach us and help us grow as God's people.

Do not worry about anything. No matter what happens, tell God about everything. Ask and pray and give thanks to him. Philippians 4:6. A priest who prays in every situation, who seeks the will of God.

My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed. Psalm 71:23 A priest who is joyful and enthusiastic, bringing worship and faith alive you everyone.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. 1 John 1:7 A priest who is shining the light of Christ into the church and the community.