



Parish Profile

2022

Diocese of Manchester

Deanery of Oldham & Ashton-under-Lyne

The Parish of the Good Shepherd

Mission Community 6

The Parish of the Good Shepherd

The Parish of the Good Shepherd was created in 2000, originally as the Team Parish of Ashton. The four original churches were St Michael and all Angels, St James, St Gabriel's and Holy Trinity and in 2008, St Peter's Church was added and the new team - The Parish of the Good Shepherd, Ashton-under-Lyne, was formed.

All five churches are situated within the town of Ashton under Lyne:

West: St Peter's and Holy Trinity

Central: St Michael and all Angels

North: St James

East: St Gabriel's

St Michael's, St Peter's, St Gabriel's and St James churches each have their own DCC, and members of these, along with the two wardens from Holy Trinity and two Parish wardens, form the PCC. Whilst the individual DCC members of the individual churches are there to represent the church and community in which they are located, the PCC members essentially work together to ensure the smooth running of the team as a whole.

St James, Parochial and St Peter's schools have recently joined the 'Forward as One Academy', a Church of England Multi Academy which seeks to provide a high standard of education within the schools that is rooted in Christian values. St James has links with both St James School and Hurst Knoll, whilst Holy Trinity is at the heart of the Asian community around the Church and School.

There are two OLMs and two ALMs in the team who preside at many of our services within the Parish. This has been especially important since we went into interregnum and the PCC are grateful for all that they have done within the Parish since they trained and joined the team. Pat Lodge, who was once the head teacher at Parochial School, trained as an OLM and, although now retired, continues to put in a lot of work on a voluntary basis to support the churchwardens and to liaise with the Diocese about the forthcoming changes, as well as leading some services. When our Curate left in May 2021, Revd Sheila Cant, another OLM, joined the team from St Lawrence's Church in Denton and she has devoted much of her time to leading services, mainly at St Gabriel's, but also at the other churches, as well as serving as a Governor and minister at Parochial School and volunteering on Mondays at St Gabriel's Place of Welcome. In 2019, Cath Sheldon from St Peter's and Peter Lee from St Michael's, both trained to become ALMs and since then have been a valuable support to the rapidly diminishing clergy. They have conducted many services both at their own churches and in the other churches within the team. Together, these four people have proved to be well respected members of the team who have made a valuable contribution to the running of the churches and have been the mainstay of the Parish in recent years. The Parish is grateful for all that they do within the team; it is clear that they will provide reliable and essential support to any new member of the clergy joining us in the future.



St Michael and All Angels



Church and Congregation

St Michael's and All Angels church provides a sung Sunday Eucharist service (Common Worship Order One Modern) at 11.00 am, with attendance of between 15 to 20 adults. The Thursday Eucharist service (Order 1 Traditional) at 11am has been suspended during the Pandemic. Attendance at Sunday services is now steadily increasing and Thursday services will recommence, changing from 11.00am to the middle of the day in order to welcome, in addition to the existing congregation, people having a lunchtime break from work. Both services have small but enthusiastic congregations. Music is attracting people into church and information online is generating interest. It is hoped that music can also be a part of some Thursday services. Parochial C of E Primary School, continues to attend some services, especially at special times such as Christmas and Harvest Festival.



Location and Buildings



The church was founded in the 13th Century and is a Grade I listed building and one of 116 surviving medieval parish churches in the North West. The church dates back to at least 1262, and a church on the site was mentioned in the Domesday Book. The church was rebuilt in the fifteenth century and in 1515 at the behest of Sir Thomas de Assheton, however little of the previous church remains as it was rebuilt again in the nineteenth century. The car park is an asset, both financially and as a valued amenity for the people working and shopping in the town centre. The ancient church of St Michael's engenders pride in the congregation and the borough. Annual Heritage days offer an opportunity to welcome people into this beautiful building and it is open for guided tours on request. There is currently a move to include St Michael's in the Major Parish Churches' Network.

Community

Over the years the church has constantly striven to emphasise mission in and to the town centre. Historically, St Michael's, as the town centre church, has been actively involved in key networks. Mission work has been centred on those who shop, work and play in the town centre. Without a designated priest, the church now engages with the community in different ways, although outreach work into the town centre remains a high priority. Engagement with the work of Pauline Town MBE in supporting the homeless and those in poverty is part of that mission. Providing a church which is a comforting and safe place for the community is a vital role for a town centre church.



All Civic services are held in St Michael's, not just for Ashton but also for the whole borough, and this creates unity between church and community. This is the only church in the Parish with a choir and there is a strong musical and choral tradition. Choral Evensongs, the Civic Candle-lit Carol Service and music and choir in weekly services are all part of this. The church also hosts the Lancashire Association of Bell-ringers and supports the Royal British Legion.



The Friends of St Michael's is an active group of about 55 members who help with the financial upkeep of the church, as well as organising social events and Heritage weekends to attract people into the church, not just to see the beauty and history of this Grade 1 Listed building, but also to engage with faith.

Mission

Mission is an on-going process, which doesn't just rest on previous successes. St Michael's aims are to strengthen and develop its mission role in the town centre. There was established mission work taking place by engaging with the community at the end of each Thursday service and it is the intention to recommence this tradition of providing hot and cold food after the service - for the congregation, the community and the homeless. The church is uniquely placed to offer this facility in the town centre. St Michael's is working with the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) to provide meaningful engagement with schools. This involves the development of materials and lesson plans to be used for visits to places of worship for all faiths. St Michael's is part of the pilot for linking curriculum requirements to visits. It is also a venue to provide an opportunity for all faith groups to work together.

Holy Trinity



Church and Congregation

Holy Trinity Church is of the Anglo Catholic Tradition. In 2013, due to a decrease in congregation numbers, it was decided that regular Sunday morning services could not be sustained and that, instead, Evening Prayer would take place every Thursday afternoon at 3.30 pm with the 1st Thursday of every month being a Eucharistic Service. Sunday services are held on special occasions or for joint Parish services. The congregation members come from the local area and other parts of Tameside.



Location and Buildings



On the same site as the church is Holy Trinity Primary school. The church and school are situated in an area of Ashton where the majority of the local community are non-Christian. The diversity of the area is reflected in the different faiths and cultures of the residents: 48% Pakistani 35% Bangladeshi mainly Muslim, 4% other minorities 13% White British. In 1992 a community facility created in the rear half of the nave was opened and managed by volunteers from the church in conjunction with other voluntary organisations.

Community

The community is very fluid and subject to change but the church has a substantive local presence and is a place where the Christian community can worship and meet with the local community and where both can learn from each other. It has been the church's mission for many years to work with the community to create a welcoming, cohesive, and safe environment for people to live and work in.



In 2013 a Community Development worker was employed and in 2017 funding from the Big Lottery Reaching Communities programme was received, enabling the "People, Place, Presence" initiative with a focus on three main objectives: -

1. A learning community - empowering local isolated women to become more active citizens
2. A cohesive community - improving skills, self-esteem and life chances for local people
3. A sustainable community - creating affordable accessible assets to enable local people to tackle problems.

Prior to the Pandemic some 200 people, mostly local residents, used the community facilities each week.

Mission

At present various funding streams and options to enable the community project to continue are being explored.



St Gabriel's



Church and Congregation

St Gabriel's Church is a small, welcoming church with an informal but structured approach to worship. Sunday services, usually Eucharistic, are at 9-30am. Prior to the Covid Pandemic, weekly attendance was around 20, including a small number of children. Since the Covid Pandemic, Junior church has had to stop due to lower congregation numbers. Members of the congregation are drawn both from the local Cockbrook area and from wider within Tameside.



Location and Buildings



The church is located in the Cockbrook area in the East end of Ashton-under-Lyne. A local restaurant, directly opposite allows people attending the church free use of their car park. The building has modern facilities including a recently upgraded kitchen and accessible toilets and is well maintained. A major advantage is that it is a flexible space that can be easily adapted for community activities and events. It is consequently well used on a regular basis by a wide range of community groups and also on an ad hoc basis by local residents. An accessible grassed area to the side of the building can also be used for outdoor events.



Community

Local councillors acknowledge the importance of the church building as a focal point for the community. There are currently six groups using the building regularly for activities for both children and adults. In 2020 the St Gabriel's Community Group was formed, consisting of members of the church and members of the community groups who carry out activities in the building. The community works well together, recently raising money to install a defibrillator for the benefit not only of those attending the church but also of residents and local businesses. Fundraising events are held regularly during the year and are well supported by the local community and by people from other areas in Tameside. In 2018, a team of volunteers started the St Gabriel's Place of Welcome. Held on Monday mornings, this group welcomes all people in Tameside to come along to chat, make friends and feel connected. It is now recognised as a successful and valuable community activity which addresses people's mental and physical health, especially those who are lonely or socially isolated and is part of Tameside's social prescribing network. St Gabriel's Church is actively involved in supporting two local charities, Infinity Initiatives which supports families in crisis and the homeless and the local Willow Wood Hospice.



Mission

Church members feel that with appropriate central support and continuity of direction as part of a wider strategy for The Parish of the Good Shepherd, there is potential for growth in the congregation and continued positive engagement with the local residents. Plans to create a community garden in the grounds of the church building are currently being pursued. Community use of the church is essential not only for the income it generates but also for the church's relationship with the community in which it operates and this will continue to be a focus in the future.



St Peters



Church and Congregation

St Peter's is a very friendly, informal church where worship is modern, open and lively. Sunday services, mainly Eucharist services, are held at 11.00am. The congregation averaging 30 adults and 4 children, is made up of people from the local area and from further afield within Tameside together with people from many different areas of the world including Mexico, El Salvador, Iran and several African countries. The diverse nature of our congregation has helped the congregation to better understand the kind of support refugees and asylum seekers need when they come to the local community.



Location and Buildings



The church's informal, open and flexible layout lends itself to a variety of large scale services and events and is often used by a variety of external organisations. The church building has undergone some modernisation in recent years and now has a good, usable kitchen where food can be cooked on site. Heritage aspects of the church continue to be a focus; Heritage weekends are held and a bank of heritage resources is being built up.



Community

The aim is to reach out to the extremely diverse, sometimes transient communities surrounding the church. One-way of doing this is in the provision of baptisms, funerals and weddings. A Drop-in centre, in partnership with the Red Cross, has been introduced and is continuing to be developed. There is also a regular craft club, Spanish lessons and ESOL lessons. The church is also used as a hub for 'The Bread-and-Butter Thing', which is a charity that works to stop food going to landfill. Strong links with St. Peter's CE Primary School are maintained through the school's governing body and Friends of St. Peter's (FOSPS). St. Peter's School is a one form entry primary which strives to provide a caring, learning environment underpinned by Christian faith, belief and values. At St. Peter's, everybody is given the opportunity to grow and fulfil their true potential, just like the Mustard Seed in the Parable of the Mustard Seed, Matthew 13:32. Pupils and staff attend termly worship at Church for Harvest, Easter, Christmas and at the end of the school year. Classes also often attend for curriculum enrichment for example, Reception class visited to collect Autumn Treasures and Trinity Club visited to reflect on the Eucharist. St Peter's Church Lads and Girls Brigade meet in St Peter's School on Friday evenings and attend church services and events during the year.



Mission

The focus is to maintain the sense of informality which is the main characteristic of St Peter's Church. Ways continue to be sought to involve the school in church services and to develop the children's groups. It is also planned for the number of community events staged and held in church to be increased to at least two per year. The church is considering ways to make literature available in other languages to ensure the services are accessible to all.



St James



Church and Congregation

St James Church is a family-friendly church, which welcomes all ages. The Sunday morning service, normally Morning Prayer, is held at 9.30 and is led by a lay member of church. Whenever possible, one service per month is Eucharist and led by a member of the clergy. The congregation is drawn from both the local community and other parts of Ashton.

Attendance at the morning service has been reduced significantly by the restrictions of the Covid outbreak and by the deaths of a number of older parishioners during recent months. At 1200 noon, a service of worship is held by the associated Nepalese community. On alternate Sundays, there is a 'St James on Sunday afternoon' family event, attended currently by around 20-25 people. The 2nd Sunday afternoon of each month is a Eucharistic service and the majority of the children have been admitted to Communion following a short course.



Location and Building



Situated on the north side of the town centre of Ashton, St James church is very versatile and has excellent facilities, including a large community room and kitchen and has catered for a number of well-attended events over the past few years. The fabric of the building is cared for as much as possible, both through the efforts of the church team and - where appropriate - by applying for grants to support more complicated and expensive work.

Community



The church hosts 3rd Ashton Scout Group, which comprises Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers. Girl-guiding groups meeting at the church include 1st Ashton Rainbows and Brownies. The building has proved a great venue for ad hoc events but is also used on a regular basis by AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) which meets on two evenings per week, NA (Narcotics Anonymous) which meets on one evening per week and a thriving Art Group, which currently meets one day per week. Concerts and art exhibitions,

that have proved popular attractions, have been held. The church has a strong link with St James's Primary School and is helping to build a closer relationship with Hurst Knoll School and also St John's Church in Hurst. These links are made through governing bodies, collective worship, school services and other activities.



Mission

The church will continue to look for ways to expand the use of the community room and existing catering facilities, in order to improve the engagement with existing users of the building and to attract future users. Plans are being discussed to increase the frequency of parade services and to invite more participation by parents, as a means of forming closer ties between them and the church. There is a small group of members who meet regularly to explore and develop more ideas for engagement with the wider community. There is also an aim to increase the number and variety of groups, as life returns to normal in the wider community following the Covid pandemic. There is agreement among members to build upon existing good connections in the local community, as well as working with other churches within the Parish of the Good Shepherd, to restore our membership numbers. It is hoped that the afternoon congregation will continue to be successful and the church looks forward to a closer relationship with the Nepalese community in the future. The church schools will continue to be an important part of the church's programme. As well as the existing activities, it is intended to resume the 'Café Church' meetings that were so successful before the Covid pandemic.



The Future

The Parish of the Good Shepherd is an ideal ministry for someone who wants to experience different forms of Christian worship. The traditions within the team are varied, so a minister seeking to broaden their experience and leadership skills will have ample opportunity to explore and engage in the different missions and styles of ministry within the team churches.

Although the idea of taking on five churches could be considered a huge task, each church has, over the years, developed its own way of providing a mission to the community in which it serves; the churches do not compete but recognise each other's strengths and work together to provide support for each other whilst creating a coherent and unified team.

We are seeking a leader who wants to work with us to develop our mission to the town and to bring new and fresh ideas to our team to make it more effective and successful, whilst recognising, valuing and preserving the positive contributions made by each of our churches.

The Diocese of Manchester is currently developing radical changes to their approach to local ministry, essentially aiming to find new ways for churches to work together and inspire each other. We look forward to having a minister working with us to embrace these changes in the years ahead, helping us to preserve what is good about what we do whilst developing new ideas about the way in which we do it.



Location of the Parish of the Good Shepherd

The Parish of the Good Shepherd is located in Ashton under Lyne in the borough of Tameside MBC. The website www.tameside.gov.uk will give you a better understanding of Tameside as a whole; the main council offices are located in the town centre and also include the library and archive facilities.

Ashton has a long tradition as a centre of trade and commerce which can be traced right back to 1413, when it was first granted a charter to hold a weekly market. During the industrial revolution Ashton became an important industrial town. With the River Tame running along the boundary and the building of the canal, it was an ideal place to build textile mills and had a supply of coal from the local mine which use to stand proud near to where the motorway junction now resides.

The strong momentum created by the hosting of the Commonwealth Games in Manchester in 2002 drove some positive changes to the East conurbation area, including Ashton, which has seen substantial improvements, thanks to both private and public investments.

The recent expansion of the Manchester Metrolink offering a service between Manchester and Ashton town centre, and the opening of the Manchester Ikea in Ashton have both given the town of Ashton a boost.

Ashton has other good transport links; it has a railway station serving trains between Manchester and Huddersfield/Leeds as well as the new bus interchange which links with other towns throughout Tameside. The M60 motorway is also accessible within 5 minutes from the centre.

Education in Ashton is well provided for, with two Sixth Form Colleges and a College of Further Education. There are two secondary schools and a large number of primary schools, four of which are associated with our churches.

There is a leisure complex five minutes from the centre, with a cinema, bowling alley, many restaurants and a hotel with gym and pool facilities.

Vast areas of open countryside are easily accessible from Ashton-under-Lyne; the town is close to the Peak District and Saddleworth Moor which offer excellent opportunities for walking and cycling. Improvements have been made to Ashton Canal and the towpaths, and local reservoirs and the areas around them, have accessible open footpaths that also provide easy walking.

Ashton-under-Lyne is a diverse town with a community from multiple faiths and places of worship, with whom we have formed links over the years. There is a well-established Asian community and also a large eastern European community, which bring a diverse and vibrant culture to the town and to the food industry.