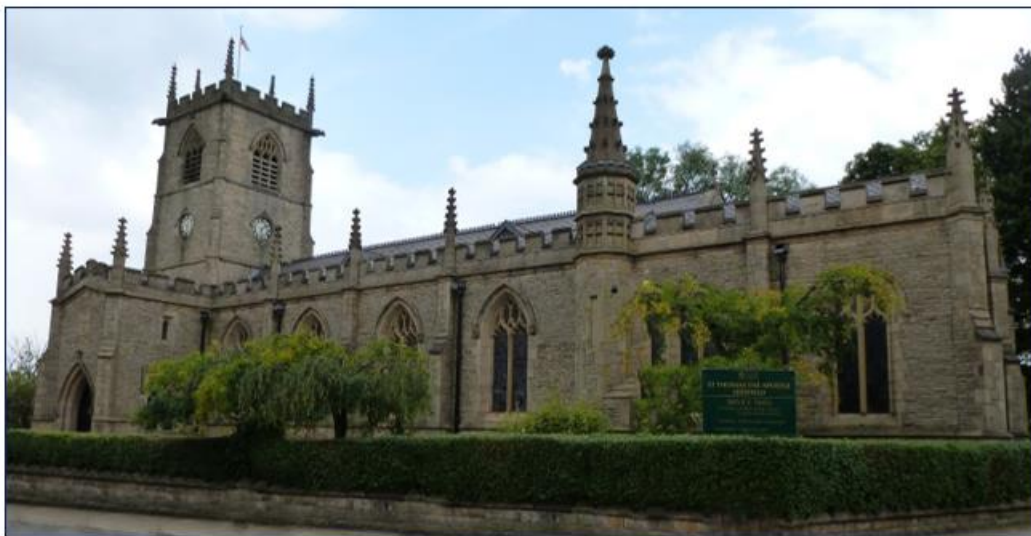




The Diocese of Manchester

PARISH INFORMATION AND PROFILE

The Parishes of: ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, HEY, AND LEESFIELD



“Receiving and sharing the love of God, every day”

“Growing as disciples of Christ and sharing God’s love across the parish and beyond”

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OUR NEXT PARISH PRIEST

As Incumbent of the Parishes of Hey and Leesfield we will look to you:

To lead and work collaboratively with clergy and laity to develop mission and growth, whilst embracing and encouraging others who are leading and working in various offices and roles

To maintain and nurture close and effective links with our Church Schools, and work well with children, young people and families who attend our churches

To nurture the gifts and involvement of parishioners of all ages in the life and worship of the church, ensuring that older, long-established congregation members are not left behind

To work alongside our current teams in the development of ministry for all generations by balancing traditional and less traditional services and congregations

To develop and deepen the spiritual life of the people of the parish by encouraging a culture of Bible study, House groups and improved teaching and preaching in and outside of services

To be a loving and caring pastor, minister to many people within services, and quietly supportive, within their needs at home and in their own lives

To further develop and extend outreach and mission, in line with the new Deanery Mission Action Plan, helping us to be influential in tackling social justice issues, supporting homeless people and food banks

Our Parishes can offer you:

A warm Christian welcome to an area where our churches and worship centre are already very much part of the community, but where there are also tremendous opportunities for further growth and service

Practical support from teams of experienced Parish Officers, PCC members and so many others in our congregations

Prayerful and caring pastoral support from congregations with a good understanding of the challenges facing a Parish Priest

Respect for the privacy, time, space and wellbeing of you and your family

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this Parish Profile. We hope you will find it informative and interesting, and that it will inspire you with a God-given desire that your calling is to serve our two lovely, varied and vibrant parishes, set around Lees, between Oldham and Saddleworth. The two benefices of Hey, St John the Baptist, and Leesfield, St Thomas, St Agnes & St Hugh, are held in plurality and there is a background of understanding of the process, advantages, and challenges which come from working as a team. We look forward to hearing from you and meeting you soon, and we look forward to your life with us in serving the people in our communities today and laying strong foundations for the future.

Our parishes are both recovering well from the effects of the pandemic, and we have taken many of the dynamic adaptations which we made during that time into our general practice. The challenges which we faced during Covid have been turned into opportunities for wider Mission and outreach, and have led us to reflect on and develop our own gifts from God.

This period of vacancy has enabled us to come closer together and evolve into modern and reflective churches involving a wider range of people in our worship and service, and we want to continue to adapt and grow the churches together with the new vicar.

In partnership with the Diocese of Manchester, Oldham and Ashton Deanery and our Mission Community, we aspire to be :-

Growing - in numbers of people of all ages attending worship, in faith through opportunities for Bible Study and House Groups, and especially growing younger by engaging more deeply with our church schools and the families attending our Sunday and midweek services.

Nurturing – the gifts and talents of all congregation members, whatever shape their calling to do God’s work may take, and affirming them in their chosen ministry, lay or ordained.

Serving – the communities within our own parishes and further afield by helping and giving support, especially to those who suffer deprivation and isolation, and globally through our commitment to caring for God’s creation and Christian Aid.

BASIC INFORMATION AND STATISTICS

Legal names of parishes – St John the Baptist, Hey, and Leesfield

Title of post that is vacant – Incumbent of the two parishes (held in plurality)

Names of patrons – St John the Baptist, Hey – The Rector of Ashton, Leesfield – The Bishop of Manchester

We are part of the Archdeaconry of Rochdale, with the Venerable Karen Smeeton as our Archdeacon. Karen.Smeeton@manchester.anglican.org

Our Area Dean in Oldham and Ashton Deanery is the Reverend Daniel Ramble. DanielRamble@manchester.anglican.org

The parishes are both within Mission Community 4 (Leesfield, Hey, Clarksfield, Waterhead and Moorside), where the post of Mission Community Leader is currently vacant.

Churchwarden – Leesfield – Neil Crook

Parish Representatives –

St John the Baptist, Hey – Edna Green and Stewart Morrish

Leesfield – Neil Crook and Paul Dent

Official Population of the Parishes – St John the Baptist, Hey 6559, Leesfield 7951

Electoral Roll – St John the Baptist, Hey 147, Leesfield 128

Official Clergy Housing – Our parishes can offer our new priest an excellent Vicarage, located at 1 Owen Fold, Lees, Oldham, OL4 3DT, opposite St John's Church on Stamford Road. Built of stone about 18 years ago, it has four large bedrooms, a study, lounge, dining room and fully fitted kitchen, a utility room, garage and small gardens.

The vicarage makes for an excellent family home, as well as for entertaining. Local primary schools have good Ofsted ratings, and there is access within the Oldham Borough to three Church of England Secondary schools.



WORSHIP ATTENDEES AND COMMUNICANTS

Attendance and Occasional Offices from Statistics for Mission – St John the Baptist, Hey

Attendance and occasional offices	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Average weekly attendance - adults	150	141	169	128	52
Average weekly attendance - children	108	53	67	72	23
Usual Sunday attendance - adults	60	N/A	N/A	52	52
Usual Sunday attendance - children	23	N/A	N/A	20	26
Christmas attendance	168	22	20	52	155
Easter attendance	285	N/A	20	41	103
Baptisms	18	2	13	16	22
Marriages	4	1	1	7	3
Funerals	3	12	10	10	7

2023 Christmas Communicants 41, 2024 Easter Communicants 112

2024 October survey figures – average number of regular attenders, adults 52 and children 24.

Attendance and Occasional Offices from Statistics for Mission – Leesfield

Attendance and occasional offices	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Average weekly attendance - adults	73	41	58	65	73
Average weekly attendance - children	37	10	31	35	39
Usual Sunday attendance - adults	88	N/A	N/A	41	48
Usual Sunday attendance - children	37	N/A	N/A	19	20
Christmas attendance	71	22	56	52	41
Easter attendance	153	N/A	53	99	68
Baptisms	17	2	8	17	20
Marriages	3	0	2	2	0
Funerals	22	10	9	8	7

2023 Christmas Communicants 28, 2024 Easter Communicants 57

2024 October survey figures – average number of regular attenders, adults 78 and children 64

In 2024 the two parishes combined presented 9 candidates for Confirmation, and 1 child from Leesfield was admitted to Communion prior to Confirmation.

The information contained in the above tables is best viewed in the context of the two parishes combined, due to the service patterns changing during the vacancy.

Since the pandemic, average weekly attendance has shown some recovery, but there has been a shift from Sunday attendance to midweek services in Leesfield. Many of the young families from all three churches find that a midweek service fits more easily around their other activities, and some of our older congregation members now feel more comfortable attending the smaller and more intimate midweek morning services of Holy Communion.

Encouragingly, Baptisms in both parishes have risen to above pre-pandemic and pre-vacancy levels.

MISSION AND PRIORITIES

St John the Baptist, Hey

Our **Mission Statement** is: **Receiving and sharing the love of God, every day**. This is on our weekly Pew sheet, website, Facebook and all correspondence.

Our **Mission Action Plan** was written in 2015, was reviewed in 2017 and again in 2020. It was made the responsibility of the Curate at that time and a meeting entitled “What’s Next?” was held just before the pandemic to further review the MAP, which was well attended.

Our priorities are;

- building and enhancing worship in church; family worship on Tuesday nights; the Sunday church; music in all forms
- building spirituality and service outside church times; stewardship
- supporting those in need within our parish whose lives are increasingly lived on the margins of social and economic needs, age, isolation and poor health.
- Maintaining our commitment to giving to charity whilst meeting our own costs in quota, mission and building
- Continue to work to develop St John’s as an inclusive Church.

Leesfield

Mission Statement: “To grow as disciples of Christ and to share God’s love across the parish and beyond”

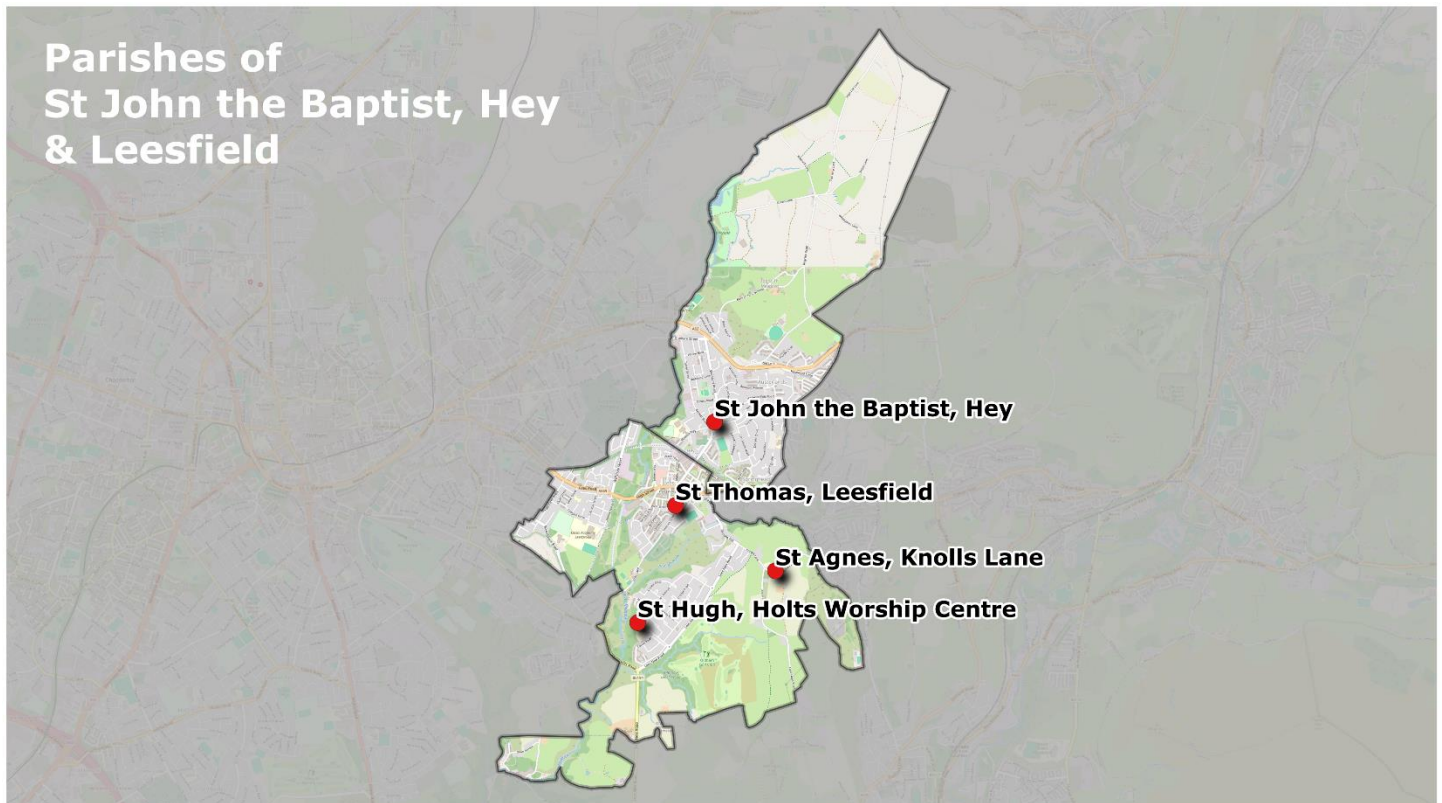
Our current Mission Action Plan was formulated in 2017, and updated in 2019. Some progress has already been made, and we have discussed how our own MAP fits alongside those of our Deanery and Diocese. The priorities established in our latest MAP have been reviewed in 2023, including seeking the views of congregation members who are not on the PCC. We agreed that our priorities would remain the same, but that our strategies to achieve them may need to change.

Our priorities are;

- To raise our income enabling us to pay our parish share and to fund other projects – stewardship campaigns and fundraising events.
- To Increase our community involvement – by making better use of the community room at St Thomas’ to welcome people from the wider community who might not otherwise visit a church.
- To retain more of our young people beyond secondary school entrance – by building a team to enhance our provision for children and young people, and engaging with the Deanery Network Hub.
- To increase our presence and effectiveness on the Holts Estate – through clergy and foundation governor involvement with St Hugh’s school.

THE PARISHES AND LOCAL AREA

The parishes of St John the Baptist, Hey and Leesfield are located in the "Foothills of the Pennines", and centred around the village of Lees, Oldham, with Saddleworth to the East and Oldham to the West. Whilst the two parishes are adjacent and share a common central area, they are quite distinct in terms of deprivation, ethnicity, demographics and housing.



St John the Baptist, Hey

St John's Parish has a mainly static population of 6559 (6482 in 2011). Homes are commonly mill terraces, pre- and post-war semis, modern estates, and old farms and scattered homesteads to the North of the Parish. 80% of the housing is owner-occupied, 14% privately rented, and 6% social rented. In the 2021 Census, 22% of the population was aged under 20 years, and 16% aged over 70, showing an older demographic than the diocese and national trend. Ethnicity is much lower than the Diocesan average, with 96% of the Parish population being white British, and there are very few families where English is not their first language.

62% of the population described themselves as Christian in the 2021 census, which is much higher than the diocesan and national average, and just 2% as non-Christian religion. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 lists the Parish as within the 40% least deprived parishes in England, with most residents being in middle-income employment or retired.

Leesfield

The Parish has a growing population of 7951 (7290 in 2011) within an area of mainly terraced houses and some semi-detached properties. 54% of the housing is owner-occupied, 19% privately rented, and 27% social rented, (mainly concentrated in Holts Village). Planning permission has been granted for over 200 houses to be built in a phased project in the valley behind St. Agnes`, which could add to numbers in our schools and churches.

In the 2021 Census, 29% of the population was aged under 20 years, and 11% aged over 70, which places Leesfield as a younger parish than the diocesan and national average. Ethnicity is lower than the Diocesan average, with 76% of the Parish population being white British (96% in 2001), and 90% of households with English as their main language.

48% of the population described themselves as Christian in the 2021 census (65 % in 2011 and 78% in 2001), which still remains above the diocesan and national averages, and 16% as 'other religion' (mainly Muslim). The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 ranks the Parish as within the 5% most deprived parishes in England, with many lower income families, and retired people on basic state pensions.

The Local and Wider Area

Both parishes, with the exception of a very small number of houses to the south at Park Bridge, are within the Parliamentary constituency of Oldham East and Saddleworth, with Debbie Abrahams (Labour) as our MP. Most of the housing is within the Oldham Council Ward of Saddleworth West and Lees, served by 3 Liberal Democrat Councillors – Sam Al-Hamdani, Mark Kenyon and Alicia Marland. The Roundthorn area of Leesfield Parish is in St Mary's Ward, and Holts is part of the Alexandra Ward. The main issues facing the community are deprivation, isolation amongst the elderly, and limited facilities for children and teenagers.

The village of Lees is in the area East of Oldham, 10 minutes from the town centre, and close to the villages of Saddleworth. There are good transport links into the countryside, as well as into Oldham town centre and the centre of Manchester, with a host of leisure and shopping attractions, vibrant multi-cultural, multi-faith, and multi-race communities, and national and international transport links.

Within the village and surrounding area are many independent shops, small to medium sized businesses, pubs, a supermarket and a diverse selection of food outlets. Other amenities in Lees include a Library/Community Hub, Post Office, doctors' surgeries and a filling station, and there is also a Golf club close to Holts Village.

The two parishes cover a large area, some of which is quite densely populated. However, there are substantial open spaces with countryside walks, superb views, conservation and nature areas, and a rich cultural and industrial heritage to explore.

We feel the area has much to offer our next parish priest - a strong sense of community, local to both rural areas and towns, and easily accessible via motorway and rail links to most parts of the country.



OUR CHURCHES IN THE COMMUNITY

Being Present and Visible – Our church congregations are often seen out and about in Lees and Hey at outdoor services and events such as Whit Walks, Remembrance Sunday and the Churches Together Act of Witness on Good Friday. Leesfield members of all ages are warmly welcomed by people in Lees in the run-up to Christmas as they continue their traditional carol singing around the village, collecting money for the Booth Centre in Manchester.



Care Homes – Each parish has a Pastoral Care Team, which visits and supports the elderly in local care homes and in their own homes. As well as Communion services at Millfield Care Home and Ashbourne House, all of the care homes in our parishes have access to our regular communications, and often receive welcome reminders of the Church Seasons such as Palm Crosses and reflection booklets. St Thomas' Sunday School are also very much involved in the work of the Pastoral Care Team by making BIG cards for Christmas and Easter, which have been so greatly appreciated by individuals and the Care Homes.

Social Events – St John's has a social committee that organises regular social events, Summer and Christmas Fairs, all of which are widely advertised and have been well attended by people of all ages from church and the local community. The Ladies of Leesfield are the main organisers of social events for the older generation of Leesfield Parish, as well as supporting family events run by other groups. Monthly Tuesday meetings and Saturday coffee mornings take place in St Thomas' Community room, and all members of our churches and visitors from the community are welcomed. Fun-filled family events are also organised by the Sunday School and Harvest Queen at St Thomas', and these attract visitors from neighbouring parishes and the local community.



Uniformed Organisations - St Agnes' has a thriving Scout Group consisting of Scouts, Cubs and Beavers, and St Thomas' Scout Group has merged with the group from St Edward's RC Church. Both groups are open to girls as well as boys, and they have been joined by children from neighbouring groups, including St John's, which have had to close because of the lack of leaders.

Links with local businesses and the wider community - Through members of all our churches, we have excellent links with local business groups and our councillors. There is a great deal of mutual support at numerous events throughout each year, helping towards a strong community spirit within the village and locality. Several local businesses are proud sponsors of Leesfield's annual Christmas Tree Festival, and church communities and schools work with them in organising seasonal activities such as Easter Bonnet Competitions and Christmas Elf-hunts.

The community is further served through the provision of defibrillators for public use at St John's and St Agnes' Churches. Through our local councillor we have arranged for the local community payback group to look after St John's Church and vicarage grounds. Congregation members always make them welcome and often provide them with biscuits, cakes and gifts at Easter and Christmas. St John's is in a prominent position for passing traffic and therefore the PCC considers the presentation of the Church to be important, in addition to the 'Wayside Pulpit' which reinforces the nature of welcoming everybody.



Eco Church – Our churches engage with the local and global community in caring for God's creation. We are registered with A Rocha UK, and have already made a start on working together towards achieving awards. St John's and St Thomas' have submitted their data to the Energy Footprint Tool, and all of our churches are committed to energy saving and recycling.

We support Christian Aid by house-to-house collections in the central Leesfield area, and also in our churches, and by raising awareness through our communications.

Locally, church members work alongside our schools and community on environmental projects such as litter-picking, nature conservation and gardening groups.

SAFEGUARDING AND INCLUSION

Safeguarding

Both of our parishes are committed to safeguarding children and young people, vulnerable adults and those in abusive relationships. We aim to create safe environments where children and young people are nurtured and protected, and where all are able to worship and pursue their faith journey with encouragement and in safety. Our Parish Safeguarding Officers and PCC members strive to create a culture where everyone in our churches shares the responsibility for Safeguarding,

Ordination of Women

The Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993 was considered at PCC meetings in both parishes, and both meetings were unanimous in agreeing that any suitable candidate, be they man or woman, would be welcomed. Since that time, there have been no resolutions passed by our PCCs under the House of Bishops Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests 2014.

Inclusive Church

Following discussions at PCC meetings, our churches resolved to become members of the Inclusive Church network. The Inclusive Church statement of belief is -

"We believe in inclusive Church - church which does not discriminate, on any level, on grounds of economic power, gender, mental health, physical ability, race or sexuality. We believe in Church which welcomes and serves all people in the name of Jesus Christ; which is scripturally faithful; which seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation; and which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows all people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus Christ."

WORSHIP AND WORSHIPPERS

Below is the current 'usual' worship pattern for each of our churches, which was established when each parish had its own incumbent, and sustained with the assistance of visiting clergy throughout our dual vacancy. Both parishes are fully open to exploring options in amending this pattern, including non-eucharistic services and joint worship, particularly on Sundays.

St John the Baptist, Hey

Our community and all services are inclusive, and offer a wide variety of styles and participation. We have worshippers of all ages, from young families to the elderly, all of whom may attend any or all of our services. Our ministry is extended to those children and families who have ambitions to attend Bluecoat, Crompton House or Brian Clarke CofE Secondary Academies within the Oldham Borough, where admission is largely based on church attendance.

Communion services tend to be traditional, liturgical and central in terms of Anglican traditions. Ordained ministers present in cassock, Alb and stole (with chasuble at 8.00 & 9.30 Service, no incense used).

Readings & Intercessions at Sunday services are lay led on a rota.



Sunday weekly 8.00: Holy Communion (Common Worship) – A said Eucharistic service, largely attended by families who have other commitments later in the day.

Sunday weekly 9.30: Holy Communion (Common Worship) - A sung Eucharist with a choir and organist, and hymns from 'Anglican Hymns Old and New'. On one Sunday each month there is a Family Communion where more modern hymns are accompanied by music played on CDs.

Sunday monthly 9.30: Sunday school – meets in the church hall for Bible studies and activities, before joining the congregation in church for the Eucharist.

Wednesday weekly 10.00: Holy Communion (Common Worship, BCP once a month) – A traditional, quieter, said service.

Baptisms: usually held after Sunday Service following preparation by members of a lay led team.

Special services: have been held throughout Easter week, these being relatively "Catholic", and at Christmas, with a Nativity and Christingle for families early on Christmas Eve, relatively "low", Christmas Carol service and All Souls Service in commemoration of departed.

Home Communions: are provided for those who are no longer able to attend church.



Leesfield Parish

Traditionally our weekly attendance in both parishes has included a large number of young families (due to our Church/School links), but we also have significant groups of long-serving and faithful members in each of our congregations. The robing style is Alb and Chasuble, and churchmanship is best described as 'central'.

On special dates throughout the year, particularly during the Easter and Christmas seasons, our congregations gather together for whole Parish Services. These are held mainly at St Thomas' Church because of its large capacity, but the services on Holy Saturday evening and Christmas morning are at St Agnes'.

Children are admitted to Communion at our Easter Sunday service after preparation by Sunday school leaders, and are encouraged to delay their Confirmation until such time as they are fully ready to make that decision.

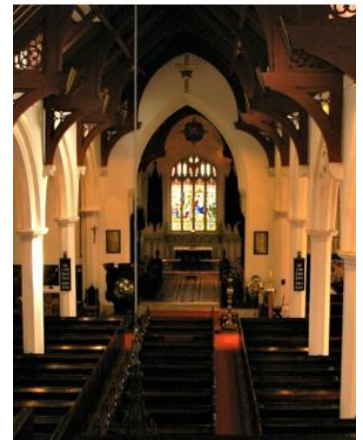
St Thomas, Leesfield

Sunday weekly 11.00: Holy Communion (Common Worship) – Sung Eucharist with music from 'Celebration Hymnal for Everybody', accompanied by CDs. St Thomas' no longer has a formal choir, but through our monthly 'All Age Worship Singing' we encourage everyone to sing God's praises with joy and confidence. The service is attended by a wide range of congregation members, and refreshments are served in the community room afterwards.

Baptisms generally take place at separate Sunday afternoon services, but if the families wish it, they may occur within our normal Sunday morning worship.

Tuesday 10.00: Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) - This service is mainly attended by older members of our congregation who prefer a shorter, quieter style of worship, and is followed by coffee and the opportunity to socialise.

Sunday weekly during term time 11.00: Sunday School - We are a friendly Sunday School and we welcome everyone. Our Christian ethos is to encourage the building of family faith. We ask that all children who attend our Sunday school register with us and that the parents of children who attend our Sunday school are worshipping members of the Church, which is also one of the criteria for admissions into local Church of England secondary schools. The Sunday School children are in church for the beginning of the service, and then go across to school for bible stories, craft and games. We love to take part in the local Whit Walks and Remembrance.



St Agnes Knolls Lane

Sunday weekly 9.15: Holy Communion (Common Worship) – Sung Eucharist with music from 'Mission Praise', with a choir accompanied by the playing of CDs. The service is attended by a mix of young families and more mature worshippers from quite a wide area.

Tuesday and Wednesday weekly (except for the last week of the month) 6.30 pm: Worship for all Generations – A Service of the Word written from Common Worship by Leesfield Parish, led by our Authorised Lay Minister, Neil Crook.



The offering is aimed at ‘all generations’ but is attended mainly by families with children of Primary school age and younger. The Gospel and Scripture form an important part of the service, and congregation participation is encouraged in a ‘fun’ way via ‘the Talk’. Services follow the key dates in the Christian calendar, and even include outdoor Pet Services in Summer.



During our dual vacancy we offer two identical services on Tuesday and Wednesday to accommodate the families from St John’s, but the intention is that the Tuesday service will return to St John’s Church as soon as this is possible. We would very much like for this to continue to grow, and to encourage more families to continue to worship with us after they have gained their places at the Church of England Secondary Schools.

St Hugh’s Worship Centre within St Hugh’s Primary School, Holts Village

St Hugh’s Worship Centre is situated within St Hugh’s Primary School. Services are held in the school hall and the altar housed in a sanctuary which is screened off when not in use.



There are no longer any Sunday services at St Hugh's, other than an annual well-attended Parish service on the Sunday nearest to November 17th, which is St Hugh’s Day. However, the ‘church’ is opened up for special services and assemblies throughout the year, with parents and members of the local community invited. This ensures that children and families are able to experience being in Church in an area which does not have access to many facilities.

MISSION COMMUNITY

Our Mission Community in East Oldham brings our two parishes together with the churches of Holy Trinity, Waterhead, St Barnabas, Clarksfield and St Thomas, Moorside, to create opportunities for us to work together to help and support each other, and to share best practice.

There have been events organised for us to come together and socialise, and a service to launch the Mission Community at St. Thomas, Moorside. Joint ventures to help us grow together as Christians have included participation in ‘More Than Sunday’, and a weekly bible study course at St Barnabas.

Our Mission Community leader was Revd Paul Monk, who has recently been appointed to the Parish of the Good Shepherd in Ashton. There are now no licensed clergy in any of the parishes in our Mission Community, and we are all supported by retired clergy with Permission to Officiate, and our Area Dean.

Social action within our Mission Community is centred at St Barnabas, and members of our congregations support the Food Pantry there. The King is awarding St Barnabas his prestigious King's Award for Voluntary Service to our "Barnabas Thrive" community project. KAVS is regarded as an MBE for organisations that serve a local community and are run by volunteers.



The King’s Award for Voluntary Service

ECUMENISM

Churches Together in Lees and District - [CTiLaD on Facebook](#)

Lees is very much a village with a strong sense of community, and Churches Together comprises of our two Church of England parishes, Zion Methodist Church, Springhead Congregational Church, St Edward's Roman Catholic Church, and the Salvation Army at Roundthorn.

Whilst there is a lack of Ministers across the district, our joint services continue as usual, and meetings are temporarily chaired by Paul Dent from St Thomas' Church.

We have joint services on Remembrance Sunday, Good Friday, Whit Sunday and an Advent Service, as well as other events in the year such as 'Week of Christian Unity', 'World Day of Prayer' and united Lent groups. The Churches Together United Service for Pentecost is always held at St Thomas' Church, as it is the only church in the group which can accommodate the huge number of attendees, but other services are rotated between the churches.



OUR CHURCH BUILDINGS

You can find more about the history of our parishes and churches in the appendix

St John the Baptist Church, Hey



St John's Church is located at the junction of St John Street and Stamford Road, Lees, OL4 3DS.

Built of local stone in 1742, and consecrated in 1744, it is a grade II listed building, which underwent two major developments during the Victorian Era. There was a major fire in 1987, which destroyed internal furnishings and balconies, and the building was re-ordered and re-opened in 1990.

The adjoining Church Hall was opened in 1980, and is used daily in term time by nursery, and in the evenings and weekends by dance classes, Thai boxing and aerobics classes. There is also a parish office within the Church Hall, which is equipped with a computer, printer, and with telephone and broadband. The Church has a seating capacity of 200 (180 in front of the altar), and both the Church and hall are fully accessible.

In 2022 the outside lighting was replaced with LED lighting, with the chancel lighting being replaced with LED lighting in 2023. Current planned work includes the refurbishment of the kitchen, and replacement of the windows in the Church Hall. It is also envisaged that the heating system in the church and hall will need replacing in the near future.

The last Quinquennial inspection was completed in 2015 – no major works required. The parish was commended for their pro-activity. We are currently planning to have an inspection carried out. We have a team of three PCC members who review and plan ongoing maintenance.

St Thomas Leesfield Church



St Thomas' Church is situated at the junction of Thomas Street and West Street, Lees, OL4 5AD.

The Church is grade II* listed, and the original building was consecrated in 1848. It was not until 1855 that the tower was added, with the bells and clock in 1866. There is a ring of 8 bells, which we ring on special occasions with the help of friends from neighbouring towers. Most weeks, a single bell is rung for Sunday service.

Several restoration schemes took place between 1979 and 2004 on the nave, aisles, vestry, south porch and roof.

In 2016 the West end of the church was re-ordered to provide us with our new Community Room, kitchen facility and accessible WC. The Community Room has become a much-valued social hub and is used widely for smaller services and fundraising events.

The church has a seating capacity of 450. Accessibility to the building is challenging, as there are a few shallow steps to the main entrance. We currently overcome this with the aid of movable ramps, but recognise the need for a permanent solution.

Our latest Quinquennial report was in 2018, and will be updated in March 2025. Whilst the most urgent items have been dealt with, there are two major items which we need to address, with project funding.

1. South side repointing, masonry repairs (especially around the stained glass windows), replacement of window protection by new polycarbonate sheets – total estimated cost £105,000.
2. Provision of disabled access ramp and equipment to the South porch – estimated cost £45,000.

St Agnes Church, Knolls Lane



St Agnes' Church is situated at Knolls Lane, Lees, OL4 5RU, and is physically connected to St Agnes' School.

Built in 1870 and dedicated for public worship in 1880, the church is of a simple and pleasing design.

In the last few years extensive alterations have taken place to modernise the school, and a new heating system has been installed which is hugely beneficial to the church.

The seating capacity of the church is 100. Accessibility poses some problems due to the steps up from the school playground to the porch. If wheelchair access is needed, this can be arranged by entering the churchyard via the school gate, which is on the same level as the church, and then using movable ramps

to access the porch.

Our last quinquennial was in 2013, which highlighted some issues with the porch entrance. Further matters have arisen since that time regarding the East window and some falling plaster. Remedial work is being prioritised according to necessity and availability of funds. The outstanding QI Report is expected to be completed in early 2025.

COMMUNICATIONS

Both parishes have very effective communications systems – reaching out to everyone, regardless of whether they are able to attend our churches or access electronic communications.

St John's publish a weekly pew sheet with news, prayers, a reflection and so much more. Leesfield provide similar content in fortnightly printed and emailed newsletters, particularly for those parishioners who are unable to get to church. The printed newsletters are hand-delivered to those who cannot access electronic communications, and are welcomed with enthusiasm.

Everything which we provide in printed or emailed correspondence is shared on our website/blogspot and social media, and encourages people far and wide in prayer and worship. Links are shown below -

St John's website is here - [St John, Hey](#) , and Leesfield Parish Blogspot is here - [Leesfield Parish Blogspot](#)

Facebook pages can be found at - [St John the Baptist Hey](#) , [Leesfield Parish](#) , [St Thomas Leesfield Sunday School](#)

Our "A Church Near You" pages are - [ACNY St John Hey](#) , [ACNY St Thomas Leesfield](#) , [ACNY St Agnes Knolls Lane](#)

SCHOOLS

There are strong links between our churches and Church schools, with the opportunity for mission being of paramount importance. Headteachers and staff are very supportive of the churches.

Several children from our schools go on to attend local Church of England secondary schools.

Foundation governors for each school are appointed by the PCCs - they are mainly regular attendees at our churches and feel that part of their role is to foster the strong relationship between church and school.

The parish priest would usually be the ex-officio governor on each Governing Body, but because we have four church schools across the two parishes the expectation is that our new Vicar would only be a governor at two of the schools. We are looking at the possibility of appointing clergy, possibly curates, from neighbouring parishes which have fewer church schools, to the other two governing boards.

Hey with Zion Church of England/Methodist Primary School:

<https://www.heywithzion.oldham.sch.uk/>

Hey with Zion is a nursery through to Year 6 school, formed from the amalgamation of the former St John's and Zion Methodist schools. It is part of the Epworth Education Trust.

There is a strong connection between the school and both St John's Church and Zion Methodist Church. The Chair of Governors is a member of the congregation at Zion, and there is also a congregation member from St John's on the board.

Pupils from the school regularly visit the church for events like 'Experience Christmas', and there are special school services in church when the local community is invited. Congregation members are also regular visitors to school for assemblies and class visits.

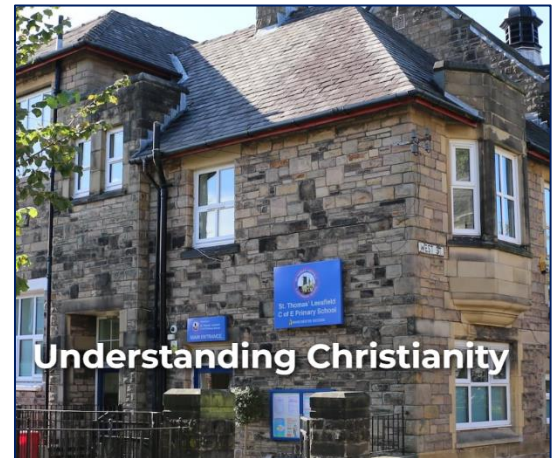


St Thomas Leesfield CE Primary School: PAN – 30 per year group, Reception – Year 6

<http://www.leesfield.oldham.sch.uk/>

St Thomas’ Leesfield School is directly opposite the church, and is regularly used by the whole school for performances and services, along with smaller groups using the Community Room for activities such as music tuition. The school hall is used weekly by our Sunday School, and for larger social gatherings.

A PCC member at St Thomas’ is Vice-Chair of Governors, and other congregation members are regular visitors to school for assemblies and class activities. Classes have been into church for Experience Easter and Christmas, and recently the children and families were invited in to explore the church as part of their Ethos Day.

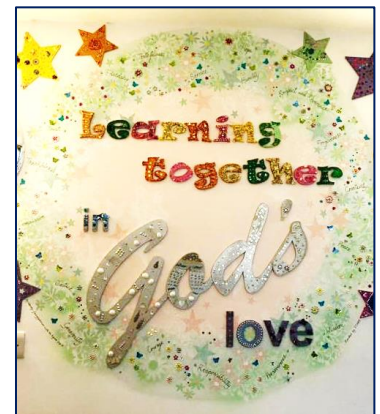


St Agnes C of E (VA) Primary School: PAN -15 per year group, Reception – Year 6

<http://www.stagnes.oldham.sch.uk/>

St Agnes Primary School is a smaller than usual school, and is physically joined to the church building, making it ideal for regular visits into church by the children. These visits have included Experience Easter and Christmas, along with services at special times in the church calendar. The school hall is used by St Agnes’ Scout Group, and for occasional events such as Worship for all Generations Christmas Party.

There are strong links between school, home and Church, with two members of our congregation serving on the Governing Body and regularly visiting classes.



St Hugh’s Church of England VA Primary School: PAN - 30 per year + Nursery

<https://www.st-hughs.oldham.sch.uk/oldham/primary/st-hughs>

St. Hugh’s School is situated in Holts Village, and serves a diverse population with high levels of deprivation. As a Christian family of God, the school is aspirational, inclusive and loving, with a strong culture of safeguarding and caring for children. Being some distance from the nearest church building, visits into church are not easy, but we are sometimes able to walk with classes to St Thomas’ Church. The emphasis is more on taking the church into school, with assemblies and services being led by visiting clergy, Groundbreakers and Manchester Diocesan Board of Education.

A member of the PCC from St Thomas’ is Chair of Governors, and regularly visits school. The school converted to Academy Status and joined the Crompton House Trust on 1st November 2023. This Trust has been carefully selected as it matches our strong Christian vision and values and also promotes 'Life in all its fullness'.



Other schools within our parish boundaries are –

In St John's Parish - St Edward's RC Primary School and Springhead Infant and Nursery School

In Leesfield Parish - Roundthorn Primary Academy and Oasis Academy Leesbrook (Secondary)

We have little involvement in these schools.

MINISTRY

Revd. Ruth Farrar (Leesfield)

The Reverend Ruth Farrar (Ordained Local Minister with The Bishop's Permission to Officiate) throughout her ministry has maintained a special Ministry focus with older people. Through and with the Pastoral Committee in Leesfield, she leads services in the care homes, Home Communion and pastoral visits. In addition to this, Revd. Ruth regularly officiates at the Tuesday morning service of Holy Communion at St Thomas' and plays an active part in Sunday services at both St Agnes' and St Thomas'.

Freda Davies – ALM – Pastoral (St John's)

Freda leads the pastoral team at St John's in visits to the care homes in the parish, and in visiting the older people in their homes.

Neil Crook – ALM – Worship (Leesfield)

Neil has been an Authorised Lay Minister since 2019, and is very much enjoying giving that spread of offering to the Parish in any way he can across all services - Advent, Christmas, Easter, and, of course, our Sunday Eucharist. During the 'Worship' part of his training, Neil worked on setting out an All Age Service and so Worship for All Generations was born. This midweek service has grown in popularity over the years, particularly amongst young families. Neil has also been very much involved in preparing candidates from around the Mission Community for Confirmation.

Paul Dent – 2nd Year Ordinand (Leesfield)

Paul is undertaking training as an ordinand at St Hild's College, and if successful he will be ordained Deacon in Summer 2025. He provides the reflections and prayers for newsletters and electronic communications, and also supports the Tuesday morning services of Holy Communion.

General

Across the two parishes there are numerous people who exercise their ministry in various forms – Baptism preparation and support, Sunday School leaders and helpers, leaders of intercessional prayers, and also those who support the provision of weekly services by reading the liturgy scripture, singing in the choir and playing music for hymns.

During the current vacancy we are thankful to be supported and advised by a number of retired clergy as well as clergy from local parishes and the Area Dean.

FINANCE, STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, HEY

Extract From Return of Parish Finance - Hey, St John the Baptist					
<u>Income</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Planned giving (including tax reclaimed)	34687	24234	20841	23108	21991
Loose collections/contactless giving	6715	1903	1665	4030	4716
All other giving	1692	4696	2331	1639	6531
Fund raising (net)	9674	1675	932	4862	6275
Other ordinary income (including fees)	10637	4694	10603	17340	31984
<u>Expenditure</u>					
Parish Share	30735	17431	21000	23500	26000
Salaries & expenses	15314	11598	8466	7436	5686
Running costs and utilities	17662	14892	18757	21387	22672
Other expenditure/donations	2004	501	137	422	1032

Giving trends: The number of people engaged with planned giving to church by standing orders and in weekly envelopes has fallen year-on-year recently. However, the average amount given per planned giver has increased, which has lessened the impact of this on the overall total received. Open plate collections at Sunday services and baptisms are showing a good recovery over the past two years. We received a contactless giving device from the diocese at the end of March 2023, which has led to increased donations at both Sunday services and baptisms, and a laminated giving sheet with the church's QR code is now available in all the seats in church.

Fundraising and Other Income: due to an enthusiastic and committed social and fundraising team, there has been a good improvement in fundraising income since Covid, and increased hire of our church hall is now bringing in more revenue than before Covid.

Parish Share: the parish share was paid in full in 2019, but with the effects of the pandemic, we were only able to pay £11,250 of the £37,000 requested in 2020, and this was only possible by taking £5,000 from reserves. In 2021/2/23 our contributions remained at between 54% and 60% of the total requested. We held a Discussion and Agreement meeting with Diocese representatives in July with the parish share being agreed as £27,000 for 2024, £28,350 for 2025 and £29,767 for 2026. Our Parish Share has been paid in full in 2024.

Parish Priests expenses: the last two incumbents have not claimed all their travel expenses, but the Parish will reimburse for all expenses claimed. The cost relating to the vicarage is shared with St Thomas, Leesfield Parish.

Charity giving: The aim of the parish has been to give charity donations decided by the PCC, with £2,154 given in 2023. The collection at our Christingle service is donated to the Children's Society and Francis House Children's Hospice. Food donations at our Harvest Festival Service are given to the Food Pantry at St Barnabas, and we also hold a Macmillan coffee morning every year.

Stewardship

The last formal stewardship campaign in our church was in 2019, but an information sheet entitled THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING was first distributed to the congregation in 2022, and was recently revised. Several of the congregation increased their standing order/weekly envelope giving as a result of these campaigns.

Parish officers and the PCC

Unfortunately our Church Warden stepped down from the post recently, but we anticipate that we will be able to appoint a replacement at our next APCM. In the meantime, the PCC is chaired by Stewart Morrish, and has 11 members in total who work together to carry out the duties of a Churchwarden. We have our full complement of parish officers – PCC Secretary, Treasurer, Gift-Aid Secretary and Parish Safeguarding Officer, and two lay members of Deanery Synod. Succession planning is rather challenging, and we are looking to involve more youthful members of our congregation in leadership roles.

LEESFIELD

Extract From Return of Parish Finance - Leesfield, St Thomas					
<u>Income</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Planned giving (including tax reclaimed)	21210	17329	16757	18647	15982
Loose collections	4625	2078	2692	4236	4692
All other giving	1413	3400	335	3761	2239
Fund raising (net)	9416	2590	2504	3849	6258
Other ordinary income (including fees)	2096	644	933	1552	1120
<u>Expenditure</u>					
Parish Share	26000	8000	12000	15000	12000
Salaries & expenses	4160	2062	1107	2088	225
Running costs and utilities	12395	12318	12351	14499	14048
Other expenditure	3050	300	47	54	0

Giving - Planned giving through our envelope scheme and standing orders is strongly encouraged, together with the Gift Aid scheme. We are becoming increasingly reliant on a small number of generous donors for the bulk of this income, and as our worshipping community ages and the circumstances of our donors change, the income from Planned Giving and Gift Aid claims continues to fall. Loose collections at Sunday and weekday services and baptisms have shown some recovery following the pandemic, but not by as much as we might have expected, given the rise in numbers now attending midweek services. We have a QR Code for giving, which, despite being well-publicised, has yet to bear much fruit.

Fundraising - Fundraising events have historically accounted for at least 25% of our parish income, as well as providing some wonderful opportunities to socialise. During the pandemic many of our events could not happen because of the restrictions in place, but we have now been able to re-introduce some of these. It should be noted, however, that several of the people who previously organised events have reached an age where they are no longer able to offer that level of support, and we are looking to the next generation for assistance. Last year's 175th Anniversary Celebrations provided a welcome boost to our social and fundraising activities, which we hope to sustain for the future.

Parish Share - the PCC has not met its Parish Share in full since 2019, and even at that time it was at the expense of reserves. Our contribution towards Parish Share fell to £8,000 in 2020, as financial resources were stretched by the need to continue to meet ongoing essential costs from a much-reduced income during the pandemic, but some recovery was made in 2021/2/3. At our 'Discussion and Agreement' meeting in August this year, we agree a reduced Parish Share of £13,000 in 2024, £14,000 in 2025 and £15,000 in 2026. We have paid our share in full for 2024 and are confident for 2025, but 2026 may become more difficult.

Clergy Expenses – the expenses of our parish priest are always met in full, and we share the vicarage expenses with St John's.

Charities - as a Parish we support national and international charities, with fundraising events in our community room and collections in our churches and out in the locality. The charities which we have supported include Cancer Research, Macmillan Coffee Mornings, Christian Aid, and the Booth Centre in Manchester.

Stewardship

Stewardship campaigns have been undertaken in 2014 and 2019, resulting in some increases in financial giving. Earlier in 2024 we held a 'Generosity Week', and although this did not result in increased giving, there was more interest expressed in assisting with worship.

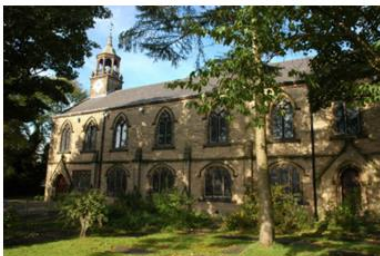
Lay Officers and the PCC

Our Churchwarden is Neil Crook, and we have one vacancy due to Paul Dent having to step down because of his ordination training. However, until such time as we are able to appoint a new warden, Neil and Paul are working together to ensure that everything continues as usual, with the help of other PCC members.

All of our other Parish Officer posts are filled, although there are some who hold more than one post. There are two lay representatives on Deanery Synod, one of whom is the Lay Chair. We are experiencing some difficulty with succession planning, as the younger members of the congregation have work and family commitments.

There are currently 9 members of the PCC, which meets approximately every 2 months, and we have recently introduced additional 'PCC Plus' meetings, where congregation members are invited to join us in shaping the future of Leesfield Parish without the routine administrative elements of regular PCC meetings.

We hope you have found all the information useful, positive and inspiring, and that you feel a calling to serve God in the Parishes of Hey and Leesfield.



THE PARISHES OF HEY ST JOHN AND LEESFIELD ST THOMAS 2024

APPENDIX – A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TWO PARISHES AND SIGNIFICANT FEATURES OF OUR CHURCH BUILDINGS

History of St John the Baptist Church, Hey

The building of Hey Chapel was commenced in 1742, at a time when fines were levied for non-attendance at church, as a chapel of ease to the mother church – Ashton Parish Church. The chapel was constructed by local people using local stone and was consecrated by the Bishop of Chester on 26th June 1744.

The chapel was originally four windows long, and was enlarged by 2 bays in 1772, and again in 1842, with blocks of pews, 2 aisles, galleries on 3 sides and an organ loft.

In 1860 Hey became a “Consolidated Chapelry” and became known as Hey Church, with the full privileges of a parish church.

In 1868 the church was closed for major restoration to the roof and interior, and was reopened on 4th June 1869. Around this time the stained glass east window was installed followed by gothic style stained glass windows designed by Capronnier.

In 1905 a church bazaar was held with the proceeds spent on the Restoration Fund which included the construction of a “substantial and commodious” vestry, a building at the west end to accommodate the Gas Engine, and renovation of the cupola and belfry for a clock. In 1922 it was agreed to install electric lighting in the church.

Around 1960 the pulpit which was very high was modified to lower it and 2 sections of the gallery were removed.

In 1967 the church became listed on the National Heritage list with grade II status.

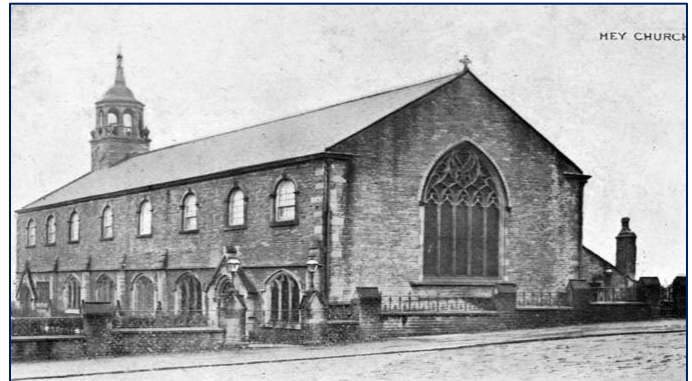
In 1976 it was agreed to build a new church hall adjoining the church, which, after much fundraising, was opened in 1980.

In early 1987 there was a serious fire which destroyed most of the roof, interior woodwork and the organ, with damage to the floor and walls. It was decided to remove all flooring, galleries and pews and completely re-order the interior. The altar was brought forward to provide a more flexible space, with a central aisle and chairs rather than pews. Fortunately the stained glass windows, although damaged, were repairable. The cupola, which is now our church logo, was restored and was short listed in 1991 for The John Betjeman Prize.

On 10th February 1991 a service of Re-dedication of the church was held by the Bishop of Middleton. The Reredos, which survived the fire, was restored in 2012.

A parish office was constructed within the church hall in 2016, complete with a computer, printer, and with telephone and broadband.

In 2017 the church celebrated 275 years with an open weekend with tours and talks about the church with displays of historical interest, with a history book and guides to the windows and reredos being produced.



History of Leesfield Parish

Until the mid-19th century, Lees was in the Parish of Ashton, in the Diocese of Chester.

In 1846 the Parish of Leesfield was constituted – a large, scattered parish which included the village of Lees and the hamlets of Park Bridge, Knolls Lane and Roundthorn, and then in 1847 it became part of the newly-formed Diocese of Manchester.

Following the consecration of St Thomas' Church in 1848, further churches were built at Park Bridge in 1866, Knolls Lane in 1870 and Roundthorn in 1878.

There was much house-building in the area during the 1950's, which included the council estate at Holts. In response to this, the Henshaw Trust built a Church of England Aided School, with the patron saint being St Hugh. The school also acted as a worship centre, with the sanctuary built into the school hall, which is still in use today. St James' Church, Park Bridge closed in 1964, and St Matthew, Roundthorn in 1996, leaving just the two churches of St Thomas and St Agnes, along with the worship centre at St Hugh's School.

St Thomas Leesfield Church

Our principal Mother church, which has a mostly boxed seating capacity of 450, was built in 1848, the work of E H Shellard. There is a bell tower at the west end and the roof has a double pitched aisle on both sides lit by dormer windows.

The beauty of St Thomas Leesfield is evident as soon as you walk in, with its ornate woodwork and numerous stained glass windows, several of which are by the Belgian stained glass artist, Jean Baptiste Capronnier. The stone font with beautiful carved wood is situated at the rear of the church. We have a gallery which is used to display all the uniformed organisations flags and is used on occasions when the main part of church is full.



St Agnes Church, Knolls Lane

St Agnes' Church and School began in 1870 following an appeal in 1868 to establish a Sunday School at Knolls Lane. The Sunday and Day Schools opened on May 1st and June 20th 1870 respectively, and the building in which they met is the current nave of St. Agnes' Church.

There is a stone font to the rear. The oak altar is in remembrance of those locally who gave their lives in the first world war. Of the simply-designed stained glass windows, 2 on the south side have been dedicated to former long serving headteachers of the school. The simplicity of the building sums up the essence of St Agnes, where the focus is on the worshipping community.

175th Anniversary

In 2023 we celebrated the 175th Anniversary of St Thomas' Church with a whole weekend of special services and events. Classes from all three of our schools came to visit for guided tours on the Friday, and the church was open all weekend. Saturday saw our Victorian-themed Village Fete, with a quarter-peal rung on our church bells, Saddleworth Male Voice Choir, Barnhowlers Ukelele Band, fun and games for the youngsters, and even a dog show.

