



St Peter's Church Westleigh



Firs Lane Leigh Lancs. WN7 4SB

Parish Profile

Introduction

This profile we hope will provide an all-round and realistic understanding of St Peter's Church Leigh. It will help our Bishop, patrons and prospective clergy to understand how we are currently working with the supporting clergy, PCC and congregation. It will outline where we are and what we need to get us to where we would like to be.

Section 1 Background

The incumbent at the time Revd Judith Cooper retired 4 years ago and the benefice has been in vacancy since then. Services are covered by 2 SSM's one of which has now retired. Our mission partnership church St Mary's incumbent Fr. Kevin Crinks has left and plans are being discussed to bring all three churches under the wing of a "Vicar in plurality".

St Peter's Church is part of a joint benefice with St Paul's Church, Westleigh which is approximately 2 miles away. The two churches are easily accessible by car, but public transport links are limited, despite both churches being on main road positions. We are in Mission Partnership with St Mary's Church which is in Leigh Town Centre. Our church is part of the Salford and Leigh Deanery within the Archdeaconry of Salford and within the Diocese of Manchester.

In the past, within our parish boundaries, we had traditional Lancashire industries of cotton spinning mills and deep seam coal mines, which employed many thousands of men, women and young people. The main benefactor for the fledgling St Peter's Church and its mission church of St Andrews Church in nearby Plank Lane was local mill owner Sir John Holden. With the demise of these industries during the 1950's, together with the demolition of substandard housing the area was left with vast stretches of brown field sites. The area was deemed to be in social decline and had a large amount of rented local authority and private landlord housing stock. New planning initiatives are seeing massive owner-occupied redevelopment within our parish which will result in a dramatic change to the population and socio-economic picture in the near future.

Section 2 The Vicar we are looking for

The vicar we need will be: -

1. Someone who can connect with middle aged parishioners who make up the bulk of our congregation
2. Able and willing to let the congregation take over the mundane organisation of the parish to free up time for the vicar to lead in mission.
3. A delegator and trainer to show us how to connect with the community in the parish.
4. Willing to work with our SSM to develop schools work.
5. Have a hands-on style of leadership.
6. Approachable in manner.
7. Able to encourage study groups enabling us to grow in faith and understanding.
8. Take an active part in the review of the Diocese and Deanery.

9. To bring St Peter's, St Paul's and St Mary's closer together and to share what ever resources are available.
10. Work within the Pastoral and Deanery reform process to ensure the voice of St Peter's is represented.

Section 3 The Parish

Our official title is Westleigh St Peter's; this title is a misnomer to many of the local population as Westleigh district is where our partner benefice church, St Paul's is sited. This contradiction relates to Victorian parish districts which obviously changed many years ago. Our Parish number is S 13880. The population of our Parish is rising due to the recent housing developments around a new boating marina on the Leeds -Liverpool canal and the area adjacent to the retail park. Our Postal address is

St Peter's Church
Firs Lane
Leigh
WN7 4SB
Telephone number 07726 162804
Benefice web page St Peter's Westleigh
We are also on A Church Near You.

The area is urban, former mining and cotton mill area, mid-way along the A580 between Liverpool and Manchester. Transport links are good with close proximity to the M6, M61 and M62 motorways. It is said to be one of the largest towns without a railway station. Railway stations are available in the adjacent townships of Atherton and Newton le Willows and a guided bus way links the town to Manchester. Recreation areas are plentiful with the Pennington Country Park and Bickershaw Country Park within the boundaries of our Parish. One of our parishioners is part of the consultation team which is aspiring to apply to national government this year for the local fens and country parks to become part of the National Nature Reserve network. Another parishioner is involved with the adjacent Firs Park renewal scheme and as the park is celebrating its centenary this year, we had a memorabilia exhibition in Church during September 2021 National Heritage weekend. The town has the Leigh Leopards Rugby League Team recently promoted to the Super League and recently won the Challenge Rugby Cup after 51 years since Leigh last won and whose ground Leigh Sports Village is one mile from Church. At the Sports Village there is a wide range of sports activities with an adjoining Harriers Club and athletic track. The grounds of prestigious football clubs' Manchester United, Manchester City, Liverpool and Everton are within easy reach.

The population of our parish(see appx A) is approximately 15,000 as shown in the 2011 census with an average age of 37. The census shows 93.6% were born in England with less than 1% from Wales and Northern Ireland. The religious makeup of the parish is 71.7% Christian, 19.9% No religion, 1.1% Muslim, 0.3% Buddhist. In general our parish is described as elderly and low income. Although the Wigan Council ward boundary of Leigh West (Appx

B) is not exactly coterminous to our parish boundary it is the best estimate for our social & demographic statistics (see Appx C)

We are currently in an area of social deprivation and poverty. According to the Church Urban Fund St Peter's is 392 out of 12,383 in the deprivation scale where 1 is the most deprived. The demographic map will change in the near future however, as the Marina complex will have 475 1,2,3 and 4 bedroom houses and apartments; 20% of which will be affordable housing. The Parsonage Gardens housing development adjacent to the retail park will have a total of 250 houses on completion.

Many of these new to the area households have been in touch to enquire about church activities and to register for St Peters School.

Section 4 The Church & its People

Licensed to officiate at St Peter's and St Paul's is one non stipendiary associate priest who takes regular Sunday Eucharist services and occasional weddings and baptisms. Funerals are normally conducted by local visiting clergy.

The numbers attending services in the 12 months before the Covid lockdown are

Sunday Eucharist 20-28

Midweek Holy Communion 2-4

Christmas Eve 30

Christmas Day 14

Good Friday 14

Easter Dawn 15

Easter Day 38

100th Commemoration of War Memorial 50

In the period before the Covid lockdown the number of services were as follows.

	2019	2020	2022
Baptisms	6	2	11
Confirmations	1	(Attendance 255)	0
Funerals	12	4	14
Interment of Ashes	2		2
Renewal of Wedding Vows	1		
Weddings			3

Revd Karen regularly offer home communion to those in the parish who are not able to attend church. At the moment this is not generally available in sheltered housing or care homes because of lack of volunteers. Also taking part in the day-to-day routine of our church are readers, intercessors, acolytes and crucifers.

The worship style at St Peter's is modern catholic with an average attendance between 20 and 28 adults each Sunday. There are rarely any children or teenagers attending and we would like to address this. For a trial 3-month period, following a parishioner's survey, we are moving our main Sunday service from 9am to 9.30 am, post covid, in order to encourage

more families to join our worship and church community. We now have a monthly Family Service to encourage children and families from school to attend.

The management team of Wardens and PCC members is strong and vibrant, and we hope to move forward in changing times. The Warden receives strong support from our associate priest. At present we have one Churchwarden who was appointed at the APGM in 2023 namely Valerie Molyneux along with 3 Deputy Wardens were appointed at the AGPM in 2023. Three new members of the PCC were elected in 2020. The PCC has adopted the policy of forming four side committees: - Worship, Finance, Fabric and Social. Each committee has its own agenda and will explore and advise the PCC on those respective issues and any other issues referred to it by the PCC. This approach has been enthusiastically embraced by the whole Church Council.

Consecrated in 1881 the church is grade 2* and has had the support of English Heritage grants for 3 phases of restoration. (Appx D) A recent quinquennial inspection (February 2021) highlights a well-maintained church with some further repair/remedial work required and investigative work on the ceilings due to loose plaster. This work will need financing by further grant applications. The organ was restored some 25 years ago and is now requiring some maintenance but is still used to support our regular Sunday services and occasional concerts. The church was originally equipped with Ellacombe bells which have fallen into disuse, but still exist. The church has a Garden of Remembrance used exclusively for the internment of ashes within a large landscape garden, with a well maintained 1919 War Memorial. Adjacent to the church is the Holden School which is owned and managed by the Acorn Trust and opened in 2019. The school caters for pupils who experience challenges in relation to their social, emotional and mental health. We have a good relationship with the Head Teacher and hope to develop that relationship further in the future. St Peter's CE Primary school of 400+ pupils is a short walk away from the church. Our SSM has, until the parish vacancy, conducted weekly collective worship there and termly school Eucharists are held at church. Our annual fundraising events are a Fun Day at Firs Park, Afternoon Teas to celebrate the late Queen's Jubilee and the Coronation of King Charles held at The Holden School and a Christmas Carol Concert in Church



Pupils at the school often use the church for fun and activities. Excellent links exist between the Foundation Governors. And the staff at the school

Also linked to church is a thriving Messy Church, held in the school, where children accompanied by an adult meet monthly for play and craft activities on Saturday morning. A short children's service is held followed by a light lunch of sandwiches and cakes. Up to 100 children and adults attend.

St Peter's has a very well attended Brownie pack of approximately 24 girls. They meet every Thursday for an hour and a half and partake in various activities in and around Leigh town centre. They attend church festivals e.g. Mothering Sunday, when they distribute flowers and cards. They also attend on Remembrance Sunday, Harvest Festival and undertake uniformed organisation parades in the Town Centre. When the Brownies attend Church, they take great pride in taking part in the intercessions.

St Peter's supports local charities throughout the year such as Findlay Street Homeless project, and Atherton and Leigh Food bank where our SSM is a trustee. Christian Aid and the Olive Tree project in the Holy Land are also supported.

Section 5 The wider context

We have limited active people who are able and prepared to roll up sleeves and get things done. We need more volunteers to work within the church and parish to allow outreach and enliven the church. Many of the people living in the parish affectionately call St Peter's their church and will offer to support concerts, exhibitions and fund-raising events to the point of helping at the event during the day or evening. Messy Church is a good example of this. If we can expand that labour force, we will be in a much stronger position as an aid to the good work we can achieve within the parish. Our electoral role figures for 2020 are 45 in total, with 37 living within the parish and 8 non residents.

At the moment we are not equipped practically or spiritually to extend our work with children and teenagers and so it is believed we would be better to leave this work for the time being. Concentrating on the older generation of people with limited mobility, living in sheltered housing or living alone would give our community far more benefits for our efforts.

One of the conditions of being awarded an English Heritage Grant is that the church must be open for general public viewing at least 160 hours per year. To fulfil that obligation, we have held an Open Church event every Saturday from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm during spring and summer months. We have on occasions had speakers and exhibitions on various local topics.



Open Church- Talk on Local History by a Parishioner



Exhibition of memorabilia from Weddings held at St Peter's in celebration of The Queen and Prince Philip's Platinum Wedding Anniversary

We always welcome members of St Paul's to these events and also appreciate their support for many of our fundraising events. We reciprocate support to our friends at St Paul's and enjoy many social occasions and joint church events.



Concert by a Welsh Male Voice Choir held to raise funds for the Mayor's Charity when one of our PCC members was the Mayor of the Borough

The pandemic has demonstrated how many people in the community are at risk of isolation and how the chance to drop in for a cuppa and a chat make such a difference. As a result we have just installed a kitchen in the north west corner of the nave. This is still in the planning stage, but some funds have been sourced. A faculty application for DAC advice has been sought for the drainage system before the kitchen design can commence. We are fortunate to have the offer of a Diocese Funding Grant (CSA) to instruct a local Fundraising Organisation to undertake an appraisal of community outreach opportunities. The company will also advise on grant funders who provide financial support for new facilities within Grade 2 * listed buildings and offer mentorship for the Grant application process. Our current aim and vision is to make ourselves a caring church which will allow us to support the local community for mission and growth. When this is established, we can use the facilities to cater for mum's and tot's groups and perhaps confirmation groups, baptism classes, Lent study groups etc. As we grow, we can consider moving the font to another place in church and dividing the church at the rear to create a comfortable meeting space or social room. Sometimes it's good to dream!

Summary

To summarise, at St Peter's we are striving to achieve a fit for purpose Christian Church, adapting our traditions and practices in a proactive manner, to meet the needs of the parish community.

Vicarage

The Vicarage accommodation is adjacent to the west end of the church. Access can be gained to the church porch via a gate in the garden fence and a locked steel gate to the porch access gates. Otherwise, it is a minute walk from the vicarage front door onto Firs Lane and then down to church. It is a modern 4-bedroom house with detached garage front lawn and private rear garden, sited in a small cul de sac position. Downstairs it has a kitchen, utility room, dining room, lounge and office. There is also a downstairs cloakroom with toilet and handbasin. Upstairs there are 4 bedrooms, one with en-suite facilities and a family bathroom. Members of our clergy are supported and expected to take days off and access training days. Normal day to day expenses will be reimbursed.

Appendices

- A) Leigh West Ward demographics -2011 census - required
- B) Leigh West Ward boundary map - required
- C) St Peters parish boundary map - required
- D) St Peters history & architectural features - required
- E) St Peter's Church latest accounts. - required