

ST MARGARET'S CHURCH, DUNHAM MASSEY PARISH PROFILE

Introduction

St Margaret's Church is in the Benefice of Dunham Massey in the Diocese of Chester. It is located on the edge of Altrincham, an ancient market town, which is now an affluent commuter town with exceptional transport links to Manchester and elsewhere in the North West. Altrincham is served by excellent rail and tram links to Manchester, as well as easy access to the M6 and M56, and is within a short drive of Manchester Airport. Voted the 'Best High Street' in the UK in 2019, it is renowned for its schools at all stages and numerous leisure facilities. The church and vicarage are within easy walking distance of this vibrant town centre.

St Margaret's Church

Commissioned by George Harry Grey, 7th Earl of Stamford and designed by architect William Hayley, the building was dedicated in memory of Lord Stamford's sister Margaret; construction began in 1851 and was completed in 1855.

St. Margaret's is grade II* listed. The building's architectural style is perpendicular, and it is brick built with Yorkshire stone wall-facings. The interior is most impressive, including a hammer beam roof with carved angels, modelled on Westminster Hall in London. A large reredos, modelled on the Henry VII chapel in Westminster Abbey, and an elegant plaster sanctuary ceiling are other notable features. The tower has a peal of ten bells cast in 1854 by John Taylor.



St Margaret's Church – interior and exterior photographs

Notable Clergy and Congregation

The Reverend Hewlett Johnson, who later became the 'Red Dean' of Canterbury, was the incumbent from 1908 – 1919. His unconventional views on war caused him to be rejected as an army chaplain but he officiated at prisoner of war camps in the parish. He left St Margaret's to become an honorary canon at Chester Cathedral in 1919 and subsequently Dean of Canterbury in 1935

The Reverend Geoffrey Studdart Kennedy, better known as 'Woodbine Willie' during the First World War, regularly preached at St Margaret's. He was famed in WW1 for giving Woodbine cigarettes and spiritual sustenance to injured and dying soldiers

The former Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, worshipped here whilst in exile in Bath following the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and during the Second World War. He was a friend of the last Earl of Stamford, Roger Grey, and was a guest of the Earl in 1938, remaining a life-long friend.

Churchwarden, Dr Sue Elves

Churchwardens have many legal duties to perform on behalf of the Parish, but very high on the list of Sue's priorities is ensuring that St. Margaret's is a warm, friendly and inclusive place of worship to all members of the community.

If you are new to St. Margaret's you are sure to be spotted by Sue, who will welcome you warmly, let you know what is happening at the service on that day, and answer any questions you may have. Existing members of the congregation receive an equally warm welcome as they arrive for worship.

Sue has been Churchwarden for nearly 20 years and is currently serving as sole Churchwarden until a new appointment is made to replace the recently retired Christine Armstrong, who served with Sue for many years and will be much missed as Churchwarden. We are delighted that she remains a valued member of the family of St. Margaret's. Nominations have been received for the appointment of a new Churchwarden, to be considered at the next APCM in April 2020.

Lay Assistant, Geoff Reyner

Our Lay Assistant, Geoff is an invaluable and popular member of the community at St Margaret's, and has taken part in worship for many years. During the period of interregnum, Geoff conducts services of the word for the congregation, leading them in ongoing acts of faith and worship. Geoff has recently entered training to be ordained. However, Geoff intends to continue to serve Christ as part of the community of St Margaret's for as long as possible.

During the period of interregnum, Geoff has also participated in services led by visiting members of the clergy.

The PCC

Consisting of 14 members, including the treasurer and secretary, the PCC work hard to protect the fabric of our church and to safeguard its future.

The church has required substantial expenditure in repairs and restoration, and we have invested over £1.3 million in staged improvements to our building. A further £24,236 was invested in 2019 to repair our beautiful stained glass windows.

This substantial investment has placed a strain on meeting the parish share. However, we were able to pay in full in 2017 & 2018. Doing so again in the current year may prove challenging financially. The PCC are discussing strategies to meet this challenge, and it is hoped that a new incumbent will fully engage with the PCC in these discussions.

Music



Music is a strong tradition at St Margaret's and our magnificent Johannus Rembrandt 4 manual organ is used to great effect in magnificent church surroundings.

We have hosted many musical events. The famous Alteri choir have been regular performers here, and Christmas concerts, organ recitals and many other musical performances have been held in this beautiful building.

Our director of music Terence Crolley MSc, FRSA, FLSM composes for our services, most notably our sung Eucharist which is unique to St Margaret's and was penned by Terry. He plays as a guest organist at Harris Manchester College, Oxford University and we are privileged to call him our own.

St Margaret's car boot sales are marked by Terry playing personal requests (for a small fee!), with all contributions going to the fund to maintain our building and the service we provide to our parish. We have a small, enthusiastic choir which leads the hymns and responses at our services.

Bell Ringing

St Margaret's is fortunate to have a long tradition of bell ringing and an enthusiastic group of ringers. The bell captain, Andrew Darling, leads a thriving and growing group of bell ringers, who practice regularly, usually on a Monday evening. The bell ringers also visit other churches in the area and around the country to demonstrate their skills, with bell ringers from elsewhere also visiting St Margaret's to enjoy fellowship with their fellow ringers and the beautiful sound of the bells. The fine peal of ten bells is regularly heard at weddings and funerals held at St Margaret's

The Church Community

St Margaret's Church is located on the fringe of where the thriving Manchester suburb of Altrincham meets the countryside at Dunham Massey. The church community is drawn mainly from Altrincham and the surrounding areas, with some travelling many miles to attend services and to take part in worship among the love and warmth of the congregation of St Margaret's. The community is a varied mix of ages, backgrounds, and diverse ethnic origins, with a regular influx of new faces and families attending services. The community continues to grow. As well as regularly welcoming new members, there are many members of the church community who have worshipped at St Margaret's for many years, including one valued member who has been attending since infancy and is now 94! There are organised groups such as the Ladies' Fellowship, Guides, Brownies, and Rainbows, which meet at the Church, and previously at the Vicarage, which enable members to engage in varied activities and fellowship together, within the arms of the wider church community.

Following the regular services members of the congregation have the opportunity to engage in fellowship and to discuss the day's service together, with a selection of delicious cakes, tea and coffee!

The Church Community (cont.)

The community helps to raise funds to assist in maintaining St Margaret's by holding two very well-attended car boot sales, usually on the Spring Bank Holiday and the August Bank Holiday, as well as the famous Christmas Fair, with its very own grotto and visit from Santa Claus!

St Margaret's is a Church which welcomes everyone to join in the worship of God, and is committed to include those from all backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, and ages.



A concert held at St Margaret's by Altrincham Choral Society, one of many community groups to use our magnificent church.

Altrincham Christians Together

St Margaret's has taken a very active role in Altrincham Christians Together, an association of inter-denominational co-operation and mutual respect within the area, although this is not active currently.

Altrincham Service of Remembrance

The annual Altrincham Service of Remembrance in November takes place in the Garden of Remembrance with faith leaders from the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faiths all taking very active roles in the service. The Imam from the local Muslim community and the Rabbi from the local Jewish community each lead parts of this service, together with the incumbent of St Margaret's. This service is a very clear sign of the desire to maintain and promote tolerance, respect, and understanding between the faiths represented in the local community.

Altrincham CE Aided Primary School

The school serves the local community in the provision of general and religious education to primary school age children, providing a broad background in meeting the educational, spiritual and emotional needs of the children attending the school. It has strong links to St Margaret's via its uniformed organisations. It has a clear vision to promote Christian values among its pupils and the **SIAMS** inspection of January 2018 (link below) carried a grade of "Outstanding" in this regard. It has a pupil register of approximately 350 children, predominantly from the local area.

At the time of the **OFSTED** inspection of March 2019 (link below), the inspection stated that the school required improvement. However, it was acknowledged that following the appointment of a new Head Teacher in January 2019, a clear plan to raise standards was in place. The OFSTED inspection also acknowledged the outstanding rating in the earlier SIAMS inspection.

The new incumbent will become a member of the Board of Governors and will integrate into a governance team that has received additional help and training since the OFSTED inspection was carried out. Consequently, the governors' ability to offer the school effective governance, giving support to the head teacher and staff, and challenging robustly when necessary has been increased and improved substantially. Two members of the PCC also serve on the Board of Governors.

North Cestrian College, a local state school, also has strong links with St Margaret's and we are delighted to hold its annual Christmas Service in the church.

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The Ladies' Fellowship meets monthly for fellowship, to listen to a speaker, and also enjoy a New Year lunch, strawberries and tea in June, and an annual outing.

The Guides, Brownies, and Rainbows meet on a Wednesday at the Church.

Sunday School usually meets on the 2nd and third Sundays of each month in the school room. Our older members (The Hot Chocolate Club) previously met at the Vicarage, but this is currently suspended during the vacancy.

Our small Pastoral Team keep in touch with sick and bereaved members of the community who are unable to attend services and are part of our wider pastoral care.

Our Services

We meet weekly at 11.00am for Parish communion (family service on the first Sunday, Sunday school on the second and third Sundays of each month)

Family Occasions: St Margaret's is highly sought after for Weddings, Funerals, and Baptisms

Confirmation classes were held annually under the previous incumbent, and it was encouraging to see the wide range of ages wanting to affirm their faith.