

ELLESMERE PORT PARISH PROFILE



**ST THOMAS &
ALL SAINTS**

**CHRIST IN THE CENTRE OF THE CHURCH;
THE CHURCH AT THE CENTRE OF THE COMMUNITY.**

ST LAWRENCE



2023

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Thank you so much for your interest in our parish and for taking the time to look at our profile.

It is our hope that through the profile you will understand who we are, and how we currently serve God through our ministries.

This is our collective, shared vision for the future of our two churches in the Parish of Ellesmere Port and **YES**, we like to dream **BIG**.

Who Are We?

We are a lively, outward facing, evangelical parish with two worship centres: St Thomas & All Saints, Ellesmere Port and St Lawrence, Stoak. Our tradition is open evangelical with a strong emphasis on Bible based preaching and teaching; particularly linking our preaching and teaching to the application in our daily lives.



The parish provides for its members regular opportunities for worship and prayer, pastoral support and guidance, a network of cell groups in which members can grow and develop their faith in a more relaxed setting, together with many opportunities to engage in the work of the church in the wider community and beyond.

In addition, the parish provides for the wider community with the occasional offices of funerals, baptism and marriage, opportunities to explore the Christian faith and a high level of volunteering in the community offered by church members.



The staff team currently consists of a full time Associate Rector, a SSM curate in training and a full time Community Development Worker, all ably assisted by a part time Parish Administrator.

We have two licensed pastoral workers, one reader in training and one person accepted for ministry to begin training September 2024.

We have a very vibrant PCC consisting of 21 active members, four of whom are churchwardens, two serving St Thomas and two serving St Lawrence.

The mission statement of the parish is:

‘Christ in the Centre of the Church; the Church at the Centre of the Community’.

Section 2 - THE CHURCHES AND BUILDINGS

Our church community meets in two buildings (St Thomas and All Saints, in Whitby, Ellesmere Port and St Lawrence in the local village of Stoak). The two buildings are very different in appearance and fabric but the commonality between them is the faithful worship, friendship, and dedication to doing God's work that takes place in both churches.

St Thomas & All Saints Church



Situated in the heart of Whitby Village, Ellesmere Port, St Thomas Church was initially built as a tin/steel building in 1909 to serve the expanding village of Whitby. The present brick building dates from around 1957-1961, and in keeping with the times the inside has been extensively reordered since then. Future reordering of St Thomas is planned subject to the necessary funding being raised through our Beacon Project. The church benefits from a good-sized car park. Within the main building the worship area is a considerable space with seats rather than pews. There is a sanctuary area, a small chapel, and an upper room.



The main building also includes a large parish office and toilet facilities. The coffee lounge with kitchen facilities is adjacent to the main worship area.



There is a church hall situated on the old footprint of the original tin/steel church. The hall, complete with a large kitchen facility, is used for numerous church community events, and is also hired by members of the local community for a range of activities and private parties.



St Lawrence Church, Stoak

Thought to be more than 700 years old, Saint Lawrence Church is a grade II* listed building steeped in history and worship. The church tower displays a one fingered clock of great antiquity which dates to 1736. There are several clear leaded windows accompanied by some beautiful stained-glass windows to the side of the chancel. The interior of St Lawrence creates an authentic, historical, country church atmosphere and is a popular wedding venue. In recent years substantial works to the roof and tower have been completed. There is a coffee area to the back and toilet facilities off the porch.



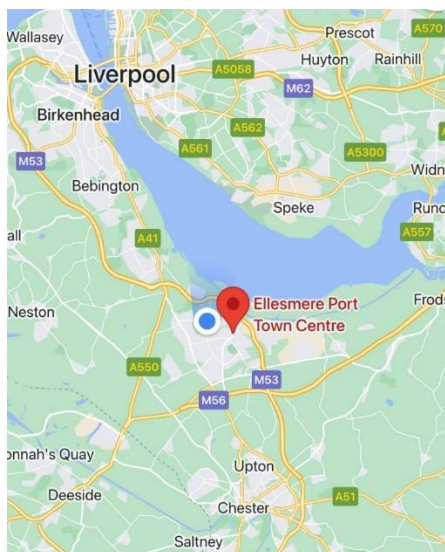
There is a well-maintained small and compact closed graveyard at St Lawrence which holds many interesting monuments.

St Thomas Church Rectory

Situated near the church, the rectory is a large property. The ground floor consists of two reception rooms, a conservatory, a kitchen/utility, an office, a downstairs toilet and an entrance hall. Upstairs there are four good-sized bedrooms, a toilet and a bathroom. The property also includes a good-sized garage. There is a large driveway and gardens to the front and rear of the property.



Section 3 - ELLESMERE PORT AND SURROUNDING AREA



Ellesmere Port is a town in the borough of Cheshire West and Chester in the county of Cheshire. It is on the southeastern edge of the Wirral Peninsula 6 miles north of Chester and 12 miles south of Liverpool and is very much a 20th-century creation. The building of the Ellesmere Canal in 1795 saw the beginnings of industrial development, but it was the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal in 1894 that marked the emergence of Ellesmere Port as a major industrial centre. Petroleum refining began after World War I. Along with Vauxhall Motors Stanlow refinery is one of the largest employers. The town has a growing population of 65,421 [source 2021 census] of whom the majority live in this parish.

Stoak village is 4 miles from the centre of Ellesmere Port and is a small rural community with a population of 180.

The parish is an increasingly diverse community with some areas of great deprivation, alongside many flourishing new builds and established housing estates, and the farming areas around Stoak village.

The town has excellent transport links with the motorway networks to Liverpool and Manchester, plus the beautiful North Wales countryside is on its doorstep. There are many shops and numerous supermarkets. Some of the local amenities include Ellesmere Port Sports Village, the Blue Planet Aquarium and Cheshire Oaks Shopping Designer Outlet with 140 shops and 19 restaurants. The Coliseum (part of the Oaks) has a large multi-screen cinema, 10 pin bowling as well as shops and restaurants. Nearby is the historic city of Chester famous for its Roman walls and ruins and the beautiful Cathedral. Chester Zoo is also a great place for a day out.



There are many primary schools serving the community in Ellesmere Port one of which is our church school - Ellesmere Port Christ Church – Church of England School (voluntary aided). There are also three high schools including The Ellesmere Port Church of England College, with which we have close links.

Section 4 – THE CHURCH AND ITS PEOPLE

Our Beliefs

We are a welcoming, friendly church community meeting in two buildings - St Thomas & All Saints in Ellesmere Port and St Lawrence in Stoak. We aim through our worship, witness, and service to put into practise our mission statement: '**Christ in the Centre of the Church; the Church at the Centre of the Community**'.

Our Sunday service patterns are:

St Thomas & All Saints

Coming together every Sunday with the family of God is a top priority for us. This is where we are fed with God's Word, and resourced and equipped to go out into a new week.

9am Common Worship Holy Communion service with traditional hymns and organ

10.45am First Sunday – Café Church

2nd, 3rd and 4th Family Communion Service or Service of the Word

Ignite – our Children's group meet during this service.

Our main morning worship services are family orientated, relaxed and quite informal using a wide variety of liturgy. Members of the laity are very involved in this service leading intercessions, reading, sharing testimony, and assisting with communion.

The worship is a broad mixture of recorded and live music led by our key board player, a lead vocalist and sometimes guitar and violinist.

Prayer ministry is offered at this service.

We have a tech team who oversee the delivery of the morning services via Songpro and screen.



Café Church

On the first Sunday of each month we have a Café style church service. This is a shorter service to which enquirers are encouraged to join us. It has a very relaxed atmosphere, sitting at tables and sharing refreshments. We still partake in worship and following a short talk we have various activities.

These services are very well supported by the community, and we see a lot of new faces on a regular basis.

Ignite

This is the children's service at St Thomas which runs every week except for the first Sunday, when we run cafe church. The children have their own age-appropriate session.

The children of St Thomas are very much encouraged to be seen and heard and we are blessed with the number of younger members who regularly attend this service.



St Lawrence

11am Our services include either a Common Worship Holy Communion Service or a Service of the Word with traditional hymns accompanied by the organ. Members of the laity are also involved in this service leading intercessions and readings.

4pm Every Second Sunday we hold an ABC service [see page10].



ABC

ABC [Adults, Babies and Children] is our family service at St Lawrence based along the lines of Messy Church.



Due to the limited space at St Lawrence, we have trimmed down the Messy Church format to fit our surroundings. This service attracts the many families who come to St Lawrence for baptism and enables us to keep contact with them whilst they are engaging with and exploring faith further with their little ones. The 'tea' is always a highlight of the service.



Joint Services

On the fifth Sunday of the month we come together for a joint service alternating between our two churches.

Preaching and Other Services

The preaching at our Sunday services follows either the Common Worship Lectionary or a sermon series giving focus on either a topic or a book of the Bible.

We do not have a midweek service; however, we do encourage the church family to join with Morning Prayer from the Daily Office which we broadcast Monday – Thursday at 9am via Facebook Live. This is led by clergy and laity.

The preaching at our Sunday services is complimented by teaching through courses held throughout the year. Courses have included:

- The Prayer Course
- The Prayer Course II – unanswered prayer
- The Bible Course
- The 'I am' sayings of Jesus
- Risky Business – pastoral course
- Christianity Explored
- The Start Course

In addition to weekly Sunday services, we also host a variety of annual services:

- Christingle
- Blue Christmas
- Annual Civic Service
- Remembrance Day Service working with Civic parties and armed forces.
- Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals are arranged directly with the clergy. Parents and couples are invited to attend baptism and wedding preparation courses.



Welcome Teams

We have a team of people at all three Sunday services who greet everyone with genuine warmth and kindness. The common comment from newcomers, "We were made to feel welcome from the moment we entered the church."

Prayer Ministry

We are a prayerful church and at the 10.45am services at St Thomas we have prayer teams ready to pray, after Holy Communion, should anyone require this for themselves, a friend or family. This ministry provides love and compassion for those in need and is well supported. People also regularly approach the teams with prayers of thanks for answered prayer.



Church Wardens

and PCC

Following the 2023 APCM we have seventeen elected members of the PCC including four churchwardens and four co-opted members plus our Safeguarding Officer. Four members serve on the Deanery Synod.

All members of the PCC choose a focus subgroup to work with during the year. These are:

The Fabric Team that looks after the church buildings and grounds. (This team includes the four church wardens.)

A Mission Team that is overseen by our Community Development Worker.

A Finance Team that controls all receipts and expenses, plus gift aiding.

An Eco team that is overseen by our curate in training.

Be encouraged, as we are, that we have so many people willing to serve. We are a lively, and friendly bunch who work together with our clergy to help bring in the Kingdom of God to the parish, community and beyond.

Clergy Wellbeing

We have a team who meet each Friday, on Zoom, to pray for the clergy and to whom the clergy can bring anything they personally require prayer for in confidence. The clergy have found this of great comfort during difficult times.

Cell Groups

We presently have four cell groups that meet every two weeks at various times in people's homes. Each group is made up of between eight and ten people, and there are currently 32 members.

The study topics may come from the current sermon series, a specific course or the group may decide to do something different. Often, we choose a person or a passage in the Bible that we wish to discuss and learn more about.

Each group has social nights out that are always good fun, and as friendships grow this often leads on to bigger things like holidays.

The individual groups support various church projects through fund raising events, such as cake sales or sausage and bacon butty sales after church services.



Section 5 – THE CHURCH AND ITS WIDER COMMUNITY

Schools

The Ellesmere Port Church of England College is situated over the road from St Thomas and has 615 students, including a sixth form. The college is now part of the Frank Field Education Trust and was rated 'Good' in the latest OFSTED report.

The retiring incumbent served as Chair of Governors for many years and had a growing ministry with the staff and students.

Links with the parish have been mainly through the clergy, with a welcome service to Year7 being held at St Thomas, and online services at Christmas and Easter.

Students from the College regularly help with the bag packing for the food hamper projects led by our Food Initiative Group.

Following its recent SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools), also rated Good, the College is looking to develop its relationship with the Parish which will create opportunities for engagement with both staff and students.

A quote from the college *"The Ellesmere Port Church of England College are proud of the partnership we have with St Thomas & All Saints Church. Our faith identity at school is underpinned with our relationship with the previous rector and is integral to our pupils' understanding of our vision, "To act justly, to love with mercy and to walk humbly with our God" Micah 6:8. The wider community is extremely important to us at the College and our collaboration with St Thomas & All Saints, which grows stronger each year, is at the core of helping our pupils to live out their Christian distinctiveness."*

Ellesmere Port Christ Church – Church of England School (Voluntary Aided) provides opportunities for partnerships between church and school. It was rated 'Good' in the recent OFSTED report and 'Outstanding' in the last SIAMS inspection.

During 2021 Christ Church became federated with Bishop Wilson Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School. A member of church currently serves as the Chair of Governors together with a number of church members serving as Foundation Governors on the newly formed federated board. Our associate rector, as ex-officio governor, takes the lead in the link with our primary school leading class sessions with children and parents, sharing stories from the Bible and encouraging faith in the family.



A quote from Christ Church School *"Our school relies on the partnership with the parish, and it is one which we want to continue to grow. The parish supports us in our vision and all elements of school life including leading worships, services, values days, and the curriculum. Our children relish in the opportunities provided by the parish and it also helps us engage with our parents and wider community for example Messy Church sessions. As we enter into a new journey of leadership at Christ Church, we hope to develop our partnership and the support it provides all members of the school community."*

Schools Continued



We are welcomed into many of the primary schools in the parish leading acts of worship/assemblies together with sharing Bible stories through our 'Open the Book' team. We also welcome some of the primary schools into church supporting them in delivering the RE curriculum.

The schools hold their Christmas services in church, which is always a great opportunity to share the hope of Christmas with the students and their families.

We recently hosted an Experience Easter event to which seven primary schools attended. This gave an opportunity to share the Easter story with 290 children in the parish in an interactive way. All the children really engaged with this and hopefully enjoyed it!



Feedback from the schools was very encouraging and included the following:

"The team of people at the church who had organised the experience for us were superb at making the event child- friendly and informative".

"Our aim is always to ensure the children in our school know more and remember more in each subject they study, and I was so proud to hear them joining in and sharing what they already knew and then being able to extend their knowledge during the trip".

"We had a wonderful time and have also been able to respond to the challenge we were given which was to create a piece of art to put on display in the church".

Open the Book Assembly Team

Our Open the Book Assembly Team is regularly welcomed into nine of the local primary schools.

The stories are taken from the Lion Storyteller Bible by Bob Hartman and are aimed at KS1. We start in September with stories from the Old Testament and move on to the New Testament. We continue throughout the whole of the academic year. The stories are converted into scripts. It is meant to be fun. It is not a lesson or a sermon.

The team consists of six of our congregation and we are currently going into three schools every week. We have a variety of ways to present the stories using various props, costumes, puppets and even the children themselves who love to be our "helpers".

Some Quotes from the children

- L *"It makes me happy."*
- B *"I like listening to the story."*
- R *"Being a helper."*
- K *"I like it because it makes me laugh and I can sit good."*
- J *"We are helpers."*
- M *"Dancing to the song-My God is a great big God."*



Community Outreach

Food Initiative Group (FIG)

The food hamper project was initially set up as a response to the pandemic, but has grown organically over time, and continues to grow as more families than ever request food hampers at school holiday times to support their families.

We provide food hampers during each of the school holidays to over 165 local families who are identified, with the support of our local schools, as requiring additional support as their children receive free school meals.

It is regrettable that there continues to be a growing need for these hampers, and we work hard to ensure we can continue to provide the funding for this project.

The initial funding came from the church congregation and appeals to local businesses, friends, family and street WhatsApp groups. As the project has grown, we have sought funding from the National Lottery, various local supermarkets, businesses, our local council, and small trusts.

Making up of 165 hampers takes a lot of hard work as we must plan, order, collect, pack, and deliver them. Our dedicated FIG group are at the heart of this work, but do have the support of others, including a local business which lends us vans and personnel, plus we have enlisted volunteers from our Church of England College.

Feedback from families and school leaders

- “You really have provided a lifeline to our families during their time of need.”
- “I got a food parcel, thank you so much, it’s amazing and makes such a difference.”



Family Activity Days

More recently, based upon feedback from meeting with local headteachers and canvassing opinion on the needs of the community, we have launched our school holiday activity days. Whilst our primary objective is to reduce food poverty there is a real need to lessen social isolation within the community.

As such we now aim to offer an activity day during every school holiday, with a few more during the summer holidays. This is another large project that relies heavily upon grant funding and fundraising.

These have been a mix of trips out, or activity days closer to home either based at church or a local park. For example, trips to the beach, the Welsh Mountain Zoo, a bug hunt in the park, a bingo afternoon, Christmas crafts, an animal adventure day with live animals at church, etc.

We hope to give families experiences they may not have had before and cannot typically afford for themselves.



We hope to work with local businesses to see what can be offered to the community to share further experiences in the future, as new opportunities for our families are invaluable.

During each activity day we look to provide a cold lunch and a warm evening meal.

“the kids had a great time, it's made the summer holidays better for them because without these days out, the kids wouldn't have been anywhere due to being short of money”

Tea at Two

Every second Wednesday of the month, in the St Thomas Coffee lounge, we host an afternoon for anyone in need of company. Tea, coffee, and cake are served. Many of those who attend have been bereaved or live alone. Thus, the afternoon allows likeminded people the opportunity to meet and share time together and enjoy the company and fellowship of others. It is a well-attended, relaxed, and friendly event for all.



PALS

On the last Friday of the month, we have lunch cooked in our church hall. Members of all three services and their guests are welcome to sign up and the event is always a sellout.

This event is all about sharing fellowship with one another and is a great success.



Scouts

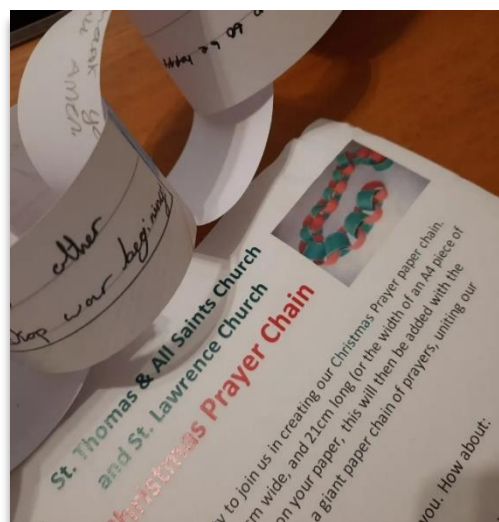
The 8th Ellesmere Port (St Thomas) Scout Group is a sponsored Group meeting in the Church Hall and grounds.

There are 5 sections running currently for 4 to 18 years old.

Total Group size now exceeds 100 young people, meeting regularly, with a leadership team of about 15. Various activities including camps take place during the year.

Advent & Christmas Programme

Advent and Christmas are given a high priority in our outreach to the community and to this end an intentional programme is drawn together.



Our Christmas programme for 2022



	Event	Aimed at	Person[s] Responsible	Purpose	Costings/funding
Advent	Gift for a stranger	Community – Forum Housing & Women's Refuge	Sue J cell group	Sharing love	Funds to be raised from Bacon Butty morning
Advent	Christmas hampers	Community – schools	FIG	Feeding children in holidays.	
Advent	Goody bag!	Bereaved families	GF/Sue M/Jane/Karen	Small gift – shortbread, choc, mince pies to all 2022 funerals – re-connecting with them – invite to Tea at 2	Approx £80
Advent	Angels of Hope	Community	GF/Jane	Sharing love!	
Advent	Christmas Prayer Chain	Community/Schools/Nursing Homes	Gemma	Offering prayer	
3	Christmas Fair	Community/church family	Everyone!	Opening the doors to the community	
17 TBC	Singing in arcades	Community	GMC		
18	Nativity at both churches	Church family	Clergy		
18	Carol service at both churches	Church/community	Clergy		n/a
20	Blue Christmas	Community/church family	Clergy	Supporting bereaved families	n/a
21	Christmas Craft afternoon	FIG families	FIG	Continuing support to families	
24	Christingle	Community/church family	Clergy		
24	Christmas Eve Midnight service 11.30pm HC at both churches	Church/community	Clergy		n/a
25	Christmas Day 10am St T 10am St L	Church/community	Clergy		n/a

Other Outreach initiatives

- West Cheshire Foodbank
- Refugee day
- Visiting and keeping in touch – monthly newsletters & phone calls to vulnerable parishioners
- Financial support to Elim Pentecostal Church Centre for Renewal in Ellesmere Port
- Response to appeals: Pakistan, Ukraine, Christian Aid, etc.
- Shoe Box Appeal
- Links with care homes
- CPAS Falcon Camp
- Contact Centre –The Embrace child contact centre is an independent organisation with no official connection to the courts or social services. It is staffed entirely by volunteers who are trained, and DBS checked. We are an accredited centre and operate under the auspices of NACCC - National association of child contact centres. The church coffee lounge is used by the contact centre for meetings.

Uganda - Link with Nyakatukura Primary School

Through a member of our congregation, we have links with the above school and work alongside Christ Church School and St Andrews Church - Tarvin.

This includes visits to Uganda and individual child sponsorship of school fees.



Our Finances in summary

- Our Parish Share is up to date and has always been paid on time, even during Covid.
- We have a healthy reserve fund for our buildings, as well as a contingency fund which has been replenished post pandemic. Some of this funding has come from funds previously held by the Diocese, which have been released to further our mission in the community and beyond.
- In addition, we have restricted funds for a new sound system at St Lawrence and for any work required to the fabric of our buildings.
- We are very proud that our PCC have sanctioned the re-ordering of St Thomas Church [The Beacon Project] to make it a building which will better facilitate our vision. Under our own auspices we have raised 50% of the funding [£271,403] and we now plan to approach various charities for grants. Our recently appointed Community Development Worker is tasked with this role. The building works will commence as soon as the funding is in place.

Section 7 – OUR VISION FOR THE PARISH

Having reached out to both the PCC and the wider church family our **dreamed vision** for the future is:

- taking and planting worship across the whole parish.
- nurturing and growing bible teaching through Cell groups and enquirers courses.
- having an open door to promote innovative ways of sowing the seeds of faith.
- the completion of the Beacon Project by 2026 to make the St Thomas Church building a multipurpose, ecofriendly, star attraction in the area for **faith, hope, and charity**.

It will be a building that:

- can be seen clearly from the main road.
 - is attractive for weddings and funerals.
 - is a community hub, accessible for all.
 - has rooms able to be hired, to generate funds to help with our wider mission.
- developing partners in worldwide mission.
 - specific healing services.
 - building a music group.
 - improve ecumenical relationships in our town.

Our Dream Rector

The person we are seeking is someone who:

- is an inspirational, evangelical preacher who can deliver services with enthusiasm and can relate them to our lives.
- can help us engage with scripture in creative ways.
- shares and can develop our vision.
- has a kind and friendly disposition with a good sense of humour.
- is a good listener and communicator who can engage with our diverse community/congregation.
- is approachable.
- can help us grow our numbers, particularly among young families and young people.
- can inspire, motivate, and innovate.
- will support our 'Beacon' project.
- will bring dynamism and fresh ideas across the parish.
- will encourage the congregation to live out their faith in everyday life, Monday to Saturday, not just on a Sunday.
- will foster a good safeguarding culture in the parish to ensure that church is a safe space for everyone.

What we can offer

- We can offer you a supportive, friendly, and hardworking church family keen to engage in work for the parish.
- You will not be on your own! You will have the support of the Associate Rector, the PCC, the Church Wardens, our Curate, our Community Development Worker & our Parish Administrator.
- Whilst realising that your job is never finished, we will insist that you always take your days off, annual holidays, training days, sabbaticals, etc.
- We will always support you through prayer.
- We will listen to any problems or issues you may have and do our very best to support you/resolve them.

Challenges

- We are one of the largest parishes in the Diocese of Chester, and yet we have a very high proportion of residents who have no connection with a Christian church.
 - Engaging children and young adults.
 - Finance. Whilst we have always met our parish share, we are conscious that this has sometimes been a struggle, and that we would like to be in a position where we can offer more support to home and overseas mission.
 - Maintenance and development of our buildings and surroundings.
 - An ageing population.
-



***God of Mission
Who alone brings growth to your church,
Send your Holy Spirit to give:
Vision to our planning,
Wisdom to our actions,
And power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers,
In spiritual commitment to you,
and in service to our local community.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen***

Source: LyCiG Prayer



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