

DIOCESE OF CHESTER

PARISH PROFILE for the Parish of St Luke, Dunham-on-the-Hill

Deanery: Frodsham

Date: July 2022



ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

1. The church

St Luke's was built in 1861 as a chapel of ease to the Parish of Thornton-le-Moors. In 2011 we celebrated our 150th anniversary with a special service and a distribution of cake to every household in the parish. There is a [slide show](#) giving a brief history of the church on our website. Basic facts about the church are as follows:

Number on the electoral roll (April 2022): 31, of which 7 are non-resident. The resident members of the electoral roll represent approximately 4% of the population of the Parish.

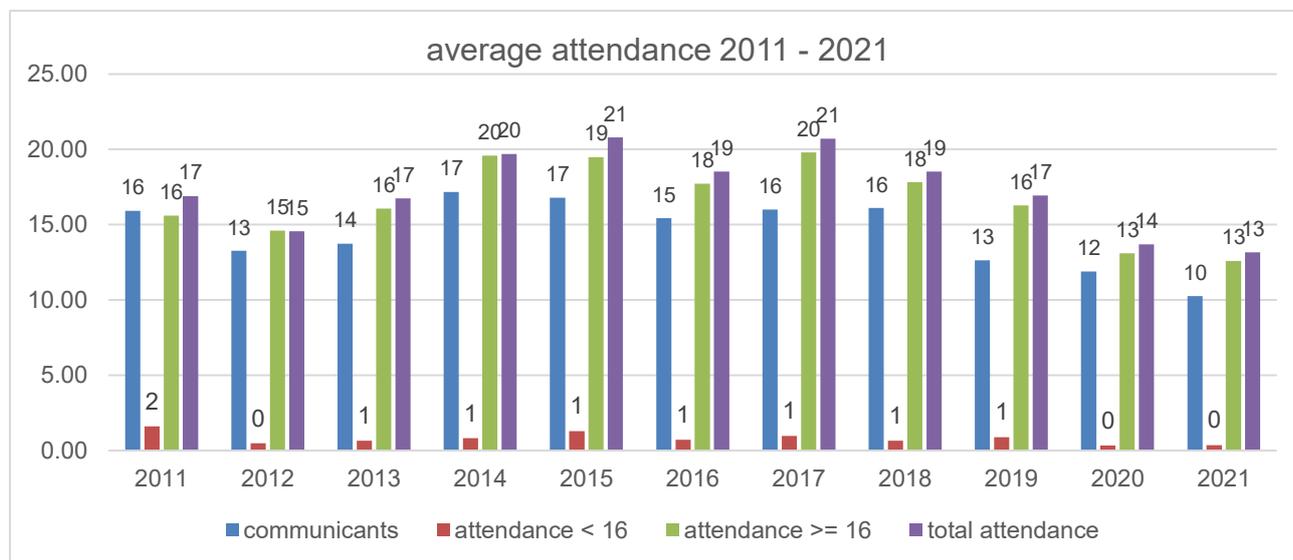
Sunday services in 2020 were badly affected by the COVID pandemic, with baptisms and weddings being infeasible during almost all of that year. Prior to that, attendance had been low, but fairly steady, with numbers at the popular monthly Family Services growing. We lost some valued members during 2020/21, which contributed to a decline in attendance.

Average Sunday attendance 2021: 13, 2020 (on days when the church was open): 14, 2019: 14

Baptisms 2021: 0, 2020: 0, 2019: 3

Weddings 2021: 0, 2020: 0, 2019: 0

Funerals 2021: 3, 2020: 2, 2019: 3

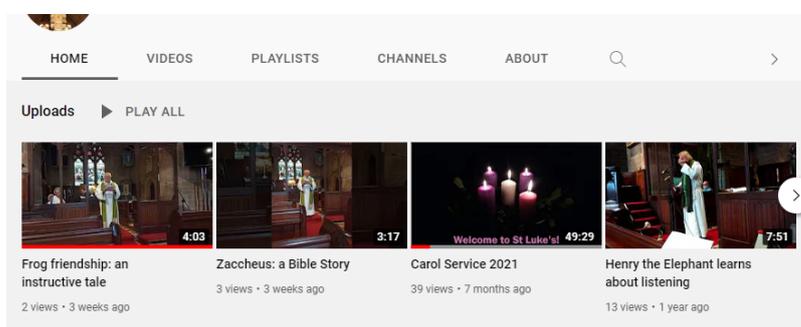


During the 2020 COVID lockdown, St Luke’s held live Facebook “10-minute worship” services each Sunday. These are still available to view on our [YouTube channel](#). During Lent and Easter 2020, total attendances across the two online channels averaged more than 30.

During 2019 the following fundraising events took place: Historic Cheshire Churches Preservation Trust "Ride & Stride", Harvest Supper and bi-monthly Book Sales. During 2020, after the January and March Book Sales, no further events were possible. Book Sales have now been re-instated with the first being held in September 2021. As well as raising money for the church and for local charities, the Book Sales are a popular community event with many people enjoying time spent chatting over home-made scones, which are provided free of charge. It also helps to make people aware that the church exists, with the sandwich board that is put out to advertise the sale during the week preceding it attracting many people who have never visited the church before.

Since the closure of the Methodist chapel in the village, the congregation has included several worshippers from a Methodist background, including two Local Preachers. We would like to develop better links with the Methodist circuit. As the only church in the village, we aim to be inclusive and welcoming to those of all denominations. In September 2021 we ratified a formal Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome, which has been signed by a minister representing the local Methodist Circuit.

The [website](#) for St Luke's, first set up in December 2009, is updated each week with the collect for the week, a hymn for the week, and news of forthcoming events. Visitors can download copies of church policies and the Parish News. Events are also publicised through [Twitter](#), where we now have more than a thousand followers, and our [Facebook page](#). Our [YouTube channel](#), which began as a way of connecting with people during the pandemic lockdown of 2020, continues to be updated with video extracts from our monthly Family Services. The monthly Parish News magazine (produced jointly with St Paul's Helsby) is distributed to every household in the Parish by volunteers.



The PCC Secretary, Judy Ford, is a member of the Chester Diocese Disability Forum. The forum promotes inclusion of disabled people in church and offers advice to churches wishing to become more disabled-friendly. It has also organised two “Celebration of Different Abilities” services, one [at the cathedral](#) and, more recently, [online](#). St Luke’s Church is committed to being inclusive of all, conscious of its place as the only remaining church in the parish.

2. Personnel

A Methodist Local Preacher, Professor Neville Ford, leads a Service of the Word or Morning Prayer once a month and on Christmas Day.

The PCC currently has 7 lay members, including the two churchwardens, treasurer and secretary. There is a vacancy for one further elected member of the PCC. The wardens are assisted by two sidespersons.

3. The Parish

The 2001 census recorded the following demographics for Dunham-on-the-Hill Civil Parish:

Population	534		
0 - 4 years	25	All males	260
5 - 15 years	75	All females	274
16 - 24 years	43	People living in households	534
25 - 44 years	132	People living in communal establishments	0
45 - 64 years	140		
65 - 74 years	71		
75 +	48		

We have been unable to obtain comparable statistics from the 2011 census and the 2021 census data is not yet available. Other online data sources confirm that the population had grown to 634 in 2011, with demographics similar to those shown in the table above.

The Parish is divided into two villages: Dunham-on-the-Hill and Hapsford. It is over a mile from Hapsford to St Luke's church and relatively few Hapsford residents attend St Luke's.

The Parish was traditionally a farming community and there are still a number of families with farming connections who attend church, but the population is now more mixed with many residents commuting to work in Cheshire towns or the cities of Liverpool and Manchester.

There are several traveller sites in the parish and relations between the settled and traveller communities tend to be distant and sometimes become strained. Occasionally traveller families have asked for marriages or baptisms to be conducted for them at St Luke's, but none of them attends the regular Sunday services.

The villages now lack most amenities with the village shop, school and post office all having closed in the last 25 years. Residents travel to shopping centres and schools in Helsby, Frodsham, Chester, Runcorn and Ellesmere Port. Although there is a regular (but infrequent) bus service through each of the villages, most residents rely on the use of their cars to access entertainment and the essentials of everyday living. Many also travel outside the parish to attend places of worship.

There is a large Brethren church in Dunham, but the members (drawn from across a wide geographical area) have no links with St Luke's or the residents of the village.

4. Church services

Our regular monthly pattern of worship is:

- 1st Sunday – Family Service;
- 2nd, 4th and 5th Sunday – Holy Communion;
- 3rd Sunday – Service of the Word or Morning Prayer.

Our Sunday services are at 9.30 a.m. We do not have any regular weekday services, but at Christmas we usually hold a Crib and Christingle service on the Saturday before Christmas, a Carol Service at 5.00 p.m. on the Sunday before Christmas and Christmas Eve Holy Communion at 8.00 p.m.

Our usual hymn book is *The Complete Anglican, Hymns Old and New*. We also have copies available of *Hymns Ancient & Modern Revised* and *Junior Praise*. During the pandemic, we invested in a display screen, which enables us to use a wider range of hymns and to avoid having to hand out hymn books

and service sheets. This also enables visual aids, such as pictures and videos, to be incorporated into the services and reduces the need for printed notice sheets and service sheets.

We use Common Worship liturgy for both Morning Prayer and Holy Communion.

We are content to allow those leading worship to choose their own dress code.



Some attendees at our recent Pets Service



Crib Service

5. Buildings and churchyard

The church building is essentially sound, but the electric wiring, while tested and safe, would benefit from updating. The lighting is also less than ideal. There are no outstanding items from the last quinquennial inspection, which took place in 2016. We have appointed an architect to perform a further inspection, but he has not yet been able to give us a date for it to be carried out.

We are aware of the Church of England's commitment to combating climate change and we are conscious that we will need to explore alternative heating arrangements when the oil boiler reaches the end of its life.

At the back of the church is a small building (the Church Room) which is used for meetings and where there is a toilet and kitchen. It has a ramp up to the rear fire door, enabling wheelchair users to be allowed in. The exterior was redecorated in 2020. The churchyard is maintained by volunteers, led by Sheila and Rob Goulbourne, and we have received many complimentary comments from visitors on how well St Luke's keeps its grounds.

The churchyard is still open for both burials and interment of ashes. The graves are generally in good condition with no known hazardous stones.

The Quinquennial Inspection, performed in April 2022, did not identify any urgent repairs or structural defects. The architect estimated, in his report, that the recommended programme of maintenance would cost in the region of £11,000 spread over the period 2022-27.

6. Finance

In recent years our expenditure has exceeded our unrestricted income, meaning that we have had to draw on our reserves in order to pay our Parish Share (currently 15%, with St Paul's paying 70% and the diocese employing the incumbent for 15%). We are fortunate in having in the region of £75,000 in unrestricted funds derived from the sale of a piece of land in 2012, but with the current low interest rates meaning that this cannot be invested to provide income, this capital has been diminishing over the years. A more recent legacy has provided us with a small restricted fund which can be used for the upkeep of the church buildings and grounds.

In January 2022, we reduced our Parish Share payments to 10%, which has reduced our annual deficit to a manageable level, but has meant that we are building up a debt with the diocese. We have now

committed to increasing our Parish Share contribution incrementally over the first three years of the next incumbency to 12.5% in year 1, 15% in year 2 and 17.5% in year 3. We have budgeted to pay this out of our reserves, but we hope that, with the help of our new incumbent, we will be able to increase our annual income sufficiently to break even in the longer term. This will be extremely challenging, since it will mean increasing our income by approximately 60%. The work highlighted in the Quinquennial Inspection will largely be covered by our restricted funds (limited to maintenance of the fabric), but we also need to consider capital projects, such as improving the electrical installation and lighting, making the church wheelchair accessible and replacing the old oil-fired central heating with a more sustainable heating system (in line with Church of England green energy policy). This means that, for the foreseeable future, working to increase our income will have to be a priority.

Details of the receipts/expenditure are below.

Table 1

Expenditure	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Parish Share - Cost of vicar	10,220	10,144	9,896	9,655	9,419
Vicar expenses and fees for services	1,028	1,642	890	1,999	1,482
Insurance	1,475	1,492	1,466	781	1,460
Utilities	1,220	313	1,037	1,847	844
Maintenance of churchground, fire equipment* checks, boiler etc.	996	1,422	889	858	620
Audio equipment*	636	1,221	0	289	3,045
Electrical work*	87	56	51	510	0
Organ restoration/costs*	294	240	0	294	12,006
Trowel display / Display* board	0	0	0	658	0
Church room / cloakroom* /Architect or Legal Fees / planning application	0	0	588	0	0
Organists/Verger/Visiting /Altar requisites	945	716	718	925	1,092
Fund raising costs/ Cost of newsletters	487	455	528	701	542
Charity donations	274	118	289	264	201
	17,662	17,819	16,352	18,781	30,711
Excl. one off items*	16,645	15,798	15,713	17,030	15,660

Table 2

Income	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Collections at church	2,251	1,702	3,121	3,490	3,809
Direct credit/CAF	3,720	3,716	2,800	2,700	2,565
Donations – Organ**	0	0	0	0	235
Severn Trent refund**	0	0	2,219	0	0
John Whitlow legacy**	0	0	10,000	0	0
Donations incl. churchyard maintenance cost returned	520	572	505	1,606	1,144
	6,491	5,990	18,645	7,796	7,753
Church fees for services	1,998	1,216	1,601	4,148	2,664
Interest	1,004	459	63	585	2
Fund raising	0	21	399	469	488
Charity income	174	118	289	225	201
Numbers club	0	900	930	940	930
	3,176	2,714	3,282	6,367	4,285
Gift aid reclaimed	848	1,140	1,527	1,544	1,452
Covid grant		2,000	0	0	0
Parish council grant	380	380	380	250	250
	1,228	3,520	1,907	1,794	1,702
Total income	10,895	12,224	23,834	15,957	13,739
Excluding one off income **	10,895	10,224	11,615	15,957	13,504

** One off income relates to organ fund donations, a legacy, the diocese Covid grant and a refund for overcharging for water from Severn Trent.

7. Church education and social provision

The Church of England village school, dating back to the 19th century, closed in the 1960s and was replaced by a County Primary School. The school building became the Village Hall, which is still an important social centre for the village today. A variety of groups meet there including bridge, whist, zumba and Parish Council. The Hall is used for church fund raising events and occasional services. The hall is also used for an annual pensioners' Christmas party, bingo sessions and children's parties. Everyone is always made very welcome by the committee.

The County Primary School closed about fifteen years ago. The premises, re-named *The Boshaw Centre*, are now administered by the Dunham on the Hill and Hapsford Community Project, which is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The charity hosts community activities and rents space to local groups and schools.

DEVELOPING CHURCH LIFE

In 2010 we conducted a survey of residents of the Parish, asking them what they are looking for in the church, so that we could plan ways of changing what we do to serve the community better. We did this by calling on households in person and talking with them or leaving a questionnaire for them to fill in. We received back 48 questionnaires, which is about 20% of the approximately 250 households in the Parish. A surprisingly large proportion (75%) of respondents said that the presence of the St Luke's Church in the parish was important to them. Responses indicated that villagers saw the church as a community resource and drew comfort from knowing that it would be there when they needed it. A few of the people whom we visited for the survey were prompted by this to start attending services on Sunday mornings.

Informed by the results of the survey, we embarked on efforts to raise the profile of the church in the village. These included: distributing the altar flowers to residents after the Sunday service was over, holding a 150th anniversary celebration and distributing a portion of the cake to every household in the parish. We attempted to continue with these initiatives during the two-year vacancy (2012-2014) and the new incumbent built on their modest successes by initiating monthly family services and making personal calls to parents inviting them to attend; however, it has become infeasible to continue to distribute flowers due to a lack of volunteers both to provide flowers and to take them to recipients. Average congregations rose steadily, but slowly, between 2012 and 2015. Since 2017, there has been a gradual reduction in attendance each year. The deaths of a number of long-standing members were the most significant factor in this decline.

Opportunities for future growth

We know from our survey that many residents in the parish value the presence of the church, but few attend on a regular basis. While recognising that the small size of the two villages means that we will never have a large congregation, we believe that there is potential for increasing participation in church life. The bi-monthly Book Sales are popular social events upon which we could build. When a resident dies, family members and friends often attend the Sunday services for a few weeks and seem to find comfort in doing so. Although we have few weddings, couples who do choose to get married at St Luke's sometimes go on to attend regularly. We aim to provide a welcome to everyone who comes to St Luke's, for whatever reason, which will encourage them to engage with the church at whatever level, and for however long, is right for them.



The Wheatsheaf pub, adjacent to the church, has been closed for a few years now and the land is to be sold for development. We anticipate that the site will, eventually, be used for housing. This would provide an excellent opportunity for outreach to new residents.

THE NEW INCUMBENT

In order to address the needs and priorities of both parishes, we need the new incumbent to be:

- (1) A good spiritual leader and communicator – able to work with the full age range and to communicate through a variety of means, as appropriate to the audience;
- (2) Dedicated to pastoral care, including visiting parishioners at home and in hospital;
- (3) Capable of enabling parishioners to develop their skills and talents to their full potential for the overall benefit of the Church in both parishes;
- (4) Capable of further developing the Lay Ministry within our churches;
- (5) Able to delegate tasks as appropriate – to allow more time for Pastoral Care, Mission and Planning;
- (6) Able to maintain and build on the links with other churches in the area;
- (7) Capable of maintaining a visible presence within, and engaging with, all the communities (settled and traveller) of both parishes;
- (8) Able to encourage the congregations in living out their faith in everyday life;
- (9) Provide leadership on safeguarding and encourage all to contribute toward creating a safer church.

St Luke's Parish Profile. Adopted by the PCC at its meeting on 2nd November 2021. Updated July 2022 and agreed by PCC members via email and telephone.

Signed  PCC Secretary
Judy Ford