



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Chester



St Thomas' Church

High Lane

Parish Profile

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Welcome to our Parish Profile. Here we set out a description of our church, parish and mission. We hope this will help you to decide if St Thomas' is the right church for you.

Name of Parish	St Thomas' Church, High Lane
Diocese	Chester
Deanery	Chadkirk
Address	St Thomas 'Church, High Lane Stockport SK6 8DL
Church website	www.st-thomas-high-lane.org.uk

Our Mission Statement

St Thomas' is a living church in the community of High Lane where everyone is welcome and our mission is to share the love of Christ with all.

The Church

St Thomas' Church is a Grade II listed building, located in the centre of the village, which was opened in 1851 and consecrated in 1859 to serve the needs of a few hundred people in a coal producing hamlet. The building was given Grade II listed status because of its architecture, stained-glass windows and a 'fine example of Victorian stencil work' in the apse. It is known to thousands of commuters who pass by daily as "The Church in the trees" and lying alongside it is a Grade II listed War Memorial.



St Thomas' was erected in 1850 when a local Victorian benefactor, Thomas Orford, gave land 'sufficient for the building not only of the Church, but also for the Parsonage House and School, as and if required'. Very soon, however, it was realised that the Church was too small and new parts were added to the building, including a magnificent spire on the south west side. When the new church was opened in 1866 the accommodation had been doubled and a congregation of 300 could be seated.

Two years later, a new organ was installed and in 1870 a peal of six bells was placed in the campanile-like tower and rung for the first time that December. The church clock, with its Westminster quarter chime, was placed in the tower in 1932.

The exterior look of the church is simple, in contrast to the far more elaborate interior. Historic photographs show the inside of the church to have been richly painted, a practice which is continued until today with apse and apsidal arch retaining their jewel-like painted decoration. A proportion of these paintings take an unusual form of being painted on tin panels attached to the walls. Similar panels, part of the original scheme and now painted over, can still be seen on the nave windowsills.



In 2013, the church started a new phase in its history when the old Vicarage, built in the post-war years, was demolished and a new development started, which included a new Vicarage and three more dwelling houses. This work was completed in 2015. At the same time, with generous support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the generosity of parishioners, the crumbling spire of the Church was rebuilt and topped with a new weathervane, and other stonework replaced during 2015. At the same time access to the Church was improved with the construction of a ramp to the front door, and pews removed from the North Aisle to create a flexible open space in Church.

The Church celebrated its 160th anniversary in 2019 and is proud to say in all that time it has always kept its doors open during daylight hours.

Plans are currently in place to repair the West Wall of the Church along with another ramp to the rear of the Church. This, along with refurbishment of toilet facilities and the Lych gate will form a request for funding from the Heritage Fund.



The Worship can be described as modern Catholic and three Communion services are celebrated weekly. On Sunday it is celebrated at 8am according to the Book of Common Prayer (BCP), and at 10am (Common Worship). On Wednesday Communion is celebrated at 9.30 am (BCP). The Wives Group have a communion service monthly on a Monday evening. Evensong is celebrated once a month on the fourth Sunday at 6pm.



The choir is currently Directed by Musical Director, Marc Hall and they lead the music at the 10am Parish Communion Service and the monthly Evensong Service. There is a group of young choristers who are going through their training and who also sing with the adult choir at services.

There is currently no Sunday School for children, however there is a thriving *Messy Church* gathering that is run by an active group meeting every second Saturday afternoon of the month. Many children and their families attend and it includes a family worship in the church led by the Vicar. They finish the afternoon with a shared meal prepared by the volunteers.





Christmas begins early at St Thomas' with the *Taste of Christmas Fair* followed by the very popular *Christingle Service*.

The local schools hold their carol services at the Church and there is a very popular *Service of Nine Lessons and Carols*.



On Christmas Eve there is a Holy Communion Service at 11pm, with Communion Services on Christmas Day at 8am and 10am.

Lent and Easter are celebrated with the normal morning and evening services on Ash Wednesday, Easter week, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. The Pascal Candle is lit on Easter Eve and on Easter Sunday there is a Communion Service at both 8 am and 10 am.

Other services of note that are well attended include Mothering Sunday and the very popular Remembrance Sunday.



The PCC is very supportive of the ministry of women at all levels in the Church, as evidenced by the appointment of our current Minister, and our support for the first female Bishop in the Church of England at Stockport. It also supports an open baptism policy and the remarriage of the divorced.

Baptisms, weddings and funerals are held regularly at the Church. There is a graveyard that holds space for burials and cremated ashes, having been extended in 2019.

During the year there is normally a course where discussion is held about Christian topics; the most recent being the Emmaus course and reference to the Church and Kingdom stage of the Pilgrim Course.

Details from the last Census in 2011 indicate that 95% of the population in the village is white British and 82% give their religion as Christian. Unemployment is low and 64% of the people are economically active. Further details of the Church can be found in the Parish Fact Sheet.

High Lane

High Lane lies in the Borough of Stockport and has a population of 5852 and there are 127 registered on the Church electoral roll. It is located 5 miles south east of Stockport straddling the A6 (which links London to Carlisle), halfway between Manchester and Buxton in the Peak District. It lies at the confluence of Cheshire, Derbyshire and Greater Manchester, in the foothills of the Pennines, and affords excellent views of the city of Manchester, the Cheshire Plain and the Peak District. The newly completed A555 Manchester Airport Link Road gives easy access to the Airport and North Wales.

The village has a canal established during the 19th century for transporting goods to support textile mills, coalmining and brick making, and a disused railway now used as a cycleway and footpath between Macclesfield and Marple.

There is a small parade of retail outlets with a nearby Doctor's surgery, Pharmacy and Post Office, and the village also includes award winning businesses by a baker and chocolatier. The village is well stocked with hostelrys and restaurants providing various types of cuisine. A Village Hall is used regularly for concerts and other events and is located in one of the two parks in the village.

There are two "Good" Primary Schools in High Lane namely Brookside Primary and High Lane Primary. High School education is mainly provided nearby in Hazel Grove and Poynton, and there are prestigious independent schools nearby too. The village has two Care Homes that are visited regularly by the Pastoral care team.

One mile away is Lyme Hall a beautiful early Georgian House and grounds, owned by the National Trust, and originally used as a hunting lodge. It was later transformed into the Legh family home and found fame as the location for the filming of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Church Activity

The Vicar of St Thomas' is currently assisted by two Lay Readers (Emeritus), a Sacristan, a Crucifer and two Chalice assistants. Officers of the Church include a Verger, two Church Wardens and a PCC of 12 members. Other people with responsibilities are a Finance Manager and Treasurer, a Musical Director and a PCC Secretary. A Standing Committee of five members meets bi-monthly as does the PCC. Committees currently comprise a Fabric Committee, Magazine Committee and a Pastoral Committee.

Communication with the local community is via weekly service sheets that anyone can pick up from the Church, a delivered monthly magazine, two large notice boards and information on the Church Website and Facebook page.

The Finances are accounted for by a Treasurer with a Finance Manager having an overview and organising policy and procedure. The Church is currently operating with income levels at around £100k per year, with approximately 65% coming from regular weekly/monthly donations and recovery of tax under our Gift Aid scheme. This has been able to allow us to pay the Parish Share in full each year. Other

income must be raised to cover the daily running of the Church, and this is becoming more difficult to achieve as the Parish Share increases each year, and the congregation decreases. There is a major building project in the pipeline and various other maintenance tasks which will require major fundraising to enable completion. Grants are at present being applied for from the Heritage Fund.

A contactless card/PIN machine has been introduced for use when visitors either do not have cash or need to pay fees by card. It's still in its early stages and it is planned to enable the machine to be left unattended for visitors and the congregation to use if they wish to give by card.

The Fabric Committee have recently overseen the extension of the graveyard along with the inclusion of more drainage facilities to reduce the amount of flooding. The Quinquennial Inspection has recently been carried out and further work is required to improve lightning conductivity. The repair of the West Wall is a major project that is being planned along with associated improvements. A maintenance programme is also in place.

Members of the church choir give a significant amount of time each week to rehearse the music to enhance worship at St Thomas'. Members of the choir rehearse regularly, especially for the big services of the year, as well as learning new hymns to introduce in weekly worship. It is envisaged that the choir will be situated in new choir stalls and there have been a number of fundraising initiatives to purchase them. Choristers are involved in the RSCM Voice for Life scheme overseen by the Musical Director.

The church choir will be creating a new Choir Steering Group, where discussion can take place regarding the advancement of the music in church.

Many people in the congregation fundraise on a regular basis and as a result many from the community attend these events, which are very congenial and happy gatherings in the church. Many of those who attend are from the wider community as well as from the congregation. These include coffee mornings and social events on a monthly basis. Social events include two band concerts annually, a parish quiz, musical evenings and many more. The *Taste of Christmas* is a very successful fundraising event that brings many local people to the Church and gets them into the Christmas spirit.



There are also regular social gatherings such as a luncheon club for the elderly, a men's forum and a wives group that meets weekly on Monday evenings with a full programme of events. The activities are well attended and act as a successful community outreach. Most of the funds raised from all activities are given to local charities and the church.

The Vicarage

A new vicarage was built in 2015 on the site of the old Vicarage, alongside three other private dwellings. It is a very desirable family home situated adjacent to the Church. There are four bedrooms upstairs, a large lounge, dining room, kitchen, cloak room and office room on the ground floor.

There is a garage and parking spaces for three cars in the driveway. At the back of the house there is a large garden that has proved very amenable to social gatherings.



The New Incumbent

We need to maintain the growth of the church family and as well as caring for the older members of our congregation, we would like to build up our young families attendance. We would like to build on our strengths to make St. Thomas' a vibrant centre of Christian influence in the community.

We are a welcoming church with something for many in the community. To enable us to achieve this the new incumbent:-

should be secure and confident in their spiritual and personal life and able to lead a variety of worship and prayer with care and sensitivity. They must be an empathetic listener, a good communicator, be pastorally sensitive, and able to nurture, motivate and affirm the talents and contributions of others.

will have the skill and passion for engagement in the local community, and who will undertake and encourage outreach to all ages; the young through contact with the schools and youth groups, community groups, and those at work and at home, and those who are infirm and sick.

will work collaboratively with other parishes in the Chadkirk Deanery and The Diocese of Chester and will be open to other Christian faith churches, especially the local Methodist and Roman Catholic congregations and to other faith communities.

should have a variety of practical skills, be computer literate and be able to encourage people to become actively involved in the life of the church and its activities in the parish, thereby enabling all the various gifts which our church members have to offer.

will develop innovative ways to help us to share our faith beyond the walls of the church, especially to the younger generation of our community and local schools.



