

ST JOHN'S CHURCH, FLIXTON

# Parish Profile



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# The church



ABOVE: St John's congregation ready to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the church building

BELOW: Worship together





### Our story

St John's began as a 'mission' in the 1930s, and its role today is still to be a **mission church**. Our motto is 'Living and Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ'.

Because of its unusual social make-up (for a suburban area) many of the people of the parish do not have any background of churchgoing, although they may describe themselves as 'Christian', send their children to activities on church premises, or wish to visit the church Garden of Remembrance where their loved ones' ashes are interred.

The role of the Church of England as a place of regular worship is as weak here as in many urban areas, but there is no compensating effect of strongly Christian minority ethnic communities or the central, 'commuting worshipper' situation which stimulates the life of some urban churches (indeed, a number of local Christian residents choose to travel out of the parish to urban or other eclectic centres to worship).



**But St John's has a committed, active membership of people who know Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord and are determined to make him known to others. Most of them live within the parish or close to it, and we are represented in the most 'deprived' area of the parish as well as elsewhere.**

### Our members

People know that being part of St John's means commitment, and there is a strong sense of participation in every aspect of the church's life. There are at present 71 names on the Electoral Roll, and most are participants in worship. Attendance figures for Sunday worship (around 45-50 adults) disguise the fact that several members are engaged in Christian activity outside our own congregation as well as within it and may be absent on some Sundays because of that. There is a broad mix of social categories and ages, and not all attenders have a Church of England background but are part of us because of our Bible-based stance and participatory worship.

### Our buildings

St John's church centre is used by groups from both community and congregation.

The original 'mission' building of 1930 is now the church hall. From 1956 it was known as St John's Church, with its own priest-in-charge from 1964. In 1968 a modern church was built to serve the newly formed parish.

It was a radical design for its time: not only on account of its looks but the economy of its cost. Plain steel girders and brick walls form the basic structure – but the square ground-plan, with the main axis of the worship area running diagonally, gives an 'in the round' feel.

The **church building**, with 100 upholstered chairs, has a glazed entrance porch which opens both into the main worship space and, separately, to a small, carpeted chapel with 20 upholstered chairs, used for weekday worship, occasional meetings and as a creche on Sunday mornings. There is a small vestry-cum-office with running water and a sink, and this is a secure space when locked.



The church sanctuary

# The parish



## Flixton

St John's church, Flixton, is set in an area of residential housing, developed mainly since the Second World War, on the western side of the suburbs of Urmston, Flixton and Davyhulme. These suburbs are bordered by the Manchester Ship Canal to the west and in the south by the Mersey, with the M60 motorway forming an informal border to the north and east – although the Trafford Centre, on the opposite side of the M60, is a retail and leisure focal point for the whole area, as well as a magnet for a wider region.

Together with Stretford and Old Trafford, this is the only part of the present-day borough of Trafford within the diocese of Manchester: Trafford parishes to the south and west are in Chester diocese.

St John's parish was created in 1968: some older housing was included from the neighbouring parishes of St Mary, Davyhulme, and St Michael, Flixton, but much was relatively new council property, and the population expanded rapidly with further private building in the 1960s – and there has been piecemeal development since.

## Flixton people

Today the parish shares a number of characteristics with its neighbouring suburban parishes – but there are also significant differences. St John's is the only parish out of five in Urmston, Flixton and Davyhulme to have any area figuring among the 30% most deprived in the country: the area made up of post-war (originally) council housing, referred to above, ranks within the top 23% in national Index of Multiple Deprivation scores.



Woodsend Circle, Flixton

The parish as a whole is within the most deprived 36% – i.e. worse than average. In this respect, despite its edge-of-suburbia situation, it shares some characteristics with the urban and inner-city parishes of the Stretford deanery.

It contains around 2,750 homes, with a population of around 6,500. It is a mainly mature housing area: there are more settled people and growing families than the national average, fewer young adults, and more old people. A quarter of all households with children are lone parents – that is 13% of all households (7% in 2001).

Occupations exceed national averages in 'supervisory, clerical, and junior managerial, administrative or professional', and 'skilled manual' categories: there are fewer than national averages in 'higher or intermediate managerial, administrative or professional' occupations and those who are 'semi or unskilled manual, low-grade employed or unemployed'. There are more in employment, fewer 'economically inactive', more retired and more sick/disabled than the national averages.

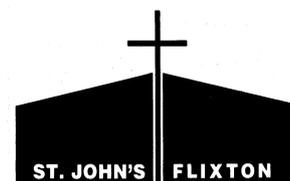
Almost 60% of all homes are semi-detached; 75% of all households are owner-occupied, 7% are privately rented, and 18% are in social rented accommodation.

*The picture is of a place where people work hard and settle down to bring up their families, with around two-thirds in employment, though relatively few aspire to positions of authority or affluence, and around a quarter are now of retirement age.*<sup>2</sup>

The population is overwhelmingly UK-born: 94% say they are white British, and 72% claim to be Christian, against a national total of 59%. (In 2001, 81% claimed to be Christian, with a national total of 72%, so there has been a marked decrease here, but not as steep as the national trend.)<sup>2</sup>

1 See Appendix

2 See Appendix



### Flixton places

The parish includes a large secondary school for boys: **Wellacre Academy**. It is a near neighbour to St John's church. **Delamere School**, a centre for children with special needs, is adjacent. A rapidly growing primary school (**Acre Hall Academy**) is nearby, and on its site a new facility for special needs children, '**The Orchards**' is being developed to serve a wider area of the borough of Trafford. Acre Hall Academy also uses the premises of a former Children's Centre and provides services for parents and children there. **St Monica's** RC church (next to St John's) also has its own primary school. There is also in the parish a pupil referral unit called **Trafford High School**, for 11-16s of both sexes excluded from mainstream education for 'challenging behaviour'.



Wellacre Academy

**Woodsend Library** is a major focal point of the local community, with a number of activity groups, though its hours of opening and access have been reduced in recent years.

Several children's and amateur football clubs play locally. Flixton Cricket and Tennis Club has its own grounds and a social centre which is widely used. There is a sports building at the edge of the central **playing field** area, Woodsend Park, and the 8<sup>th</sup> Flixton (St John's) **Scouts** have their own headquarters building nearby, used for a number of community activities.



Woodsend Library

The parish includes De Brook Lodge, a 52-bed development by Ideal Care Homes, directly opposite St John's church, and Marlfield Court, a sheltered housing unit nearby.

There is one **pub** in the parish – the Railway Tavern, close to St John's church. It is a 'drinkers' pub, with modest food offered. Another, the Fox & Hounds, serving a more extensive food menu, is just outside the parish on its northern corner.

There are a couple of car body repair shops in the parish, but most other commercial activity is retail **shops**, with a group at Woodsend Circle (including a Sainsbury's Local, a Spar, a Post Office and small café) and others closer to St John's church, including a Co-Op supermarket, fish-and-chips take-away and a café.

Other **churches** nearby include St Monica's RC (a large building adjacent to St John's) and Flixton Fellowship Church (meeting at 'The Ark' – see below). Flixton Methodist Church closed a few years ago, but its work is continued mainly by Cornerstone Methodist in Davyhulme. The Maranatha Community, a national network of ecumenical prayer and other activity, is closely linked to Flixton Fellowship Church and based in premises near St John's church: it runs the 'Taste and See' café, almost opposite the church. The Ark, a Christian residential conference and healing centre, is also closely linked to Flixton Fellowship Church and just outside St John's parish on the southern side.



The Railway Tavern

Refurbishment of the church in recent years has seen pews replaced by chairs, the installation of a reredos incorporating a screen in the sanctuary for video and computer projection, a new pulpit, font and Holy Table, and removable Communion rails, which, with full carpeting of the sanctuary, enhance its practical flexibility. There are also dimmable lights, separately controlled for the sanctuary and congregational areas.

The **hall** consists of a large space with a variety of uses, with a smaller meeting room attached, the church's Book Unit in a secure space of its own, and a kitchen and store room. Around 15 folding tables and 150 stacking chairs are housed here. A project to modernize the hall for better community use, including installation of a new heating system and suspended ceiling, followed by redecoration and additional storage provision, is now almost complete, using around £80,000 obtained in grant aid as well as money from church funds and generous donations by church members.

The covered walkway linking church and hall was transformed into an entrance corridor in 2000, with toilet facilities, and is now being refurbished inside and out.

### Our worship

Worship centres on a **Family Communion** service on Sundays at 10.30am, with a Sunday School group for children in the church hall meeting room (who leave after the Bible readings and return for sharing of the Communion) and a self-service creche in the side chapel (with a sound relay from the church PA system so that parents are not cut off).



Sunday worship at St John's

Worship is liturgical, with different orders of service taken from Common Worship for different seasons of the year, but with informality and flexibility. The service rarely exceeds 90 minutes in length and is marked by enthusiastic sharing of the Peace at the 'half-way' point.

Music is a mix of old and new, led by a good electronic organ, electronic piano and guitarists and others when available. St John's has live acoustics and enjoys its congregational singing. An informal singing group offers worship songs during the administration of Communion and contributes occasional special items.

On the first Sunday of the month, usually February to June and September to December, our 10.30am service is **All-Age Worship** – designed to last an hour or less and to include children throughout. It has its own team of leaders, under the supervision of the ordained ministers. The St John's Scout group members, and some of the Rainbows, Brownies and Guides groups using our church hall in the week, join us on some occasions, October's Harvest Festival being the best attended.

**Evening worship** at 6.30pm on Sundays draws a small congregation and is almost always held in the side chapel. It takes the form of Holy Communion on the first Sunday of the month and a variety of Services of the Word and other forms on other occasions.

There is a **Thursday morning Holy Communion** (occasionally Morning Prayer) at 10.30am in the side chapel, attended by a regular congregation usually between 12 and 20, including members of Trafford Heart & Stroke Club when it is present in the church hall and by residents of De Brook Lodge old people's home (opposite the church) when we are able to escort them across the road to take part. The deanery has been deemed 'dementia-aware', and some of our own members have had training in provision for dementia sufferers.

The church sees occasional weddings and funerals, and baptisms and naming-and-blessing ceremonies are carried out either during or immediately after morning worship on Sundays.



### Other church activities

Two housegroups meet fortnightly, involving about half the church's active membership. There are occasional ladies' and men's weeknight get-togethers, both on and off church premises (and sometimes both groups combine). Weekly meetings for prayer are held, and there is a confidential 'prayer chain' so that prayer needs can be circulated by phone and through a weekly sheet. An informal ladies' Bible study group, using video presentations, has been active, and some members of the congregation also organize social activities in their own homes as a Christian witness to the community.

### Our ministry team

St John's is committed to shared leadership. There are two Ordained Local Ministers – the Rev Rodney Green, who is licensed as Associate Minister, and the Rev Mo Surrey – and two readers (one is reader emeritus). Others take leadership roles in work with children, prayer, visiting, etc.

### Our finances

The church's 'baseline' donation income is around £50,000 a year, of which around £30,000 goes in Parish Share and the rest in normal church expenditure. There is a strong emphasis on committed giving, and around £45,000 of the total is from regular donations and the Gift Aid recovered on them.

**The church has a long-established policy of giving away 10% its voluntary income to other Christian work and does not seek funds for its worship and witness from anyone except its own members.**

Members have been generous in recent years in making extra gifts for specific projects, particularly in 2006, when the church roof needed replacing and around £20,000 was given or pledged in addition to normal income, in 2014-15, when around £12,000 extra was given for a new lighting scheme and a church re-wire, and in 2016-7, when over £8,000 was given in each year for urgent work on the church hall.

In recent years an improvement project for the outdoor space at the back of the church hall was completed with finance from the local authority, the church hall kitchen was modernised with a grant from Trafford Housing Trust, and we met the cost of a new kitchen roof and rewiring of the hall from our own resources. Our only reserves are in a cash account worth around £30,000, but we rejoice in God's past provision for our needs and trust him for the future.

The hall modernization project referred to above is now close to completion, using both grant aid and large amounts from our own funds and received in members' donations: expenditure is expected to total around £150,000 over five years – a plan which seemed daunting at first but which we have committed to in faith and in which God has encouraged us by providing more than we asked or thought.

### Our relationships with other churches

In a programme of celebration of the 50th anniversary of our church building in 2018, we worked with St Michael's Flixton, our neighbouring and 'parent' church, on a number of events, and we expect this pattern to continue. We share worship on the Sunday before Christmas, Good Friday and some other occasions with Flixton Fellowship Church, and have seen the value of accepting initiatives from each other, particularly in evangelism.

Some of our members take part in Maranatha Community activities, which represent Christians from many churches, including Roman Catholics. There is also a local ecumenical house group, which includes members of St Monica's RC church next door. Several of St John's ladies attend local Mothers' Prayers groups (which represent various local churches).



### Our relationships with the community

St John's church hall is in use almost every day of every week, throughout the year, by local community groups.

- **St John's Pre-School** operates four mornings and four afternoons a week (it has independent leadership but its equipment and good will belong to St John's and it enjoys privileged rental terms).
- **Trafford Heart & Stroke Club** is on Thursday mornings and lunchtimes and some of our church members help (the leaders are members of St Michael's, Flixton).
- **Rainbows, Brownies and Guides** (not church-affiliated) meet on Friday nights.
- During school holidays a private **children's holiday club** uses the premises almost every Monday to Friday.
- The hall is often booked for **children's parties and private functions** on Saturdays and Sunday afternoons.



The church hall exterior



The church hall interior

Our clergy have visited Wellacre Academy, and the Rev Rodney Green is chairman of the 8<sup>th</sup> Flixton (St John's) Scouts Group and has links with Acre Hall Academy. Wellacre Academy, Acre Hall Academy and Delamere Special School use the church for Christmas carol services almost every year, and a united carol service for Urmston area Scouts, and Rainbows, Brownies and Guides has been held each year since 2014.



From our 'community day': the Bishop learns to belly-dance!

# The future



St John's is committed to an open evangelical churchmanship, with a strong emphasis on the primacy of the Bible, the need for personal faith, worship that includes all ages and temperaments, shared ministry, committed giving, and evangelism of our community in co-operation with other Christians whenever possible. We also endorse the value of diversity among Anglican churches and believe that working together can be possible without dilution of a church's own identity.

We see the following qualities as **ESSENTIAL** for a minister in this parish:

- **Bringing fresh ideas to our evangelism, discipling and teaching**
- **Having gifts to help us build relationships with local schools and young families, and expand our children's and youth work**
- **Being our team leader and enabler, and our voice in the community**

Other **DESIRABLE** qualities would be:

- **Helping us grow ministries within the congregation, especially its younger members**
- **Helping us build a pastoral care team**

Our experience of **worship** is that it should accommodate different tastes and traditions, where all are potentially free to contribute.

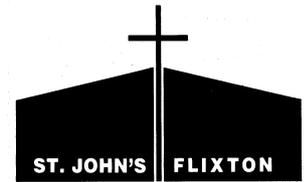
Our experience of **ministry** is that it can be shared, involving those formally authorised to lead and also those with gifts to share.

Our experience of co-operation in **mission** is that it is already happening in different ways across denominational boundaries in this area (particularly through our links with Flixton Fellowship Church), and we believe that plans for Anglican co-operation should be widened to include other denominations and groups.

## A leadership role

Our present leadership team offer many gifts needed for work in this parish, but it would be unrealistic to suppose that they will be able to grow it without further help – or indefinitely. We don't expect the same person to contribute in each area of the church's life, and we hope our new minister will be keen to work with our ecumenical colleagues.

We have benefitted from the ministry of a house-for-duty priest already, and are used to working as a team to support our vicar on this basis in visiting, teaching and making links in our deanery and diocese. We also look forward to greater co-operation with our neighbouring parish of St Michael's in the future.



## APPENDIX

Parish overall Index of Multiple Deprivation score: in the 36% (approx.) most deprived in country. We have one Lower Super Output Area completely within the parish (and making up a large central segment of it) which is within the 23% (approx.) most deprived. No other parish in the Urmston, Flixton and Davyhulme area has any LSOA even in the most deprived 30%. Three other deanery parishes (in the area closer to Manchester city centre) have one LSOA in the top 20%, and two are considered 'inner city', with one or more LSOAs in the top 10% and at least one in the top 20%. (Source: Church Commissioners/Diocese of Manchester: 2010 figures)

The Trafford 007 Middle Layer Super Output Area (slightly larger in area than the parish but including almost all of it) has these features:

Population 8,108: in 2011 there were slightly more than the national average in the 0-19 age bracket, fewer than the national average in the 20-39 age bracket, the same as the national average in the 40-49 bracket, more than the national average in the 50-69 bracket, and slightly more than the national average in the 70-and-over age bracket. The most marked difference was in the 20-39 bracket (fewer).

32% of our population are single (national 35%), 49% married (national 46%), 12% separated or divorced (national 12%), and 7% widowed (national 7%). In the parish, a quarter of all households with children are single-parent households – that represents 13% of all households (7% in 2001).

*This would seem to indicate a population with more settled people and mature families than elsewhere, fewer young adults, and more old people.*

Ethnicity and religion: 93% say they are white and British. 72% claim to be Christian (national total 59%). In 2001, 81% of this MLSOA population claimed to be Christian, so there has been a decrease by 13% here, against the national decrease by 18% (2001 total 72%).

### Social grouping:

AB (higher or intermediate managerial, administrative or professional occupations): 19% (national 23%)  
 C1 (supervisory, clerical, and junior managerial, administrative or professional occupations): 35% (national 30%)  
 C2 (skilled manual occupations): 24% (national 22%)  
 DE (semi or unskilled manual, low-grade employed or unemployed): 22% (national 25%)

Adult population in employment: 62% (national 59%)

Adult population unemployed: 3.8% (national 4.7%)

Adults 'economically inactive': 34% (national 37%)

Retired: 23% (national 21%)

Carers: 2.2% (national 3.9%)

Sick or disabled 4.75% (national 3.9%)

Housing in the parish: 75% of all households are owner-occupied, 7% are privately rented, and 18% are in social rented accommodation.

(Source: Office for National Statistics/Diocese of Manchester: 2011 figures)

