



# Parish of St. Peter's, Halliwell, Bolton

## PARISH PROFILE



**"Transforming Bolton Together in Jesus' Name"**

[www.stpetersparish.info](http://www.stpetersparish.info)

# Foreword from the Bishop of Bolton

Welcome to this Parish Profile for St. Peter's Halliwell.

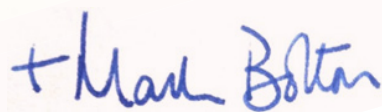
St. Peter's has always played a significant role in the life of the Diocese with a heart for mission and the transformation of Bolton. It is a parish that has a big vision and a group of gifted and committed people who long to see that vision come into reality. So, we are praying for the right person under God to respond to God's call to serve and lead here.

Manchester Diocese is seeing tremendous transformation to fulfil our desire to be a "Church for a Different World". We are focussing on growing the church and to become younger and more diverse. St. Peter's is very much part of our vision to plant over 100 new churches by 2030 bringing new people to Jesus Christ. We also focus on discipleship and evangelism and enabling the whole baptised people of God to engage in the whole mission of God.

Clergy are expected to work collaboratively and to empower the laity in discovering their own gifts and passions. Again, St. Peter's has been at the forefront of this. Manchester Diocese is well known for some of the challenges of deprivation and poverty and we have a special emphasis not only on serving the poor as St. Peter's does but caring for the environment as the Diocese has recently achieved a Bronze Eco Diocese award. We would love to see St. Peter's stretching its wings and continue to be a blessing to Bolton and the wider Diocese.

Bolton is a great place to live and serve, set in beautiful surroundings but also with all the amenities that a City Region has to offer. You may not yet be the finished article, you may well have lots to learn, but if the Lord is calling you to this place, He will equip you and empower you and you will have a fantastic group of people to share in the next phase of the life and mission of St. Peter's. May God's Spirit enable you to discern if this may be the right place for you.

With every blessing

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Ashcroft". The signature is written in a cursive style.

**The Rt Revd Mark Ashcroft**  
**Bishop of Bolton**

# Summary

St Peter's is a large, vibrant, evangelical parish on the edge of Bolton. We are four churches who each have their own identity, but with a single Parochial Church Council and a big, unifying vision - to transform Bolton in Jesus' name.

Our vicar has recently retired after 17 years with us, leaving behind an enthusiastic parish with a large staff team, active and gifted lay leadership and a wide variety of well-established ministries and mission to our community.

We're looking for someone dynamic who will seek and develop God's vision for St. Peter's Parish and take us forward into a new season. We have lots of strengths to build on, but we are hungry to grow and we are ready to be challenged and to do things differently. We don't just want to maintain the status quo; we want to grow God's Kingdom.

We want someone to 'dream big' with us, to help us grow in our whole-life discipleship and be more intentional in drawing in those on the fringes of our church. We want to develop our digital presence and transform how we use our buildings for outreach. We want to equip our congregations to share faith on their front lines. We want to find out how God wants us to grow in other new and exciting directions. We're looking for someone who is excited about taking our church from where it is to where it needs to be.

We are excited and expectant as we move towards a new season in our life as a parish. We hope that this profile gives you a flavour of who we are - our context, passions, strengths and opportunities for growth. Please do look at our website and view our services online to get to know us better. We will be praying for you as you seek God's will and consider applying for this position.

Could God be calling you to join us to work together building His kingdom in Bolton?



St. Peter's Church



St. Peter's Parish Centre



Barrow Bridge Mission



The Hope Centre



Smithills Fellowship



Smithills Chapel

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# Our Parish:

## Vision and Mission

Our vision at St. Peter's is to transform Bolton together in Jesus' name. This shapes our **values** and **priorities** as a Parish and individual churches, as laid out in our **Mission Action Plan (MAP)** which can be found on our website. This was last completed in November 2018 and is regularly updated to reflect how action points are being changed or revised. Our vision can be summarised in the graphic below.

Our Vision	
Transforming Bolton Together in Jesus' Name	
Our Foundations	
	<p><b>Welcoming in:</b> all are invited and everyone belongs in Christ</p> <p><b>Moving on:</b> ready to take God-led risks to start, stop and change as He leads</p> <p><b>Going out:</b> committed to establishing God's kingdom in Bolton and beyond</p>
Our Mission Goals - to be a parish which seeks to:	
<b>Know God</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be devoted to sacrificial prayer and rooted in God's word.</li> <li>• Give people the space and freedom to encounter the Holy Spirit.</li> <li>• Help more people come to know Jesus for the first time.</li> </ul>
<b>Grow in God</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be whole life disciples, helping everyone to follow and serve God wherever they are.</li> <li>• Share all of life together and recognise that everyone has something important to give.</li> <li>• Empower young people, encouraging them to lead the way; embrace older people, encouraging them to share their wisdom and passion.</li> </ul>
<b>Go for God</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be on the lookout for God at work, ready to grasp opportunities to share the good news that Jesus is alive. Reinterpret biblical truths for today's world.</li> <li>• Engage with our neighbourhoods, and play our part as God transforms them, our town and our world.</li> <li>• Partner with others in seeking the common good, ready to take a lead where needed, and willing to share all that God has given us for His glory.</li> </ul>

We are excited about working with our new incumbent to develop our vision and plans for the next ten years and beyond. Following on from the impact of COVID, in Spring 2021 we developed a strategic action plan to guide us through the next 12-18 months, which is summarised below:

### Our overriding priority is to grow our church by:

1. Identifying and focussing on our "key ministries" as we recover from the pandemic.
2. Making the most of our buildings to better accommodate the key ministries and our outreach activities.
3. Developing "Life Groups" as a means of developing stronger relationships between small groups of people and providing discipleship teaching/training in order to provide confidence to enable members to more readily witness for Christ on their front lines.
4. Creating a strong social media presence to encourage and inspire people.

## Theology and Churchmanship

We are an evangelical Anglican church, and we fully subscribe to the *Evangelical Alliance basis of faith*.

We want to express God's love for the world in the way that we live and relate to others and we find the Bible a trustworthy guide in discovering God and His will for our lives and our community. Faith for us means a transforming and trusting relationship with God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. As a church, we have worked with, and been greatly influenced by, the *London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICCC)* who have helped us to emphasise whole life discipleship to the extent that concepts such as "*frontlines*" and "*scattered and gathered church*" have entered our vocabulary. Our current strapline "*Transforming Bolton together in Jesus' name*" reflects our vision.

Our style of worship tends to the informal and we are strong believers in "*every member ministry*". Our clergy generally only robe for life events such as weddings and funerals. The vast majority of our services include contemporary sung worship lead by a worship band, and will often include video clips or drama which support the service theme. Pre-pandemic, we had congregations meeting in five different worship centres with up to seven services each Sunday, some of which were simultaneous, making the use of lay people as leaders essential. One of these seven services used a more traditional, liturgical format with hymns accompanied by the organ and liturgy from Common Worship.

Members of our congregations regularly attend various conferences including Spring Harvest, New Wine and Keswick Convention. Many are also involved with various social action initiatives and we maintain close links with organisations such as *Urban Outreach* (<https://www.urbanoutreach.co.uk>) and *Create Bolton* (<https://createbolton.org.uk>).

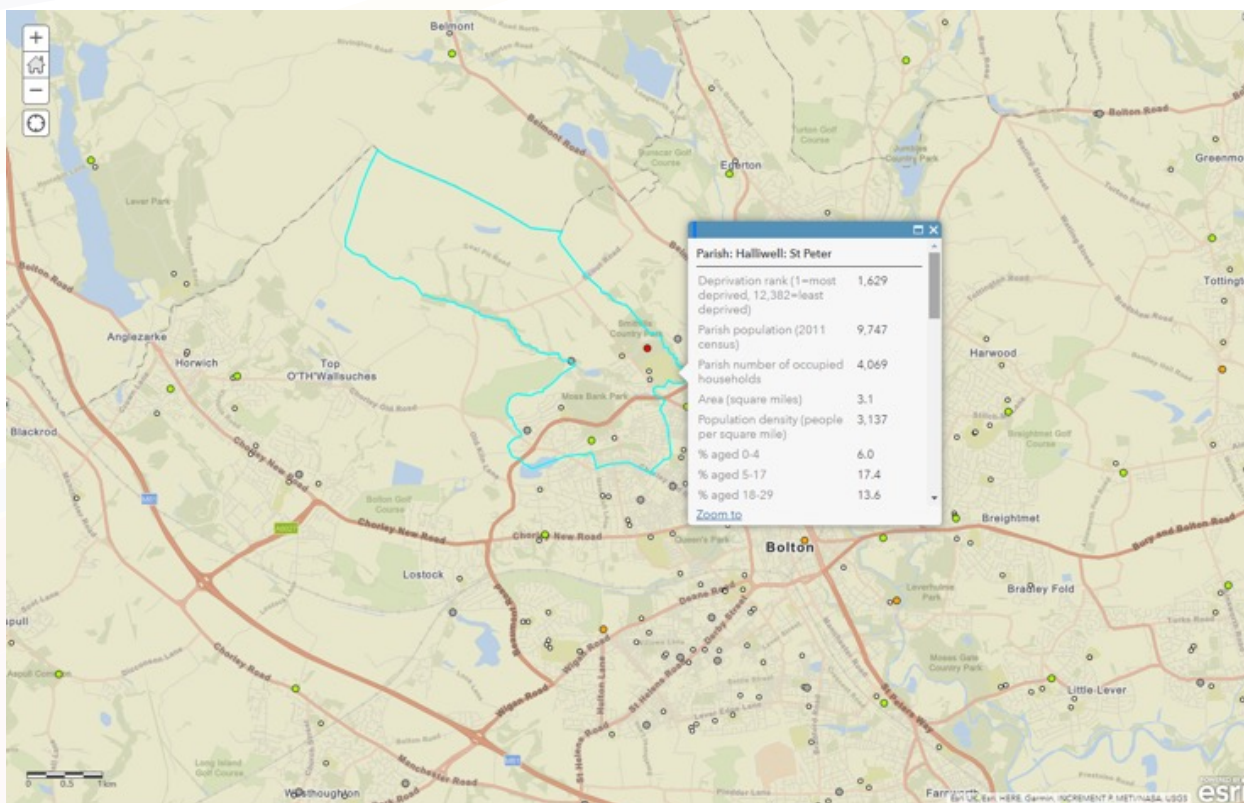
We benefit from a high standard of teaching and preaching from clergy, licensed lay ministers and members of the congregation alike (we have a preaching rota of about 30 people). The overall style is challenging, thoughtful and seeks to apply Biblical principles to everyday life; we are committed to encouraging church members towards whole life discipleship. Our leadership is not defined by gender; St Peter's has had female curates in the past and has proposed women for ordination.

Please do browse our YouTube channel where you can watch any of our services from the last year:

<https://www.youtube.com/stpetershalliwell> under the title "*Church Without Walls*" or "*Church Live*".

## Location and Membership

Bolton is 10 miles north-west of Manchester. It is surrounded by several neighbouring towns and villages that together form the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton, of which Bolton is the administrative centre. The town of Bolton has a population of 139,403, whilst the wider metropolitan borough has a population of 262,400. According to a survey of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Boltonians are the friendliest people in Britain. Bolton is reasonably close to several National parks and Areas of Natural Beauty, including the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales, Peak District, the Trough of Bowland, and adjacent to the West Pennine Moors.



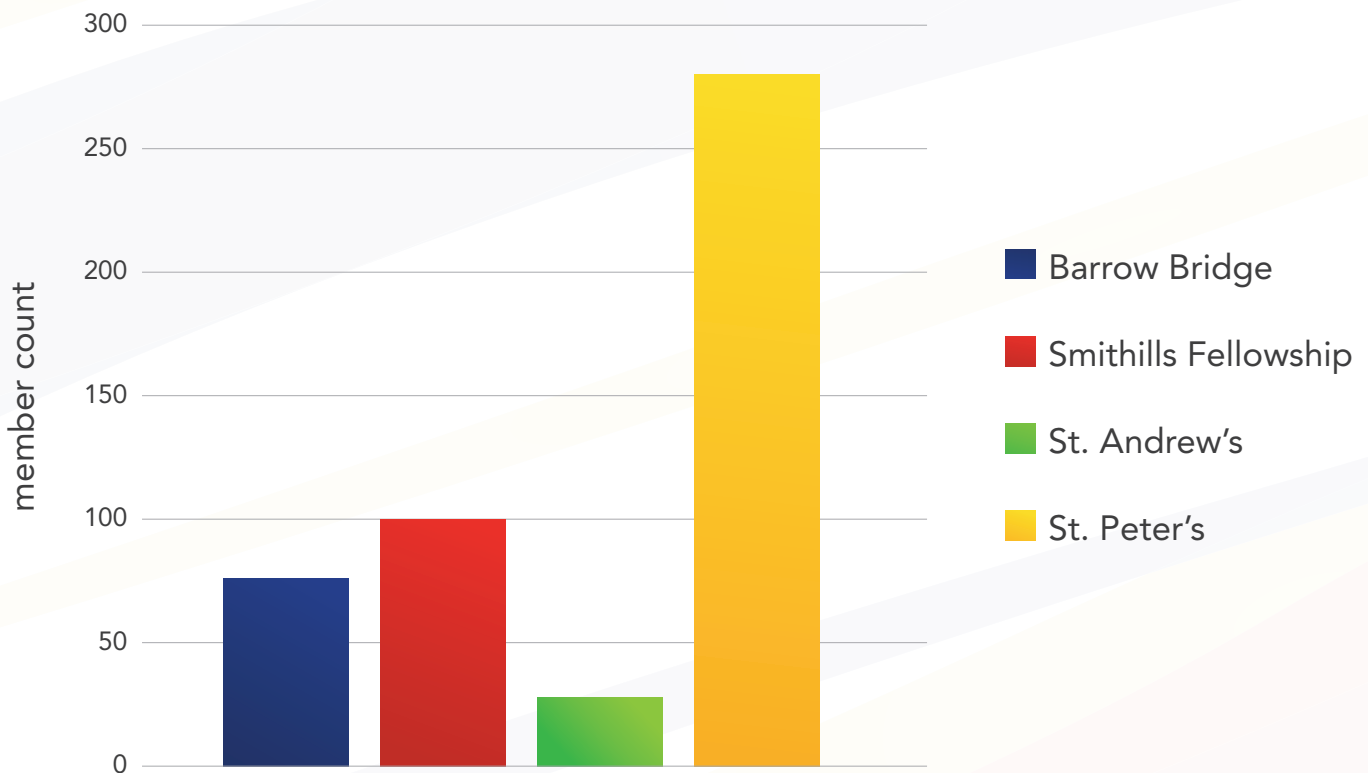
Cultural highlights in Bolton include several theatres such as the Octagon, Bolton Little Theatre and the Phoenix Theatre Company. Bolton has also been used as a filming location for several recent films and television programmes, including "It's a Sin", "Peaky Blinders", "Traces" and "Last Tango in Halifax". Inside the Town Hall there is a theatre and conference complex, the Albert Halls. Le Mans Crescent, home to the central library, museum, art gallery, aquarium, magistrates' court and town hall, is to be the centre of a new Cultural Quarter. Bolton Museum and Art Gallery houses a collection of local and international art, and Bolton Steam Museum houses a variety of heritage steam engines in the old Atlas Mill. The town centre is currently undergoing substantial redevelopment.

The parish has an official population of 9,747 (2011 Census) and includes several affluent areas as well as some areas of deprivation. It lacks a central focal point but includes a major park and some lovely open countryside. The parish contains 4100 households; of these, 93% identify as white. In terms of faith background, 71% identify as Christian, 20% as no religion and 2.5% as Muslim (2011 census data).

There are three primary schools, one of which is our church school, and one secondary school within the parish.

Our parish consists of 4 churches: St. Peter's Church and three sister churches of St. Andrew's, Barrow Bridge, and Smithills Fellowship, which serve specific congregations and communities. We also have the Parish Centre which is a parish-wide resource, providing space for our ministries and local community groups. The Parish Centre is also licenced as a worship centre and sometimes used by our congregations where needed.

## Electoral Roll



Our electoral roll numbers about 490 people, of whom just over half live in the parish; the breakdown across the churches is shown above. We are a very sociable, welcoming church, seeking to develop a closer sense of community across the parish and beyond.

We have a very committed core that have been members for many years and, at the other extreme, a large attendance of young families committed to their children's schooling. The latter tend to fall away as their children grow older. Those in the 30-40 age range are underrepresented. Statistics over the last 10 years (2009 – 2019) show that actual church attendance has decreased by almost 30%. However, the proportion of children (under 16) attending has remained relatively constant at about 30%. Between 2013 and 2019 (years when the roll was fully revised) the decrease was about 20%.



# Leadership and Governance across the Parish

We consider it a real strength of the parish that there is well-established lay leadership across many areas. There is a lot of practical support and structures in place, and many areas run with a high degree of autonomy. Though the new vicar will be central to our vision, mission and ministry, it will not be all down to him or her to get things done.

The PCC directly employ six people who have key roles in the church. The staff team meet for prayer twice a week, in addition to a weekly staff meeting and regular study days and socials together. Currently, the vicar has line management responsibilities for several of the employed staff. The employed staff include the Parish Business Manager (Amanda), the CAP Centre Manager (Sam), the Youth Minister (Sarah), the Caretaker (Ben), the Parish Finance Administrator (Elaine) and a cleaner (Shirley – based at St. Andrew's). Sarah, our Youth Minister, went on maternity leave in October 2021 and we have employed part-time maternity cover, Kristen Allen for her.

The parish has a single PCC with 23 members, which meets 6 times a year. Sub-committees oversee specific elements of parish management. There are two church wardens for the parish.

Each of the four churches has its own leadership team, which is lay-chaired and includes a number of members of the church as well as the vicar. These teams work with the vicar to oversee the worship, ministries and mission activities of each church, and are the owners of each church MAP. For the three sister churches (St. Andrew's, Smithills Fellowship and Barrow Bridge), the leadership teams are elected and have a slightly broader remit including some control over buildings and finance. These three churches run with quite a high degree of autonomy.

The chairs of each leadership team meet together regularly with the vicar and, in addition, each leadership team has representation on the PCC. We all work under the same shared vision and parish-wide MAP; although we are churches with different contexts and identities, we work closely together.



## Key People

**Rev'd David Brae**  
Associate Minister



David, who joined the staff in March 2020, is part time Associate Minister in the parish and part time Pioneer Minister for Bolton town centre. David is progressing a church plant in the centre of Bolton for students and young adults, as proposed in the Deanery MAP.

**Sarah Saxon**  
Youth Minister



Sarah joined the staff as Youth Minister in March 2015, having worked for The Sycamore Project - Zac's Youth Bars, in Farnworth, Bolton. Sarah works with the different youth and children's groups and their leaders across the parish. *(employed full time)*

**Sam Wolstencroft**  
CAP Centre Manager



Our Cap office has been running for 10 years and Sam has worked as our CAP Manager (Christians Against Poverty) having previously been our Debt coach. She works with clients and coordinates our team of support workers. *(employed for 22.5 hours per week)*

**Amanda Blease**  
Parish Business Manager



A member of St. Peter's Church, Amanda joined our staff team in September 2009. Amanda's responsibility is day to day administration for both the work of the parish as a whole, St. Peter's Church and the Parish Centre. *(employed for 27.5 hours per week):*

**Elian Winstanley**  
Churchwarden



Elian has been a member of St. Peter's since 1987 and was elected a Warden in 2018. He's also our resident "techie" and is heavily involved in developing our AV support and live-streaming. He has been elected as one of our Parish representatives, the other being Carolyn Rigby, a member of PCC.

**Phil Weaver**  
Churchwarden



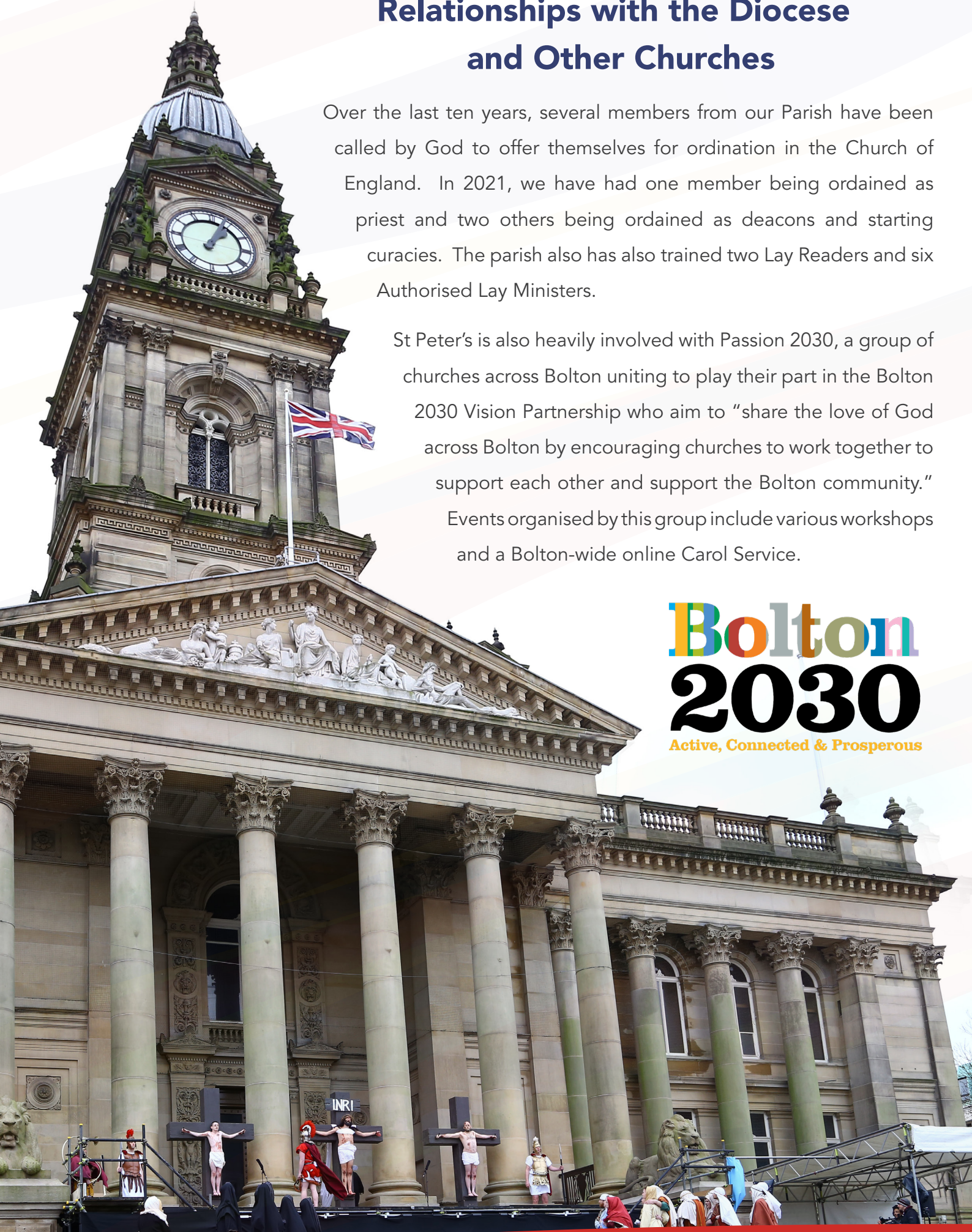
Phil has been a member of St. Peter's since 2004 and was elected Warden in 2021. Previously to this, he served as our Treasurer. Another of Phil's duties is that of Gift Aid Secretary. Phil also volunteers at Urban Outreach and serves on our Welcome Team.

## Relationships with the Diocese and Other Churches

Over the last ten years, several members from our Parish have been called by God to offer themselves for ordination in the Church of England. In 2021, we have had one member being ordained as priest and two others being ordained as deacons and starting curacies. The parish also has also trained two Lay Readers and six Authorised Lay Ministers.

St Peter's is also heavily involved with Passion 2030, a group of churches across Bolton uniting to play their part in the Bolton 2030 Vision Partnership who aim to "share the love of God across Bolton by encouraging churches to work together to support each other and support the Bolton community." Events organised by this group include various workshops and a Bolton-wide online Carol Service.

**Bolton**  
**2030**  
Active, Connected & Prosperous




# Parish Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

## Strengths

- Vibrant and energetic parish, lots of mature Christians as well as those at every other stage of their faith journey.
- Emphasis on biblical teaching and preaching at the heart of our worship, and a large number of gifted musicians.
- Strong lay leadership across worship and ministry areas - a large number of people who are involved in leading services and preaching - and collaborative, supportive PCC and leadership teams.
- Focus on national and international mission, overseen by a steering group, which supports mission partners all over the world with prayer and financial giving of circa £40,000 per year.
- Good provision for children and youth: we have a paid youth minister and a wide variety of fellowship and discipleship activities for young people.
- Buildings: our churches and separate Parish Centre building provide significant and flexible spaces, offering affordable rents, which support a wide range of well-established ministries and groups serving the community.
- We are the home church for Bolton North's Christians Against Poverty Centre, based in the Parish Centre
- Parish-wide support from a strong staff team, including a Parish Business Manager, a Finance Administrator, a Youth Minister, our CAP centre manager, plus a caretaker and cleaner.
- Strong and well-developed working relationships with other churches and organisations including our local housing provider and town-wide Christian charity - Urban Outreach.
- Significant experience of running events: special services and events throughout the year are generally well attended and supported by the community.

## Weaknesses

- Welcoming and integrating newcomers: we have many new people who come along to our church but in many cases we have found it hard to engage with them well and draw them into the life of the church. We did a project in early 2020 looking at how our church welcomes people, the barriers that people face coming into church and then getting further involved, and were at the start of implementing the actions from that pre-COVID. We are also increasing our focus on 'pathways' by which people new to church, especially those earlier on in their faith journey, can get further involved.
- Proportion of people in our 'Connect Groups' (small groups) is limited: we have active and committed small groups, many of which have thrived online during lockdown. However, there can be a lack of desire to grow spiritually and many people are not part of a small group. We are in the process of re-launching our small groups as 'Life Groups', with a focus on 'doing life together' and emphasising the opportunities for mission. It is recognised that Life Groups need to be used to build a practical support structure and nurture faith.
- Pastoral care: this often happens organically driven by existing personal relationships, but we do not always oversee this in a very systematic way and there is a risk of people falling through the gaps. However, post-COVID, we have mitigated this by forming a new parish-wide pastoral care team under the leadership of one of our Readers.
- Mobilising the congregation's gifts and contributions and bringing new people into roles of service: we are not always good at doing this to support existing and new ministries, and this can sometimes leave us feeling overstretched, with too few people filling too many roles. Succession planning for leadership roles is limited with ageing leadership teams and limited "new blood" coming through to take up positions of leadership on these teams. This is also mirrored in the availability of people to lead groups and other ministries across the parish. It is clear that there is a particular absence of leaders in the 20-40 year old age group.
- Complacency and resistance to change: change/freshness is not always easily accepted and there can be too much reliance on 'the way we have always done things'.



I'll stand  
With arms high and heart  
abandoned  
In awe of the One who gave it all  
So I'll stand  
My soul Lord to You surrendered  
All I am is yours

## Opportunities

- Large numbers of families and primary-aged children attend our services due to the church schools' admissions requirements (which are unusually high in Bolton). However, they are often not involved in any other aspects of church life.
- With 3 primary schools in our parish there is particular scope to further develop and build on the links with Johnson Fold and Church Road schools, as well as our church school, St. Peter's.
- Digital/online worship, fellowship and discipleship since pandemic: there have been lots of positives in bringing our parish together (through one weekly service) and being able to connect with those living further away, including our Mission Partners. Our small groups have continued to meet virtually, we have run Alpha and bible study groups online. We have invested in AV technology to be able to continue to stream our services post-lockdown.
- Ministry/outreach to the parish: there is a need for the gospel in our local area, and a desire to build on 'Church Without Walls' and extend ways we 'do church' into the community, increasing our visibility as a church (e.g. outdoor carol services and cafes have been well received by our community.) A team from St Peter's has also taken the lead in organising Bolton's 'Party in the Park' (see later) for a number of years, a large-scale annual summer community event attended by approximately 7,000 people.
- How we use our buildings: we need to look at possible ways to recover loss of income from hire during the pandemic. Our buildings have enormous potential to become even busier community hubs and alive with new opportunities. We need to be alert to the needs of, and reach wider into, the community and ask where the gaps are, and how we can support or meet those. We need to keep an open mind as to what we can appropriately offer as we share with others the buildings we are blessed with.

## Threats / Challenges

- Clergy resource: since March 2020 our curate has moved on; our associate minister (NSM) has taken up a missionary position overseas; and last summer our ordinand, along with her husband who was one of our Readers, moved to her curacy. This has in effect been mitigated by the change in worship and ministry patterns during the pandemic but we haven't re-thought how this reduction in leadership capacity will shape us as we go back towards normality, especially with services at 4 worship centres each Sunday morning.
- Volunteer resource: pre-lockdown, there was a diminishing pool of volunteers to resource our churches and support and lead our ministries and activities, especially the daytime ones - we need to inspire and build a whole new pool of volunteers to support and drive activity forward coming out of lockdown.
- Reconnecting/re-thinking post-lockdown: like many churches we have struggled to maintain connections with those who were previously on the fringe of our church - and those who were regulars and are cautious about returning to church 'in person', particularly the older members. Trying to re-establish these will be a significant challenge in the next few months.

# The Person

Our parish needs a new vicar who is led by the Holy Spirit; a man or woman with the confidence to lead, and the humility to listen.

## **We envisage that the new vicar must:**

- Be an evangelical with a deep personal conviction in the truth and authority of the Bible and who is open to God's leading through His Spirit.
- Be recognised as an excellent, Bible-based preacher and teacher, creative and contemporary in their communication.
- Have an infectious enthusiasm which encourages the church and maintains unity in the fellowship whilst moving forward together.
- Have prayer at the heart of all they do and will encourage the Church in all aspects of prayer.
- Be an experienced leader, either within an evangelical church or in a relevant context.
- Sees the importance and value of children, young people, young adults and families and has a heart and vision to grow and develop their discipleship.
- Be comfortable with and have experience of developing "every member ministry" within a church, encouraging members to develop and use their gifts in God's service, in all aspects of church life including leading services, preaching and teaching.
- Be comfortable with the existing informal styles of service across the parish and enthusiastic about developing our contemporary worship together.

## **In addition, we feel that the following attributes would be desirable:**

- Experience of setting a vision for a church, involving and inspiring others to join in with that vision, and seeing it through to fruition.
- Experience of large-scale building projects in a church context.
- Experience of engaging with and providing pastoral support for a diverse community, both within the church family and wider community, and of building up pastoral teams.
- A gifted evangelist who can communicate the Gospel well, has a proven track record of bringing people to Christ and the ability to encourage existing church members to share their faith.
- Someone who will welcome everyone to worship with us, irrespective of their background or current situation.

**Above all, our new vicar needs to be called by God to minister in our parish.**

# Our Churches

## St. Peter's

### Introduction

As we emerge from the COVID pandemic lockdown and start to come to terms with the "new normal", we took the opportunity to re-evaluate our service patterns in order to increase missional opportunities and in the light of a decrease in resources. Our new service pattern is as follows:



Time	Description
8:30am	Service of the Word. A more traditional Common Worship service with average attendance currently of about 20, with hymns accompanied by the organ. The congregation, mainly older, value thoughtful worship and preaching. This service is held on the second and fourth Sundays in a month, with the second Sunday service being Holy Communion. This provides a quieter and more contemplative service for those who find an all age service more challenging.
10:30am	This is our main morning family service. It alternates between an all-age service with concurrent creche and an adult-focussed, but accessible, service with concurrent Twinklers (2-4 years) and Lighthouse (5-13 years) provision for children. There is a mix of all ages and stages, including many families attending due to church school entrance requirements, and is our main missional service.
6:30pm	Our evening service is adult-focussed and contemporary in style. It is an informal cross-parish service with a focus on in-depth preaching and extended sung worship. This is attended by many of our 'core' church members, and offers an opportunity for people across all of the churches in the parish to come together for worship and fellowship. It particularly attracts our older young people and young adults, but is attended by a very wide range of ages. It is also a place where we can introduce and mentor new leaders.



Our Lighthouse children's ministry meets fortnightly at the same time as the main Sunday service in our Parish Centre and caters for primary age children. Twinklers meets in the church lounge during the service and caters for pre-school children.

The current monthly service pattern at St Peter's is summarised in the table below:

Week	8:30	10:30	Lighthouse/Twinklers	18:30
1	✗	✓ AF	✓	✓
2	✓ C	✓ AA	✗	✓
3	✗	✓ AF & C	✓	✓
4	✓	✓ AA	✗	✓ C
5	✗	✓ AA & C	✗	✓

C – Holy Communion service, AA – All Age,  
 AF – Adult Focused (most children at Lighthouse or Twinklers)

Prior to the COVID pandemic, there were three services on a Sunday:

- **9:30** - a family-focused service with modern worship, accessible preaching and an average attendance pre-COVID of around 150 (103 adults and 47 children).
- **11:00** - a more traditional Common Worship service. This was a close-knit congregation, mainly older, who valued thoughtful worship and preaching.
- **6:30** - an informal cross-parish service with a focus on in-depth preaching and extended sung worship.

Each of these services included Communion once a month. We also had started a monthly Café Church service on Sunday mornings in the Parish Centre in October 2019, for all ages but especially trying to attract those on the fringes of our church. The aim of Café Church was to explore new ways of meeting together as Christians as an alternative to traditional church services. The congregation met to share food, share stories and share Jesus each month, once on a Sunday morning and once on a Saturday evening. This was paused due to COVID and has not restarted.

During the lockdown period, we held one on-line service for the parish each week on Sundays at 10:30. This was streamed on Zoom, Facebook and YouTube and averaged about 175 households connecting each week.



# Through the storm, He is Lord, Lord of all



We are a vibrant and flourishing church; however like everyone there are areas in which we face challenges and where we are seeking to grow. Many of these are common with the parish-wide challenges set out in the SWOT analysis, including welcoming and integrating newcomers; largely ad-hoc pastoral care structures; and mobilising church members' gifts and contributions.

One particular challenge has been the lack of flexible space in our building. In the 1980s an extension added a lounge, toilets, kitchen and office space to the back of the church; and removal of the pews has also made the main space flexible. However, our workable space for welcome, fellowship and outreach activities in the main church building is limited and this has been a frustration for a number of years. In the last 18 months, we have had plans drawn up for a significant long-term building project which will transform the space we have for welcome, mission, fellowship and social activities (more details are in the buildings section later in the profile). We have a vision to see the church as a community hub, and being able to use the building better as a tool of mission.

## **Mission and Community Engagement**

As the largest church in the parish, there is often a blurring between St. Peter's Church activities, and St. Peter's Parish activities - especially where they take place in the Parish Centre, and are supported by attendees or volunteers from across the different churches. To avoid duplication, St. Peter's Church mission and community outreach activities are listed under the main outreach, mission, fellowship and discipleship sections further on in this profile.

## Smithills Fellowship

Smithills Fellowship is a congregation within the parish that meets primarily in St Peter's Primary school but also monthly in Smithills Chapel. It is a multi-generational congregation with young families, alongside long-standing members over 80 years old.

As a fellowship we are passionate about Jesus and passionate about people, seeking to bring people to faith and grow disciples through our services and activities. Our prayer is that we will always glorify God in the life of the Church, and our presence in the community.

### Sunday Services

Sunday services are informal with sung worship led by our worship band. Our weekly attendance averages around 90. We have small teams of faithful church members who serve in different ways to make our services possible, from setting up, running technology, serving coffee and contributing to the service itself. Our children have access to a children's ministry "timeout" twice a month, which makes use of classroom space in school. Once a month we have a family service in Smithills Chapel and once a month a café-style service.



### Building Fellowship and Prayer

Over the last few years we have met as a fellowship once a half term over a meal in school on a Monday tea time. This has been a time to chat and build relationships and to share a testimony and time of prayer at the end of our meal. We also meet once a month to pray for our church, its members and our community. We have one mid-week home group, and one Saturday morning "men's walk, talk and pray".

## Mission and Community Engagement

### Overseas Mission

In addition to the parish-wide National and International Ministries work, for over 3 decades Smithills Fellowship has fostered strong links with the diocese of Machakos, and Makueni, Kenya. We have supported various projects in the area, including financing theological training and recently raising over £12,000 as our extended harvest project to enable a local borehole to be drilled. We have also exchanged visits with Bishop Joseph and Bishop Francis visiting Bolton and a few of our members visiting Kenya.

## Smithills Christmas Market



In 2014 we were encouraged to reach out and engage with our community as part of the Year of Hope. As a result we began “Smithills Christmas Market” on Redcar Road. Its original ethos and intention was to engage with neighbours and build community. Every year, non-church members have participated alongside us and enthusiastically helped to raise money for our town centre charity Urban Outreach. Over the last 7 years the Market has provided much-needed funds for the fresh produce for the “Christmas Dinner on Jesus” hampers distributed around Bolton.

## Café on the Green

This pop-up café began in 2019 on four pre-set Saturdays throughout the year. It is an opportunity to welcome our community into our building and serve them fresh food and cakes. It is also a place where our young people can serve, and it has been well received with the local community returning for repeat visits.



## Christmas Nativity at the Farm

For three Christmases (pre-pandemic) we have been able to tell the story of Jesus birth on a real-life local farm. Over 150 adults and children followed the performers around the farm, joining in with carols and listening to a message of the good news of Jesus’ birth.

## The COVID Pandemic

We have stayed connected to members of our fellowship through our neighbourhood church groups, supporting one another with shopping needs etc. Meetings over the Zoom videoconferencing platform in these groups after Sunday services helped us connect with some folk for the first time and build new relationships. In the autumn we began our own fortnightly, pre-service "Smithills catch up Zoom meeting" to enable more specific news and notices and prayer needs to be shared with our own congregation. This has been very well received and has helped people feel reconnected to their church family. Members of the Smithills neighbourhood church groups have organised street events to boost local morale. These have included VE day celebrations, a fish and chip delivery, a sunflower growing competition, a scarecrow competition, and a pizza van.



## The Future

As we return to meeting together post pandemic, our Sunday services and other outreach events will offer opportunities to encourage new people to serve and people to serve in new or different ways. Our priorities will be to continue to develop our pastoral care, encouraging "Life Groups" to be a focus for pastoral care and discipleship. Exciting times lie ahead!

Some of the specific challenges that we face as a church include the practical difficulties of meeting in a school and an ageing leadership team.

# Barrow Bridge Mission

## Introduction

Barrow Bridge Mission is one of the sister churches in the parish of St. Peters, situated approximately ½ a mile away from the main parish church in a picturesque area of Bolton.

The locals like to call this area Barrow Bridge village although there is neither a shop or a pub in the neighbourhood. The area in and around the Mission is one of natural beauty, with a river running through the middle of the village. The local houses are mainly stone and a number are accessed over their own bridges.

As for the population demographic, it is predominantly middle class, and as a result property prices in this area are usually slightly above the average for Bolton as a whole.

The Mission building itself used to be a part of a 6-storey cotton mill (formally the engineers' workshop) and is built in stone and stands on the riverside in the middle of the village. In 1999 the building was refurbished and extended and now offers an attractive, modern, welcoming space.

As you enter the Mission you have to cross the river on a metal bridge and once inside there are two main rooms; one used for the Sunday worship and one for meetings and socialising, with a modern kitchen and toilets in the middle, separating the two rooms.

## Sunday Services

Sunday services range from traditional to family services led by the children and the sung worship ranges from traditional to contemporary in nature. We meet weekly every Sunday at 10.30am for worship.

On most Sundays, the children attend Sunday school, which meets in the meeting room and a bible class that meets in the homes of members of the congregation.

Average attendance on a Sunday morning would be around 40 adults, ranging from late 30's to 90 in age and around 10-15 children under 16 years old.



## Fellowship and Prayer

As the building and church congregation are quite small, there is a real sense of family and community within the church; a very friendly and welcoming place to worship. Midweek there is one Connect group with approx. 8/10 attendees.



## Mission and Community Engagement

This has been one area that the church has focused on in the recent past.

Annually, the church arranges a bonfire and firework display for the local community and will regularly sell out the 450 tickets allocated.



Also, one of the unique aspects of the church is the proximity to the river. Refreshments in the church and a duck race are held in the river in front of the Mission in May, where plastic ducks are raced to raise money for local charities. This event will attract 200+ attendees. Bi-annually the Mission hosts a Christmas tree festival where the building is filled with Christmas trees decorated by schools and local community groups.

The Woodland Trust uses the facilities of the building regularly for training and meetings, as well as a local singing teacher and our fellowship banner group. The quiet peaceful area is also ideal for church retreat days and a number of churches from all denominations regularly book to use the building this way.

## The COVID Pandemic

The challenges brought by the COVID pandemic have been many, not least the closing of the building. Over the past year we have tried to keep contact with all our congregation through a weekly coffee and chat zoom meeting after the live streamed parish service, the connect group has also met weekly throughout the shut down and Easter eggs, Christmas cards and Advent calendars have been hand delivered to our fellowship. Our Youth Minister and the leadership team checked in with our youth to see how they were coping; and we decided to move the foodbank collection bin to outside a house in the village so all the community could contribute. We even managed to go carol singing around the village for the brief time this was allowed.

## The Future

Barrow Bridge Mission is a friendly and welcoming church with wide variety and good congregational involvement on Sundays, with many people staying on after the service for refreshments. Other strengths are the level of pastoral care available. The fellowship is also disability friendly. One challenge is to increase parish wide involvement with both the youth and adult members. It is felt that there are opportunities to further develop the format of services and to grow the youth ministry by greater use of parish resources.



# St. Andrew's Church

***"The purpose of this church is to encourage one another to know and experience the reality of Jesus and to share it with this community."***

St. Andrew's Church, also known as the Hope Centre, began life as a Mission Hall, built in 1934 to minister to the social housing estate that was being built in the area. The Mission became part of the Church of England in 1955 attached to the Parish of St. Peter's Halliwell. In 2007 it underwent an extension and modernisation programme more suited to meeting growing ministry needs. It is the smallest of the churches in the parish. St. Andrews is situated on the Johnson Fold estate, a deprived area with several socio-economic challenges.



Prior to the COVID Pandemic lockdown the church met weekly on Sunday mornings at 10.30am for worship. The style was relaxed but rather traditional with an average attendance of 25. On the first Sunday of the month a faith lunch followed the service. There is also one connect group which met fortnightly.

St. Andrew's enjoys very strong partnerships with a number of Christians from across the parish who support our ministries by leading/speaking at our services and/or serving in our many weekly social programmes.

There is a willingness and openness for many non-church families to be involved in the many varied activities and programmes that were taking place prior to lockdown. Opportunities for Kingdom growth are extensive; however, breakthroughs with the gospel are quite rare and, even then, prove difficult to maintain.

## **Mission and Community Engagement**

St. Andrews Church supports three external mission partners prayerfully and financially.

- A Christian couple who founded a charity that serves the whole town. This charity ministers to many who find themselves living on the fringes of society.
- A church building programme in Zimbabwe.
- Two missionaries working in Thailand who are currently on furlough.



One of the major ministries from St. Andrew's pre-COVID was called R'Place, a weekly community programme for all ages which included a "Mums and Tots" group specifically called TOTS (which also included Health visitors), a lunch for the over 50's and varied afternoon activities.

Provision for the local youth included a youth club that met on Friday evenings and could be quite challenging at times!

Messy Church was held every month with a Messy Café on two other weeks in the month.

For the last few years, the church has been used during the school summer holidays for the collecting of pre-packed free school children's lunches.

The TOTS leadership conducted a survey in 2019 and the following comments were typical of those received:

***"This is just a gem in the middle of Johnson Fold Community and don't take them from us too. Please keep doing it"***

***"Thank you to everyone for making me and my kid feel welcomed."***

## **The Future**

In summary, St. Andrew's is a place of great warmth and welcome with a small but faithful congregation who have a strong desire for the Gospel message to be heard and experienced across their community. The church benefits from a healthy prayer team/chain and a strong core of Christians from across the parish who actively support services and ministries. However, challenges include the proportion of the congregation who live outside the area of the church, the average age of the current congregation and the small number of regular attendees at Sunday services. There are currently no families with children at the services.

There are huge opportunities for "home-based missionaries" – those willing to leave the larger congregations for an extended period of time to serve with and encourage the St. Andrew's congregation. A new mid-week café church initiative is currently being planned.

# Key Parish-wide Ministries

## Youth and Children's Work

Our vision is for young people and children to be engaging in church community, growing a faith that sticks and sharing hope and good news with others. Our key values and priorities are community, connection, mental health, wellbeing and discipleship.

The youth and children's ministry is a vibrant and integral part of the parish at St. Peter's. It is supported by a full time employed youth minister and a team of over one hundred volunteers. The ministry is active during Sunday services and all throughout the week. It engages with over 2,000 children and young people through its work in the community and in schools.

### Children's Ministry

Some of the key ministries are:

- Discipleship within children's groups during the Sunday morning services, and regular involvement in the main services through drama, leading, readings and prayers.
- Weekly toddler groups including St. Peter's and The Well toddlers at our Parish Centre and St. Andrew's group running from the Hope Centre. Combined, these work with at least 150 families, supporting them and providing a strong missional link with the church. As an example, pre-COVID, our Tuesday Toddler Group was the busiest weekly ministry held in the Parish Centre. With a very good reputation, it routinely attracted upwards of 60 babies and children plus their parents/carers each week (often from outside of the Parish). Activities that took place included craft and messy play, story and song time, picnics in the park and free play on the bikes and ride-ons in the Sports Hall plus provision of a healthy snack for the children. For those parents with new babies, the volunteers would also co-ordinate practical support by way of a meal and ironing rota, and other support would be provided if needs were identified. Many parents/grandparents have attended the group with a succession of their children over the years and it has been shown that attendance at Toddler Group has been a key pathway by which families have started to attend our church services and become a part of the St. Peter's family.



- Messy Church at St. Andrews – working with around 30 families on the estate and providing a fresh expression of worship.
- Events throughout the year such as holiday clubs, special children’s events and an annual Light Party.

There are opportunities for admission to communion and confirmation available to children and young people.



### Schools

Our church school is St. Peter’s Smithills Dean CE Primary School, a one-form entry school which is part of the ‘Forward as One’ Academy Trust. Our previous vicar was a governor at this school.

There are two other primary schools in our parish, and at all these schools we regularly lead collective worship and are involved in events such as Easter Experience and iSingPOP. We occasionally lead assemblies in Smithills Secondary School and work closely with the chaplaincy team at Canon Slade School, a Church of England secondary school just outside our parish boundary which is attended by many of our young people.

### Youth Ministry

Young people’s participation is an essential part of church services, such as leading and operating the audio and visuals and involvement with the worship band.

We have several weekly open-access youth sessions including:

- Tread at the Parish Centre, engaging with around 40 young people, (about 60% already have some church involvement).
- Johnson Fold Youth at St. Andrew’s, with over 60 young people attending from the estate, most of whom have no previous church connection. The youth club on Johnson Fold is run in a positive partnership with Bolton Council.

Many young people aged 14 - 18 choose to join a discipleship group, and we run the Duke of Edinburgh Award for this age group. At 18, we offer support into gap years and the Fusion Student Link Up course, if they are planning to attend university.





We are Kintsugi Hope Partners and we plan to start running wellbeing groups for young people in January 2022. We hope to expand this into schools.

Residentials, summer camps, fundraising, mission and serving the community are all important parts of our annual programme.

## Youth Ministry during the pandemic

Throughout 2020 the volunteer team and youth minister continued to serve with a varied, dynamic and creative programme. Some examples include online youth and children's sessions, pre-recorded assemblies, a filmed nativity play, detached work, delivering gift boxes, doorstep visits and young people engaging in the Duke of Edinburgh Award in creative and community focused ways.



*"Through the youth work here I have gone to new places and tried new things, and I've developed courage and confidence to achieve things that I didn't think I would be able to."*

**Caitlin**

The strengths of the youth and children's ministry include a committed and experienced core team of leaders, young people involved in serving and leadership, an evangelistic focus, partnership work with other agencies and many parish-wide youth events, schemes and activities that connect young people from the sister churches.

Some weaknesses are that it can sometimes feel disconnected from the other ministries, Sunday services and the church leadership. Stronger leadership and co-ordination is needed for the children's work - a children's and families worker employed role would be hugely beneficial.

There is the missional opportunity for our toddler groups and Messy Church to have a stronger connection with the church, supporting and offering discipleship for parents and carers. Challenges include young people and families disengaging once the children have gained entry into a church school, and that it's the same leaders serving across most sessions, meaning if a few leaders had to stop, it would essentially stop the work of this ministry completely.

*"The youth work is important to me at St. Peter's because it helped me and others make friends and gives us an opportunity to talk about our faith."*

**Charlotte**

# National and International Ministry

## Mission Statement:

We are passionate as a parish about the part we have to play in extending God's kingdom across the world. As a parish we support several mission partners, both in Bolton and worldwide, most of whom have long-standing personal links to our churches. We have a National and International Ministry team which oversees our financial giving and support of mission work. In 2021/22 our giving to our mission partners will be approximately £40,000.



*World*  
Mission  
Partners

## The purpose of the NIM team of St Peter's Parish is to support our mission partners and raise awareness of world and national mission. This includes:

- To raise awareness of the work being done by our mission partners, and increase the focus on mission in general within the congregation.
- To encourage vocations to mission, short and long-term, from within the congregation.
- To encourage the congregation to support our mission partners through prayer, financial and practical support ('PART').
- To manage the finances supporting our mission partners.
- To provide pastoral and practical support directly to our mission partners, including organising visits.
- To pray individually and together for our mission partners and mission more generally.

## We support a wide range of missionaries who work in the following contexts and organisations:

- WEC (Thailand)
- MEC / Operation Mobilisation (Worldwide)
- Release International (India)
- Daylight Project and Mother and Baby Group (Israel)
- Musalaha (Israel / Palestine)
- Centre for Biblical Research (Croatia)
- Work among the Muslim population (Bolton)
- Urban Outreach (Bolton)
- Create (Bolton)
- Education India (India)
- CMS at Kathmandu International Study Centre
- Evangelism, worship leading and teaching in Central Asia
- Good News for Romania

We encourage vocations to mission and have seen people being called to long-term overseas mission in recent years.

## CAP Centre

We partnered with Christians Against Poverty in 2010 as we felt it would give us a unique opportunity to demonstrate God's love in practical ways to those in the wider community and to welcome people into the life of our church. We celebrated 10 years of the CAP Debt Centre in November 2020 and are able to look back and acknowledge God's faithfulness: during that time, 120 families have gone debt free and over 80 people have chosen to respond to the gospel. Many of the latter have come to church for a period of time, and attended START and Alpha courses, but it is true to say we struggle to keep them coming and there are only a handful of former clients in our church now.



The CAP ministry is one that requires the support of the whole church family and many church members have stepped into roles to serve, and along the way discovered new giftings. CAP work challenges one's faith at times but also increases one's expectancy that God can do anything in what can often seem impossible situations. People who seem hostile to faith can soften after just one visit where they are listened to and prayed for. There is a spiritual hunger in all of us and it is wonderful that the CAP ministry gives us the opportunity to share God's story and our stories of his faithfulness. Our CAP Centre manager loves that what we do day in and day out shouts of his love and grace. He answers our prayers in abundance and transformation of lives unfold before us.



The Debt Centre has, over the years, sought to follow CAP's lead in proactively helping people with the causes of debt. We have consistently run CAP Money courses for 11 years now. This is an excellent budgeting tool which has benefited many in our church and local community. From 2013 to 2017 we ran a CAP Job Club and then CAP Lifeskills. This course is structured around money, and in particular addressed the challenges people might face from living on a low income. Many clients found this a helpful addition to the debt help they received and we now refer to other CAP Lifeskills courses run by neighbouring churches.

We have a good connection with the local press and several clients have shared their story of finding freedom from debt and support from the church. You can read these via our website:

<https://www.stpetersparish.info/p/index.php/debt-support/>

### Acts 435

Acts 435 is an online giving charity, directly connecting those who want to give with those who are in genuine need of their help, through a network of local churches and charities. Our Acts 435 team was set up to provide a mechanism for church members to support financially those CAP clients in desperate need.

## Music Ministry



We have a history of excellence in musical worship and that continues to the present day, with a broad range of musical styles and ensembles represented on a weekly basis across the parish. The majority of our sung worship across the parish is based on contemporary songs, but traditional hymns are used in our liturgical service and occasionally in other services as well.

We are blessed with a good number of gifted and creative musicians who lead worship at each of our worship centres. Instruments used include guitars, violin, saxophone, brass, keyboard, banjo, percussion, keyboard and of course, at St. Peter's Church, the organ.

During the pandemic, our team of musicians has excelled themselves by producing a range of pre-recorded music videos that we have been able to use in our online services.

Several of our musicians are also songwriters and have recorded Christian albums. Pre-pandemic, our musicians held a training workshop for worship leaders from other local churches. About 30 people attended



# Community Outreach and Mission

We are passionate about reaching people who need the Gospel, and that we do this in a number of ways; through relational ministries, through social action projects, and through large-scale events. With our large-scale events we have a vision to transform Bolton, and St Peter's is a driving force behind cross-Bolton, cross-church Gospel initiatives like Party in the Park and Believe in Bolton. Some of the ministries involved in our community outreach are listed below.



## Start and Alpha courses

We run Start groups and the Alpha Course throughout the year as small groups across the parish, as a key part of our evangelism strategy, to help people become Christians and grow in faith.

## The Well

Pre-COVID, The Well met weekly during term-time in the Parish Centre and was a friendly and welcoming place where up to 80 guests come to enjoy a 3-course home cooked meal, fellowship and companionship. Some stayed on after lunch to enjoy activities, discussion or talks from invited speakers at the Thursday group whilst parents/carers with babies or young children moved on to the Well Toddler Group for creative play, songs and stories. Open to everyone, The Well attracted guests from across the parish and beyond; some with a church connection but many without. Sadly, the Well has been unable to re-start post-COVID owing to a lack of leaders / volunteers. However, the Well Toddler group once again meets regularly.

## Home for Good

Home for Good believes that we all have a part to play to ensure that every child has the home they need. The charity works to mobilise the Church in the UK to respond to the needs of vulnerable children through families stepping forward to foster or adopt and churches wrapping around families with support, and to influence wider society through advocacy and engagement to create systemic change. At St. Peter's, we have several families involved in adoption or fostering and we host the Bolton Home for Good group that provides peer support and advice to foster and adoptive families.





## Party in the Park

Party in the Park is a community event hosted by St. Peter's parish which has been held annually in Moss Bank Park. As a result of the pandemic, that last time it was held was in July 2019, where a total of around 7,000 people attended.



The event started with an open-air church service in the morning, followed by a programme of main stage events that showcased local talent, ranging from school choirs to African drumming, and included an evangelistic message. There was also a Gazebo Village boasting a huge range of stalls and attractions from local churches, community groups, charities and organisations.

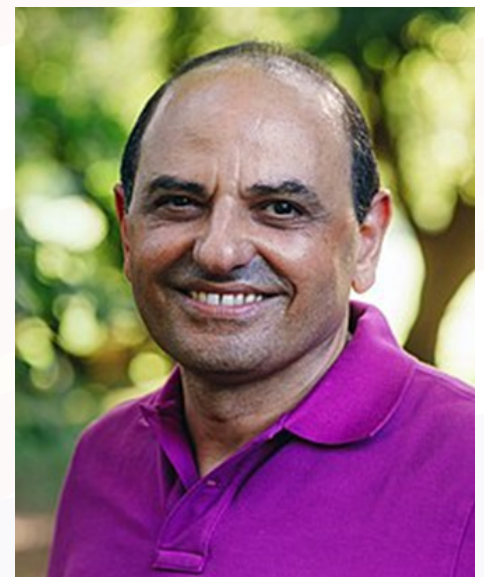
For the children, we created an inflatable area where youngsters could have a go at human hungry hippos, take on the giant wrecking ball or wipe out their friends in Zorb football!

For further details, please visit <https://www.theboltonnews.co.uk/news/17742802.party-park-2019-hailed-huge-success/>.

## Believe in Bolton

Believe in Bolton was conceived as a large-scale evangelistic mission to Bolton which would involve both Anglican and other churches, with St. Peter's taking the lead organising role. It was originally planned for May 2020, but, as a result of the pandemic, had to be delivered as an online event. However, even in this format, it was very successful, with over 3000 views on Facebook and over 700 views on YouTube to date.

We had planned to hold a Carol Service on 14th December 2021 at Bolton Parish Church entitled "Christmas Unwrapped". Our main speaker for this event was scheduled to be Canon J. John, the well-known international evangelist and author. Sadly, this event had to be cancelled as a result of the COVID pandemic, as explained on the website <http://www.believeinbolton.org/>



# Fellowship and Discipleship

## Connect/Life Groups

We have a large network of small groups, which we traditionally called Connect Groups, across the parish. We are in the process of re-launching our Connect Groups as 'Life Groups', with a focus on 'doing life together' and emphasising the opportunities for mission within small groups.

Some of these groups contain people from across the parish, but most are specific to the individual churches. They usually meet in local homes in an evening on a weekly or fortnightly basis, for Bible study, prayer and fellowship; during COVID many continued meeting via Zoom. Our aim is that everyone should be part of a small group so that they can grow and develop, and so discover God and engage with him in a friendly environment. Membership is good within our core church members, but overall the proportion of people in our churches who are in small groups is limited - many people are not part of a small group despite encouragement over several years!

## Open Door

Open Door is a weekly ladies' group with a programme of bible study and guest speakers. It meets in the Parish Centre and has an average attendance of around 30; some of these people regularly attend our Sunday church services but for others this is their only connection with the parish.

## Prayer and Pastoral Support

Regular evenings, weekends and weeks of prayer are held throughout the parish. In addition, there is a well-established prayer chain and prayer and ministry team. It is recognised the need to ensure prayer is central to all we do as a parish and we are continually looking for new ways to involve all in prayer. We also host counselling sessions at the Parish Centre, run by a fully-qualified counsellor, in support of our church family and wider community. Coming out of the Pandemic, we have a newly expanded team providing pastoral care parish-wide.

## Accessibility

Over the last couple of years (pre-COVID), our parish has taken small steps towards making our worship more accessible to everyone. Three of our worship centres have had basic accessibility audits completed. In December 2019, we held our first Sensory Carol Service, that aimed to enable families who would otherwise find attending a church service very difficult. Each of our worship centres have an "Access Box" that contains items that people with learning disabilities or autism may find helpful to use whilst participating in a time of worship. We hope that this area of ministry will continue to grow once COVID restrictions are fully lifted.

## Social Groups

We run a variety of social groups for people both within our churches and more broadly within our communities.

These include:

- Out and About, the parish walking group that meets monthly. It is open to all and travels to various starting points for organised walks!
- Art Group, in which local artists meet together in our Parish Centre where they occasionally hold exhibitions of their work.
- Stressbusters, a weekly badminton session mostly attended by men but open to all hosted in the Parish Centre.



## Parish Weekend Away

Every two years, the church family holiday away together for a weekend at Quinta, a residential Christian centre in Shropshire. There is a theme expounded by a guest speaker, with morning and evening sessions for adults and separate children's groups covering the same teaching. The afternoons are generally free for people to explore the local area. Our next parish weekend away is planned for September 2023.



# Our Buildings

## The Parish Centre

At St. Peter's we are extremely blessed to have St. Peter's Parish Centre. It is an attractive, Grade 2 listed, two-storey building located approximately 300m from our parish church, St. Peter's. Originally the Jubilee School, it underwent a million-pound redevelopment project in 2000 to form the Parish Centre as is now. The home of the Parish Office and Bolton North CAP Centre, it is also a licensed place of worship, used by our congregations periodically when our other church buildings are out of action for renovations etc. Prior to COVID, it also hosted our St. Peter's Café Church services.

Pre-pandemic, several hundred people would typically pass through the doors of the Parish Centre on a weekly basis to attend the diverse range of parish-wide activities on offer. Examples of these include bible study groups, courses such as Alpha, children's and youth groups, cafés and lunch clubs. It is also hired privately for activities and events, including performing arts groups and fitness classes, and also benefits from long-standing partnerships with schools and childcare providers. For example, Church Road Primary use our Sports Hall for PE on 4 afternoons a week and Zak's Childcare run their Before/After School club and holiday club from the centre. The building is a deceptively large and flexible space including a generous sports hall and several meeting rooms and lounges. Downstairs there is a large, fully equipped kitchen which was used by The Well to provide meals for up to 80 people each week and also a small kitchenette upstairs used for serving refreshments, where The Coffee Room meets on a weekly basis.

Strengths include its situation in a prominent location next to Church Road Primary School, across the road from the community sports club and only a couple of minutes' walk from the popular and highly regarded Moss Bank Park. Our main meeting rooms are equipped with sound and AV facilities and the Centre has benefitted from both internal and exterior re-decoration over the last few years making it an inviting and welcoming space.

Challenges include the considerable running and maintenance costs, which are offset by the reasonable income generated from hiring out rooms in the building to external groups. As we are very clear that all activities need to be sympathetic to our Christian values and ethos, it does mean that we are sometimes unable to accommodate certain proposed activities. The Centre has limited parking on site, but street parking is available and, as it is a residential area, we try to encourage responsible parking as we are mindful of the need to maintain good relationships with our neighbours.

Post-pandemic, as people review what they were doing before lockdown and how they now re-start their activities, there are some who have indicated they won't be coming back. Whilst many activities have comfortably moved onto Zoom and people have adjusted quite well to this, the loss of meetings in person has been very widely felt in most of our groups and these groups will be supported as far as possible in re-establishing their activities, albeit in a different format, in the Parish Centre moving forward.

Whilst not overtly obvious, the Parish Centre is unashamedly first and foremost a church building and it strives to provide a warm welcome to all who enter in, wherever they are at - a place where everybody is welcome, just as they are.

## The Vicarage

The Parish Vicarage is a 5-bedroomed house located about a half a mile from St. Peter's Church, in Sefton Road, just off Harpers Lane.

The house benefits from a study/office, which can be accessed without entering the house, with a nearby downstairs toilet. The lounge and dining room are separated by a moveable partition, allowing you to create a larger space for entertaining etc. There is also a utility room off the kitchen. Upstairs, there are five bedrooms (three double, two single) and three of the bedrooms are equipped with wash basins. The bathroom includes a bath and separate shower.



Externally, there are two driveways and a single garage, providing parking for three cars in total. There are gardens to the front, side and rear, with the rear garden being enclosed to provide a high degree of privacy.



## St. Andrew's House

The parish also owns St. Andrew's House which is adjacent to St. Andrew's Church. It has been previously used by some of our curates and is currently being rented by one of our missionary couples who are on home leave. Future plans include the possibility of using this property to house interns.

## Buildings Maintenance and Development

Across our four churches, we have 6 licenced worship centres. St. Peter's, Barrow Bridge and St. Andrew's have their own church buildings whereas Smithills Fellowship meets in both St. Peter's Primary School and Smithills Chapel. In terms of building maintenance, we only have responsibility for St. Peter's, Barrow Bridge, St. Andrew's and the Parish Centre.

St. Andrew's, Barrow Bridge Mission and the Parish Centre buildings are generally in good order. However, for St. Peter's Church, the Quinquennial Report of 2016 identified a number of significant issues.

## The Link Corridors

- The corridors linking the church and hall required total replacement.
- We successfully raised the £320,000 needed, roughly half from donations from our church family and half from grant funding.
- Work started on the new glazed entrance in September 2021 and we expect the work to be completed in May 2022.



## The Church Tower

- The tower needs a number of repairs to the fabric, some of which are urgent on health and safety grounds.
- The most significant requirement is the removal of an embedded iron bar in the mortar at a high level. This iron bar has rusted and is 'jacking-up' the top of the tower. This has meant that we can no longer ring our peal of eight bells. Additional repairs are needed to the tower roof, fabric and clock.
- Our architect has completed all the necessary design work and a Faculty has been obtained.
- Fundraising has yet to begin for this work at a total estimate of in excess of £300,000, although it seems likely we will need to break this project into its component parts.

The upkeep of our historic building inevitably absorbs a lot of resources, both physical and financial. This has meant a considerable emphasis on fund-raising of late. We are aware of the need to ensure that this does not over-dominate our church life to the detriment of our worship and other important activities.



## Future Plans

The lack of available space for doing all the things we want to do at St. Peter's Church is a noticeable hindrance. The current project to of our link corridors with new glazed links and reception area will greatly help in creating a more welcoming environment, but we recognise more needs to be done.

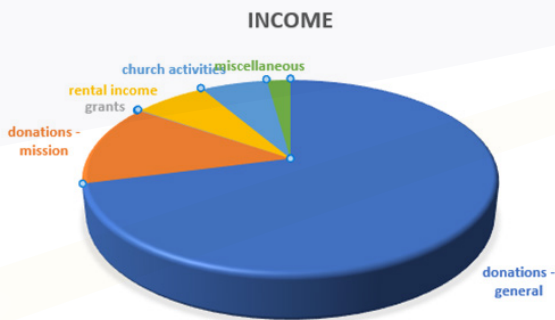
Possible ways of solving this have been under discussion for a number of years, including a north extension to the church. However, until our major repairs are completed, this remains a long-term aspiration.

# Our Finances

As a parish, we are grateful to God for his many blessings to us financially over the years. He has provided what we needed; the most recent example being the raising of £320,000 for the new link corridors. Our theology around our finances is based on prayerful dependence on God and good stewardship.

## Our finances generally fall into four areas:

- Operational budget.
- Routine Maintenance.
- Capital Projects including major repairs.
- National and International Ministry.



Our income had remained steady in recent years, despite changing economic circumstances. However, 2020 saw a 10% fall when compared with 2019's level. The main cause was having to close the buildings, due to the COVID pandemic, and the resultant loss of rental income and plate collections.

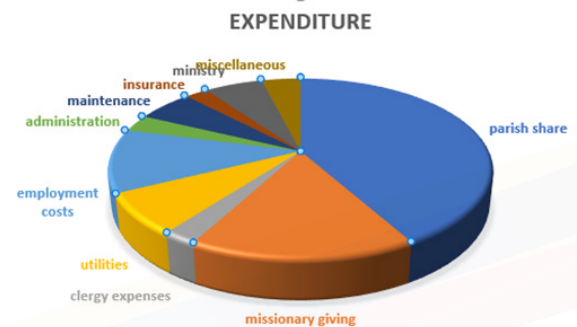
Our main source of income is congregational giving which accounted for £417,351 in 2019 and we are very thankful that God has continued to bless us with such faithful donors. A further £27,728 was generated from rents received for use of the Parish Centre and St. Andrews House.

Overall expenditure has, historically, matched income as the PCC has striven to pay the Parish Share in full. In 2019 this was £160,000 but the COVID pandemic highlighted the unsustainability of this policy as no realistic reserves were held. The reduction in income, in 2020, had a direct impact on our ability to pay the Parish Share although we were still able to give £110,000.

The annual report and accounts can be downloaded from the following link:-

**<https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5005311/accounts-and-annual-returns>**

In terms of stewardship, we are looking at how our annual campaigns can get the message through about the need to be realistic in our giving, whilst being sensitive to those of our members who are far from well off.



# Response to COVID

There is no doubt that COVID has had a major impact across the parish. The Parish Centre was forced to close with a loss of over £10,000 per annum as a result. All the worship centres with the exception of St. Peter's Church remained closed throughout.

St. Peter's Church ran the only service in the parish each Sunday. It was an in-person service at 10:30 a.m. with a family focus and limited to 60 people to allow for social distancing. Seats had to be booked in advance using our online booking system. We have also been able to organise special events outdoors, such as Christmas carol services, which attracted in excess of 300 people.



Thanks to generous designated donations from members of our church family, we have been able to invest in online streaming equipment. Our services are streamed to Zoom, Facebook and YouTube. Catch up facilities are also available. During the periods of lockdown, around 170 households (equating to perhaps 300-400 individuals) joined our live streams, with many more views subsequently.

During the pandemic, we have also greatly expanded our social media presence, posting items such as "Thought for the Day". We are currently active on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and are exploring ways of generating an on-line community around these platforms.

