



Parish Profile



Welcome to our Parish!

welcoming | worshipping | serving

Introduction

Thank you for considering God's call to lead and serve in our parish!

This parish profile sets out our core values and beliefs and gives what we hope is useful information about where we see ourselves, our challenges, our ambitions, and the qualities which we believe our new Rector will possess.



About Us

Our Parish

Christ Church West Didsbury and St. Christopher Withington is a large, diverse parish in South Manchester. We have areas of affluence as well as areas of deprivation. There is a real social mix with some houses selling for over £1m and, at the other end of the scale, housing on the Nell Lane Estate and part of the Mersey Bank Estate in areas of high deprivation.

There is a population of over 20,000 and the parish also includes the Old Moat Estate in Withington - which was previously served solely by the parish of St. Christopher's, established in the 1930s to serve that estate. We have several residential homes, the Withington Community Hospital, a resource centre for the elderly, a Children's Centre, and several schools. One of Manchester's most picturesque suburbs, West Didsbury has long held its position as a fiercely independent, community-focused suburb.

At the heart of West Didsbury is Burton Road - a bustling street lined with independent bars and restaurants which has managed to fight off any chains opening along the main stretch. Pair this with the well-kept streets and regular local festivals, and it's easy to see why this has become one of the most desirable places to live in Greater Manchester.

The two previously existing parishes of West Didsbury and Withington (Old Moat) became a single parish in December 2006 following a time of working together, and our electoral roll currently stands at 122.

We are part of the Manchester South and Stretford Deanery.

Our Buildings

We have two church buildings: Christ Church (1882) and St Christopher's (1959).

Christ Church is a traditional church building, situated at the corner of Darley Avenue and Princess Road, with a separate church hall building on the same site. The church is used primarily as a place of worship, but also as a popular and well-used venue for concerts (and rehearsals). The church hall, which includes a kitchen, is in daily use by the wider community with groups including karate and dance classes, private music lessons, children's parties, and groups such as Cocaine Anonymous. Since early on in the pandemic, Chorlton and Didsbury Foodbank moved to using Christ Church Hall as its permanent base of operations (due to other venues ceasing to be available) and now have their own entrance and dedicated storage rooms. They are currently open every Wednesday and Friday.

St Christopher's is of more modern construction, with a single building which contains a worship space, hall, kitchen, and meeting room. It was previously the hall for the original St. Christopher's church (now demolished). Similar to Christ Church, St. Christopher's is used by a wide range of people and groups from across the community, including the Seventh Day Adventist Church, who use the building as 'their church' on Saturdays, the Tamil Christian Fellowship meet there on Saturday evening, and a Pentecostal Church worships in the hall on Sunday afternoons.

The hire of our buildings provides a significant proportion (approximately one-third) of our total income, although we do provide these spaces at heavily discounted/subsidised rates to organisations such as the food bank, Al-Anon and Cocaine Anonymous.

At Christ Church we have completed a £600,000 restoration project of our building, which will ensure its use for future generations. Work has also been done on the Church Hall roof, heating, and facilities, as we consider this as part of our mission and ministry in offering a place of welcome and hospitality to community groups.

We currently hold an Eco Churches Bronze award and are working towards Silver.



Our Worship

We have a strong tradition of liturgical worship which is Eucharist-centred in the Liberal Catholic tradition of the Church of England and we endeavour to include all who wish to be part of our worship. Our worship ranges from Fresh Expressions (with crafts and croissants), to all-age Sunday Eucharists, to high mass with incense on principal feast days. Our congregations are diverse and bring with them myriad gifts.

Music is important in our worship and is a normal part of our Sunday worship. We have two highly experienced organists (one is also Diocesan Organ Adviser) plus, at Christ Church, a rota of cantors who lead the sung parts of our liturgy.

Our pattern of Sunday worship is as follows:

9.30 a.m. **Eucharist at St. Christopher's**
11 a.m. **Eucharist at Christ Church**

One Sunday each month is normally a Eucharist with Prayers for Healing at both churches. Another Sunday each month is our recently re-introduced All-Age Eucharist at Christ Church where children can undertake crafts at the back of church and participate in/lead parts of the worship including the lesson, the intercessions and the offertory procession, and where the sermon is aimed at children and typically includes an opportunity for them to interact or participate. On the first Sunday of each month, our increasingly popular Soul Space (Fresh Expression) service normally takes place at St Christopher's.

Morning Prayer is said at 9.30 a.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays at Christ Church and Tuesdays and Thursdays at St. Christopher's. The churches are open from 9.00 a.m. for quiet prayer and reflection.

There is a Wednesday evening Eucharist at 7.30 p.m. at Christ Church.

We meet together for joint worship several times each year, which includes celebrating our Parish Anniversary and the respective Patronal Festivals at both churches. During Holy Week and at Easter we have a variety of services and worship (ranging from an Agape supper to High Mass) every day at one (or both) churches



and a Christmas we have Christingle Services and Midnight Mass at Christ Church and the Christmas Day Eucharist at St. Christopher's. St. Christopher's is a smaller congregation – 15-20 on a good Sunday – and Christ Church has an average attendance of around 50. We have children's group. Our two congregations 'travel well' when we have a joint Eucharist.

Lay involvement is very important to us as a parish and we encourage lay folk to be involved in all aspects of life at both churches.

The PCC have signed up to the 'Inclusive Church' statement.

Several times a year, we welcome visiting preachers – either from the Deanery/Diocese or from other Christian communities such as Didsbury Baptist Church and the local Welsh Chapel. Over the years, our clergy and readers have also supported other churches through preaching or leading worship and we are keen to see this collaboration continue.

We livestream our Sunday and feast-day Eucharists at Christ Church, as well as baptisms, weddings and funerals by request. The recordings can be accessed via our website.

Where we are

In a wider church which is increasingly focussed on missional strategies and targets, we believe that our core focus is to be 'the church' in our area and to meet people where they are, helping them to experience the love and faithfulness of God and to provide pastoral support whenever they need it. There's a lot to do. We have strong engagement with local schools and community groups, and our history of pastoral work within our parish and local residential homes is something which we are proud of. Baptisms and funerals further aid our engagement with the local community, and we would like to continue to build on this.

As outlined above, our buildings are well-used and generally in a good state of repair, our finances are healthy, and we have a regular congregation with many engaged volunteers. However, like many churches, our congregations are smaller than they were 10 years ago (with many of our long-standing stalwart parishioners having sadly passed away during this time).

We have a long-standing and ongoing commitment to community involvement and social justice. We hold fund raising activities for national and local charities, for example Christian Aid and the Booth Centre. We commit to making donations to charity every year. Members of our ministry team and congregation give their time as trustees/governors/volunteers at local schools and charities.



Vision and Priorities

We strive to be a place where people can simply 'be'. We seek to engage with people on whatever level they desire and in due course help them to form a relationship with God and to feel able to worship him as part of our church family.

In recent times part of our work has been focussed on the mission of the church around St. Christopher's. We have undertaken the Natural Church Development Survey and from this positive action was taken. This work is ongoing, because of the small congregation there. More recently we have begun work in partnership with Southway Housing, the local social housing provider, and St. Christopher's is used as a local hub for coffee mornings and events.

Obviously, we are keen to see our congregations grow numerically as well as spiritually and hope that our next Rector would work with us on a programme of church growth whilst keeping true to our tradition and core beliefs.

We would like to see more engagement and collaboration with local schools and to continue the great foundation which has been laid for this.

Developing Christ Church as a music and arts venue is also part of our vision. This particular part of our outreach brings many more people into the building than we would otherwise achieve, and we'd be keen to work out a strategy for engagement.

Previously, Messy Church has been done in collaboration with St. Paul's Withington and Withington Methodist Church and regularly had between 40 and 80 children and we would like to explore re-starting this with our partners.

At Christ Church we work with St. Clement's Chorlton on Experience Easter and this year we will have 300-400 children coming along.



Parish Boundary Map





