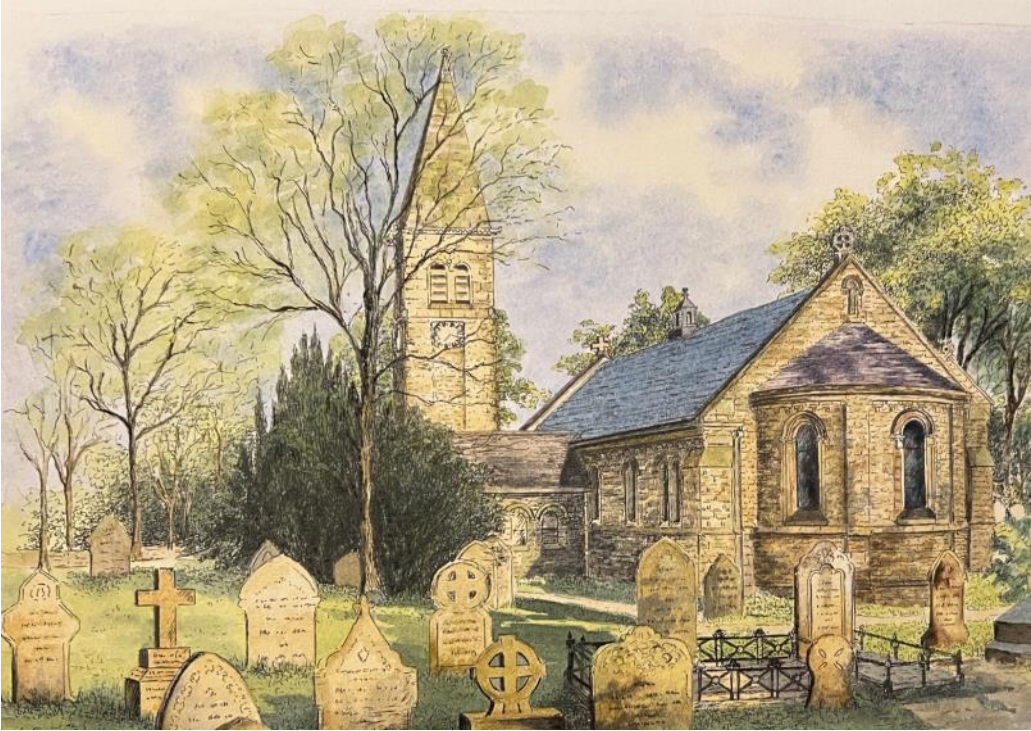




St Thomas' Church

High Lane

Parish Profile



St Thomas' Church Parish Profile

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

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

Our Mission Statement

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

High Lane

High Lane lies in the Borough of Stockport with a population of 4362 and there are 131 registered on the Church electoral roll. It is located 5 miles south east of Stockport straddling the A6 (which links London to Carlisle), halfway between Manchester and Buxton in the Peak District. It lies at the confluence of Cheshire, Derbyshire and Greater Manchester, in the foothills of the Pennines, and affords excellent views of the city of Manchester, the Cheshire Plain and the Peak District. The A555 Manchester Airport Link Road gives easy access to the Airport and North Wales.

Details from the last Census in 2021 indicate that 95% of the population in the village is white British and 62% give their religion as Christian. Unemployment is low and 64% of the people are economically active. Further details of the Church can be found in the Parish Fact Sheet.



The Macclesfield Canal runs through the village. It was used during the 19th century for transporting goods to support textile mills, coalmining and brick making.



A disused railway is now used as a cycleway and footpath between Macclesfield and Marple and both are well used for recreational purposes and are of great benefit in the wellbeing of our community.



There is a small number of retail outlets including a Spar supermarket, a Doctor's surgery, Pharmacy, Dentist and the village also includes an award winning chocolatier.



Almost opposite the church a new Sainsburys Local store is under development due for completion early 2025. The village is well stocked with hostelryes and restaurants providing various types of cuisine. A Village Hall is used regularly for numerous events and local groups. It is located in one of the three parks in the village along with a Scout hut. The village also includes the local Cricket Club, Tennis Club and a Bowling Green at the High Lane Club.

There are two good Primary Schools in High Lane namely Brookside Primary and High Lane Primary. High School education is mainly provided nearby in Hazel Grove and Poynton, and there are prestigious independent schools nearby, too.

The village has two residential Homes that are visited by the Pastoral Care team.

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

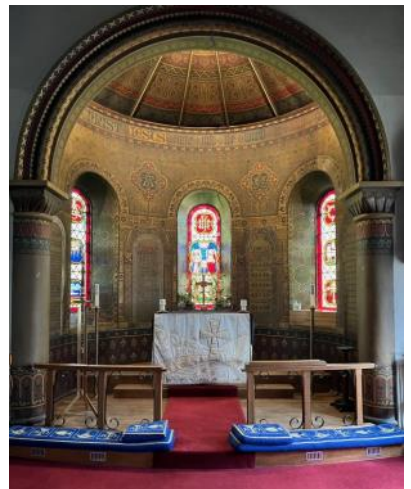
The Church

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

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

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

The exterior look of the church is simple, in contrast to the far more elaborate interior. Historic photographs show the inside of the church to have been richly painted, a practice which is continued until today with apse and apsidal arch retaining their jewel-like painted decoration.



A proportion of these paintings take an unusual form of being painted on tin panels attached to the walls. Similar panels, part of the original scheme and now painted over, can still be seen on the nave windowsills.

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

The Church celebrated its 160th anniversary in 2019 and in all that time it has always kept its doors open during daylight hours, except for a short period during the Covid pandemic in 2020. The church doors were re-opened at the earliest possible opportunity and it is our wish to maintain continuous opening during daylight hours in the future to ensure a place in our village for all to seek sanctuary for prayer and reflection.



We are currently planning to repair the West Wall of the Church and refurbishment of toilet facilities, along with the installation of another ramp to the rear of the Church. In addition, an application for funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund is in the process of being submitted. Work is also in hand to repair the Lych Gate for which we have an offer of a generous donation.

Worship can be described as modern Catholic and three Communion services are celebrated weekly. On Sunday it is celebrated at 8.30am according to the Book of Common Prayer (BCP), and at 10.00am (Common Worship). On Wednesday Communion is celebrated at 9.30am (BCP). The Wives Group have a communion service monthly on a Monday afternoon. Morning Prayer is read on Thursday and Friday mornings at 9.30am. Evensong is celebrated once a month on the fourth Sunday at 6.00pm. Telephone Compline is held at 9.00pm every Thursday.



There is a thriving *Messy Church* gathering that is run by an active group meeting every second Saturday afternoon of the month. Many children and their families attend and it includes a family worship in the church led by the Vicar. They finish the afternoon with a shared meal prepared by the volunteers.

Monday mornings during term time there is a Tree Tots Group, encouraging parents, grandparents and carers to bring the under-5s into the North Aisle and Church Hall for play, crafts and singing.

Christmas begins with an annual Christmas event followed by our Advent Carol Service. The local schools hold their Carol services at the Church and there is a well attended Service of Nine Lessons and Carols.

Our very popular Christingle Services attract a lot of families in the afternoon of Christmas Eve. On Christmas Eve there is a Holy Communion Service at 11.30pm, with Communion Services on Christmas Day at 8.30am and 10.00am.



Lent and Easter are celebrated with liturgical morning and evening services on Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. The Pascal Candle is lit on Easter Eve and on Easter Sunday there is a Communion Service at both 8.30am and 10.00am.

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

The PCC is supportive of the ministry of women at all levels in the Church. It also supports an open baptism policy, the remarriage of the divorced and the Living in Faith document granting same sex blessings in our church.

Baptisms, weddings and funerals are held regularly at the Church. There is a graveyard that holds space for a few further burials and cremated ashes.

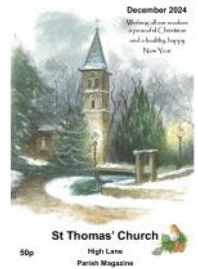
During the year there is normally a Lenten course where discussion is held about Christian topics.



Church Activity

The Vicar of St Thomas' is assisted by a Reader (Emeritus), a Sacristan, a Crucifer, seven Chalice assistants, and a number of parishioners on a Readers and Intercessors Rotas. Officers of the Church include a Verger, one Church Warden and a PCC which includes three Deanery Synod members. Other people with responsibilities are a Finance Manager and Treasurer and a PCC Secretary. A Standing Committee of five members meets bi-monthly as does the PCC. Committees currently comprise of Finance, Fabric, Magazine, Pastoral, Safeguarding, Social. There is also an Eco Group and a West End Project Group.

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



The Finances are accounted for by a Treasurer with a Finance Manager having an overview and organising policy and procedure. The Church is currently operating with income levels at approaching £100k per year, with approximately 65% coming from regular weekly/monthly donations and recovery of tax under our Gift Aid scheme. We were able to pay our Parish Share up to 2019 but reduced income due to lockdown and the closure of the church in 2020 has meant that we have been unable to do the same since 2020. Since then, we have steadily increased our contribution of Parish Share and in 2024 were forecasting 77%. Other income must be raised to cover the daily running of the Church. A contactless card/PIN machine has been introduced in response to the reduction in the use of cash as a means of donating. It's still in its early stages and it is planned to enable the machine to be left unattended for visitors and the congregation to use if they wish to give by card.

There is a major building project at the planning stage and the Quinquennial Report identified other maintenance tasks which will require major fundraising and grants to enable completion. Grants are also at present being considered for major tree works in the churchyard and Copse where Ash Dieback is significant. Our church gas boiler has been identified as in need of replacement and we will need to explore more Eco-friendly power options.

The *Eco Group* has worked hard and the church has now been awarded the A Rocha Silver Church Award. We have held regular Repair Shop Coffee Mornings and Eco exhibitions during the year, bringing together charities, organisations and the community.

The church has an organist and a small choir who rehearse on Wednesday evenings. They are located in the North Aisle for the weekly Common Worship Communion at 10.00am on Sunday and in the front pews of the church for Evensong on the 4th Sunday of the month.

Members of the congregation hold regular fund-raising events including monthly coffee mornings and many people from the community also attend these events.

Social events include two band concerts annually in Summer and December.

The *Christmas Tree Festival* was a very successful fundraising event that brought many people to the Church and gets them into the Christmas spirit.

There are weekly social gatherings of the Wives Group on a Monday afternoons with a



full programme of events. The *Knit and Stitch Group* meets on a Saturday afternoon and have produced a magnificent knitted tree and decorative ornaments for sale. They also produced displays for other occasions, both inside and outside church.



Successful community outreach events include a fortnightly Luncheon Club for the elderly on a Thursday which is well attended and we have encouraged the community use of our Church Hall. There are regular bookings with C.O.A.S.T (Chilling Out at St Thomas') and Sue's Singers. A private choir, The Smithy Belles, used our church in December 2024 for a concert.

On Back to Church Weekend in October 2024, Disley and Lyme Horticultural Society used our hall for their awards event, which was linked with an exhibition of 65 paintings and photographs of our church supplied by members of the High Lane community. This was aimed at raising awareness of our church as a focal point in the community and to seek donations for necessary repairs and improvements.



The Vicarage

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

There is a garage and parking spaces for three cars in the driveway.



At the back of the house there is a large garden that has proved very amenable to social gatherings.

The New Incumbent

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

We seek a minister with collaborative leadership skills to work with the PCC and the Parish in building up God's Church in High Lane. Therefore we would like the new incumbent to:

- Be secure and confident in their spiritual and personal life and able to lead a variety of worship and prayer with care and sensitivity. They must be an empathetic listener, a good communicator, be pastorally sensitive, and able to nurture, motivate and affirm the talents and contributions of others.
- Have the skill and passion for engagement in the local community, and who will undertake and encourage outreach to all ages; the young through contact with the schools and youth groups, community groups, and those who work and have businesses in our village.
- Work collaboratively with other parishes in the Chadkirk Deanery and The Diocese of Chester, the local Methodist and Roman Catholic congregations and other faith communities.
- Support the emerging Mission strategy of Chester Diocese.
- Be Disability Aware and develop appropriate pastoral care for those in need in the community.

- Be able to encourage people to become actively involved in the life of the church and its activities in the Parish. This would enable all the various gifts which our church members and members of our community have to offer in maintaining the church fabric, growing our village faith and ensuring we are seen at the centre of our community.
- Have good IT skills and awareness of digital technology
- Develop innovative ways to help us to share our faith beyond the walls of the church, especially to the younger generation of our community and local schools.
- Focus on Safeguarding, along with our Safeguarding Officers, to ensure our church is a safe and welcoming place for all and complying with Diocesan guidelines.
- Have the appropriate skills, determination and patience to navigate the processes of obtaining Diocesan support, in a timely manner, in order to develop projects and obtain necessary faculties.
- Identify and encourage new ways of involving the whole community in fundraising for special projects.
- Continue to support and develop ECO group Church principles.



St Thomas' Church and the Northern Lights, May 2024
Photograph by Rev'd Hannah Hupfield