

The Eccleston Team

Team Profile

The Parishes of
St James with St Matthews
St John, Ravenhead
St Luke, Eccleston



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Thank you for your interest in our team of churches. We're a team of three parishes. For the last few years we have been on an exciting journey of shared mission, ministry, and mutual support. We are seeking a Rector who will continue to unite us and help us continue to grow numerically and spiritually.

We have a lots to offer a prospective candidate as we hope you'll see. It's an exciting time for us as we see growth in many areas of our life, but there are challenges to address too. We hope and pray that God will help you to discern His call for your life and ministry.

The PCC members of our Team Churches

Who we are

We are a team of three evangelical churches with four church buildings on the western side of St Helens. While each of our churches have a distinct identity and history, we collaborate and work together incredibly well often sharing our resources, clergy, staff and often coming together to worship. All our churches are evangelical, affirming the importance of the Bible and it's relevance for our daily lives. We are united in our desire to see our churches continue grow in size and spiritual commitment, and we want to make concerted efforts to help our churches reach children and young people..

Team Vision

In October 2023 our PCCs met together to discern a clear team vision which encapsulates the sort of team we would like to be. The result was the following:

Together, we want to be a team that:

- Puts Jesus at the heart of everything we do.
- Reaches all ages with the good news.
- Serves our community in meaningful ways.

This vision gives us some clear direction as we reach out, as a team, to our parishes. There's always more that we would like to do than we can actually do. We want our vision to be a filter, helping us say 'yes' to initiatives that help us achieve it, and 'no' to initiatives that don't. We also want it to act as a refiner, helping us reflect on our mission and activities, making sure they are Jesus-centred, reaching all age groups, and serving the people in our town in ways that are meaningful, and communicating God's love.



Our PCCs meeting to pray, discern a shared vision and make priorities for 2024.

Evangelism and Discipleship

St Luke's PCC has been engaging with 'Leading Your Church into Growth' (LYCIG) for a couple of years now, and St John's and St James are preparing to go on the conference soon. As a team, we want to embed the principles and wisdom of LYCIG into our evangelism. As such, we're learning how to 'join the dots' and make the things we already do become more missional and reach people with the good news. In addition we're committed to running an annual Start Course (following its success at the start of 2024) as well as an annual 'Moving On' course. For discipleship, we run a number of weekly home groups and bible studies throughout our team, both online and in person. We're currently working on a 'small group' strategy because demand is greater than we can currently offer through existing groups. Overall, it feels like our team of churches is on the threshold of a new chapter in the way we reach new people and help them to become more than church attenders, but whole-life disciples.

Leadership

We currently have one full-time team vicar, who is supported by four wardens and three fantastic PCCs. Until recently our PCCs operated with 'sub teams' (each team attending to a particular area of church life). However in keeping with LYCIG principles we are working towards a 'leadership team' model for each church, where a small number of people meet regularly with clergy to pray, action tasks, delegate others and take the church forward in various ways. These teams will then report back to the PCC on a regular basis. As a team we also recently made the decision to employ a Team Administrator (part time) to help ensure that our leadership teams across the team are working together as efficiently as possible. Our team admin is centralising and digitising a lot of processes (safeguarding, policies, external bookings etc) with the goal of helping our clergy, wardens and lay teams focus on mission.

St James with St Matthew's

Worshipping Community

St James with St Matthews is a church community, which was formed when two parishes came together in 2017. St Matthew's is a 1950's church set in Thatto Heath, and has no current weekly worshipping community, but the community centre is well used by various groups through the week. It's the home of a pre-school nursery, dance school, guides group and more, and it is the base for our Food Pantry, which is our largest missional outreach project.

St James is situated in Eccleston Park and recently celebrated its centenary. Weekly Sunday services for the parish are held at St James and follow a similar pattern to our other parishes (services of the word, with a monthly communion). Every other week we have children's provision in the lounge at the entrance to church, with crafts and a story. In the recent past our church community has had good success hosting cafe style services once per month, and pop up messy style services at St Matthew's.

We're keen to see a regular midweek worshipping community begin and grow at St Matthew's. For the hundreds of people who come through the community centre each week, it is regarded as their 'church'. Recently St James sold the land that their church hall was situated on and with the proceeds we plan to invest in St James building in a number of ways (making it more comfortable, and increasingly attractive to renters) and we plan to rejuvenate the St Matthew's church and centre so that it can truly serve the people of Thatto Heath.

Average Sunday Attendance		
Year	Adults	Children
2021	21	1
2022	28	7
2023	24	4



St James Church



St Matthew's Church and Community Centre

In terms of numbers our worshipping community has struggled to bounce back since the pandemic, seeing regular numbers about half of what they were prior to 2020. However, in recent months we have welcomed new faces and seen the return of some members who have been missing for a while. We've also seen some key roles being filled in the last 12 months, (including treasurer and warden) and the PCC are

united in their desire to grow, and to continue our journey as a team of churches, helping and supporting one another. We have committed to engaging with the 'Leading Your Church into

Growth' programme starting in October 2024, in order to generate a culture of excitement, prayer, and hope for numerical and spiritual growth.

Our Parish

As mentioned above, our parish used to be two parishes of Thatto Heath and Eccleston Park. Our boundaries encompass a diverse mixture of reasonably affluent areas of private sector housing combined with a large estate of social housing and new community housing. In addition, there are several sheltered and supported housing schemes, and a hospice. The diversity of housing types presents a range of different challenges and opportunities. Overall, our parish is in the top 12% of deprived parishes in England.



Team Worship Service, which happens on fifth Sundays at St Matthew's

The Parish is predominantly residential and in parts rural, including the edge of the internationally renowned Knowsley Safari Park. There is now little in the way of industry or commercial premises in the parish other than some local shops, Thatto Heath local centre and several public houses. There are several other churches from a variety of denominations within the parish, 3 primary schools, a few nurseries and Carmel Sixth Form College stands on the parish boundary. We enjoy a particularly close relationship with Eccleston Lane Ends, and are also involved with Nutgrove Methodist Primary School, and make occasional connection with St Austins, a Catholic Primary School.



Some of the St Matthew's Food Pantry Team

Finances

St James has struggled historically with finances, however in 2021 and 2022 the PCC made a concerted effort to increase rentals at our two sites, and financially the outlook of the church is much better. This, combined with the sale of the land which the old church hall stood on, has meant St James has a one off opportunity to really invest in its buildings and mission. Our financial assets at present stand at around £390,000, and we want to seize the opportunity to invest in the St Matthew's Church and Centre, and see it transformed into a thriving, fit for purpose and environmentally friendly space where a new worshipping community can grow, and where all our churches can meet with and serve the community of St Helens. We have started initial discussions with an architect about these plans, and are excited to see them develop.

St Luke, Ecclestone

Worshipping Community

St Luke's is a growing, lively, evangelical community of Christians. Since the pandemic the two congregations have worshipped together and have grown gently and steadily (see chart below for attendance). Our services have a 'light-liturgy'. Our service follows the structure of common worship, utilising different elements of the liturgy week by week to keep things fresh. We enjoy a balance of modern choruses and well-loved hymns, chiefly through iSing worship software. St Luke's has three licensed lay readers and a wider team of volunteer preachers and service leaders. In practise, our team of churches share leaders and preachers very flexibly between them.

Average Sunday Attendance		
Year	Adults	Children
2021	29	1
2022	42	3
2023	49	7
2024	57	9



Our Annual "Good Good Friday" Service

Occasionally, (especially around major festivals) we offer one-off cafe-style worship services which are always well-attended. Our Kid's Church began at the start of 2022 and have a number of regular families and many occasional families who now rely on our weekly children's provision. Our average attendance currently stands at 57 adults and 9 children. We have a number of home groups, some online and some in person, though in practise almost all of the midweek groups in our team are open to and enjoy members from all churches.

Our Parish

Our Church is situated on Knowsley Road, a large main road in the centre of the parish, which includes parts of Ecclestone, as well as West Park. The parish population was 8000 in the latest census and is in the top 6% of deprived parishes in England. Opposite the church we there is a large pub and soft play centre, and we have multiple shopping areas in the vicinity, including Cambridge Road with many independent businesses. Queen's park is our closest local Park and leisure centre, and we also border Taylor Park, a substantial public park with lake and play facilities. We have a couple of schools in our parish, including Queen's Park Primary which is a joint Church of England/URC two-form entry primary school. We enjoy an especially good relationship with Queen's Park school. The vicar regularly leads worship in the school, the PCC appoints two foundation governors and we're often asked to help with their R.E Curriculum. The Schools Ministry Team organises events in the school and at church when pupils visit. We'd like to continue developing this relationship.

Our Building

Our church building was opened just over 90 years ago, and is in good repair. About 15 years ago it was re-ordered and the pews were replaced by chairs. This means that we now have an open plan church giving flexible space to accommodate different styles of worship and opportunities for other events such as our Family events. It's also occasionally used for conferences or music events. We're blessed to have high quality audio and visual equipment (and a great team) which means we can live stream our services.



Our building is prominently located on Knowsley Road

There is also a side chapel, a Parish Room which is a small meeting room, a Lounge with a small kitchen space towards the back of church and a toilet to the side. In the entrance porch to the church there is a Smart TV to use for Welcome notices. We have a small car park at the front of church, and the grounds are maintained by a team of dedicated volunteers.

We have a community centre which can be accessed independently. In 2023 it underwent a redecoration, following some issues with flooding. Now it is reopen it is well used by the community. It consists of a large hall, two smaller meeting rooms and a fully functioning kitchen. We have toilets facilities including one with disabled access, and baby changing facilities. At the front of the centre we have an Eco Garden which we want to encourage the users of the centre/ community to maintain and develop. Unfortunately, this has been held up due to COVID-19. We would like to increase the use of the centre for community needs.



Family Fun Event in the Community Centre on Shrove Tuesday 2024

Our Finances

Financially, St Luke's has a longstanding deficit, though we've always paid our parish share in full (which is around £51,000 per year). We're currently taking steps to reduce our deficit, in part, by increasing the use of our community centre and seeking an increase in our congregation's regular giving. Last year our total income was approximately £84,000 and our expenditure was £133,000. A large amount of that however was payments made to get community centre up and running, and much improved following flooding at the end of 2022. We're hopeful that 2024 will be a much improved year for us financially. Our total reserves stand at around £130,000 though most of that is an endowment fund that is restricted.

St John, Ravenhead.

Worshipping Community

St John's is a growing, evangelical church. We have two primary Sunday worshipping communities. We have a monthly 8.30am eucharist service according to the Book of Common Prayer. This is a small community of faithful disciples who really value the BCP's rich historic liturgy. We also have a weekly 11am morning service with a Kid's Church that runs alongside. This service utilises elements from common worship (though the liturgy is adapted and modified regularly) and is relaxed and informal. We use a mixture of traditional and contemporary songs, some of which are played on piano or organ and some on our iSing worship software. There are no licensed lay readers at St John's but we have a number of lay service leaders and preachers and we enjoy visits from other leaders and preachers across the churches.

Our Kid's Church was developed at St Johns in April 2021 and has flourished since, usually welcoming between 10-20 children on a given week, and many more for special festivals and services. It particularly suits primary school aged children, and the church is currently exploring



Some of our children leading the Nativity Service

plans for some structured youth provision. Following its success the model was introduced at St Luke's at the start of 2022. The two Kid's Churches cooperate very closely, both follow the same curriculum and share resources with volunteers often preparing crafts and activities for one another.

We also have two other local worshipping communities. Our church offers a monthly communion at Reeve Court Retirement Village, and also at St Helens Hall and Lodge Care Home. Both are well attended and valued by members of their community.

Ravenhead Parish

Ravenhead Parish has close to 11500 people, and is in the top 6% of deprived parishes in England, according to the latest census. Close by we have a local park (Thatto Heath Park, situated at the bottom of Crossley Road), and we also border Taylor Park, a substantial public park with lake and play facilities. a small street of shops, a library and a well-used train station connecting Liverpool with Wigan. There is a large modern retail park within our parish (named Ravenhead Retail Park) which is right next to the town centre. There are a number of local schools and we enjoy a particularly close relationship with Thatto Heath Primary School, our closest geographically. It's very large (being three-form entry). As well as regular assemblies, in the church and in the school,

Average Attendance at 11am Service		
Year	Adults	Children
2021	21	1
2022	28	7
2023	35	12
2024	38	12

every year group gets it's own special visit to the church every year as part of it's R.E Curriculum. These events are led by the Eccleston Team's Schools Ministry Team which you can read about under 'Mission and Outreach Activities'.

Our Building

The building is a traditional Victorian-era church with a modern, attached community centre. There are areas of the building that need repair and investment, not least our roof which is original. Generally however, most of the building is in good repair and is an attractive Grade II listed structure. The church features striking stained glass, a traditional layout of pews, an attractive and working pipe organ alongside an appealing side chapel and a comfortable enclosed reception area and creche. It has a new and powerful video projector system installed alongside a sound system with the capacity to accommodate Sunday worship and small-to-medium sized music groups.

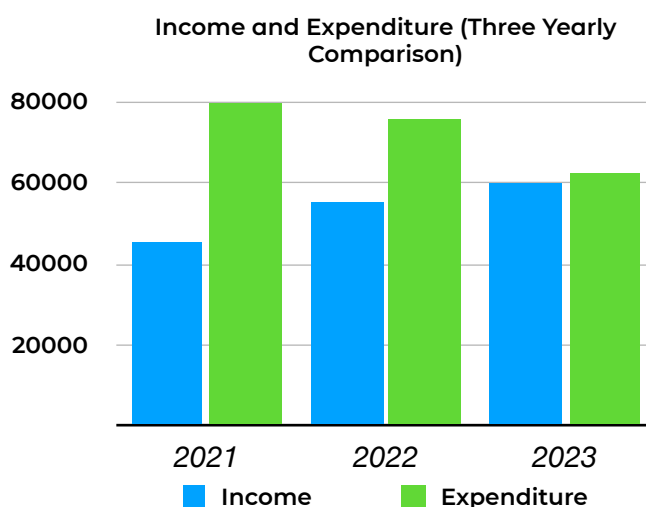
Adjoining the church is St John's Centre, a community initiative opened by the church in 2005 consisting of two activity halls, an office area, professional kitchen, toilets, waiting area and two meeting rooms. The centre generates an income stream for the parish, but also forms part of our outreach strategy and is a big asset to both the church and local residents.

Finances

For the last few years we've been on a journey of increasing financial health. Following the pandemic our annual deficit in 2021 was around £34,000, and our reserves were nearly depleted. The PCC has worked really hard for the last two and a half years to increase income and decrease expenditure. Even with sharp rises in utility costs, we're a lot closer to break-even point. During this whole time we continued to pay our full parish share (approximately £40,000). At one point we needed helped with a gift from St James church to pay for three months parish share, which is evidence for the way our churches work and operate as a true team. Our reserves currently stand at around £20,000. In the future, we want to go further than break even as we're keen to invest in our building and more importantly begin to invest more in mission and reach more people with the good news.



Our church is located on Crossley Road, in Ravenhead



Our Team's Mission and Evangelism

Life Events

From the moment booking, to the event itself, we do our best to establish good relationships with people seeking a life event with us, whether it's a baptism, wedding or funeral. These are organised centrally by our team administrator. 2023 was a fairly typical year and across our team we conducted 25 Baptisms, 2 Weddings and 25 Funerals. In 2024 we've had the privilege of the first confirmations in many years, with 8 adult confirmands.

Team Food Pantries

Our Team has two busy and thriving food pantries, located at St Luke's and St Matthews., Together, they serve hundreds of households every week, representing thousands of meals for local families and thousands of volunteer hours every year. This is our church's response to the cost of living crisis. Our pantries also dramatically reduce food waste, helping the environment. Our customers can access a wide array of support services through the pantry, as well as making friends and building relationships. This is a key mission field for our churches, and so as well serving people in the moment we use the opportunity to build friendships, make connections, invite to church and to special events and services. Our pantries work together, and work well with other local pantries and food banks, often supplying one another when someone is short. God has been incredibly faithful to our pantries, proving to us week by week that when we share, there is always enough for everybody.



A Reception Class visiting St Luke's and learning a worship song

Schools Ministry Team

Our Schools Ministry team was established September 2023 by our clergy, and is now led and directed by lay volunteers. It includes members from all our team churches, representing a team effort to reach the children in all our parishes. As a team we host events and services for our local schools. Sometimes these events are in school, and often they are in our church buildings.



Year 6 Children visiting our Annual Easter Journey

We're inspired by words from Psalm 74: "We will not hide these truths from our children... we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord, about his power and his mighty wonders." Sometimes we're helping schools with their R.E curriculum, and other times we're leading times of worship, reflection and prayer. There are several events every term that our team works together on, during which we have the privilege of speaking to thousands of local children and sharing the gospel with

them. This is a really exciting growing ministry in our team of churches that we want to invest more into.

Team Toddler Groups.

Across our team of churches we have three weekly toddler groups - one in each of our churches. Our toddler groups have been operating for many years as a team by sharing and making resources as a team, following the same curriculum, and meeting termly to pray together and share stories. All our toddler groups are places where families come for tea, toast, free-play and friendship. Most of our volunteers are committed members of the church and do their utmost to build supportive relationships with the families and to provide a witness to our faith. We begin our sessions with prayer, offer prayer throughout and there is always a bible story and nursery rhymes at the end.

Teens and Youth Group

We have a weekly Sunday evening kids group that meets in St Matthew's, aimed for children who might not be able to attend church in the morning. It's primarily targeted towards older primary school aged children, and younger secondary school ages children. It's led by two lay leaders and supported by Scripture Union. We're currently trying to ensure our Sunday mornings are welcoming to older children and teens, and we're exploring the possibility of a new after school youth group with our local schools, specifically for pupils in the final year of primary school and throughout their secondary school journey, as we recognise that teenagers are the age group we have the least regular engagement with.



Coffee Mornings

We have two weekly coffee mornings at St Luke's and St John's, and occasion events at St James. These are all run by lay people. They are attended by members of our churches, as well as people who are not part of any church community.

Their goal is to show hospitality

and allow our church the space and time to build relationships with those we don't know yet. We also run a weekly 'Young at Heart' group at St John's, which is particularly for over 50's. They take regular trips together and meals out, and are becoming known in the area as a group that offers community and friendship to the elderly.

Hobby Groups and Occasional Events

We have a number of hobby groups that meet at various points in the week across our churches. St Luke's hosts a weekly craft group and a bowls group. St James has a weekly event where members play snooker and pool, as members of St Luke's host a monthly speaking event in a local pub, primarily for local men. We also run a number of occasional events such as speaking events in pubs, film nights, rock and roll evenings, and quiz nights to raise money for charities. These are always well supported by members of the church and wider community.

In Conclusion

Thank you for your interest in the role of Team Rector in the Eccleston Team. We are praying that God is already calling the right person to this role, and we look forward to meeting you. It's an exciting time to be joining our team, with a good foundation to work on and plenty of room and scope for new exciting developments.

We are seeking:

- A priest who will lead us in worship, and encourage us in our discipleship.
- A rector who is excited to see our churches grow and thrive together.
- A pastor who will love the people in our parishes.
- A leader who is a team player, and skilled at leading groups of volunteers.
- An evangelist who is enthusiastic to see people come to faith.
- A disciple who will help nurture new disciples, and nurture new lay leaders for our church.

We can offer:

- The full support of our PCCs, wardens and leadership teams.
- Administration support from our Team Administrator
- Respect for all days off, annual leave and retreats.
- Weekly meetings and the chance to pray with other clergy and leaderships teams.
- Space and freedom to use your own gifts and abilities. .
- Expenses in full and on time.
- A well equipped, modern vicarage in a beautiful part of the benefice.