



Parish of Whaley Bridge Parish Profile



The purpose of our parish is...

- To demonstrate the love & care of God in Christ for everyone
- To grow a living community of faith of all ages
- To deepen our faith as we pray & worship God together
- To become an inclusive, hospitable & accessible Church where all can feel that they belong
- To be at the heart of our community, & to have our community on our heart

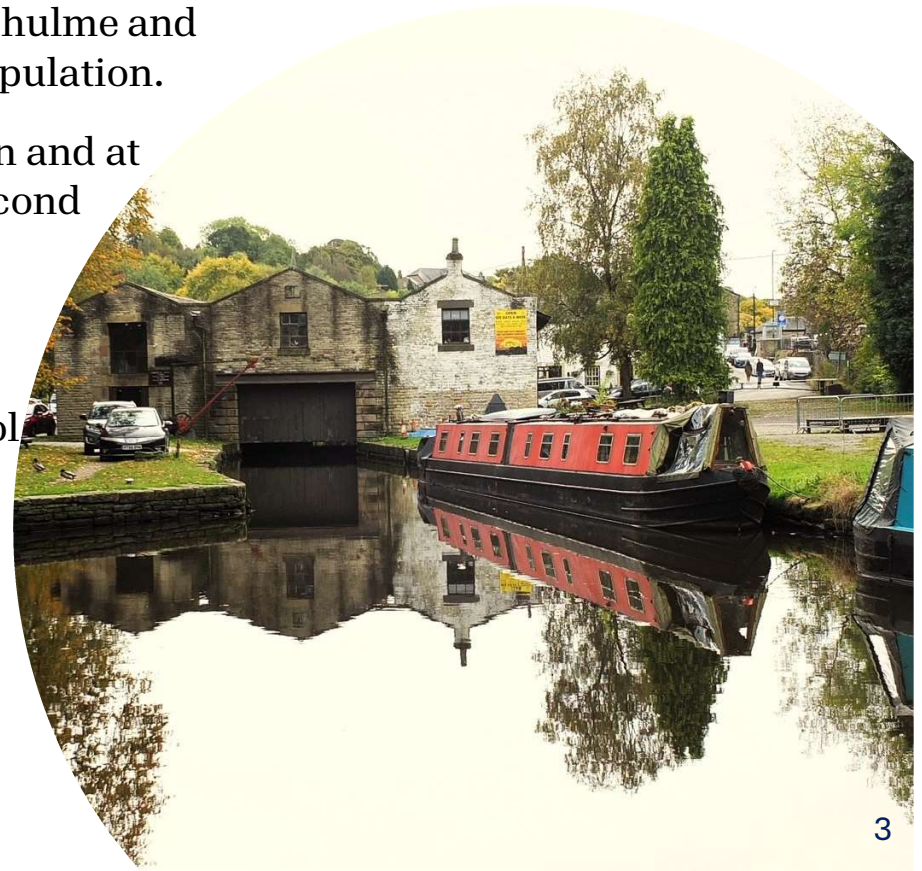
We pray for a vicar who



- Is prayerful and spirit led and will teach the word of God with enthusiasm and humour.
- Is willing to continue the very strong ecumenical links within the village and to further develop our common mission.
- Is keen to participate in a busy village community life and build supportive relationships with everyone inside and outside church.
- Has a heart and enthusiasm for encouraging children's work within our church and a willingness to embrace the needs of all ages.
- Has a calling to nurture the spiritual journey of our school children and to find opportunities to further involve our schools in church.
- Will encourage young adults both within our church and in the wider community to take a fuller part in church life.
- Has energy and creativity to help further develop and encourage our faith as we strive to live and grow as the body of Christ.

Where we are

- The Parish of Whaley Bridge occupies the upper reaches of the beautiful Goyt Valley, on the western fringe of the Peak District. The southern portion of the parish consists of upland moor and wooded landscape around the Fernilee and Errwood reservoirs.
- The main population is found in the small town of Whaley Bridge which occupies the northern half of the parish. The village of Kettleshulme and hamlets of Fernilee and Taxal are the other main centres of population.
- We are situated on the branch line from Manchester to Buxton and at the end of the picturesque Peak Forest canal. Close by is a second railway line that connects Manchester to Sheffield.
- We have a population of around 5500. There are two primary schools in Whaley Bridge itself (one is a church school the other a county school). There is a third church primary school in the nearby village of Kettleshulme. Whilst the average age of residents is around 46 years there is a good mix of families and older people across the Parish. The demographic of the village is predominantly white. The village hosts a number of small to medium sized businesses and farming is still important to the community. A significant number of people commute to Manchester.





Where we worship

We are a single-congregation church who worship in our two buildings on alternating weeks. Our recent QI inspection (April 2024) shows that both buildings are well maintained and in good order.

- **Holy Trinity (top front cover)** - Is situated close to the centre of Whaley Bridge and was built in 1904. The church was reordered in 2000 to include a large upstairs space and smaller downstairs room. This has enabled it to be used increasingly in a multi-purpose capacity and to host both church activities and community groups; these include Stay and Play, U3A, a Dance School, Jiu Jitsu and Trinity Stitches.
- **St James (bottom front cover)** - Forms the centre of Taxal, a hamlet one mile up the Goyt Valley. This picturesque church is the oldest building in Whaley Bridge and is a prayerful place of great historic interest and heritage value. It is frequently visited by walkers and those tending graves. It has a square Norman bell tower; the central body was rebuilt in the 19th century. St James' rural surroundings are idyllic for weddings and a peaceful location for funeral services and burials in the large graveyard. Bell ringing practice takes place every Monday evening.

Holy Trinity has kitchen facilities and a small office space with printing facilities. St James has a kettle for tea and coffee. Both have disabled toilets.



Who we are

- Our Ministry Team includes a Reader and Pastoral Worker (both with PTO) who pursue very active ministries.
- We have a paid administrator for 4 hours each week.
- Each week we prepare a newsletter of upcoming services, events and activities. This is handed out to the congregation on Sundays.
- Our free Parish Magazine is produced six times a year, which provides information about upcoming services, events and activities. Over 300 copies are printed and distributed widely across the parish and are available from a number of local shops. It is also available on our website.
- The Parish website is updated weekly and has details of all our services and organisations and a section on who to contact should you need to speak to someone.
- Facebook is proving a valuable means of communication, particularly with the younger people, and we now have more than 400 followers.
- We are conscious that we need to develop our communication in order to stay visible and relevant in our community.



Mission

In addition to our regular services, we have a strong sense of mission to our community. We continually seek ways to be inclusive and welcoming; to offer new opportunities for people to hear the Good News and to show God's love in practical ways, some of which include:

- **Pastoral Care** - When someone is ill or in hospital, or is no longer able to attend church, we aim to maintain contact with them through the Pastoral Care Team and through the many members of the congregation who visit them as friends. Where appropriate, people receive home Communion. This is a church where we pray for each other.
- **Warm Hearted Fridays** - Started as an initiative to offer a warm space to people at a time when heating prices were rising sharply. Holy Trinity is open every Friday lunch time for anyone to come and enjoy soup, cake and a brew alongside the chance to chat and/or work on jigsaws in a welcoming environment. Volunteers work on a rota basis to provide and serve the food; these Friday lunch time sessions have become a popular offering to the community.

Mission cont.

- **Social Events** - Recognising the importance of having times of fun and fellowship, we hold a variety of social events during the year. These are supported by members both of the congregation and the wider community. Happily, these events add both fun and income to the church. These include Ladies' Clothes and Accessories Swap, a Christmas Tree Festival held at Holy Trinity and concerts at St James. We have recently started a monthly local walk for the men of the community.
- **Open Church** - St James is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and weekends 10 to 4pm. The locals kindly open and close the church.
- **Overseas Mission** - With the other churches in Whaley Bridge we offer financial support to Tracy and Jason Day who are our CMS mission partners in Thailand and who come from Whaley Bridge. We also support Christian Aid through an annual fundraising walk. This is also supported by members of other churches in Whaley Bridge informally; similarly, members of our congregation support other churches' mission initiatives.

Where you will live



- **The Vicarage** - Is situated almost opposite Holy Trinity church and close to the centre of Whaley Bridge. It is a large detached house built in 1908 and was originally a doctor's house. It is fully double glazed and has gas central heating.

- The accommodation includes:

Ground floor

- Two reception rooms
- Kitchen, conservatory, scullery
- Study/office and cloakroom (shower & toilet)

First floor

- Four bedrooms
- Two bathrooms

Outside

- Large mature gardens
- Garage
- Ample off-road parking

How we worship

- Currently much of our worship centres around Holy Communion, though other forms of service from Common Worship are also used. Services are usually led by the vicar with assistance from a Reader. Clergy robe for services with cassock and surplice/cassock alb and stole. This is our current practice, but we are open to change.
- Services on Sundays alternate between the two churches, with services on the 1st & 3rd Sundays taking place at Holy Trinity and on the 2nd & 4th Sundays at St James.
- Our principal service is at 10.30am on Sunday. It is Holy Communion on the 1st, 2nd & 4th Sundays. We use different services drawing on Common Worship according to the different liturgical seasons. We sing hymns to organ accompaniment at St James, piano at Holy Trinity. Services last no longer than an hour. Members of the congregation read an Old or New Testament reading and offer the intercessions. We have several lay assistants licensed to assist with the chalice. The average attendance is 25 adults, 2 children.
- On the 3rd Sunday we have a family service held at Holy Trinity. We use PowerPoint and interactive discussions. Children are asked to do the reading.
- On the 5th Sunday the service alternates between the two churches.
- Tuesday morning prayer is always held at Holy Trinity. This is often led by the pastoral worker. The Tuesday after the 3rd Sunday is a Holy Communion service led by the vicar.



Special Events

- **Christingle Service** - Held at Holy Trinity, this is a very popular service held on Christmas Eve afternoon and for many people a highlight of the year. A couple with a young baby take the role of Mary and Joseph. The Travelling Crib that has been going from home to home during Advent is brought back to church for the service.
- **Carol Service** - Held at St James this service is usually held at 4.00pm on the Sunday before Christmas. It is a traditional service of nine lessons and congregational singing of carols, to which schools contribute.
- **Service of Light** - For the recently bereaved, as close as possible to All Souls' Day, we hold a special service at St James for those whose loved ones have died. The families of those whose funerals we have conducted receive written invitations for two years, although anyone is welcome and can ask for their loved one to be remembered.
- **Christmas Tree Festival (picture opposite)** - This is a very popular community event held at Holy Trinity over a long weekend. Local businesses and organizations supply a decorated Christmas tree to the church. Entertainment is provided by the children from the three local schools and Whaley Bridge Brass Band, even Santa makes an appearance, and all have a jolly nice time. Small enterprises sell their wares and refreshments are provided.



Special Events

cont.



- **161st Manchester (Jodrell's Own) Scout Group Service** - For 100 years this inner-city Scout Group have held their annual camp in the field below St James and have attended the service on the Sunday. Over the years many friendships have been formed and renewed each year at the service.
- **Remembrance Sunday** - The main act of remembrance is an ecumenical service and takes place at the War Memorial in the Memorial Park behind Holy Trinity. The usual Sunday service is suspended on this occasion. As it is not possible for everyone to get up to the War Memorial, the same service is held at the Uniting Church.
- **Joint Services with other denominations** - For a number of years it has been the custom to hold several joint services with the Uniting Church (LEP). These have often been around the time of the Methodist Covenant Service and Palm Sunday. In recent years, it has also become the custom for Churches Together in Whaley to hold a joint service on Good Friday, Advent Sunday and Ash Wednesday and during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Baptisms, Weddings & Funerals

- **Baptisms** - Take place at either church during either the usual service or immediately following that service at 12.30pm. Both the pastoral worker and vicar prepare the family with home visits. We encourage them to come to the monthly CATS (Carers and Toddlers Service) to help them keep the promises they make at baptism.
- **Weddings** - St James is the preferred venue for weddings and in 2024 there were two. Weddings are arranged in consultation with the vicar, who also prepares the couple for their marriage. We are aware of the potential of St James and would like some help constructing a wedding package.
- **Funerals** - During the last year, the clergy and reader have conducted over 20 funerals. The majority of these have taken place at St James, which has a large open graveyard. Some people prefer to have a funeral service at Holy Trinity. A small number have a service at Macclesfield or Stockport Crematorium. Whenever possible, the person who has conducted the funeral, or a member of the Pastoral Care Team, visits the family about six weeks after the funeral. Families also receive an invitation to the Service of Light for the recently bereaved in November.



Children and Families

- **CATS (Carers and Toddlers)** - This is our pre-school fun session that meets in Holy Trinity on the first Wednesday of every month. Each session has a Biblical theme and incorporates play, craft, singing, story and of course snack time. It runs from 9 – 11.30am. Children come with mums, dads, grans, grandads, carers or childminders.
- **Stay and Play** - Responding to the ‘Filling the Gap’ initiative that recognizes that holiday time can be difficult for parents whose children receive Free School Meals, we hold a free two-hour session from 11.00am – 1.00pm once a week in the school holidays at Holy Trinity. Children and their carers have the opportunity to engage with a variety of crafts and games. The morning ends with a sandwich, crisps and fruit lunch. Attendance at Stay and Play averages about 35 children & 25 adults.
- **Babies’ and Children’s Clothes and Toy Swap** - We hold this on the third Saturday morning of each month from 10.00 – 12.00 noon at Holy Trinity. As young children grow so fast, this provides an opportunity for young families to come and swap clothes and toys for the next size up or the next toy! It also offers families a chance to chat over tea and biscuits and maybe meet some new friends.
- **Older Children** - We support other churches in our community who support older children.
- **Safeguarding** - We take safeguarding very seriously, with a dedicated safeguarding officer. We have a safeguarding plan, plus all the PCC and other church members who work with children are DBS checked.



Our schools

There are three schools in the parish:

- Kettleshulme St James CE (VA) Primary School is located in the village of Kettleshulme. The parish supplies five governors, including the vicar who is currently represented by a substitute. The Reader takes weekly assemblies; the vicar monthly. We welcome the school into each church once a year at Christmas and Easter. There is a close relationship with the school which could be further developed.
- Whaley Bridge Primary School is located in the middle of Whaley and is a local authority school. Relationships are via the 'Open the Book' team which visits twice per term. See next page.
- Taxal & Fernilee CE Primary School is also located in Whaley and is a Voluntary Controlled School. The parish supplies three governors including the vicar ex officio. The vicar takes monthly assemblies. We welcome the school into church six times a year at the end of each half term, for a service which is co-lead between the vicar and the children from one year group. There is again a close relationship with the school which could be further developed.



Churches Together in Whaley Bridge



We work closely with the other churches in Whaley Bridge. These include Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Fernilee Church, the Uniting Church and the Good News Church. The following are some of the things we do together –

- **Open the Book** - Every half term a small ecumenical team visit the three primary schools in the area, to act out short bible stories in a fun way involving home made props and help from pupil volunteers. Children and teachers seem to really enjoy these sessions and team members are regularly recognised by children around the village which can spark off interesting conversations. Members of the same team are also involved in a Christmas special and a session for year 6s prior to them moving on to High School.
- **Whaley Bridge Lunch Club** - On the second Thursday of the month, at the Uniting Church, members of the local churches and other volunteers cook a tasty home-made two course meal for the elderly, isolated or vulnerable residents of Whaley Bridge and the surrounding area. There is a nominal charge, which includes tea and coffee. Our guests enjoy meeting up for a chat, and report that they enjoy the club greatly!



- **Lent Study Groups** - During Lent, members from the different churches regularly meet to try to discover more of what God wants of us. Usually, we follow a published course.
- **Whaley Bridge Summer Carnival** - Churches Together always enters a float in the Whaley Bridge summer carnival and recent themes for our float have been *God welcomes all sorts* and *God's beauty surrounds us*. For a couple of years, Churches Together have manned a marquee serving free tea, coffee, juice and cakes. It provides a place to sit and relax amid the hustle and bustle of carnival day and alongside some children's activities has been extremely well received.
- **Christmas Tree Lighting** - At the annual lighting of the Whaley Bridge Christmas tree towards the end of November, we sing carols and retell the Christmas story. We work alongside Whaley Bridge Brass Band and the rest of the community. Families also have fun looking for Nativity figures hidden in various shop window displays.
- **Holiday Club** - Each year during summer holidays, Churches Together in Whaley Bridge runs a Holiday Club for primary school aged children. It runs for five mornings from 9.30 - 12.30pm and is held at the Uniting Church. Additional holiday clubs are also run for one full day once or twice a year during other school holidays.

Finances

- As a small congregation, we work hard to balance the books. The last three years' accounts are in this pack.
- We encourage monthly giving by Standing Order and have a giving campaign most years in November.
- We have worked hard to catch up on Gift Aid from HMRC.
- We have a new Treasurer who is taking forward a process with the Charity Commission to release some restricted funds for wider use.
- We supplement congregational giving with income from letting out space at Holy Trinity. This can be developed further.
- The cost of heating and maintaining our two buildings remains a challenge.
- We have recently installed a card reader in St James.



Challenges we Face

As our community faced the challenge of the dam breaking in 2019, so our church faces these challenges.

- Running and managing two listed buildings.
- Only one church warden.
- As with many parishes we face declining congregation numbers.
- Upkeep of a large graveyard with the newest part in use for burials.

However, we are up for facing these challenges head on with God's and your help.

Summary

We hope that as you read this Parish Profile, you will feel called by the Spirit to become our vicar. However, we also want to share with you some thoughts on what we feel God might want the next stage of our journey to look and feel like.

- We are open to new ideas and change.
- We would love to help people to grow closer to God through our worship and pastoral care including baptisms, weddings and funerals.
- We believe that there should be a focus on teaching and discipleship as we learn to follow Jesus together.
- We recognize the need to help young people and families connect with us in our common journey of faith.
- We want to continue to work closely with the other Christian communities in the town.

In helping us to work towards this you would be supported by an active group of lay members, who are very engaged in leading the wide variety of activities we have in place (included in our team we have a pastoral worker and a reader). We offer a range of administrative support, including a part-time church administrator, which will help you to focus your time effectively.

