

Is God calling you to St James?

St James' is a small but active church. God is answering our prayers to grow his kingdom here in Spirit, Size and Service.



The vicar we want



We are looking for a vicar who will lead our mission and pastoral care at St James, continue to work with our Church school and the local community. Whoever God calls to St James will need to be a Team player, both to work with the other Clergy across the West Warrington Team and the Deanery of Warrington as part of the new Fit For Mission Parish, but also with the local leaders at St James. As an Inclusive Church we hope that God will send us a Priest who will break down barriers and help us to share God's love with all.

Prayer of Love and Faith 

We pray together for our church to grow:
Gracious God,
In this year of action, may our love for one another kindle flames of joy and hope.
May the light and warmth of your grace inspire us to follow the way of Jesus Christ, to serve you as you grow your Kingdom, in Spirit, Size and Service.
Amen

  

About the Church

The Church in Action: Sundays

We are committed to offering God the very best worship that we can every Sunday and through the week. Almost 10 years ago the church was often feeling full on a Sunday, but we felt that our worship was often inaccessible for those who did not have a church background. We prayed and researched and made a brave decision to move to two Sunday morning services.



Our 9.30 service is a traditional Parish Eucharist Service. Readings (a first reading and the Gospel) usually follow the Lectionary. There is a sermon of about 10 minutes. Someone from the congregation will usually read the lesson and someone else will lead the intercessions. The liturgy is from Common Worship and reflects seasonal variations. Our Reader Emeritus, Ian, will usually Deacon, and sometimes preach, as will Rebecca our Self-Supporting Minister (SSM) and Paul our Local Missional Leader (LML). We sing

four 'proper' hymns, and we use hymnswithoutwords.com for the backing tracks which we embed into the PowerPoint. There are usually around 20 people in the congregation, mostly retired, some of working age, and maybe a couple of children.

Following the service – at around 10.30 there are refreshments: Fairtrade tea, filter coffee and cakes. We try to ensure that this is available for both congregations.



At 11am our Active Church for Everyone (ACE) happens – this would be called a ‘Fresh Expression’ in many circles. We sometimes describe ACE as “church- but not like you expect!”. ACE is distinctively Anglican, in that we have liturgy that we say each week; much of this has been written by ourselves and all of this is accessible and inclusive. We have confessions and a Bible reading that someone will volunteer to read in the service. We sing modern worship songs accompanied by guitar, piano and drums. We have times when the congregation talk to one another. The talk is very brief, and we always have a craft or other activity that everyone joins in with. We pray in an active way - we like using pipe cleaners, balloons, fire, Lego or post it notes. The congregation is usually between 5 and 20 adults and often as many children. All of this is led by a team of Paul our LML, Rebecca our SSM and others who are being nurtured in leadership roles. ACE includes Communion about six times each year. There are three or four baptisms a year as part of ACE. As well as this families who want a separate baptism are accommodated in a 12.30 service which happens on average a dozen times each year.



We have typically up to 5 funerals each year in church and occasional weddings. We have agreed that we would hold blessings of same-sex marriages within regular worship.

The Church in Action: Vision

St James’ has not historically had an ethos of prayer. In December 2022 PCC decided to focus on prayer, this grew out of our discussions about *Leading Your Church into Growth* initiative. We committed to saying the LYCIG prayer at each service throughout 2023 and designated 2023 as a Year of Prayer for Growth.

Ambitiously, we began with 24 hours of prayer on the first Saturday of the year. We managed it with 24 people praying at some point along with an hour of active prayer by our young people.



We followed this each month with a prayer breakfast on the first Saturday of the month. After half an hour of prayer, we share breakfast - usually a bacon butty, but alternatives were available. Numbers fluctuated but were generally between 10 and 20.

On Thursday nights we ran an eight-week prayer course (The Prayer Course from 24/7 Prayer). This was hosted at Paul and Ruth's house and 15 people took part in the course. We finished the course with a prayer walk around the parish, finishing at the Chapelford Farm pub. The group members were inspired to carry on and so in July and August we spent Thursday evenings doing 'Pray and Prune' – meeting at church to tidy the garden and pray.

In September we spent Thursday evenings walking around the streets of the parish, praying for those streets and delivering 2000 invitations to the Church Warrington Christmas Carol service. On 28th September we began St James' first ever Alpha course which Rebecca and Ruth led at church with 3 attendees. Whilst this was happening the Prayer group continued to meet at Paul's house, to pray for those taking the Alpha course, as well as for other matters. The Alpha Course's Holy Spirit Day was combined with the November Prayer Breakfast. This all built up to us all joining with 3000 other Warrington folk at Halliwell Jones Stadium for a missional carol service on December 14th.



The year of prayer helped focus St James' Church on God and what God was calling His small congregation to do. We prayed for growth in size, spirit and service, and we believe that we are beginning to see this.

We have designated 2024 as a Year of Action. We again held a 24 hours of prayer in January and have continued to hold monthly prayer breakfasts. The Thursday night group have continued to meet, doing the Loved + Liked course and the Prayer Course II, and again praying and pruning.

We have started a monthly Sunday Supper Club. This is held at teatime on a Sunday and it is open to anyone. The initial vision is to support food poverty in the area and link our school families. We have regular contact and advertise through the local food bank also. Members of the congregation and community sit together and eat and then have a short talk or



reflection before a short activity or craft to take away and encourage people to think about their faith. Our hope is to develop this and it to become its own missional community in time.

We have held a Youth Fellowship Group on a Friday night for the past year. This provided a space for up to a dozen young people (mostly the confirmed members of our church) to play games and grow in their faith. We were delighted that four members of the congregation were able to lead this missional activity. The older youth are now joining with the Deanery group, and we are going to focus in October on the junior age children only on a Friday night.

The Church and its people

Our Electoral Roll is out of date and misleading. Our active membership is 60 adults, and 10 of these have joined the church within the last two years. Approximately half of the congregation are retired and half of working age. We have a couple of families with toddlers and four or five with school aged children. Around 90% of the membership are ethnically white British.



We have an active PCC who meet monthly. Members are committed to growth and all the necessary roles are filled, even though the majority are of working age and have busy work and family lives. Rosie our treasurer helps us manage our finances, but we (like all churches in the Deanery) are struggling to make ends meet. Since the pandemic we have had to dip into our small reserves, and the proceeds of the land sale to balance the books – however we have always paid our Parish Share and tithed our church income to support charitable causes.



Mike and Julie, our Wardens, are key members of the congregation who work tirelessly to maintain our buildings and deal with whatever comes. Ian, our Reader Emeritus also helps with lots of the practical work around church. Julie has also been hugely involved in our Church school, helping to lead the Messy Church services there.

Ruth our PCC secretary is highly efficient and also maintains our church website www.stjameschurch.info and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/StJamesChurchWestbrookHoodManorChapelford>, sends weekly notice sheets by email and WhatsApp. Most members are in our St James Info and/or Prayer request WhatsApp groups. There are PCC and Standing Committee WhatsApp groups.



Rebecca, our SSM was ordained Priest in 2023. She is a full-time solicitor, and Chaplain to the Liverpool Hospitals. She leads the Sunday Supper Club initiative, ACE and is in charge of rotas for who is doing what on a Sunday.

Paul our Local Missional Leader is also the Deanery Lay Chair and is a Diocesan Synod representative and Board of Education member. He is an Academic at Edge Hill University and works regionally and nationally in RE. He leads ACE, the prayer breakfasts and many of the Thursday night groups.



The Church and the community



Church has links with 7th Warrington West Scout Group based in Hood Manor and the Scouts, Cubs and Beavers typically attend church for 3-4 parade services each year.

Lowry Close is a development of retirement apartments adjacent to St James church land and which is managed by Warrington Housing Association. The Lowry Close Residents Association and Warrington Housing Association sometimes use St James church hall for residents' meetings.

For many years, the Church has distributed leaflets about our Christmas Services alongside a Santa's Sleigh float and street collection to raise money for the Church and selected charities. We are often contacted by members of the community to check in advance when we will be visiting their road.

The Church and our school

Links with our church school, Sankey Valley St James CE Primary School, are exceptionally strong with regular Eucharist services held in school and visits to church at major festivals. There is a weekly 'Open the Book' assembly and termly Messy Church services in school. Confirmation classes are also offered annually – with up to 10 school children choosing to be confirmed. At school everyone is valued as the unique person they are, consequently, the vision of 'life in all its fullness,' is a lived reality, reinforcing the idea of God's unequivocal love for all. Parents and carers value this collaboration and church events are well-attended – especially the Church Christmas fayre held in school. Church members Julie, Barbara, Paul and Rebecca are governors, and the previous Vicars have been Chair of Governors.



We would hope that the new incumbent would be committed to continue developing this strong relationship.

The Church and its building



St James Church is situated on a main road adjacent to a woodland area. It is a relatively low maintenance building, The building is one unit comprising one large area, church and hall, that are separated by sliding doors giving the option of seating up to 70 or up to 150 if opened up. All seating is flexible giving the option of creating a single large hall space if needed and seating can be set as needed for different services and activities. Services are projected onto the front walls for the congregation by two new projectors, and on a TV screen at the back of church for the leaders to read from. There is a good sound system with wireless microphones. Additionally, within the building

there is a vestry, small chapel room, large foyer and small kitchen.

In 2022 we sold part of the land that was unused scrub land for £132,000; Currently two homes are being built on that land and this involves the church car park being relocated. During the summer months, we often have a small group of members who spend an hour 'Praying and Pruning' to try and keep the bushes and flowerbeds under control.



The church hall is used by a variety of external groups during the week (Slimming World, Jo Jingles and Tinytalk) and this is a major source of income for the church. The church hall is also hired out for parties and community group events on an ad-hoc basis. Julie co-ordinates hall hire.

St James is lucky enough to have a vicarage which is a detached property with five bedrooms and very flexible accommodation over two floors as well as a detached garage. The house is in a good state of repair and is less than five minutes' walk from the church itself. It is ideal for small church meetings/gatherings with a large downstairs lounge.

About the parish

The parish of St James, Westbrook is situated within Hood Manor, an area of Great Sankey formed during the late 1970's when the Warrington and Runcorn New Town was in its infancy. It is an urban area which is relatively densely populated. In the last 20 years the area of the parish which was home to the US Air Force Base has become Chapelford – a development of over 2000 homes with a mix of large family homes and some (allegedly) more affordable homes. There is a green area (Dakota Park) and a small shopping centre on Chapelford, centred on the Sainsbury's and an older precinct in Hood Manor, centred on the Tesco Local. The ethnic mix of the area is predominately white, but again this is changing; Warrington has had a large number of Hong Kong Cantonese immigrants arrive over the last three or four years. The 1980s Hood Manor estate is mainly occupied by council tenants. Our church school Sankey Valley St. James' CE VA Primary School is situated in the middle of the Hood Manor estate approximately five minutes' walk from St. James' Church. The Parish also contains a large Community Primary School (Chapelford Village Primary School), a railway station, one pub (The Chapelford Farm) and a Roman Catholic High School

The church building itself was completed in 1990 but the Church has been in existence since 1980 - in the early days we met on Sunday mornings in the hall of the school - then called Hood Manor Primary - on at least one occasion we had to use the Scout hut if the school was in use. The fund raising for the Church was intense and one of the most interesting things was the selling of rubber bricks for £1. Minnie, the last remaining original church member recently passed away, aged over 100.



About the wider context

St James has been part of the West Warrington Team of Churches for over 10 years. This includes St Paul's, Penketh, St Mary's Great Sankey and St Philip's Westbrook. Jeremy Tear is the Team Rector responsible for St Mary's and Sarah Peppiatt is the Team Vicar responsible for St Philip's and St Paul's.



Warrington Deanery is part of the second Liverpool cohort exploring becoming a larger single parish together. All 12 of our parishes are currently part of the journey, which is unique in the diocese and reflects the good relationships already there and the strong partnerships the clergy have with each other. This is a great time to join us as you'll be able to be part of the shaping of the new larger single parish, and your role inside it, as well as your leadership of the congregation at St James and in due course at St Barnabas. We would love to see someone join us, who will be committed to being part of this journey together, and who'll bring an enthusiasm for seeing our churches grow, and the kingdom extended. We're particularly keen to see people who will honour the liberal Anglo Catholic tradition of these two churches, while helping them find new ways to reach people with the good news of Jesus.

