



ST. MATTHIAS, TORQUAY

PARISH PROFILE

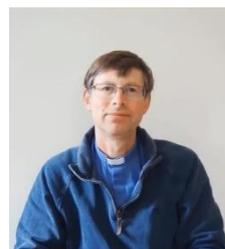
November 2024



General Information

St Matthias Church is an Anglican Parish Church set in the 'village' of Wellswood, on the Eastern side of Torquay.

The vicar is the Rev John Beckett, a former vet who arrived in 2014, and is supported by a team of licensed and lay staff.



The context:

The town of Torquay is situated on the coast of South Devon and is commonly known as "The English Riviera".

Torquay, together with the towns of Paignton and Brixham, form the Borough of TORBAY.



The population of Torbay is 134,000 (2011 census), increasing greatly in the summer when large numbers of holiday makers swell the population. The major industry is tourism in the summer with many people engaged in the hospitality industry.

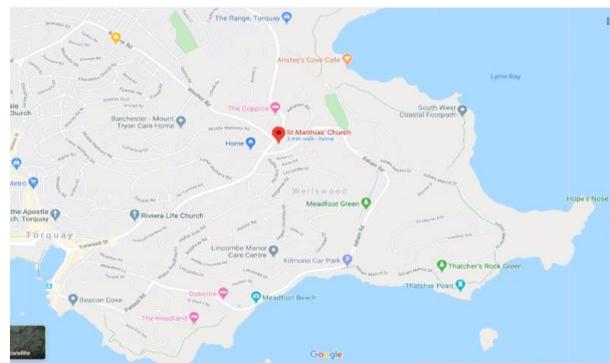
A significant proportion of the population is retired, who historically were regarded as being generally well off (although not quite so true now with a change in the financial climate), with another large group made up of those who have come for seasonal employment, which is poorly paid and uncertain.

This leaves Torquay with pockets of unemployment and poverty alongside areas of affluence, conditions which are reflected in our parish and which present a significant challenge to the church as to how best we can serve, and be engaged with, the local community.

More recently, the addition of part of what was Ellacombe parish, a very deprived ward, has accentuated this diversity

Our Parish and surroundings

The parish has a population of around 8,000 people with a broad mixture of housing and age demographics. Despite being an Urban parish it includes several miles of the scenic South West Coast Path with a number of excellent beaches as well as green spaces.



St. Matthias Church is a Victorian Building originally built in 1857 in the gothic revival style, with several major modifications since.



In 1986 our wonderful Church Centre was opened, which is physically connected to the Church, containing a large hall with kitchen, a lounge, library, office and other meeting rooms.

The Centre is used throughout the week by 800 – 900 people from both the Church and the community, with all manner of groups making use of the excellent facilities on offer. As Wellswood does not have a Village Hall, the Centre is very important to the local community.



Another more recent addition is a lower hall with excellent facilities for the church-run Pre-school, which is run by Liz Sampson, and hosts a fantastic outdoor space where Forest School runs.

We began a new chapter in the life of the church, having completed a major re-ordering work, costing £850 000, in December 2019.

The pews have gone, there is a modern audio-visual system and lovely modern seating and storage together with a full kitchen.



The space is light and open, offering us fantastic options, and has been used for Celidhs, the Christmas Market, a Youth Concert, Welcome Space, Messy Church, Toddlers, 'Mummy and Me', Concerts, meals and more – as well as services held in different formats.



We also now have a beautiful new Piazza which connects us with the local community and where we host 'Welcome Box' and Christmas Carols. Glazed entrance doors at the West Entrance invite passers-by and visitors to see into the building.

Our Schools

There are three primary schools in the Parish:

Illsham Church of England Primary Academy for ages 5-11 years. This school is located adjacent to the Church.

Warberry Church of England Primary Academy is located a short distance from the Church and caters for children aged 3-11 years.



Ellacombe Church of England Primary Academy, more recently added *jointly* to St. Matthias and neighbouring St. Mary Magdalene parish. They cater for children aged 2-11 years

There are strong links between the schools and the church, with members of St. Matthias regularly taking assemblies and the schools using the Church for special festival services such as Harvest, Easter and Christmas as well as Leavers' Services.



More recently we have been able to offer various other activities such as the 'Ethos Day' at Kents' Cavern.

Both schools have achieved 'Good' status from recent OFSTED assessments and 'Outstanding' at recent SIAMS inspections.



St. Matthias also has its own Pre-School held on its premises – **St. Matthias Pre-School & Childcare Centre** – which is managed by members of the church, with its own employed staff.

It caters for children aged 2 -5yrs. Children have the benefit of a fantastic outdoor environment and an increasing number of "Forest

School" activities as well as activities during the school holidays. A team of members of the church and clergy regularly attend to teach bible stories.



There is one Church Secondary School, **St Cuthbert Mayne**, with which, although not situated in the Parish, we have good links.





The Church

St Matthias', St Mark and Holy Trinity were originally three separate parishes which came together in 1979 when the buildings of **St. Mark** and **Holy Trinity** became redundant and are now a theatre and a private house respectively, leaving **St Matthias** in the enviable position of being a Mission Community with only one church building.



Ecclesiastical tradition:

St. Matthias Church is an open evangelical Anglican church with an ongoing commitment to applying Biblical truth to contemporary life, personally and communally.

Pattern of worship

We encourage taking God and the Bible seriously, but ourselves lightly and therefore have fun together as a church family.

We welcome the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. We also aim to have a permission-giving culture, to enable people to try out and develop their gifts.



We endeavour to develop styles of worship, both in music and teaching, which promote spiritual growth among people from different backgrounds and who are at various stages of their own spiritual journey.

St. Matthias is committed to all members of the congregation, whatever their age or background.

Our challenge is to be inclusive as a fellowship, allowing all to feel that they belong, that their gifts can be used and that they can play their part within the life of the church.





The Covid Pandemic forced us to make changes and adapt, and because of the re-ordering and our A/V system, we were fortunate to have been able to provide a wide range of regular 'on-line' services and events during lock-down, and we continued to live-stream services.

We are continually re-evaluating our pattern of worship, and recently have adjusted our morning worship menu.

Messy Church



This has been running for several years and is offered about 6 times a year, with fun, worship, crafts and teaching followed by a meal in the hall.

It is an ideal way of reaching those families who may not otherwise hear the Good News of Jesus, and

we use the Church and the Hall (and Forest School in the summer) to make the best use of our space. 'Jollyween' and Christmas are always a mixture of fun, chaos, noise and laughter.



Sunday services

Holy Communion (BCP), at 8 a.m.

Despite small numbers, for some this traditional worship is their preferred church service and, therefore, it remains an important part of our weekly worship..



9.30 a.m.

Explore services are our informal, café-style services. They are attended by a mix of families and the older generation, semi-churched and un-churched, with a congregation of approximately 30-40. We use the Hall and have refreshments before, during and after.



11.00 a.m. services are more traditional, are live streamed and held throughout the month with a variety of worship, and between 80 and 110 people, with refreshments available before and after the services. The worship is led by organ and keyboard with a small group of singers:

First and Third Sunday: Common Worship Holy Communion.

Second Sunday: Morning Worship - a less formal worship service using a variety of different liturgies.

Fourth Sunday: Morning Worship: - a more traditional service

Fifth Sunday: 'Family Holy Communion'. A less-formal Communion service when the 9.30 and 11am congregations are encouraged to worship together.



'Prayer Ministry' is available at all the 11am services for those wanting people to pray with them or for them, and a number of people meet before the 11:00 service to pray as well as at the monthly afternoon Prayer Meeting.

5.30pm Fourth Sunday Youth Led Praise and Worship.

A very informal time of contemporary worship, where the young people are encouraged to help lead both the worship and the teaching.



As a church we wish to give a warm welcome to all who come into the building. The **'Everyone Welcome'** course has twice been run for all the church, and was found to be very valuable. As a result, we doubled the size of our Welcome Teams, and many people comment on the quality of the welcome they receive.

The re-ordering of the church and removal of the pews has allowed other community outreach activities to move into the body of the church as well as its use by the church family, including Messy Church, Pre-school, Ilsham and Warrberry schools, the Friends of St Mathias concerts and Christmas Market.



Mummy and Me

A group which runs on a Friday morning for mothers and babies up to 12 months of age. Various informative topics are covered with the help of an external facilitator. This has been taken up by several other local churches and mothers are being referred from our local NHS perinatal mental health team. Many who come along to this also come along to other activities as a result and several have asked to have their babies baptised.

Ukrainian English Lessons and Activities.

One of our church members has taken English lessons for our Ukrainian guests in the Bay from when they first started arriving, and now has refugees from other countries as well. Activities for children during the school holidays are provided as well as art activities. Recently they had a pottery class in the church! Many stay on after the lesson to take advantage of our...



Welcome Space.

On Wednesdays the church is open to welcome people for soup and a roll and a space to meet and chat with others.

Weekday services

Morning prayer is held online on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

On Wednesdays there is a 9am Holy Communion service followed by refreshments.

Groups and activities



Youth Group

Children from year 6 upwards join us in the Church Centre for a time of games, activities and an opportunity to hear the gospel. Our youth group works closely with the Children's and Family worker from Home Church (formerly Riviera Life) who has been key in growing and training our team of volunteers. Some of the young people are now taking leadership roles themselves and the team has grown. We are encouraged as the young people choose to follow Jesus and take roles in services such as Christingle. Our Youth Group sometimes join with the youth group from Home Church. Ilsham School have recently offered the use of their playground, so we hope to be able to offer more Youth activities.



Home Groups

We have had Home Groups in our parish for many years. There are 10 groups with approximately 80 members. Several groups have grown out of Alpha courses, which we currently run once or twice a year. Members find these meetings valuable for the support and fellowship they offer and the chance to study the Bible, discuss current issues and pray together. In a fairly large church these small, more intimate groups are extremely valuable and a great support.

Men's Breakfast

Around 30-40 men from different churches in Torbay regularly meet for a monthly breakfast with a speaker, usually from the group, sharing testimony.

Girls Allowed

A group for women at St Matthias who meet monthly for support and friendship and where non-church friends are made welcome.

St Matthias Gospel Choir

A gospel choir that attracts a real mix of singers from the church and the wider community.

Matt's Knits

A small weekly group who meet over lunchtime for fellowship and, of course, knitting! Much of their output supports various charity initiatives.

Parochial organisations:

We have good links with other churches and Christian groups in the area such as:



- **LiNX Christian Youth Trust**, founded by a group of churches including St. Matthias'. It employs 6 staff and, as well as going into most of the Bay's secondary schools to teach PSHE and RE lessons and run clubs, it also organises regular activities across the Bay for secondary age children.
- **Christians Together in Torquay**: This is an organisation which exists to pray, worship and work together for the transformation of Torquay town into a more Christ-centred community. In particular we join with other churches on Palm Sunday service and a walk of witness on Good Friday.
- **Torquay Community Larder** -a foodbank run by local Christians with good support from members of St Matthias
- **Torbay Street Pastors**: Members from St. Matthias' are involved in this work, either by prayer support or at the harbourside, helping to keep down crime and provide a safe haven for those in need.



- **Torbay United** consists of local Christians and is dedicated to making a positive impact in our community through a range of charitable initiatives, such as the YUM food bus (You+Us=More).



People

Staff Team members:

- The Rector
 - Assistant Minister (self-supporting)
 - Assistant curate (a training post)
 - Retired Clergy
 - Licensed Lay Ministers
 - Full time administrator and secretarial help
 - Churchwardens
 - Operations Manager
 - Ordinand
- Rev John Beckett
Rev Paul Barton
Rev Claire Reynolds
Rev Dallas Ayling
Norma Gerry
Pere Snow
Claire Whittaker and Cheryl Bevins
Sylvia Barratt
Sharon Hiley

The Staff Team meet fortnightly.

Lay people

St Matthias has historically involved 'lay' people in every aspect of Church life, including welcome, hospitality, sound and vision technicians, reading, teaching and preaching, and we are fortunate to have so many people from all ages involved in aspects of our community life.

Vision and Priorities

St. Matthias' 'mission statement' is that we are here to

“Share the Good News of Jesus with everyone.”

Our focus is to:

- **Worship God**

We worship God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit – not just in our worship services but in all that we do

- **Make disciples**

We want to learn to follow Jesus more closely ourselves and to enable other people to join in that journey

- **Transform communities**

We want to see God's Kingdom come more and more in communities at home, in church, in the Bay and beyond.

Overall, we seek to discern where God is blessing and join in, and as we do so, we want to become more like Jesus. We've begun to use these four values with associated Bible texts and symbols to remind us that we want to be:

Going Jesus 'Way –

'Come, follow me...' (Matthew 4:19)



- **Following Jesus who is 'the Way'** (John 14:6)
- **Loving God and loving neighbour** (Mark 12:30-31)

Knowing God's Joy –

'The joy of the Lord is our strength.' (Nehemiah 8:10)



- **Receiving His love through the Holy Spirit** (Romans 5:5)
- **Celebrating together as children of God** (Luke 15:23)

Being Generous like Jesus –

'Freely you have received, freely give.' (Matthew 10:8)



- **Welcoming and valuing all** (John 6:37, Luke 15)
- **Selfless giving** (1 Peter 3:18, 1 Corinthians 12:7)

Growing on the journey –

'it's only God who makes things grow.' (1 Cor 3:7)



- **Open to change** (2 Corinthians 5:7)
- **More of God in our lives** (Psalm 63:1, Matthew 6:33)