



ST. MATTHIAS, TORQUAY PARISH PROFILE

January 2023

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 good 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.



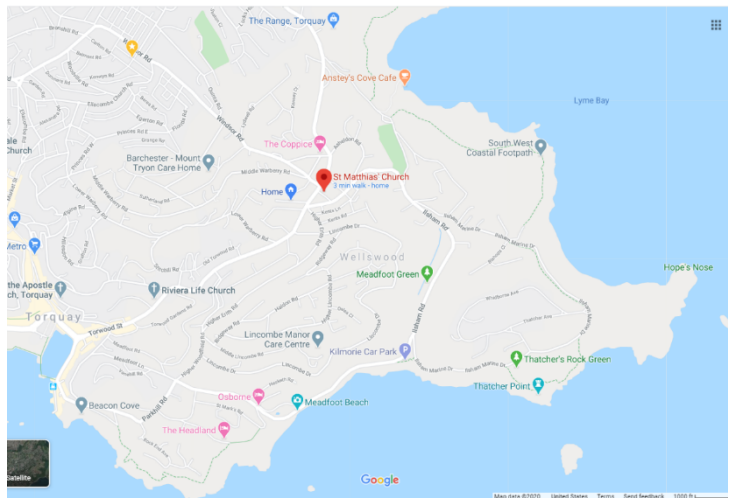
The population of Torbay is 134,000 (2011 census), increasing greatly in the summer when large numbers of holiday makers swell the population. The major industry is tourism in the summer and many people also retire to Torbay, forming a large percentage of the population. The retired people of Torbay were once seen to be generally well off (although not quite so true now with a change in the financial climate), whereas the younger people tend to come to the area for the seasonal employment, which is poorly paid and uncertain.

Torquay does, therefore, have substantial pockets of unemployment and poverty, conditions which are reflected in the parish. This presents a real challenge to the church as to how best we can serve the community and be involved.

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. It is an Urban parish which includes several miles of the scenic South West Coast Path with a number of excellent beaches.



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 full cooking facilities, 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.

We have more recently added another lower hall with facilities for the church-run Preschool, 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 reordering 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 a Celidh, a Christmas Market, a Youth Concert, Messy Church 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 glazed entrance doors at the West Entrance, allowing everybody to see into the building.

Our Schools

There are three primary schools in the Parish:

Ilsham 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.

There are strong links between both schools and the church.

Members of St. Matthias attend regularly to take assemblies and both schools use 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.

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

Ellacombe Church of England Primary Academy has more recently been added *jointly* to St. Matthias parish and neighbouring St. Mary Magdalene parish. In 2017 Ellacombe parish was divided between the parishes adjoining Ellacombe with the new parish boundaries deliberately drawn so that part of the academy site is in both parishes to encourage a new approach to mission in this difficult area of Torquay. They cater for children aged 2-11 years.

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 derelict children's play centre 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. The challenge is to be inclusive as a fellowship allowing all to feel that they belong and can play their part within the life of the church.

Since the Pandemic we have had to adapt to new styles of worship and new ways of engaging with our local community. We were fortunate to have been able to provide a wide range of regular 'on-line' services and events during lock-down, and have continued to live-stream services. We are continually re-evaluating our pattern of worship.



Open Church

We open the church every weekday between Midday and 2pm staffed by volunteers to welcome visitors and anyone wanting to pray, or just have a chat over a coffee.

Messy Church

This has been running for over 10 years and is run monthly on Tuesday afternoons, providing a hot meal for families as well as activities and crafts. It has been a great way to reach out to those people who do not



attend
on



Sundays.

We have begun to offer Messy Church on some Saturdays and have a very well attended Messy Church in the week leading up to Christmas.

Sunday services

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

Despite small numbers, for some service and, therefore, very



this is their preferred church important.



9.30 a.m.

Explore services are our informal services, held twice each month. They are attended by a mix of families and the older generation, semi-churched and un-churched, with a congregation of approximately 30-40. They take place in the Hall with food and drink available.



11.00 a.m. services are more traditional, are live streamed and held throughout the month with a variety of worship:

- **First and Third Sunday: Common Worship Holy Communion Service.** Congregations average about 100. A small group of singers often give a lead to the singing, accompanied usually by the organ and sometimes by the piano.

- **Second Sunday: 'All-Age' or 'Family' Service.** This is an informal worship service consisting of talks and activities suitable for all ages, using a variety of different



liturgies.

- **Fourth Sunday: Morning Worship:** held in the Church, with a congregation of approximately 90-100 people. This service is valued by those members who find a more formal, liturgical structure helpful for worship.
- **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. There is also a prayer meeting prior to the 11am services in church.

Refreshments are served at the end of the 11am services.

5.30pm Fourth Sunday Praise and Worship.

A very informal time of contemporary worship, led by a group of musicians and singers, with some discussion, teaching and prayer.

In the past, many of us attended the 'Everyone Welcome' course. As a result, we doubled the size of our Welcome Teams, and many people comment on the quality of the welcome they receive. As this is such an important part of our ministry we intend running the course again in 2023.



As mentioned earlier, in 2019 the church underwent a large re-ordering process and the move from pews to chairs has seen significant changes for many people.

The greater flexibility has been hugely beneficial, not only for different worship services, but also events such as a sit down meal for the Queen's Jubilee, and informal social events and a Christmas Market. Others include:



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 to us 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.

Begin Well, an antenatal course which was started by a Christian obstetrician and Health Visitor. The material was originally written for the NHS but was never implemented. There is currently no free NHS antenatal class and so this is meeting a local need.

Toddler Group which runs on a Tuesday morning with toys, refreshments, a story and songs.

Godly Play. The 2 youngest year groups from Ilsham school come in to enjoy a Bible story and various crafts and activities.

Messy Church – whilst this has been running at St Matthias for many years, we are now able to use the full space in the Church as well as the Hall.

Local Primary Schools. The church is used by the local church primary schools for services and plays and Warberry School had their own Christmas Messy Church.

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. Activities for children during the school holidays are provided plus art activities. Many stay on after the lesson to take advantage of our...

Warm 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 and Tuesdays.

There is a 9am Holy Communion service on a Wednesday morning followed by refreshments.

Groups and 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.

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. We are joined by a member of the team from Riviera Life Church who co-leads these evenings. We are encouraged as the young people choose to follow Jesus and take roles in services such as Christingle. Youth Leaders from churches across the Bay meet regularly to support each other, meeting socially and to plan activities where young people across the Bay can join together.

Ilsham School have recently offered the use of their playground, so we hope to be able to offer more Youth activities.

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.



Open House

A weekly parent and toddler group



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.** This is an organisation 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.
- **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.
- **Torquay Community Larder:** a foodbank run by Christians with good support from St. Matthias members.
- **Torbay Winter Night Shelter:** 14 churches across the Bay, of which St Matthias is one, have accommodated up to 12 homeless guests for three months of each winter. Unfortunately, this had to take a different format during the pandemic and this outreach is being based in a single location in the Bay.

People

Staff Team members:

- The Rector
- Assistant Minister (self-supporting, nearly full-time)
- Assistant curate (a training post) *vacancy*
- Children's and Family Worker – (currently a part-time volunteer who is re-locating later this year)
- Two Licensed Lay Ministers
- Full time administrator and secretarial help
- Churchwardens

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)