

Woodchurch Parish Parish Profile May 2023



**Holy Cross
Church Lane,
Woodchurch,
Wirral,
Merseyside,
CH49 7LS**

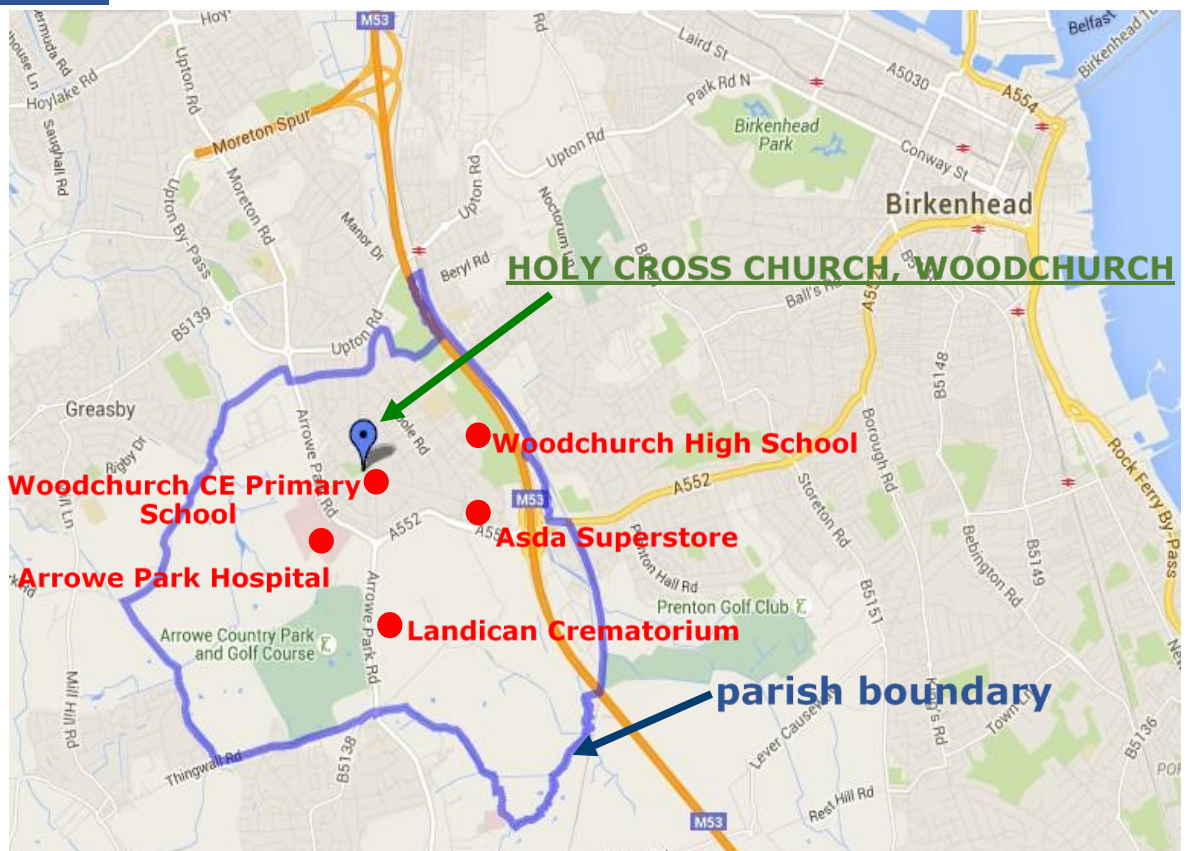
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Parish of Woodchurch and Holy Cross Church. We hope that this Parish Profile will provide you with an insight into the life of our church, our strengths, and our hopes for the future.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission strapline "Growing Disciples of Christ" (July 2020) reflects our commitment both to growing as individuals in our own personal discipleship and to making known the love of Christ in our wider community, particularly through mission to new generations and through outreach and community engagement.

OUR PARISH



The parish of Woodchurch is situated in the diocese of Chester, the archdeaconry of Chester, and the deanery of Birkenhead. The parish is geographically located in the centre of Wirral, a roughly rectangular peninsula about 15 miles long and 7 miles wide, which lies between Liverpool (separated by the River Mersey to the east) and North Wales (separated by the River Dee to the west).

Wirral has areas of outstanding natural beauty with coastal paths, sandy beaches, country parks and woodland. In contrast the areas bordering the River Mersey are urban and more industrialised. The parish of Woodchurch is a diverse but strong community with a population of 8,500 (2011 census). It is on the outskirts of Birkenhead and is part of the Wirral West parliamentary constituency.

The parish is a mix of residential, industrial, commercial, retail, farming, recreational and health facilities. At the heart of the parish is a large housing development known as the Woodchurch Estate, a former council estate which was built in the years following the Second World War. At the time of the 2011 census, about 50% of the housing stock was owner occupied, 15% was owned by private landlords, and 35% was social housing, mostly owned and managed by *Magenta Living*. The built environment is pleasant, with a range of amenities, and there are regular transport links to Birkenhead and Liverpool. The Carrbridge Community Centre and *the Hub* provide support services, groups and activities for all ages and a social supermarket.



The Woodchurch estate is, however, among the 20% most deprived nationally, with some areas among the most deprived 10%. Residents experience deprivation in terms of income, health and disability and education and skills. In 2011 the estate also had an unusually high proportion of people living alone. In the 1980s the estate was notorious for drug-related crime, and, though crime figures have fallen substantially, anti-social behaviour and drug and alcohol abuse are persistent issues.



In spite of these challenges, it is a community where family ties and neighbourliness are important; many of the residents have lived on the estate for a long time and people look out for one another. In 2011, 72% of its residents self-identified as Christian, well above the national average at that time. People often refer to Holy Cross as their church and come to us to mark significant events in their lives.



As well as the estate, the parish also includes the well-established Arrowe Park and Durley private housing estates. Some brownfield sites within the parish have been recently re-developed for private housing, the latest being Arrowe Brook Park where 127 new private houses are in various stages of construction.

The parish also includes:

- 8 schools, including three SEND schools
- Arrowe Country Park (250 acres of parkland with pleasant woodland walks, a children's play areas, tennis courts, bowling greens, a fishing lake, a municipal 18-hole golf course, and a Grade II Listed mansion (now a private care centre)
- Arrowe Park Hospital (a 750-bed hospital with the full range of acute health services for adults and children, an accident and emergency unit, a maternity unit, a walk-in centre, chapel and Chaplaincy Team)
- County Homes, a purpose built 82-bed care home offering advanced dementia care
- the North Cheshire Trading Estate, the Champion Business Park, an Asda Superstore, various small local shops and two pubs
- 3 working farms and the ancient hamlet of Landican

The ancient hamlet of Landican appears in the Domesday Book (AD 1086), which mentions a priest at the manor of Landican, of which Woodchurch was part. The mainly Tudor church is perhaps on the site of a sixth century Saxon church that was itself on the site of an earlier raised Druid burial ground.



SCHOOLS

Woodchurch CE Aided Primary School (founded in 1665) was officially recognised as a Good Church School in November 2022 following a Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS). The report noted that:

The strong partnership with Holy Cross Church means that school and church work together with a shared goal of supporting the families they serve. Initiatives such as Messy Church are well attended. Parents note how well the school and church work together to support families. One parent describes the school and the church as being 'as one'. As a result, the school is more firmly 'rooted in the teaching of Jesus'.

On leaving Woodchurch CE Primary, most students proceed to Woodchurch High School which became a full Church of England Academy in 2014. The school employs its own chaplaincy team but there are opportunities for the ministry team at Holy Cross to take part in school assemblies.

Other schools in the parish are:

- Fender Primary School
- St Michael and All Angels Catholic Primary School
- Meadowside Special School
- Foxfield School
- Gilbrook School
- Ganney's Meadow Nursery and Family Centre

The church has well-established links with both Fender Primary and Meadowside School. A number of pre-school groups also operate in the area.

FACTS AND FIGURES

The number of persons on the electoral roll on 31st January 2023 was 135, of whom 65 were resident within the parish.

Regular worshippers range in age, but the majority are aged above 60.

There were 33 baptisms, 10 weddings plus 1 wedding blessing and 21 funerals in church in 2022. In addition, our ministry team conducted 5 services at Landican Crematorium.

WORSHIPPING LIFE

On an average Sunday, about 70 people receive Holy Communion at Holy Cross, and the congregation has grown over the last four years. The Eucharist lies at the centre of our spirituality and worship, and Holy Cross might best be described as belonging to the central catholic tradition of the church. There is also a tradition here of accessible Bible teaching and a real desire to see people come to faith.

The regular weekly services are as follows:

Wednesday 10am Holy Communion (said)

Sunday 8am Holy Communion (said)

Sunday 10am Parish Communion (All Together Worship every first Sunday)

Sunday 6pm (4pm in winter) A simple said service, usually Evening Prayer or

Holy Communion with prayer for healing (currently suspended during the vacancy).

Incense is used at the main service on major feast days – about 12 occasions over the course of the year.

Members of the congregation read the lesson, lead intercessions and serve as sides-people, altar servers and chalice assistants. Weekly flowers are paid for by individual members of the congregation. These donations are given in memory of a loved one or to celebrate a birthday or anniversary.

Our worship at the 10am Sunday Service is enhanced by music provided by one of our two organists and a small but committed choir whose repertoire includes both traditional hymns and more modern worship songs.

On the first Sunday of the month, we hold a more informal all-age communion service which includes music that is provided by the students from Woodchurch CE school and trained by one of our organists.

Baptisms take place at a separate service on Sundays at either 12pm or 1pm, or occasionally during the 10am Sunday service. Our policy is to offer baptism to anyone living in the parish or with a connection to the parish, provided they have attended one of our monthly baptism preparation events.

Our wedding policy follows Diocesan guidelines and we hold a marriage preparation day in February every year.

MISSION TO NEW GENERATIONS

Mission to new generations has been an urgent priority during the previous incumbency and much has been achieved in spite of lockdown. The number of children and their families who have contact with the church has steadily increased over the last four years. In 2019, for example, there were no children at the Christingle service, but there were 30 in 2022, and the same trend can be seen in attendance at the Crib Service.



Messy Church was reinstated in autumn 2019, continued online during Covid, and is flourishing today, led by a talented team of lay people. Average attendance is currently 18 children and 20+ adults who gather for Bible-based craft and games, a simple act of worship and a shared meal. A lay-led *Open the Book* team also takes Bible stories to two local schools, Woodchurch CofE and Fender Primary in alternate weeks during term time. Baptisms (33 last year) provide another welcome opportunity to share the Good News more widely.

Foundation Governors are regular visitors at Woodchurch CE primary, and members of the ministry team help with RS lessons, visits to church and assemblies. One of our organists is the school pianist. She has started a children's choir at school, and we welcome them to our All-Age Worship on the first Sunday of the month. The whole school comes to church for a monthly special service which is prepared by the students and led by a member of the team. These services are very well supported by parents and grandparents, a core group of whom also attend Messy Church.



Six students from the school were confirmed at Holy Cross by Bishop Julie in October after confirmation classes in school, and we are following this up with a series of special events for them.

In 2021, we set up a weekly *Community Café* in the Parish Community Hall in partnership with Meadowside Special School. This offers a warm space, company and a hot drink

for members of our community at the same time as providing valuable work-experience for senior students who will find themselves at a disadvantage in a job market where only 5% of adults with disabilities find employment.

In 2022 we welcomed the Beavers, Cubs and Scouts of 5th Birkenhead Scouts back to church for their first post-covid parade service and look forward to working with them in the future. The group was founded in 1927 and is fully affiliated to Holy Cross having its headquarters in the grounds of the church.

OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



In addition to *Community Café*, the Outreach and Community Engagement Team leads an initiative to present new residents with a welcome gift and information about what's available at church. A project to create an online nature trail in the Churchyard is nearing completion. The aim is to provide a resource for families and local schools and to encourage more people to enjoy the space and engage with the natural world. A possible future project is to set up a Dementia Café.

The Parish Community Hall and Jubilee Rooms are available to the church and local businesses. Users include the Holy Cross branch of the Mothers Union, who meet monthly, a Community Choir, a Craft Club, the Women's Institute and groups promoting healthier lifestyles. There are also many activities for children and the hall is often used for children's parties.

For the late Queen's Jubilee we joined with many other local organisations and businesses to organise a fun day for the community which ended with a special Messy Church at Holy Cross for 48 local children.

Our most successful outreach activity, however, is a bottom-up initiative conceived and organised by our Parish Administrator. This is the annual Tower of Light service which regularly fills the church and the parish community hall. At the beginning of Advent we gather to remember those we have loved and lost and to light up the tower and surrounding trees in their memory.

ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

At Holy Cross we are committed to growing in faith and discipleship and helping others to grow alongside us. In recent years we have run the *Start Course* in Christian basics and also prepared 7 adults for baptism and 3 for confirmation. We have a thriving Bible Study group which meets weekly on Zoom, and others regularly join this core group for special courses at Advent and in Lent.

ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIPS

We have very strong ecumenical links with both St Michael and All Angels Roman Catholic Church and Woodchurch Methodist Church, including regular evening prayer walks around the parish in the summer months and shared events to mark Holy Week and Easter.

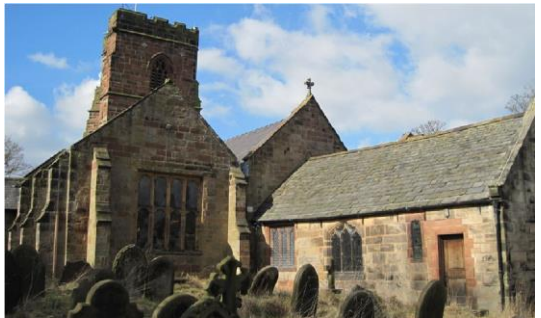
SAFEGUARDING

We are committed to safeguarding. Our PCC has adopted the diocesan safeguarding policy and our safeguarding officer is Mr Paul Mountford.

OUR CHURCH BUILDING

Holy Cross Church, Woodchurch is an ancient and beautiful Grade II* listed mainly Tudor English country church built on one of the oldest Christian settlements in Wirral, local mythology suggests dating from the 6th century.

The 20th century saw the enlargement of the church by the addition of a north aisle and new vestries. The rood screen was added in 1934.



The last Quinquennial Inspection was in February 2018. The most urgent work noted was to deal with a beetle infestation in the rood screen and chancel pews. The work needed to eradicate the beetles has been completed. A report from a structural engineer on the entire length of the churchyard wall has identified several sections in need of urgent attention. We are now seeking advice on the most economical way to undertake these repairs.

The church tower houses a ring of eight bells cast in 1971 by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry and in regular use.

The church has a large churchyard which encircles the building and is open for burials. Maintenance of the churchyard is currently undertaken by a very willing volunteer whose efforts have been rewarded with a Green Flag Award.

OUR OTHER CHURCH BUILDINGS

The Parish Community Hall is adjacent to the Church and is a large space with separate kitchen area and toilets. It is used for church events, outreach and for refreshments after church services. It is also available for hire for parties and non-church groups, and is much in demand. In addition, we have a smaller hall known as the Jubilee Rooms, situated opposite the Parish Community Hall. This is used by small community groups and is also available for hire.



RECTORY

A new rectory was completed in 2019.



OUR PEOPLE

Honorary Assistant Priests: David Felix, Sheila Hughes and Josie Tuplin

Reader: Sue Mountford

Churchwardens: Roy Milne and Martin Hughes

PCC Secretary: Sue Mountford

Treasurer: Wendy Deverill

Parish Administrator: Sue Treanor

Safeguarding Officer: Paul Mountford

Organists: Suzy Chappell & Gill Locke

Verger & Sacristan: Tony Lunam

Caretaker: Jayne Large

Our congregations and PCC are a diverse group with many gifts and talents.

There are active Fabric and Social Committees.

FINANCE

We have strong financial oversight thanks to a diligent treasurer and an informed PCC which has enabled us to pay the parish share, clergy expenses and running costs in full every year and still have a small surplus at the end of each year.

An annual Christmas Fair and our monthly 100 Club lottery raise funds for church expenses and projects.

PARISH ADMINISTRATION

Our parish administrator works from home on four mornings each week (Monday to Thursday). Her role is to provide confidential, efficient and effective secretarial and administrative support for the church and clergy.

As an employee of the Parochial Church Council and reporting to the Rector, the parish administrator is the first point of contact for members of the public wishing to make appointments to see members of the ministry team or to book a baptism, funeral or wedding. She also deals with administrative matters that are legally required and necessary for the smooth running of the parish.

COMMUNICATIONS

In addition to www.achurchnearyou/woodchurchholycross, we have our own church website at www.holycrosswoodchurch.uk and a Facebook page (Holy Cross Church, Woodchurch - Approved). We also produce a weekly pew sheet and a monthly prayer diary.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Our programme of social events was affected by Covid but is now being gradually revived. We also arrange two annual coach trips – a summer mystery trip and another for Christmas shopping – both of which are well supported. There are also regular coffee mornings and social events throughout the year.

CHARITABLE GIVING

A Christingle Service, in which our church primary school is involved, is held annually in December. The donations from the service and the school are sent directly to the Children's Society.

Members of Holy Cross Church and Parish are very responsive to both local and international crises and disaster appeals such as DEC Afghanistan, DEC Covid Appeal and DEC Ukraine. We also have envelope donations to Christian Aid.

OUR NEW RECTOR

We are looking for someone who can:

- share our commitment to the values, worship style and spirituality of the liberal catholic tradition.
- help us to grow both in number and in our own discipleship.
- build on our existing outreach to new generations and the wider community and take it to the next level.
- be a familiar presence in the community, actively engaged in pastoral care and community issues.
- foster a good safeguarding culture in the parish.
- enjoy working collaboratively, encouraging and supporting the ministries of others.
- continue to develop existing links with the Church School and with other local churches.
- encourage the congregation in living out their Christian faith in everyday life - Monday to Saturday, not just on a Sunday.

Gifts and Skills

- A deep faith grounded in a life of prayer.
- A heart for mission and a calling to estates ministry.
- The ability to engage well with people of all ages and backgrounds.
- Enthusiasm, approachability and a sense of humour.
- Skill in communicating the Christian faith in a relevant and inspirational way.

We are now very much looking forward to welcoming our new Rector. If you feel you have what it takes to help us to move forward, we would very much like to hear from you.

Woodchurch PCC

May 2023