

The Diocese of Manchester

PARISH INFORMATION AND PROFILE



The benefice or parish of:

St Thomas Moorside, Oldham

Please return your Parish Profile when complete, together with any other requested papers, to:

The Bishop of Manchester:	The Right Reverend David Walker, The Lord Bishop of Manchester bishop.david@manchester.anglican.org
The Suffragan Bishop:	Bishop Mark Davies bishopmark@manchester.anglican.org
The Archdeacon:	The Ven Karen Smeeton karen.smeeton@manchester.anglican.org
The Area Dean:	The Revd A Daniel Ramble danielramble@manchester.anglican.org
The Deanery Lay Chair:	Mrs Elizabeth Dent lizzy.dent@googlemail.com
The Registrar:	Diocesan Registry, St John's House, 155-163 The Rock, Bury. BL9 0ND

A hard copy needs to go to the Registrar. Otherwise email copies will suffice.

INTRODUCTION

Sitting prominently on a hill, this local landmark where the top of the tower is possibly the highest point in the Diocese of Manchester, St Thomas Moorside Church is Grade II listed and displays classic Victorian design.



Welcome, and thank you for your interest in becoming our new vicar at St Thomas Moorside.

We are looking for an enthusiastic and innovative priest who shares our vision, ready to embrace the many opportunities and challenges that our parish presents, with a calling to grow God's kingdom among our diverse community.

Ideally, we seek to employ a priest who is personable and dynamic, who can immerse themselves in our congregation. Someone who can nurture the faith amongst the families, youth and children of our parish whilst also having a love of people of all ages, ready to actively encourage and support them pastorally.

This role requires someone who is approachable with energy, compassion, vision and commitment, who values the beauty of traditional worship as well as a more modern approach.

In turn, we hope you can find a place to call home within our wonderful community!

BASIC INFORMATION AND STATISTICS

The Deanery

Oldham and Ashton, Mission Community 4

Full name of benefice or parish

St Thomas Moorside, Oldham

Title of the post that is vacant

Vicar of St Thomas Church, Moorside



Names of patrons

The Patronage Board:

Mr James Mellodew Barlow Esq

Mrs Anne Valerie Russell

There are currently 2 vacancies on the board.

Archdeaconry, Deanery, and name of Area Dean

Archdeacon – The Ven Karen Smeeton

07504 960446

karen.smeeton@manchester.anglican.org

Deanery - Oldham and Ashton

Area Dean – The Revd A Daniel Ramble

danielramble@manchester.anglican.org

Official clergy housing: address and brief description

The Vicarage
1 Glebe Lane
Moorside
Oldham
OL1 4SJ



The Vicarage stands just outside the Church grounds. It is a red brick 3-bedroom detached house at the end of a row of 5 houses. There is a garage and there may be a possibility to extend over the garage to add a 4th bedroom. All bedrooms are upstairs where there is a separate bathroom and WC. Downstairs there are front and rear reception rooms. An extension was added which enabled a larger kitchen, a purpose-built office and separate WC. Visitors to the office are able to enter by a separate entrance from which you are also able to access the garage and also the main house.

Official Parish population

8,754 according to the 2021 Census, information from ArcGIS Hub.

Number on electoral roll 94

Average Weekly Attendances for the last 2 years

Year/Service	Average Adults	Average Young People
2022 - Sunday	37	16
2022 - Wednesday	35.30	37.33
2022 Weekly Average	72.30	53.33
2023 - Sunday	32.66	18.5
2023 - Wednesday	35.58	32.66
2023 Weekly Average	68.24	51.16

2023 numbers of interest

- Baptisms x 14
- Those admitted to holy communion before confirmation N/A
- Confirmations x 7
- Marriages N/A
- Blessings x 1
- Funerals x 4
- Burial of Ashes x 4
- Christmas communicants x 27
- Easter communicants x 40

Anglican churches and licensed places of worship in the benefice or parish profiled here:

One

Name of principal church

St Thomas Church Moorside, Oldham

Approximate key dates for the building

1861 – Thomas Mellodew erected a temporary building for the people of Moorside to worship while the Church was being built.

1872 – saw the opening of St Thomas Church. The cost of £10,000 was funded by Thomas Mellodew.

Approximate seating capacity 250-300

When was the last Quinquennial inspection done? What are the main things that the architect has highlighted as needing to be done? How much did the architect estimate they might cost? What progress has been made thus far by the parish?

September 2019 – This is attached. We are aware that the metal guttering will need replacing and are in discussions with the architect as there may be some new grant streams to access for this.

Attached or nearby hall or other similar facility

St Thomas Church Hall

What else should be recorded

Our Hall has a defibrillator mounted on an external wall allowing access by all. This is registered with The Circuit – a national network of defibrillators.



In 2020 with support from a National Lottery grant we completed extensive work on the tower and spire.

Externally this included repointing in line with English Heritage guidance, and replacement of our cross and lightning conductor. Internally the removal, replacement and redecoration of all plasterwork in the baptistry. Unfortunately, some of the external work does not seem as watertight as was anticipated and we are currently in discussions with the architect and contractors to look for remedies.

We are also in discussions with our architect to improve accessibility for people who experience additional mobility needs and those families with babies and small infants.

Details of other Anglican churches or licensed places of worship in the benefice or parish

Our Lady Roman Catholic Church – Turf Pit Lane, Moorside.
Fresh Church (Independent) – Coleridge Road, Sholver

Details of publicity that the parish produces e.g., newsletter, magazine

Weekly notices are printed on a pew sheet. We also produce a printed magazine 10 times a year, usually monthly with 2 issues being bi-monthly. These are available as a hard copy in Church, delivered on request or sent as a digital copy.

As we have 2 main congregations, we have recently asked them how they would like notices shared with some suggestions being e-mail, WhatsApp, Facebook.

Address of website and other social media if applicable

Website: www.stthomasmoorside.org
A Church Near You: <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/19556/>
Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/StThomasChurchMoorside>
Our account on X (formerly Twitter) @MoorsideSt

Churchwardens

Miss Samantha (Sam) Atherton and Mr Simon Cane

Names of any representatives (usually two where applicable, but in certain notified cases more) appointed under the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 section 11 (1), or otherwise

Miss Samantha Atherton and Mr Simon Cane

LOCAL COMMUNITY

What is the social character of the area?

According to the Church Urban Fund, 'Look up tool', the population of this parish is 8399 (data from 2020). In terms of deprivation, it ranks 2224 out of 12382, where 1 is the most deprived parish. It is therefore in the 9.8% most-deprived parishes in England. More data is available at <https://cuf.org.uk/parish/240292>

The parish lies on the outskirts of the town and given its location there is stunning countryside on our doorstep and beyond, with plenty of places to explore and marvel in peaceful nature and all that is God's creation.

What would you say are the main challenges facing your community?

With almost 60% having at least one of the measurable dimensions of deprivation, Oldham ranks among one of the most deprived areas of the country; meaning that the main issues are poverty and deprivation.

These issues could provide the opportunities to have a meaningful impact within the community.

What kind of houses make up the bulk of the parish?

The housing stock of the parish is varied comprising of flats, houses and houses in multiple occupation (HMO's) with approximately 45.5% of people renting their properties.

In recent years there has been a development of owner-occupied houses on the old Counthill School site, in addition to other houses being built on both a private and shared ownership basis.

What engagement with the local community does the church already have?

As a church we are fortunate that we are able to engage with the local community in many ways.

We are visible every year when we have our Whit Walk through areas of the parish, through the organisations with a direct connection to church (i.e., Coffee and Conversation Group and S.T.Y.L.E., with the many events they organise) and the uniformed organisations that we sponsor.



Some of the other ways that we connect with our community are:

St George's Care Home – our previous incumbents would regularly visit to provide ministry.

Moorside and District Historical Society – This group is based at the church and involves several members that may not be congregants that have a vast knowledge of the parish. They are also the driving force behind the annual Heritage Day which they organise. On this day the Church is opened up for all to come in and see the building, take a tour of the tower and see the stunning views, and to also visit our graveyard which houses 4 commonwealth war graves.

Local schools – As well as the strong links with St Thomas C.E. (V.A.) Moorside Primary School, we also collect uniforms for recycling. This allows us to act as a uniform bank where necessary distributing anonymously through Oldham Social Prescribing (part of Action Together). Additionally, our Handbell Group has represented St Thomas by visiting schools across the borough.

Moorside Community Choir – formerly used our choir vestry for practise until their numbers grew, and still use the church for ad-hoc rehearsals. This familiarity with the church has enabled some of their members to attend services and support social events.

What significant institutions such as factories, shops, offices, and hospitals are there?

Moorside lies towards the outer boundary of Oldham, meaning that most significant institutions are situated more centrally. Within the parish we have a Cricket and Bowling Club, Co-Op supermarket, a Morrisons Local, some smaller local shops, 3 pubs, and a medical centre.

SCHOOLS AND VOLUNTARY GROUPS

What schools are there within the benefice/parish boundary (church schools or other)?

St Thomas Moorside C.E. (V.A.) Primary School, part of the Dove Shell Federation with East Crompton St James', Shaw.

Hodge Clough Primary School, a local authority primary school.

There are a number of private day nurseries in the parish and before and after school clubs.

What links are maintained or desirable?

We have strong links with St Thomas School with two Foundation Governors appointed to the Governing Board. One is an appointee for the local Henshaw Trust (this post is currently filled by Simon Cane) and the other is a member of our congregation.

The Church is used by St Thomas School, for their Easter, Christmas and end of year services.

Weekly clergy led worship has been held in St Thomas School, up until the current vacancy. The school has also visited the church in smaller groups for activities connected to religious education.

In 2023 Hodge Clough held a Christmas service in the Church, encouraging further growth in relations.

Which voluntary groups (other than church-based groups) have a presence either on church premises or elsewhere in the benefice/parish?

As we are on the peripheries of Oldham many of the volunteer organisations have a greater presence in the town centre. However, in the parish we do have several registered charities including the Sholver & Moorside Community Team who run the community hub. The hub houses several programmes including a young person's autism social group and Hope Restoration.

Fulwood Rangers tend to the upkeep of the millennium green, and the RSPCA has a charity shop in the parish.

WORSHIP AND WORSHIPPERS

What is the present pattern of Sunday and weekday worship?

Due to the nature of the appointment being planned as an appointment in plurality with St Mark's Heyside the pattern of services may need to be reviewed.

Daily 07:00	Morning Prayer, streamed on our Facebook page.
Daily 12:00	Midday office, this was streamed on our Facebook page up to the current vacancy.
Sunday 08:30	Communion service (Book of Common Prayer) (this is currently suspended during vacancy).
Sunday 10:30	A Eucharistic service following Common Worship, with the 2 nd service of the month being a Parade service for our Uniformed Organisations.
Wednesday 19:00	Wednesday Worship, this is currently a service of the Word but prior to the vacancy was a communion service on average 3 times a month (adapted from Common Worship).

Which books and service orders are in use?

Common Worship and The Book of Common Prayer.

What is the normal vesture for ministers (i.e., what robes are normally worn?)?

Alb and Stole for Word services and chasuble for the Sunday Eucharist.

In the congregation(s), what is the mix of age, gender, and social groups?

We are an inclusive Church; at our Sunday services we welcome all from newborn babies upwards encompassing all social groups. We fully support the needs of breastfeeding mums.

Wednesday services tend to see mainly primary school aged children with their parents.

How many worshippers live outside the parish boundary?

Sunday – there are between 6 and 8 regular worshippers who live outside the parish boundary.

Wednesday – all probably live within the parish boundary.

In the spectrum of church tradition how would you describe the worship – “evangelical”, “central”, “catholic”, or some variation, or in other terms?

Central Eucharistic would be a fair description, although we consider ourselves a broad ranging Church that acknowledges all styles of worship without being limited to any one style.

What else should be recorded?

The church has an enthusiastic and loyal congregation who warmly welcome visitors.

In addition to the Church space, we also have a separate hall where we can accommodate large gatherings.

During times of national and international importance we have held large services or simply been open for vigils and a place to come for quiet reflection.

Each year we hold a Carols by Candlelight service; this is a traditional service of nine lessons with carols sung by candlelight. It is always extremely well attended by many members of the community.



Carols by Candlelight



At Pentecost we undertake a walk around part of the parish led by Delph Brass Band. Weather permitting, we alternate between 2 routes through the parish that allows us to invite people to celebrate with us. When we return to Church, all are invited to take part in a 'bring and share' Faith Lunch.

CHURCH-BASED ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS

What church-based organisations and groups exist?

We are proud to be musically blessed in our Church in having a robed choir. Although it may seem small in numbers it is more than ably led by our Reader Gail Randall who is an experienced musician and published composer with an international reputation. Gail's husband Peter is our organist.

Gail also leads our Handbell Group who not only entertain us but represents us in the community when they go out into local schools and care homes.

Peter, a nationally renowned bell ringer, is our Bell Captain. We have a ring of eight tower bells in addition to a set of thirty-five handbells. Tower bell practice is held on a Monday evening when we are joined by ringers from other local towers. Recently, two full (three hour) peals have been rung to celebrate the 150th anniversary of our church in 2022 and the coronation of King Charles III on 6th May 2023. During 2023 the ringing room has been decorated and a new set of bell ropes fitted.

Every Thursday we host a Coffee and Conversation Group; organised by our Treasurer Corinne. The following quotes have taken from an article she provided.

"We support our elderly members within the community by running a Coffee and Conversation Group in the Church Community Hall each Thursday between 1 and 3 pm. It initially started with the aim of reducing isolation in people aged 50 and above (although all are welcome)"

"Initially, to be delivered for 6 weeks towards the end of 2022 with funding from the GMCVO (Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation) Ambition for Ageing project via the National Lottery Community Fund. However, attendees really valued the group and asked us to continue. The group has grown to an average of 22 members, most of whom do not attend church; the youngest being one year old and the oldest is about to turn 91."

"Last year, we started to provide hot meals or buffet food to help out with the cost-of-living crisis and ensure that members had a good meal. So much so, that they usually bring along a container to take some home for later!"

"Some members of the group have lost their partners in recent times and say that this group is a lifeline for them. Not only do they receive friendship and nourishment, but they also support the church by attending events etc"

The sharing of food together has always been a tangible expression of service, love and unity. In addition to this and the overview from our Treasurer Corinne, the group provides what may in these times be a much-needed warm space for some.

Before lockdown we had an extremely active Sunday School. Since the return the young people mainly tend to attend the Wednesday service due to family commitments at the weekend. We are blessed with a healthy number of young people at the Wednesday service although this could be partly due to Oldham having two well regarded CofE secondary schools (The Blue Coat School and Crompton House School) in the borough where supplementary forms detailing church attendance is used for admissions. As seems to be the case in most Churches some families do not come to church as frequently once their children gain admission to the schools.

How would you describe the social life of the church?

St Thomas has 2 active ladies' groups

Our Older Ladies Group – meet in different members' homes on a monthly basis and provide social contact and activities; from lunches out, trips to the cinema and garden centres, enabling all to participate regardless of any mobility requirements. They are also invaluable in providing refreshments after the Sunday services and the necessary support for us to run our 'bring and share' Faith Lunches.

St Thomas Young Ladies Enterprise (S.T.Y.L.E. for short) run most of the social events for Church which have included annual clothes shows, various raffles for Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's/Father's Day etc; celebrations for the late Queen's Jubilee, the King's Coronation, live music events from local singers, brass and swing bands.



These social events are not just for fundraising, they help to bring our congregation together and attract new visitors. Although events were hit hard by COVID, S.T.Y.L.E. members looked for new ways to keep active which included the innovative idea of organising a "Virtual Market". This approach was recognised with our church receiving a "Church for a Different World" award in 2020 from the Diocese of Manchester.

Post lockdown Church attendances declined, and this had impacted on the social life of the church with some S.T.Y.L.E members not as active as they would like to be. In 2024 S.T.Y.L.E held a music night with a local singer and have other events planned. A family within our church has also organised and ran a Trivia Quiz night, attended by over 80 people, and have another planned for the Autumn; new ideas and initiatives are always welcome.

These events, plus those held by our various youth organisations, leads to a lively and vibrant social life.

What else should be recorded?

As well as being used for our own social events, our Hall is also used by a local dance school and hired out in the community for various events. In recent years our Hall has been used for a community gathering after the Moorside Christmas Tree has been lit, including performances from Moorside Community Choir.

Some of the visitors that have come to events at our Church or the Hall always comment on the warm welcome that they receive from us.

NEIGHBOURING ANGLICAN CHURCHES AND PARISHES

Describe any collaboration you have with neighbouring or other Anglican churches and parishes.

The Revd Dr Paul Monk, Vicar of Holy Trinity Waterhead & St Barnabas Clarksfield (both in East Oldham), is a licensed Curate at our Church as well as leading Mission Community 4.

ECUMENISM

Is there an active Churches Together or similar organisation in the area?

Currently there are no active organisations in the area. Unfortunately, the COVID lockdown has taken a toll, however this does provide an opportunity for somebody with drive and determination to rebuild these links.

Does another church or denomination use your building for worship or other activities?

No.

What else should be recorded?

Previously members from Fresh Church have accepted our invitation and joined with us for our Whit Walk.

Our Handbell Group represented St Thomas Church at the 2023 Community Carol Service involving groups from other free churches and schools.

MINISTRY

Apart from the parish priest, what other ordained ministers, if any, are licensed to, or regularly officiating with the bishop's permission in, the benefice / parish? Please name assistant curates, NSMs, OLMs, and retired clergy.

No

Are there licensed or emeritus Readers who minister?

Revd Dr Paul Monk, Vicar of Holy Trinity Waterhead & St Barnabas Clarksfield (both in East Oldham), is a licensed Curate at our Church.

Mrs Gail Randall – Lay Reader

Mrs Angela Bilbruck – Lay Reader

What else should be recorded?

Our previous incumbent was licensed as a curate in the churches of Holy Trinity Waterhead & St Barnabas Clarksfield.

MISSION

Is there a Mission Statement?

We are currently reviewing our mission statement to ensure that it fully reflects our vision and mission goals.

In what ways have you seen the church growing over the last few years?

Wednesday worship has seen our weekly attendances increase as there are regularly 100+ attendees. This may be influenced by local Church school year 7 entry requirements.

LGBTQi+ members have felt welcome in our congregation when they may not necessarily feel so in churches elsewhere.

FINANCE AND STEWARDSHIP

Please attach copies of annual accounts for the last three years

Hard copies attached for 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Is Christian stewardship practised, and when was the last campaign or renewal?

Christian Stewardship is practised, with the last major campaign in 2014. Although the discussion with all about how we may be able to offer help with our time and talents is always ongoing.

In what ways have you seen giving (in its broadest sense) increase in the last few years?

It would be very good to be able to say that financial giving has increased or at the least remained static over the past few years. Unfortunately, the combined effects of local deprivation, austerity and COVID has meant that financial giving has declined over the past few years. However, we are blessed that whenever we ask for volunteers to assist with specific things, we always have people that volunteer their time and talents, meaning we are fortunate that we do not have to ask too much of any one person.

Is the benefice/parish committed to full payment of the Parish Share, and if it has failed to pay it recently what are the reasons?

Historically we have a very strong record of being able to pay the parish share in full - up to 2016 we had paid in full for 25 of the previous 27 years.

However, given the challenges in the area since 2019 we have not fared as we would have liked with the share being paid as follows.

Year	Paid	Percentage of	Parish Share
2019	£20,000	57.1%	£35,000
2020	£20,000	55.6%	£36,000
2021	£28,000	75.7%	£37,000
2022	£23,000	60.9%	£37,740
2023	£29,000	70.3%	£41,227

After a discussion with the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) our Parish share for 2024 has been set at £25,000. The share for 2025 set at £26,250 and 2026 set at £27,563.

Were the parish priest’s expenses of office met in full last year and what was the total sum reimbursed?

We can confirm that all legitimate expenses are paid immediately and in full, in 2023 we reimbursed the parish priest £81.95 for printing, no other expenses were claimed. We also paid the full council tax on the vicarage of £1115.96.

To what extent does the benefice / parish offer financial support to home and overseas mission work, including projects, appeals, and charities?

We actively support Oldham Foodbank. Our 2023 donations were 807.1Kg - apparently this was almost double the 2022 donations. During our Harvest Service we also collect hats and gloves; these go to the Booth Centre, Manchester.



During Lent we choose 2 charities one local and one international and for 2024 our local charity is Maggie’s Oldham, with Tearfund as the international one. Baptism collections are split equally between the Church and a charity nominated by the baptismal family.

What else should be recorded?

We have succeeded in maintaining the Church, fully paying expenses, insurance, all utility bills and the vicarage council tax. During the period of vacancy, we have also paid the costs for the vicarage gas, electricity, and telephone, which we will reclaim from the Diocese.

We look to appoint a new, forward-thinking and outward looking priest, in order to progress, rather than maintain the status-quo.

We hope that our new priest can help to rejuvenate our Sunday School. Although our direct opportunity for youth work is restricted, we do have opportunities to engage with young people from 5 to 18 because of our sponsorship of the Scout and Guide groups. Our groups are thriving and benefit from dedicated leaders that are inspirational and committed to providing opportunities for all young people.

More specific youth work can be accessed from Mahdlo (operated by the Onside youth charity), so there may be opportunities there.

The successful candidate must be prepared to provide social as well as spiritual leadership as Oldham is one of the poorest communities in the country. The parish of St Thomas Moorside is ranked 2,224 out of 12,382 parishes, the IMD-19 standard (English Indices of Deprivation), places us within 18% of the most deprived parishes in the country. Specifically, the Parish is ranked 19% in terms of child poverty, 10.8% in terms of working-age poverty, and 17.6% in terms of pensioner poverty.

The ONS (Office for National Statistics) reported Oldham to be the poorest local authority area in England as 65% of its wards had a mean income in the lowest 10%. Oldham is almost invariably in the bottom 10 or 20 areas in terms of measures of poverty and health outcomes. Excluding the more affluent Saddleworth area, Oldham itself suffers because its young people who go away to university seldom return, causing a deficit in social leadership. Hence only 14% have qualifications at Level 4 or above.

The Vicar of St Thomas Moorside may need to be able to engage with those who are frequently not heard and are left behind, be their advocate and encourage them to speak and organise effectively for themselves.



THE NEXT PARISH PRIEST

Considering and with reference to all of the above, in particular your mission priorities, what are the key priorities that you would like the next parish priest to address?

What are the gifts and skills you would hope they will bring?

- Teaching and guidance to all on their individual Christian journey.
- Promoting lay ministry and development, including that of our young people.
- Collaborative ministry within the mission community and neighbouring parishes.
- A willingness to try new approaches.
- An energetic and engaging personality.
- People skills.
- Diplomacy.
- Being seen as a civic leader and upholding any duties as required.
- Leading, developing and affirming a culture of inclusion.
- Supporting the many and varied musical activities within our Church.

To summarise this position, we are looking forward to welcoming our new priest who feels able to bring the skills and empathy outlined above to the parish of St Thomas Church, Moorside. Admittedly this parish, like all, will have its challenges but provides great opportunities to grow, nurture, and serve our community and the wider mission community.

It must be said that this appointment can only be made on the understanding that the role may develop as further opportunities arise within this Deanery, ensuring our new incumbent is prepared to be very adaptable. This would include collaboration with other parishes and Mission Communities, aiming to help strengthen one another by sharing ideas and resources.

