

 THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

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Diocese of Leeds



**Interim Priest - in - Charge  
St John, the Divine, Thorpe Edge**

Sharing life and discovering Jesus  
together on Thorpe Edge

## **Interim Community Priest (0.5 Stipend)**

### **St John the Divine Thorpe Edge**

#### **Bishop's Statement**

Our vision in the Diocese of Leeds is about confident clergy equipping confident Christians to live and tell the good news of Jesus Christ. In appointing to every post, we seek people who have a joyful and confident faith which has inspired a track record of church growth, both numerically and spiritually.

St John's Thorpe Edge is an urban parish of just over 5000 people in north-east Bradford, and is in the top 2% nationally in terms of overall deprivation. It comprises a large social housing estate, with the church buildings at its heart, as well as some new-build housing. It forms a benefice with the parish of St John's Greengates, but for the latter part of the outgoing priest's ministry she became part-time and relinquished her role at Greengates.

St John's has a long-standing and deep commitment to its local community. For example, its buildings include a day centre which hosts two groups, as well as a Community Café which provides very low-cost warm meals. The Community Hall is well used by local community groups. The church has also run a bedding bank to help local families in need. There are good relationships with other key community groups, including the Rockwell and Springfield Community Centres.

Social housing estates are ministry contexts common to other parishes in north-east Bradford, particularly Eccleshill, Greengates, Idle and Wrose, for which we are also seeking new clergy to come and serve. In total, we have 2.5 posts available, and we therefore have the opportunity to look at the current and emerging mission and ministry needs across these parishes alongside Thorpe Edge and consider the area as a whole. Another nearby parish, Holy Trinity Idle, was designated a Resourcing Church in 2019 and is receiving Strategic Development Funding from 2019-2027 to support revitalisation work in north-east Bradford. Holy Trinity is therefore well-placed to offer support across this wider geography. Furthermore, a Bishop's Mission Order exists across north-east Bradford for Sorted, a youth church started 20 years ago aimed at unchurched young people from harder to reach backgrounds. Sorted's office base is at St John's.

Conversations have begun within the churches of North East Bradford to explore how we can move towards working together, supporting one another and on occasion joining together in worship or prayer as we have done recently. The conversations we have had have identified the following:

A strong desire to work more closely together;

Recognition that there are significant unreached communities across the area;

Some of these areas are long-standing social housing estates;

Some of these areas are major new housing developments;

An opportunity to use the 2.5 posts available with some flexibility to enable us to recruit people with specialisms in pioneering mission in new housing developments or on social housing estates, with the expectation that this expertise would be offered across the whole area from a base at one (or two) of the existing churches.

Hence, following the appropriate and necessary consultations locally and within the Diocese, the right of presentation of a new incumbent has been suspended at Thorpe Edge, (as well as at Greengates, Wrose and Eccleshill) and an interim ministry appointment is being progressed for an initial period of three years. This will allow the space and time to focus on the specific questions which need addressing for St John's and the wider area, carefully manage such change as is needed, and begin to take forward the pioneering mission opportunities across the wider north-east Bradford area.

We envisage stipendiary ministry across north-east Bradford as combining both a proper focus on the needs of an individual parish, as well as both offering and receiving particular skills to and from neighbouring parishes. From the perspective of the Episcopal Area, we therefore see five specific tasks for the Interim Community Priest at Thorpe Edge:

1. To provide clear and enabling leadership at St John's Thorpe Edge, which will foster growth numerically as well as spiritually and in service to the local community;
2. To build on existing relationships with Messy Church families, users of the café and others engaging with activities at the church to grow new disciples;
3. To help shape and implement a plan for mission and ministry with people living in the less well-reached social housing in the North-East Bradford area;
4. To work ever more closely with clergy, PCCs and church congregations in north-east Bradford in taking forward the above tasks, and to explore possible structural changes, including pastoral re-organisation (particularly for Thorpe Edge and Greengates), which might support this better;
5. To strengthen relationships with the rest of the Outer Bradford Deanery, as well as the wider Episcopal Area and Diocese.

In common with all our Interim Ministry appointments, a monitoring process will be put in place, involving a quarterly meeting with the Archdeacon and a review point at the end of two years at the latest. This will enable a decision to be taken as to whether the arrangement should be extended, made permanent or the appointment reviewed and changed. This will allow the decision to be implemented during the third year of the interim post. The criteria for the review would be based on the five tasks listed above.

The Deanery of Outer Bradford is comprised of parishes similar to Thorpe Edge, many of whom are experimenting with mixing new approaches to worship and mission alongside inherited patterns. The new interim Community Priest will therefore find a group of creative and supportive colleagues in the Deanery chapter, all of whom will be deeply familiar with the joys and challenges that each other faces. The new post holder will therefore be expected to work with a spirit of generosity in sharing wisdom and insights about ministry within the Deanery of Outer Bradford and across the Episcopal Area

+Toby Bradford October 2023

## St John the Divine, Thorpe Edge

Thorpe Edge parish was created to embrace the post war Council Estate which at its height had a population of almost 8000. The five large 8 storey tower blocks were completed in 1957.

The estate is an Urban Priority Area and has gone through a period of when it was a challenging place to live. The local authority decided to introduce a mix of housing and some of the tower blocks were demolished, and modern housing was built. Now there is a different feel to the estate and the people who choose to live there.

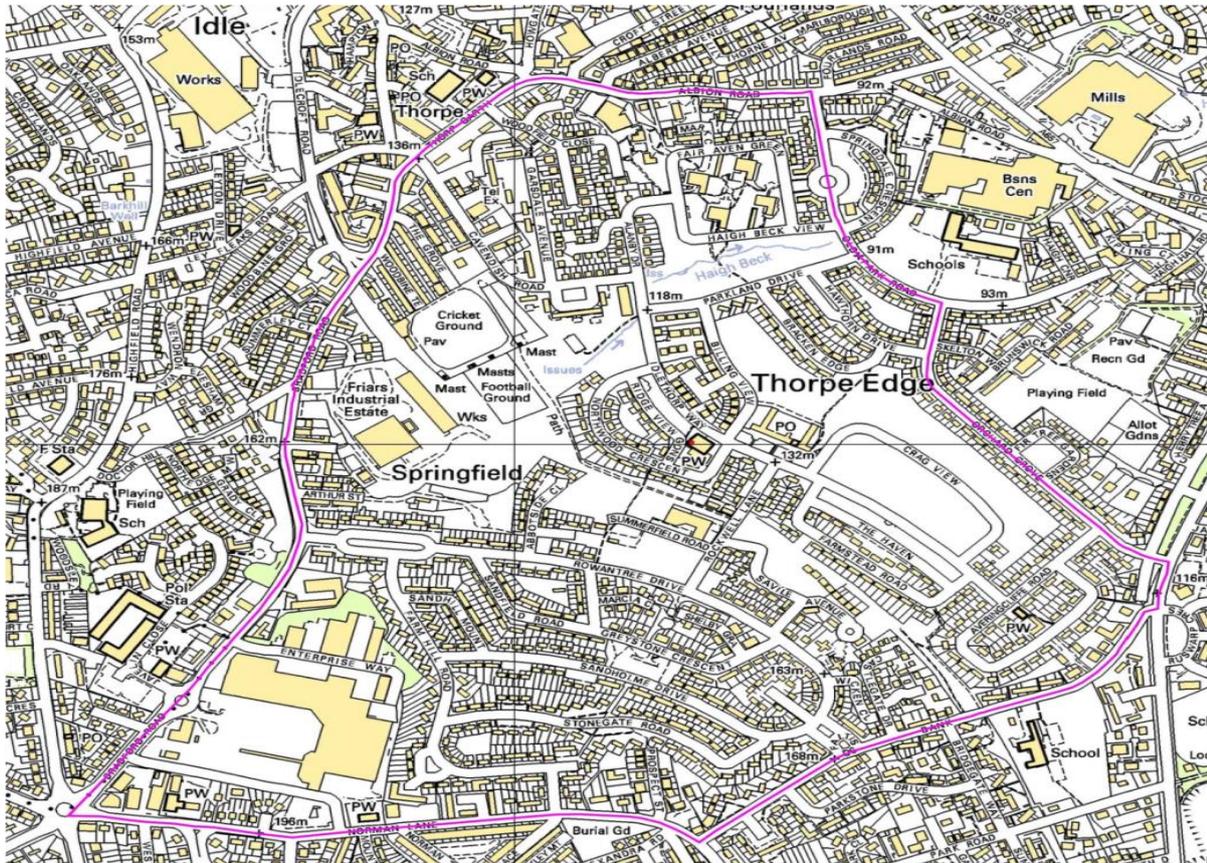


In 2003 the Newlands Community Association opened the Rockwell Centre on Thorpe Edge Estate. Newlands is a community association which covered a large part of North East Bradford.

Sadly the centre closed in Oct 2022 due to lack of funding after many years of being a real rock on the estate. The story doesn't end there though, the centre opened its doors again in 2022 and is now known as 'The Rockwell Centre and Blooming Buds Theatre Company'. It is a busy and thriving centre and its website shows the range of activities on offer.

The estate is well provided for in regard to community resources; besides the Rockwell Centre, there are the Springfield and Springdale community centres, a medical centre, chemist and our own Day centres and café.

Thorpe Edge doesn't have any schools; the nearest school is Coop Academy Parkland which is just outside the parish. It is a small primary with 216 children. However, St Johns has really good links with it through assemblies and events and some of the families attend our Messy Church.



In the 2021 Census, the population of Thorpe Edge comprised 88% white British and the social rented housing proportion has decreased to 39%. This welcome development has brought in people with more energy. Nevertheless, the Church Urban Fund analysis reveals that the parish has much higher levels of poverty than usual CUF ranks the parish in the poorest 202 parishes in the whole of the country.

However, a major high-rise block (York House) with approx. 80 family size flats and 10 bed sits has recently been marked for demolition and the families relocated not always within the estate.

## St John, the Divine, Thorpe Edge

The Vicar and people of Idle established a Mission in the Thorpe area of the Parish, and erected a building containing a School, a Schoolmaster's house, and a Mission Church in 1874. By 1908 the



outreach of the Church had grown and permission was sought to establish St John's as a parish in its own right. Once the Diocese of Bradford was created in 1919, plans went ahead and in 1922 the Bishop of Bradford consecrated St John's Church in Cavendish Road, as the Parish Church of St John the Divine, Idle.

In 1953, the Local Authority began building Thorpe Edge Housing Estate, to cater for about 8,000 people. This meant the Diocese had to alter the boundaries of the Parish, as the Estate would have been in three different parishes. Bishop Donald Coggan decided that St John's should cater for the whole Estate as well as a few older developments on the periphery. This move required a new church at the heart of the estate and the present St John's Church was built between 1960 and 1962 .

The church was designed by Norman Outhwaite, a local architect. The old church was initially used as a church hall and was eventually demolished in 1974. The new St. John's opened in April 1963.



On our 50th anniversary, we held an exhibition of stories and pictures from our first 50 years in Thorpe Edge and held a thanksgiving service offering thanks to God for the witness of St John's down the years.

The church interior is an attractive, warm and welcoming place, ready to invite what God has instore for us, it is also the largest community space on the estate so there is potential for developing further community links.

We have architects plans to renovate the community part of the building.

## Accommodation

The next priest will live in the vicarage just behind and a little above St John's, Thorpe Edge. The house is an original design which deliberately evokes the high single pitch roof of the church (which is seen behind it in the picture).



The 4 bedroomed vicarage was erected when the church was built in 1963. Since then, the house has been double glazed and had upgraded central heating installed. Three new composite doors have been fitted along with a new alarm system and CCTV. There is a large front garden and a smaller rear garden.

## The Worshipping Life at St. Johns

Our congregation is a friendly group of people who love to welcome new people into its community. A strong sense of fellowship has blossomed over the last few years to establish a supportive network within the Church family.

The age range of the congregation lies between 0 – 80 years. The ethnicity of the church has shifted significantly recently as we have welcomed people from Nigeria and Iran.

We have a mix of retired, employed with a very small number of unemployed.





Our worship tends to be informal using a range of liturgy. There is freedom within worship to use flags, share stories and be open to the spirit.

Services include morning worship and Communion. The second Saturday of every month we have a Messy Church Service which is well attended and has its own regular congregation. Lay participation is encouraged within the services.

## Messy Church

We have a fantastic team of people who run Messy Church on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month with a theme where families come and learn more about Jesus through worship, crafts, songs, prayers, fun and a shared lunch together too.

Our numbers are continuing to grow as we meet new families each month and we feel truly blessed providing them a safe environment to come along and have fun where they feel comfortable and enjoy the fellowship of each other. We've also had baptisms within the service.

It is a place for families to be creative and we have all ages ranging from 0 - 80 and we give them a space to be creative through bible storytelling, music and a meal.

The encouraging, non-threatening atmosphere has enabled us to grow leaders within the church in a variety of ministries including leading worship, prayer ministry, hospitality, pastoral care and creativity.

We see Messy Church as integral to our church life. It is Christ – centred and we aim to provide activities for the families and inspire them with worship where they hopefully take a message away with them.



There's a real sense that this great, once a month, Saturday service is of God, it surely can't be anything else, and so many people hear the good news of Jesus who wouldn't otherwise hear it.



## What our families had to say ...

Our kids love the  
crafts and the  
food!

Welcoming and  
friendly.

It's a place where  
we learn about  
Jesus.

A great friendly  
team of people.

There is a family  
feel and a place I  
consider being my  
church.

It's a great place  
to chat with others  
making friends.

## St John's Community café

St John's Community Cafe is what it says it is. It is a cafe in the church for the community run by the church with paid employees and volunteers from the church and is a place where the local community can access fare share food.



We are so blessed to be able to reach out to our neighbours with gifts of food and other everyday essentials.

The cafe is a place where we offer cooked breakfast and lunch at a very minimal cost. It is a place where all are welcome and since it opened it has become a beacon of light in the community that has helped many people

who are struggling. We are now producing over ninety meals a week for the local community.

It is a real opportunity for mission as we get to chat to all who come through the doors. There are opportunities to listen to their stories, many of whom are in difficult situations because of financial hardship, broken relationships and loneliness.



Many have been helped by simply having someone to chat to. This has resulted in new people coming to church and other's returning who haven't been for a while. We have been blessed with the baptism of two people through their contact with the church via the Cafe.

In addition, we now have an afternoon drop in called 'Kettles On' open on a Tuesday afternoon. It's a place of

welcome, open to anyone who wishes to come along. This works alongside our cafe offering refreshments and a warm pleasant place to meet friends and chat with members of the church team.

Moving forward, there is potential to begin a basic exploration course called Start as some people have expressed an interest.

Plans for future ministry might include a men's mental health group as well as a toddler group. We want to be seen as a community church that meets the needs of the people we serve.

Our purpose is to follow Christ, encouraging others to join with us as we do that by following the example that Jesus set for us, sharing God's love both practically and spiritually.

## Our Day Centre's - Safe Space and Good Companions



We have two-day centers for the elderly at St Johns Thorpe Edge, Safe Space and Good Companions these are run by paid staff together with several volunteers some of which are from our church. The two-day centers are completely different; Safe Space is for the benefit of individuals with dementia and is held on a Friday and Good Companions which runs on a Wednesday is more for the lonely and isolated and some with complex needs. At these sessions we play games and

talk with the clients about their family and childhood as this helps stimulate their memories. They enjoy fitness sessions, art and craft, bingo, quizzes, entertainment and trips out. It is an amazing service and privilege to be run these sessions, they are vital to their well-being giving them a more enriched and fulfilled life.

These day centers are also used by members of our own church.



## What our members had to say ...

It's a safe place to come and I love it!

The day centre is invaluable to me, I bring my husband Jim, he loves it, and it means I get some much-needed respite.

I don't know what I would do without it, and the staff are lovely.

I get a chance to socialise twice a week, without it I would be quite isolated.

# Our community life together









# What kind of a Priest are we looking for?

- Someone who can provide a strong spiritual leadership rooted in prayer.
- Previous experience of mission work, working on an inner city, deprived estate with a heart for estate ministry.
- A team player who can encourage, discern and develop skills in others to strengthen / build on our current ministry team with good communication skills.
- A believer in every member ministry
- A nurturer to engage and value people who are currently on the edge spiritually.
- Someone who will value all people as individuals and regard the children of our congregation and what they have to offer as equally important to the church family.
- A get up and go person willing to meet the people of the parish where they are both physically and spiritually.
- A flexible, creative and imaginative person who will be willing to try new things to breathe new life into the heart of the church.
- Someone who sees the church as an important part of the community so that bridges can be re-built between us and existing community projects.
- A person with managerial qualities willing to both delegate and work with our existing lay leadership team and administrator

**Above all, we would like to see our new priest as someone who feels called to work in the Parish to serve our community – a person to love the place and its people.**