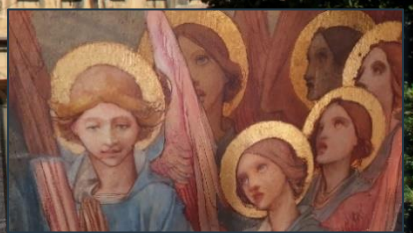




St Peter's Birstall

CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Parish Brochure



In this brochure:

1. Welcome to St Peter's
3. Ancient building, living church
8. Our five priorities
10. Living and working in Birstall
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Welcome to St Peter's

Welcome to our parish brochure, thank you for taking the time to read it. Our aim is to give you a taste of our Christian Mission through an understanding of our parish, its people, and its church.

We are seeking to appoint someone to lead us in achieving our key priorities as we bear full witness to Christ's teachings. We welcome applicants who have experience of leading and managing a parish, working with volunteers, parishioners and young people and have created a culture of giving and support. We are very excited to have the opportunity to work with our Patron and Bishop in the appointment of a new vicar.

Most of the information in this brochure is based on the life of the church in "pre-COVID" times, for obvious reasons!

Miles and Denise *Churchwardens*



Meet the team

We are blessed at St Peter's to have a leadership team with both experience and enthusiasm!

Church wardens



Denise Gosling

I am churchwarden with Miles and as a team we manage to handle most things successfully. I live close to the church and also am the PCC Secretary for the last 10 years.



Miles Lawson

Appointed at the last AGM after a 2 year break for work reasons and now working closely with Denise to help keep everything afloat during the interregnum.

Readers



Wendy Harper

I'm 78 years old, married with two daughters and four grandchildren. I've been a Reader at St. Peters for over 20 years and am now Emeritus with PTO. It's felt that my calling is

preaching; teaching and the healing ministry.



Leif Wilks

I'm 75, married with four grandchildren. I retired from Kirklees Council ten years ago, and been a Reader since 2006, which means preaching, teaching and anything else I can contribute to.

Church council and lay pastoral ministers

Our PCC of 16 members, is currently chaired by Ray Gallagher as Lay Chair and Secretary, Denise Gosling. The rest is made up of a very gifted group of people including Churchwardens, Treasurer, Trustees of Church Woods, Health and Safety Officer, Governors and Chair of Governors of St Peters School and our Safeguarding Officer.

We also have a team of lay pastoral ministers. Alison, Elaine and Solly, who work under the direction of the incumbent, supporting church members and those who live in our parish, they visit the elderly, housebound and sick, as well as those who are bereaved. They care and support families, having befriended many through the work of St Peters playtime and through baptisms, and our school of St Peters. This work gives us the opportunity to come alongside people, offering care and support and showing Gods love.

Get to know St Peter's

Services and mid-week events

For over a decade the church has had two Sunday morning services; one with a traditional feel, and one more modern and family oriented. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and especially when worship moved online, we have had to merge these two services. We also have a Wednesday morning prayer service with a small but dedicated congregation.

For many years, St. Peter's has been known to have a heart for prayers for healing. Authorised members of the team have made themselves available at every regular service, and every third Sunday we had prayers for healing instead of Intercessions.

Music for our modern and online services is provided by our Music Team, using guitars and drums, playing a mixture of contemporary songs and modern arrangements of favourite hymns. For traditional services, weddings, etc. we have a functioning organ.

Each Wednesday lunchtime the church becomes a cafe as we welcome around 40 diners to "Bridge", a lunch and social club. On three afternoons/evenings per week, the Church becomes a classroom for a local private tutoring group. And we also cater for a monthly coffee morning hosted by local travel agents.

St Peter's Playtime on Thursday afternoons for pre-school children with their parents, grandparents, and carers offers a couple of hours of play, songs, refreshments, and friendship for everyone, adults and children.

You may even catch St Peters from time to time hosting a thank-you meal at the church or holding a murder mystery evening or concert – we've hosted everything from brass bands to big bands!

In addition to this St Peters also has house groups which meet weekly to monthly depending upon group structure and preference. We also welcome families to our Messy Church service where they can enjoy painting, cutting out, pasting, drawing, colouring, making things to eat, Bible stories, Christian teaching, worship, tea, and sandwiches!

St Peter's School

St Peter's is a happy, hard-working, and well-ordered school in which children are able to develop to their full potential academically, socially, spiritually and creatively. The school is privileged to have wonderful caring children, supportive parents, a committed governing body and staff whose efforts are underpinned by the drive to see every child achieve success in a warm, caring, supportive and stimulating environment. Taking assemblies at the school is a very worthwhile and enjoyable part of the role of the vicar!

St Peter's was judged in the last Ofsted as a good school and in the last SIAMS inspection was awarded a Good judgement.



All members of this vibrant Christian learning community live out the school's vision and values on a daily basis.

SIAMS 2019

Ancient building, living church

There has been a church building on the same spot in Birstall for over 900 years, and even before this we have evidence to suggest a stone preaching cross may have been present.



900 years of Christian worship

In 2020 we celebrated 900 years of the first stone church being built on the site of the present St Peter's. We celebrated this important milestone with a year of events and special acts, including:

During the autumn of 2019 we planted 900 bulbs in the church grounds due to flower in the spring of 2020

We challenged the congregation to carry out 900 acts of kindness ('pay it forward') during the twelve months of the celebrations

We held a Festival of Flowers weekend in June 2019 with arrangements by Church members, local groups and organisations

In September 2019 we held Heritage Open Days with displays of historical artifacts

In December 2019 we hosted the West Yorkshire Fire Service brass band for a special 900 year Christmas Concert

We had specially commissioned merchandise for sale including inscribed mugs, pens, framed paintings of our church and much more

We also hoped to give out 900 invitations during the year – although due to the coronavirus pandemic many of our events were sadly cancelled.

For many years we have had a small collection of historical artifacts on show in the church. Recently we have mounted these artifacts, some dating back 800-900 years, in custom-designed stands to preserve them so they can be enjoyed by future generations.



A member of the church also carved a commemorative stone tablet, which you can see on page 1.

This is a view of the High Altar, with the Lady Chapel on the left, and the Vestry on the right.

We took many pictures of the church from the scaffolding erected while the Frampton Mural was being restored. We may not get the chance to take photos from 30 feet in the air again!



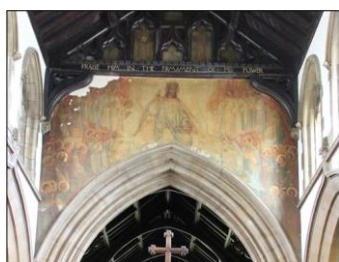
Frampton mural

St Peter's Church in Birstall, West Yorkshire, preserves one of the few surviving wall paintings by the artist Edward Reginald Frampton (1872-1923). Painted in 1901 over the chancel arch on the nave east wall, it depicts Christ in Majesty surrounded by angels.

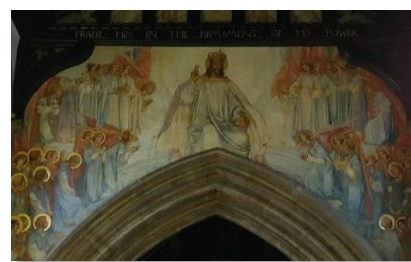
It was almost indecipherable due to the darkening of an unevenly applied varnish coating – and partly damaged by past rainwater infiltration. As the painting was otherwise in exceptional condition and following the recommendations of a preliminary inspection report in July 1996, a phased conservation programme was begun in March 1998 with funding from the Council for the Care of Churches.



The mural in the 1920s



The faded mural



The mural after restoration

In January 2020 the final phase of the restoration of the Frampton mural was started by acclaimed conservators Stephen Rickerby and Lisa Shekede (pictured right). The restored mural was revealed in February 2020, and some details of the work are available in photos below.



The church is extremely grateful to all those who donated to ensure this vital work was completed, especially the generous donor (who wishes to remain anonymous) who contributed half the total cost. We hope that this beautiful mural can bless visitors to our church for years to come.



Angels in adoration



The mural centrepiece; Christ in majesty (shadowed by scaffolding)



One angel is not paying attention!

This close-up shows what an amazing difference the restoration has made.



The church building and grounds



Stained glass

The church is the home of some beautiful stained-glass windows including the work of Charles Kempe, a famous glass designer of the 19th century, as well as that of J B Capronnier of Belgium, and F X Zettler of Germany.

Bells

In 1919 eight bells were recast by bell founders, Gillett and Johnson of Croydon, and rehung in memory of their son Lieutenant Edward Brook Longbottom. The Longbottoms were owners of a local mill and the dam opposite to the church was a part of that site and is called Longbottom Dam.

The Tenor bell is 22 cwt being cast in the key of E \flat and the bells are some of the best sounding in West Yorkshire. The ringing band is led by Miles Lawson and comprises a mix of both local and visiting ringers. Most are at an early learning level and more people from the town have requested to join the band.



Stonework

There are many wonderful stone statues on plinths inside and outside of the church including Saints Wilfred and Hilda. These statues tell the biblical story from both testaments and include some of the more recent saints.



Churchyard/Church wood

The church wood lies beyond the Victorian graveyard and was acquired by St Peters church for recreation and wellbeing from Trinity College, Cambridge. It is a beautiful wood maintained by volunteers and attracts dog walkers, bird watchers and people who simply want to soak in the atmosphere of an ancient wood.



A walk among the bluebells of Church Wood

Reaching out



Like many churches, Christmas and Easter are busy times at St Peter's. Our yearly Christingle service has been regularly attended by over two hundred people, and the Carols by Candlelight and Christmas Eve Midnight Communion are both popular services.

Easter, the most important celebration of the Christian year, is also popular with people who only visit church once or twice per year. During Holy Week we have a series of three short meditations, the Maundy Thursday service and supper, and on Good Friday the Walk of Witness, when, with members of the other Birstall Churches, we carry the large wooden cross around Birstall, with pauses for readings and hymns.

On Good Friday the church is open to anyone for quiet meditation, and prayer stations around the church guide reflections on the Good Friday events. On Easter Saturday a vigil around the fire begins at sunset and a flame from the fire is carried into church to light a candle that will burn until Easter morning.

Both Christmas and Easter services are always joyful and well-attended, but neither that nor our Good Friday witness are attracting regular worshippers. We clearly have more work to do with our outreach.

We have also previously trialled an ecumenical evening contemporary worship service called 'Deeper', but this did not result in the level of engagement we hoped for. It is, however, something we are willing to try again.



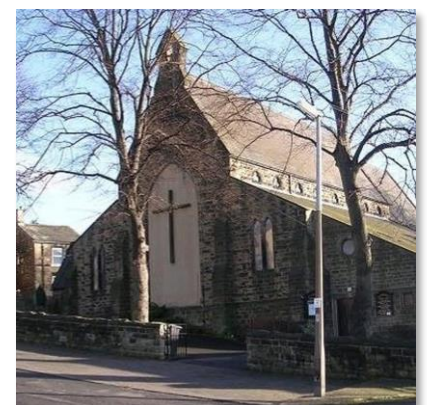
Churches Together In Birstall

St Peter's is part of Churches Together in Birstall (CTiB) which exists to promote unity between the Christian Churches in Birstall and to join in mission projects. It is part of Churches Together in England.

Throughout the year there has grown up a tradition of various events including a Unity Service during, or near, to the world-wide Week of Prayer for Christian Unity; Good Friday Walk of Witness; Events for Christian Aid Week; sponsorship and hosting of the annual Birstall Festival of Music (to which the local schools send choirs as a celebration of musical talents and gifts); and Carol Singing at the Birstall Retail Park on the Saturday before Christmas.

Each year a representative of one of the churches becomes the Chair and, among other things chooses and promotes a charity of their own choice to which collections and the proceeds of CTiB fund-raising events go.

The other member churches are: St Saviour's Church, Brownhill (C of E), St Patrick's Church (RC), and Birstall Methodist Church (incorporating Howden Clough Methodist)



St Saviours, Brownhill; the other Church of England church in Birstall



The city of Leeds

In this new diocese, less than seven years old, we are working with three core objectives:

- **Confident Christians:** Encouraging personal spiritual renewal with the aim of producing clergy and laity who are confident in God and in the Gospel.
- **Growing Churches:** Numerically, spiritually and in their mission to the wider world.
- **Changing communities:** For the better, through our partnership with other churches and faith communities, as well as government and third sector agencies.

The Diocese came into being at Easter 2014 following the dissolution of the historic dioceses of Bradford, Ripon & Leeds, and Wakefield.

The Diocese comprises five Episcopal Areas, each coterminous with an Archdeaconry. This is now one of the largest dioceses in the country and its creation is unprecedented in the history of the Church of England. It covers an area of around 2,425 square miles, and a population of around 2,642,400 people.

The Diocese comprises major cities, large industrial and post-industrial towns, market towns, and deeply rural areas. The whole of life is here, along with all the richness, diversity, and complexities of a changing world.

The Diocesan Bishop is assisted by five Area Bishops (Bradford, Huddersfield, Kirkstall (with responsibility for Leeds), Ripon and Wakefield) and five archdeacons (Bradford, Halifax, Leeds, Pontefract, Richmond & Craven).

Within the Diocese, there are 323 stipendiary clergy, 165 self-supporting clergy and 398 clergy with PTO along with 408 Readers, 125 lay pastoral ministers and 52 chaplains in 656 churches with 256 church schools.

The Diocese is unique in having three cathedrals, Bradford, Ripon, and Wakefield, and over the past year the cathedrals have begun to work together on the key diocesan services as well as developing three strands that they will offer to the diocese – pilgrimage, civic engagement, and apologetics. This new diocese, led by the bishops, is working out how best to create a diocese with more than one cathedral, and to develop the ministry and outreach of these cathedrals in a way that secures their future and recognises their distinctiveness.

The Diocese has inherited strong partnership links with the Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Southwest Virginia, Skara (Sweden) and Erfurt (Germany).



Wakefield Cathedral



Bradford Town Hall



The Yorkshire Dales

Our five priorities

Five priorities were set out for the church by our previous vicar, and we continue to focus on these areas as we move to the future:

Ministry

Ministry is about how we as a church serve our community. A church is more than a building and a congregation. It is associated with serving.



Fellowship

Fellowship is how we share activities, goals, interests, duties, trials, troubles and alike with one another in a group that holds common faith, beliefs, convictions, and hope.

Discipleship

This is about how we behave in our daily lives, with our families, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and everyone around us. It is more than just attending church. It is about seeking to be more like Jesus in everything we do and how we, as a church, support individuals to do this.



Mission

The Church of England states that we should be:

- Proclaiming the good news of God's Kingdom
- Teaching, baptising and bringing on new believers
- Responding to human needs by loving service
- Challenging the things that are wrong in society
- Protecting God's world

Worship

This is how we respond together to God's goodness to us. There is no one way of doing this. It includes preaching, giving, Bible reading, the Liturgy, prayer, and music, and sharing bread and wine in memory of Jesus.



...this is all a work in progress!

Safeguarding

At St Peter's we take Safeguarding very seriously. As well as keeping all the necessary checks and records up to date, we stress the importance of training and keeping up to date with all the changes. The PCC is kept up to date through a regular agenda item on the PCC meeting.

We value each and every person who comes into church and know how vital it is to ensure that we have the right procedures in place to ensure everybody is safe. As well as our Safeguarding Officer, we also have a team of Safeguarding Champions who are available at every service to help and support anyone who has any concerns.



Janice Mitchell, our safeguarding officer

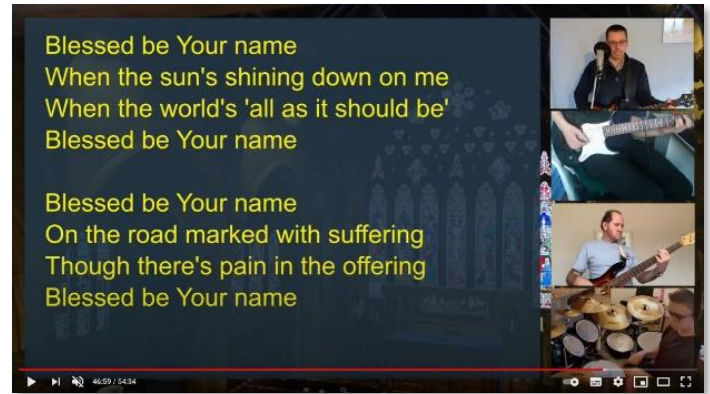
21st Century church

All churches have had to adapt to life in the modern age. At St Peter's we are fortunate to have "friendly geeks" in the congregation who have helped us to embrace modern technology.

In church

In the church building we have a modern audio-visual system, with speakers and screens around the church building. Words for songs and hymns are displayed on the screens, as well as videos used during sermons or as part of worship.

For our 10:30AM service our Music Team use guitars, keyboards, and drums to provide music – from recently written worship songs, classic choruses, to modern arrangements of favourite hymns. The team have also been recording music for our online services – see them on our website and YouTube channel.



Online

We have had a Facebook page and website for many years, and the recent addition of a YouTube channel and Twitter account have helped to keep the church family connected during 2020 and beyond. Many members of the congregation are contributing to these new-fangled means of communication by providing readings, prayers and more.

The impact of COVID-19 has required the rapid enhancement and modernisation of our communications, with much more emphasis on Facebook and the website, as well as continuing the use of our email 'Prayer Chain' which is an important way for church members to share prayer requests.

We have also started a monthly email newsletter, to which anyone can subscribe, and all our online services are published to Facebook, YouTube and our website.

Church during COVID

All churches have had to adapt to the restrictions put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have provided a weekly online Sunday service since April 2020 incorporating readings, a sermon, and music by our Music Team. We have also held in-church prayer services when it has been possible to do so.



More importantly, we have tried to keep in touch with all members of church to ensure they are keeping safe and well – and to offer help where needed. Early in the first 2020 lock-down we established a system to ensure that everyone in church had someone who was committed to contact them regularly.

We created a new "support" email address and published mobile numbers for the church leadership, to ensure people who needed help could contact us easily. And, we decided as PCC that we should formally support the local food bank, which is often the only help available to local people in need. That support will continue long after Coronavirus is no longer such a threat.

Living and working in Birstall



Oakwell Hall, which appears in the Charlotte Bronte novel *Shirley* as 'Fieldhead'.



Birstall Market Place has hardly changed in the last 100 years.

The town of Birstall (2018 population: 5861) is situated between Bradford, Huddersfield and Wakefield and is immediately south of Leeds. There has been a settlement at Birstall since Roman times and it is now a semi-rural commuter location for Leeds.

Local community facilities include a library, 4 schools, a local town centre plus out of town shopping at Birstall shopping park, (with many household names such as Ikea, Showcase

The population has a fairly typical socio-economic profile with the distinction that the majority of the population is White British, which contrasts with some of the surrounding areas. Private Home ownership, employment levels and those retired are all above the national average. Qualification levels lag slightly behind the national average figure. For a full summary see the chart below.

	Birstall	National average
Private Home ownership	68%	63%
In full/Part employment	62%	52%
Retired	17%	14%
No qualifications	29%	23%
Level 4 qualification (degree or higher)	20%	27%
Jobseekers Allowance	5%	3%
Any benefits	15%	14%

There have been some notable people associated with Birstall, such as Joseph Priestley, (who discovered oxygen), John Nelson (a key figure in the Methodist movement), and Jo Cox (local MP remembered for her senior support roles in Oxfam, Save the Children and the NSPCC).

There are numerous social groups and activities within Birstall itself Including fun runs at Oakwell Hall country park, 'Knit and Natter', Film club, Writers group, Children's rhyme-time, health walks and other events run from the library. Meals and social activities are available each week at St Peter's Bridge club.



The local area



Birstall has retained its distinctive identity as a town, with the advantages of being in easy travelling distance to large, vibrant, multicultural cities and towns such as Leeds, Huddersfield, Bradford, Wakefield, and York.

Birstall town has a range of small independent shops, restaurants, pubs, takeaways and delis and a small weekly market, as well as a library, Post Office, community centre, and a leisure centre in nearby Batley. Large superstores are within a few minutes driving distance, including Tesco, Asda, Morrisons, Lidl and Aldi.

Centre 27 and the White Rose Centre are also within close driving distances for a more concentrated and wider shopping experience, including IKEA, and Sheffield's Meadowhall is just 30minutes drive down the M1.

Nearby Batley has a railways station, with excellent free parking, and a short, direct train journey into Leeds City Centre which provides regular and fast trains to London and the rest of the country and into Manchester, including the airport, in the opposite direction.

Schools

Our Church school, St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior, Infant and Early Years School, is adjacent to St Peter's Vicarage and St Patrick's Catholic Junior school is within walking distance from the vicarage. There are a range of secondary schools in the Birstall catchment area, including academy and grammar schools with Ofsted ratings ranging from good to outstanding. The close proximity of towns and cities such as Dewsbury, Leeds, Bradford Huddersfield and Wakefield, also provide excellent higher education opportunities at colleges and universities.



Springfield 6th Form Centre, Dewsbury

Parks, museums and culture

There is a wide choice for eating out ranging from cafes, restaurants and takeaways to countryside pubs serving both traditional, and gastro food. Leeds city centre provides restaurants of every imaginable cuisine including The Trinity Centre and the unique concept of global street food and pop-up carts.

There is plenty to do if you want to see the latest films, with Showcase Cinemas at Center 27 and the fantastic theatres in Leeds and Bradford for a night out. Locally, there is a thriving historical society, with museums, and halls and parks such as Oakwell providing lots of recreational space. If you have "green fingers", then there is Birstall in Bloom and there are numerous community organisations and charities to join to learn anything from Tai Chi, to craft skills.

Alternatively, you could go indoor ski-ing or snowboarding at Xscape at nearby Castleford, or try out rock climbing or mountaineering at one of the climbing walls in Leeds.



The Hepworth, Wakefield

Life in Birstall

Major employers

There were a total of 4,139 jobs listed on Total Jobs within 10 miles of Birstall, in January 2021, with a wide range of opportunities given the town's close proximity to retail parks, superstores and of course offices in larger cities. The largest employer in Birstall town is the Johnstones Leyland Paints Group.

There are also opportunities to commute for work further afield thanks to the excellent network of motorways, bus and train services.

Health

There are several GP practices in the immediate area, as well as dentists and pharmacies. The Mid Yorkshire NHS Hospital Trust provides hospital facilities across several sites in the area, the closest at Dewsbury, and then Pinderfields, in Wakefield. There are centres of excellence at Leeds hospitals, as well as a range of private health providers in nearby towns or cities.

Community outreach and events

A parish church must be part of the life of its community, and the Bridge Project began to build on our links with the community. The Bridge in question refers to the bridge or road over the beck that runs past the churchyard. At the start the Bridge offered, as well as a good lunch, games, craft activities, talks quizzes and even help with computers. The Christmas and Easter specials and the annual outing have always been very popular. Most weeks friends attending have included a group from a local organisation supporting people with learning difficulties.

As time went by it became apparent that what people valued most was the companionship they found, and this should be the focus for future meetings, rather than any elaborate catering provision. There has been some attendance at church services from Bridge members.

Playtime on Thursdays is a shared time of play and songs and refreshments for pre-school children and parents and carers together.

The Bonfire celebration, always on November 5th, has been one of the biggest events of its kind in the district. Good organisation has meant that it is recognised as a safe event and so is attractive for families, with attendance approaching 1000 people. We have taken the opportunity to hand out fliers about other events at St Peter's but there is no indication that these lead to interest in other aspects of church life. For that reason and with the rising cost of insurance we will need to consider whether the bonfire is worth continuing.

Our Christmas and Summer fairs have always been popular, and useful sources of funds, and while helping to keep the community aware of the church, they do not lead to attendance at other times.

The church food cupboard was started some years ago, as a means of meeting emergency needs rather than as something open on a weekly basis. With the lockdown all stock was passed over to the local foodshare scheme, which we continue to support.

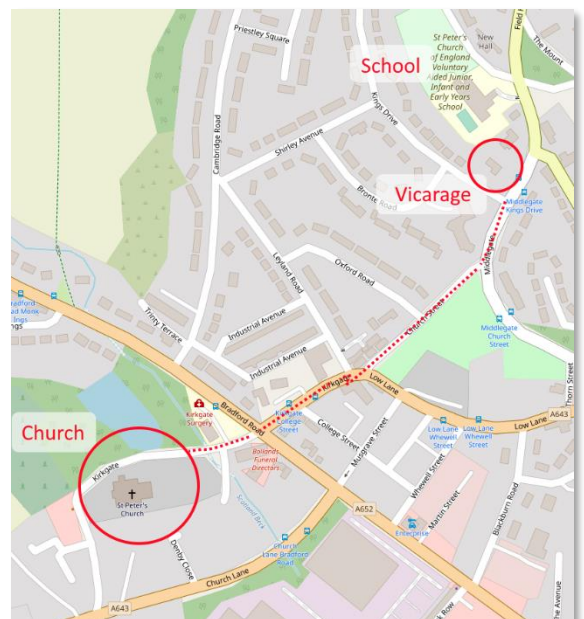


The vicarage



St Peter's vicarage is located on the corner of Kings Drive and Middlegate to the north west of Birstall town centre and adjacent to St Peter's School, about 10 minutes' walk from the church.

It is a modern style 4 bedroom house with integrated double garage. The garden is protected by high walls and includes a small rose garden and some excellent trees and shrubs.



Internally the downstairs has an entrance lobby leading to a main hallway of which there is a good sized study and downstairs power shower bathroom.

Further along there is a magnificent staircase leading to the second floor and also entrances for the large lounge, separate dining room and adjacent kitchen. The large kitchen has a utility room off with a gas heating boiler and plumbing for the washing machine and entrance/exit to the garden. The second floor has 4 good sized bedrooms and a family bathroom.



Looking to the future


Proverbs 29 v18 says that “without a vision, the people perish”. At St Peter’s we have a vision of our church filled and supporting mission into the community and training disciples, seeing people healed and restored into a loving relationship with our Father in heaven.


Challenges and opportunities


Of course, not everything is perfect at St Peter’s. We recognise that there are areas of our ministry, our fellowship, our mission, our discipleship, and our worship which could be improved.

In November 2020, the PCC sent all church members a questionnaire, to gather clear and accurate information how they think things are going at St Peter’s, as well as their hopes for the future. We had over 60 responses, giving us a great overview of how people feel about St Peter’s.

Some things stood out clearly:

- 

We could see that we have a loyal and dedicated congregation: 61% of respondents said they had been attending St Peter’s for more than twenty years, and just 15% said they attend fewer than four times per month. However, 7% have been attending less than 5 years, which confirms our recognition of the fact that we are not attracting new members.
- 

We also asked about what activities church members attend or support, and it was clear that we have a huge range of things going on! Perhaps this indicates that we can streamline our activities, so some members feel less stretched.
- 

Many church members prefer having a full-time vicar, but we must acknowledge the challenging circumstances the Church of England currently faces. Appointing a 'Priest in Charge' - allowing for the possibility of future pastoral reorganisation within our Deanery - is a pragmatic solution which the PCC supports.

Church members felt improvement could be made for all our five priorities. When asked the question ‘how do you think we are doing’, we got these responses:

Ministry

Very well	43%
Could do better	51%
Not well	6%
Not well at all	0%

Fellowship

Very well	57%
Could do better	41%
Not well	2%
Not well at all	0%

Discipleship

Very well	43%
Could do better	55%
Not well	2%
Not well at all	0%

Mission

Very well	36%
Could do better	57%
Not well	7%
Not well at all	0%

Regarding worship, the answers highlighted the fact that church members attend either our traditional or modern services. 7% described worship as ‘contemporary’ and 11% as ‘traditional’! However, it is pleasing to see that 11% of respondents used the words ‘reverent’, ‘joyful’ or ‘comforting’ to describe our worship.

In terms of maintenance on the building, we have a few projects underway or proposed, including a necessary modernisation of our toilet facilities and a more accessible entrance.

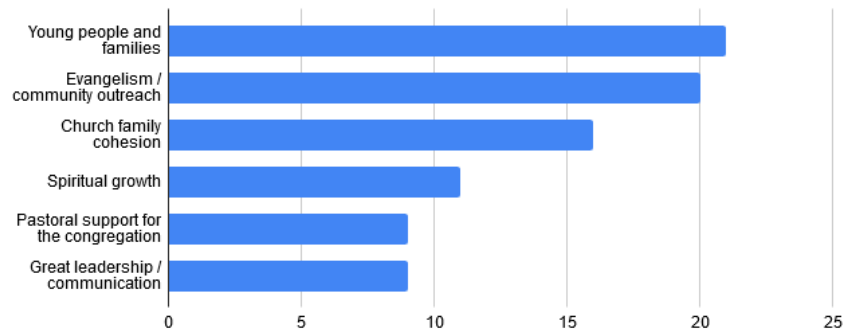
Our vision



The responses to the questionnaire showed there were some areas we as a church feel we should concentrate on.

These were the items which respondents said should be top of the agenda for a new vicar:

We grouped all responses and saw three clear themes, which form our immediate vision for the church – illustrated here by a few quotes:



1. Growing the Church

A clear priority for the church is to grow our membership - particularly by reaching out to young people and families. We welcome many dozens of people to our Christmas and Easter services, and our prayer is that we can build relationships with them, so they know more of the grace and love of God.

We do not want “bums on seats” just for the sake of it! However, bums are attached to people - each of whom is loved by our Heavenly Father.

“Create growth in the church by attracting families and young people”

“Engagement with children and young families”

“More family orientated services”

2. Growing together in our faith

There was a clear feeling from many respondents that there is a lack of cohesion in church. Several people mentioned preferring either the traditional or contemporary aspects of our worship, so balancing these is going to be an important part of ensuring the church works for everyone.

Some people also said they wanted to grow more spiritually, and that the healing ministry which has been a vital part of the church for so long should continue to serve the congregation. This is wonderful to hear; we obviously have members who understand that faith and action go together.

“Cohesion and the melding of the past and present as we move into the future”

“Ensuring that everyone feels they are a part of St Peter's”

“Integration - further breaking down the us/them traditional/contemporary divide”

3. Mission and community outreach

The third theme is related to the first, with the emphasis on the church going into the community - rather than just people coming into church. While we've been involved in “out of the church building” events for a long time, such as the Easter outreach events, it seems church members recognise that this perhaps isn't making the tangible difference in our community that we wish to see.

It may be that the increased awareness of local support services, such as the Birstall food-share, is also helping the church to think about how we can engage with our community better - reaching out in love.

“Take the Church into the Community”

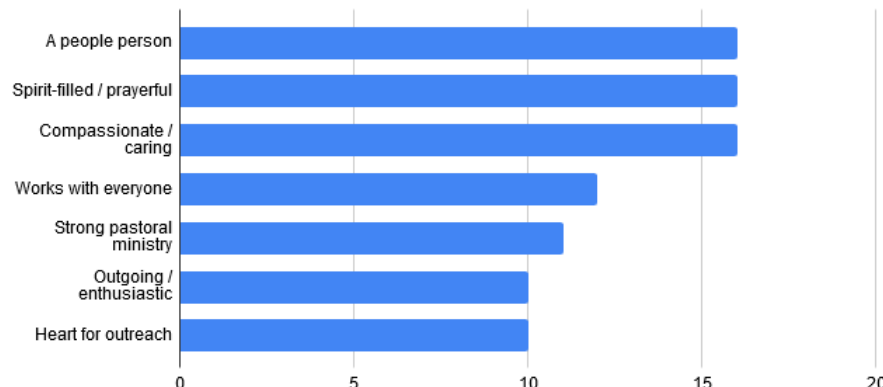
“Make and nurture disciples”

“To take us forward in faith with vision and passion”

Our new vicar

Our prayer is for a priest who can guide and nurture the church family, to be the best community we can be. The responses to the questionnaire showed (as you might expect!) a range of different qualities which people would like to see in a new vicar.

We've categorised all the responses to give a flavour of the qualities which were mentioned most often, as you can see in this chart.



It's no surprise that interpersonal skills are rated very highly, and tie in closely with the items which respondents said should be high on the agenda for a new vicar.

Here are some quotes we've gathered from church members describing the new vicar they would like:

"Interested in people and have great interpersonal skills"

"Spiritual discernment and dedication to prayer and actions"

"A huge love for Gods children and their families"

"Community bound, not office bound"

"A commitment to pastoral ministry, not reluctant to come alongside those in distress"

"Open to people of all characteristics"

"A vicar for the whole community, not just a Sunday preacher"

"A vicar who believes in developing the faith of all ages and believers"

"New ideas to help grow the congregation"

"Someone filled with the spirit and following Jesus' teaching to the best of their ability"

"Someone who is forward thinking and creative who is prepared to embrace new ideas, skills and technologies and possibly take us outside our comfort zones"

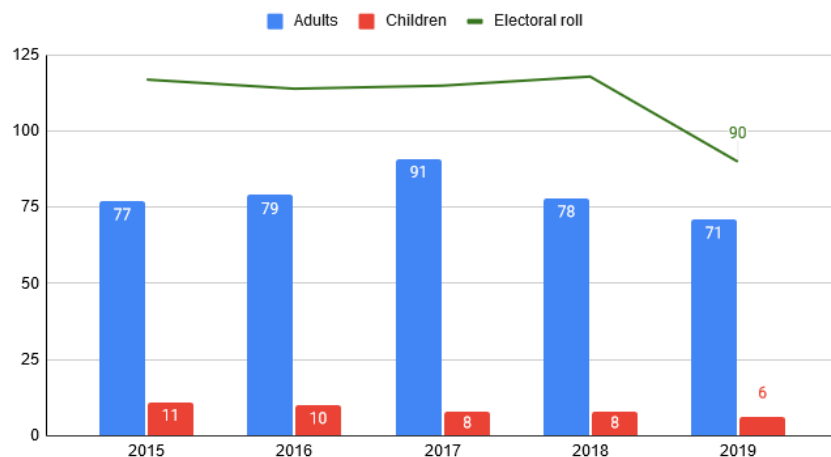
Support from the church

We hope you can see from these quotes, and from the whole of this brochure, that St Peter's is a church not just with a long history, but with a vision for the future. We're also Yorkshire folk; not afraid to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Our commitment to our new vicar is that we will support them in their ministry and life in Birstall with prayer and practical action, use our skills in the service of God and his Church, and work together to proclaim the good news of Jesus to people in Birstall, across the communities of West Yorkshire, and beyond.

Facts and figures: Church attendance

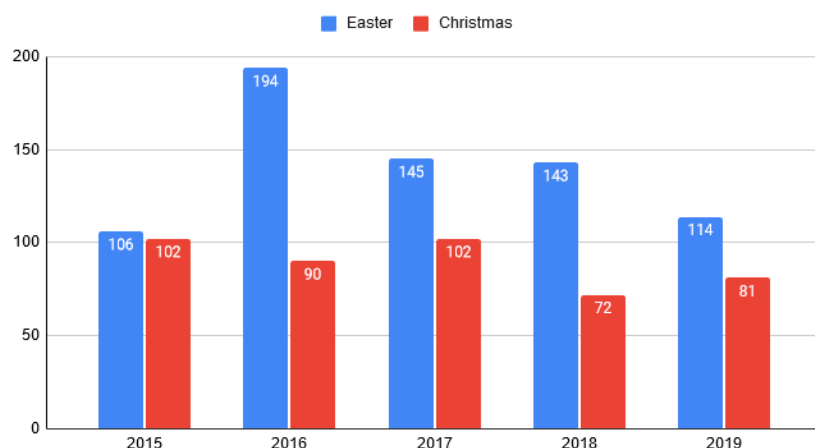
Electoral roll and Sunday attendance



Attendance at Sunday services has been split between our 9AM (traditional) and 10:30AM (modern/family) services.

During the COVID-19 pandemic we merged these two services, and indications from the congregation is that they would like to continue to have one joint service.

Seasonal services

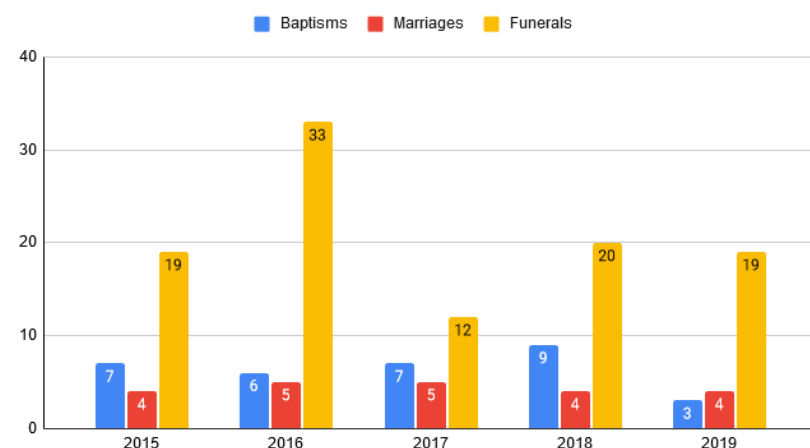


Attendance at seasonal services, in particular Easter, the Christingle and Christmas Eve services, is generally good.

However, we have not had success in making these visitors into more regular worshippers.

Our outreach clearly is not working as well as it should.

Special services



Funerals include ones held in church, at crematoria, and at the graveside.

Facts and figures: Our finances

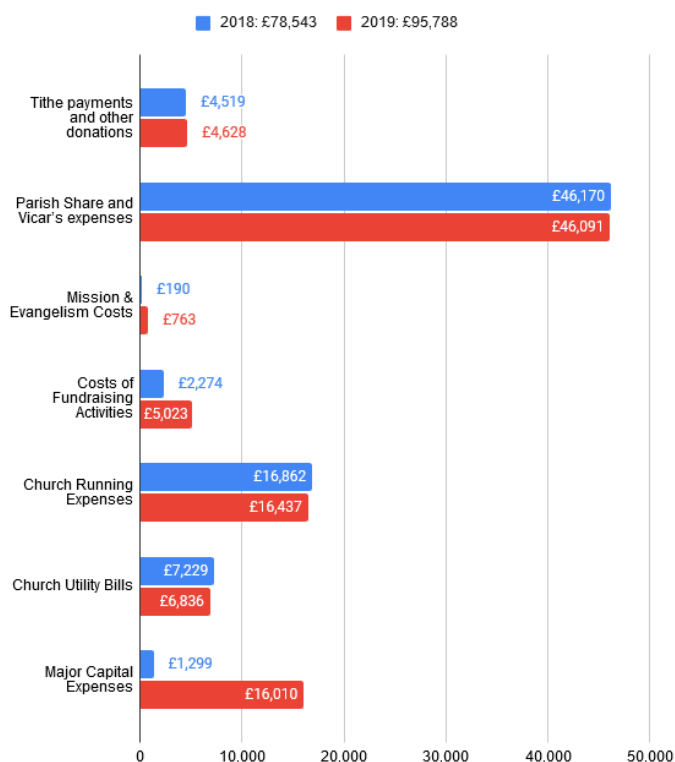
Our treasurer, Alan Graves, has kindly summarised the current financial position of the church:

- Investments - shares in CBF Church of England Investment Fund**
 Held by Leeds Diocese representing historic Endowment funds, Restricted funds and Unrestricted funds with a value of £80,970. The dividends generated are used for Church purposes.
- Restricted funds**
 Five Restricted Funds are held by the PCC representing donations or grants made for specific purposes, these total £58,759, a large proportion of which will be used for imminent roof repairs.
- Designated and General funds – Unrestricted**
 The PCC also has a number of Designated Funds and a General Fund with a combined total of £24,446.
- Donations**
 We donate 9% of income as tithe payments to various missions and charities at home and abroad. We also support various humanitarian appeals and dedicate some services to such as Christian Aid and the Royal British Legion.
- Parish Share**
 We have paid our Parish share on time and in full for many years.
- Giving**
 Based on Sunday attendance figures the weekly giving amounts to £11.15 per person and 88.5% is gift aided. Our last Stewardship campaign was in September 2018.

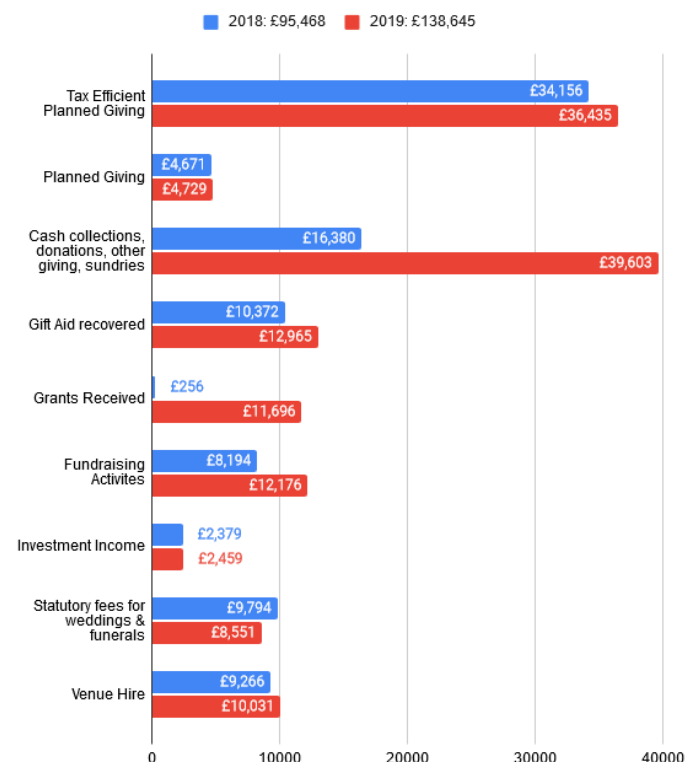
All figures quoted above are as of 31 December 2020.

A summary of transactions relating to our unrestricted income and expenses covering 2018 and 2019 follows:

Unrestricted expenses



Unrestricted income



Further information



Hopefully, this brochure has given you a good overview of St Peter's, Birstall and the local area, and the future we want for our church and community. Lots more information about the church is available on our website:

<https://stpetersbirstall.co.uk/>

Please also look at our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stpetersbirstall/>

All our online services, plus hymns and songs recorded by our Music Team, are on our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9wmoeVGw6PecdPGCSjrA5w>

Follow us on Twitter for tens of tweets per month!

<https://twitter.com/birstallparish>

And feel free to email us at: support@stpetersbirstall.co.uk

You can also find out about our church school on their website:

<https://www.stpetersschoolbirstall.co.uk/>

Thank you for reading this brochure, may God bless you and all whom you love.

St Peter's Parochial Church Council