

ST MARY'S CHURCH THORPE



PARISH PROFILE 2024

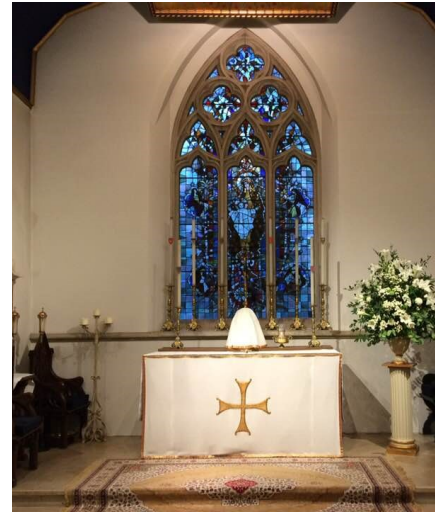
Sharing Faith with Friendship and Enthusiasm

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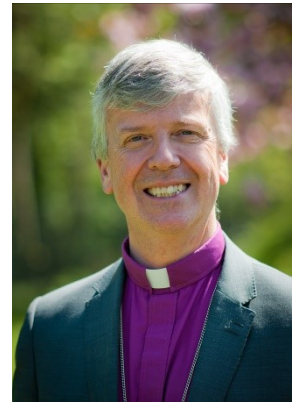
A Letter from the Rt Revd Andrew Watson Bishop of Guildford

The Diocese of Guildford is a warm and friendly place to be, with a strong cohort of gifted and passionate laity and clergy, some excellent church schools, and plenty of beautiful countryside to enjoy on a day off!

Our vision as a diocese is to see lives and communities transformed through the love of Christ; and, to that end, we have recently refreshed our Diocesan Strategy *Transforming Church, Transforming Lives*, with a particular focus on Growing Disciples, Growing Diversity and Growing Community. Although our congregations are generally rather larger than average, we are all too conscious that we are only reaching a tiny proportion of our parish populations, and are particularly keen to become more effective in passing on the baton of faith to younger generations.

Our team of Mission Enablers are committed to working with every parish in fleshing out that vision in an appropriate way, going with the grain of the church's history and tradition, whilst also suggesting new ways to 'proclaim the gospel afresh in each generation'. The pandemic, while presenting many challenges, has helped to forge new relationships between many of our churches, creating a spirit of 'us and us' more than 'them and us', and opening up new approaches to partnership and inter-church collaboration.

If you share our vision for transformation, and have a track record in growing disciples, growing diversity and growing community, we'd love to hear from you!



A Letter from Venerable Martin Breadmore The Archdeacon of Dorking

There is much to celebrate in the life of St. Mary's Church Thorpe, which includes a beautiful church building sited in the heart of Thorpe Village, a committed worshipping community in the Catholic tradition, a musical emphasis and a desire to reach out in service to the Parish of Thorpe and beyond.

We are seeking to appoint a full time interim priest-in-charge for an initial period of 3 years, which could be extended for another 3 years if all is going well. St. Mary's has grown and developed significantly under the leadership of the previous incumbent, however it is not currently sustainable in the long term. This interim appointment is designed to draw upon the real potential that lies within this parish for further growth, especially with children and families, to ensure health and viability for many years to come. The interim minister appointed should be able to embrace all that currently flourishes in the parish but also bring with her or him a commitment to developing new missional activities. I sense that a focus on 'Faith at home', 'Everyday Faith' and ministry to schools will be important aspects of this new season. One of our Mission Enablers is currently working with the parish as they look to the future, and this same person will work with the new interim minister to help them develop a plan to bring new growth and revitalisation. The successful candidate is likely to have some experience of bringing revitalisation or significant growth to a church community.

This appointment is perfect timing for receiving resource and support from the wider diocese. 2021 saw the launch of our new Parish Needs Process. This marked a brand-new way of working whereby the Diocese of Guildford will seek to walk alongside each parish to help them with vision and whatever needs they might have arising out of this.

I am very enthusiastic about this post. For the person that God calls, there is so much to offer here: the warmth of a great church family; the opportunity of leadership in a parish, deanery and diocese which offers considerable support and resources; the challenge of discerning with this community what God is doing and how we might join in; the privilege of living and working in a part of the country with so many opportunities for clergy and families.

If you'd value an informal conversation about this post, please do not hesitate to be in touch with me via: archdeacon.dorking@cofeguildford.org.uk .



Our Vision

**St Mary's Church seeks to always offer a warm welcome for all,
as we grow God's Kingdom in Thorpe.**

**We believe in an inclusive church - a church which celebrates and affirms every person
and does not discriminate.**

We work for a Church which:

- welcomes and serves all people in the name of Jesus Christ;
- is scripturally and sacramentally faithful;
- seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation;
- in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows all people to experience unity through the love of Jesus Christ.

St Mary's PCC is committed to growing prayerful, confident disciples in a spiritually enriching environment that encourages the sharing of faith in our daily lives and homes.

Our discussions and plans are rooted in prayer and trust in God from whom all good things come as we seek to fulfil the Diocesan Vision of **Transforming Church. Transforming Lives. (TCTL)**

"Unless The Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain." Psalm 127:1

Growing Disciples

We recognise the need to share our everyday faith that it may inspire our families, friends, neighbours and colleagues. We are committed to exploring our sense of vocation; bringing our trades, skills and talents together to offer hospitality and community engagement.

Growing Diversity

We desire to better reflect the community we serve through increased interactions with children, young people, and community groups; to use new technologies where appropriate, and provide opportunities for study, fellowship and worship.

Growing Community

We seek to build on community partnerships and demonstrate a genuine concern and respect for the environment, leading by example as we work towards an Eco Church Gold Award.

Our People

St Mary's is a relatively small church family with an older demographic, and a large 'fringe' beyond those who regularly worship whom we wish to draw in. We would love to attract more younger families and grow our congregation.

We are known for offering a warm welcome and genuine friendship. We recognise that our most important resource is our church membership who give unstintingly of their time, energy and finance to support the worship and work of St Mary's Church. Members are actively involved on various rotas for worship as wardens, readers, servers, intercessors and chalice assistants; for hospitality, including post-service refreshments and church family breakfasts and for social and fundraising events.

We have an enthusiastic and dedicated choir who sing in our services and festivals, and at weddings and other services as invited.

Our flower arrangers bring life and colour to our beautiful church every week, and our annual flower festival is a glorious celebration of God's creation.

There are currently 116 on the Electoral Roll. Usual weekly attendance for 2023 was 51 adults and 2 children, of which 50 adults are regular weekly communicants.



Platinum Jubilee
creation by Valery from
Ukraine 2022

Our Church

St Mary's Church is a beautiful and inspiring Medieval Grade 2* listed building that has been a place of worship for well over a thousand years. As you enter through the porch the light from the East window draws you in deeper through the nave. Streaming in above the high altar, through the chancel and the Norman arch the light reaches the central altar dais. To the north is the delicately ornate and secluded Benedict Chapel and to the south the modern simplicity of the Lady Chapel, watched over by the beautifully serene statue of the Blessed Virgin cradling the Christ child.

Lining the walls are many glorious stained-glass windows, some with fragments of C14th glass. The great East window and the Annunciation in the chancel are especially colourful and radiant in full sunlight.

In our festivals, when the church is adorned with candles and lights, it vibrates with the light and colour reflecting off the gleaming chandeliers and candlesticks, and filled with the triumphant anthems from the choir and organ, it uplifts hearts and souls in celebration of the glory, majesty and wonder of God.

St Mary's has a unique and powerful atmosphere and is a prayerful, peaceful place offering a glimpse into centuries of English heritage within a small, beautiful setting, founded upon an unbroken tradition of eucharistic worship.



Our Music

Music is a key element of the liturgy at St. Mary's - it provides a vehicle for Christians to express their love and praise for God and His Son, Jesus Christ, and follows the example of the disciples 'When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives' (Matthew 26:30 NSV).

The choir leads our singing and is supported by our Director of Music, who prepares our hymns, psalms to Anglican Chant, Taizé music, anthems, and a Service of Carols each Christmas. St. Mary's is frequently the venue for concerts by two local groups, Egham Band and The Hythe Singers.

Our music is much loved and integral to our worship at St Mary's, raising spirits and allowing all to be uplifted while praising the Lord. We are mindful of the comment of St Augustine: 'Qui cantat bis orat' (He who sings prays twice).

We are fortunate and privileged to have Prof David M Howard as an organist and Prof Lionel Pike as assistant organist. We have a venerable two manual Lewis pipe organ (~1913) which is in need of a major overhaul but we have been blessed with a bequest that has enabled us to purchase a new Viscount electronic organ this year. We hope to encourage young interested players and offer practice facilities to scholars and students from Royal Holloway London University. We also have an electronic Yamaha stage piano which is often used for the family service.



Rutherwyke Room Complex

The Rutherwyke Room adjoins the church and can be accessed from the church. The large central room is used for meetings, social events and fundraising activities. Additional facilities include a kitchen with serving hatch, wall-mounted smart TV, toilets and storage rooms. The room is regularly rented out to community groups providing an income stream for the church.



Summer Fair "Jolly in July" 2023



The Wallace Room is the Parish Office and is equipped with PC, photocopier, phone and WIFI.

Comfortably furnished it makes a pleasant venue for smaller confidential meetings or prayer and study.

The picturesque closed churchyard surrounds the church on three sides with a Memorial Garden for the interment of ashes. There is a wonderful peace and serenity which lends itself to outdoor services. Summer and winter fairs are held outside creating a festive atmosphere.



The recently upgraded paved patio area by the parish office is an ideal outdoor space for fellowship and refreshments.

A defibrillator is installed by the patio area for easy access.



WIFI is available throughout the church and Rutherwyke Room complex. Our Audio-Visual system was upgraded in 2022 with a new hearing loop, sound system and large drop-down screen with 2 ancillary projectors and smart TV. The sound system can broadcast outside and is used for services in the churchyard, for processions on Palm Sunday and Corpus Christi, and for large social events when our church seating capacity of 165 is exceeded.

We aim to develop and extend the use of these facilities as part of our community outreach endeavours. Recently we provided successful live screening events for the Funeral of Queen Elizabeth II and the Coronation of King Charles III.

Vicarage

Located next to St Mary's Church in Church Approach, the Vicarage is a modern, well-proportioned 4 bedroom, 2 bathroom house with a generous fitted kitchen, utility room, dining room, lounge, large study and cloakroom. The PCC provides the broadband and telephone for the study.

There is a garage and spacious off-street parking (which is also used by the church) and a large secluded rear garden laid to lawn with mature fruit trees, shrubs and raised beds for vegetables.



Our Services

Sunday Services

8am Said Eucharist

10am Sung Parish Eucharist - followed by refreshments in our Rutherwyke Room

11.30am Fortnightly Family Service, which is non-Eucharistic, held on 1st and 3rd Sundays

Wednesday Eucharist

11am Said Eucharist - Followed by refreshments in our Rutherwyke Room.

The Sacrament of Healing and Anointing is administered monthly after the Sung Eucharist.

Our Church services are supported by:

- Dedicated teams of wardens, deputies, servers, intercessors, chalice assistants and readers
- Weekly newsletters with prayer list, Collect, Readings and Post Communion prayer
- A full selection of vestments
- All-age Activity packs provided for children attending services.

Our worship tradition is modern Catholic, and we currently use Common Worship Order One with the traditional language version of the Lord's Prayer, and bible readings from the Revised Common Lectionary (NRSV). We enhance Festival services with vestments, processions, incense, bells, organ music and singing led by our choir.

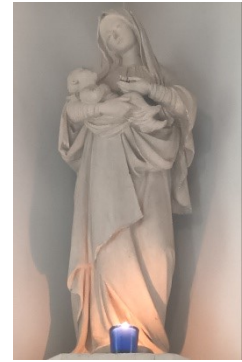
Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

These are regularly held in church and in 2022 we held 14 baptisms, 7 weddings and 18 funerals.

During the vacancy, to ease the load on visiting priests, we are holding baptisms within the 10am Eucharist, Saint's Days are observed on the nearest Sunday where possible, and our monthly evening Compline and Benediction services are currently in abeyance.

Deepening Our Faith

We can only reach out to others with Christian love and service if we have a deep well of faith within our own hearts and minds that is nourished by spending time with God and with each other. We would like to pursue more study courses, establish home groups and enlarge membership of our contemplative prayer gatherings. Across our congregations there is a desire for Quiet Days and pilgrimages along with a wider range of services including Evensong, Compline and Taizé.



Pastoral Outreach

We strive to be involved in our local community, endeavouring to stay relevant and supportive in all areas of village life. During the pandemic we ran a “Buddy” scheme to ensure no one was left isolated and we are trying to maintain those links. Prior to the vacancy our priest provided home communion regularly to the sick and house-bound. He also made weekly visits to Thorpe Primary School and lay members of the church are continuing to welcome year groups and individual classes into church for seasonal celebrations and worship. A recent visit included a “Show and Tell” talk about the history of St Mary’s. The children were actively engaged with many questions and thoroughly enjoyed their visit. We organise a popular monthly community event, Tea and Talk, which is open to all.

A weekly newsletter is circulated by email and in hard copy at all services. We contribute towards the quarterly parish magazine Thorpe Together, which is distributed around Thorpe Ward. Events are advertised with fliers and posters and circulated to parents through Thorpe Primary School. We also promote our services and activities online through Facebook and the church website. We are steadily rebuilding our Facebook presence with a new page started in April and would like to develop and refresh our website. Information booklets on Faith, Life and Prayer are available in the church. We recognise that it is vital to find ways to stimulate interest in Faith and the message of Jesus Christ; to explore and develop new ways of making fellowship more accessible and to share our Gospel message.

Social and Fundraising Activities

We have a very active and successful Social and Fundraising Committee who are essential to our community engagement. Every year we put on a range of events; some for outreach and others focussed on fundraising to support our church mission. We invite the community to visit by offering activities, refreshments and entertainment for families.

In the past we have hosted some very successful events including:

- Medieval Ball
- WW II D-Day Dance
- Magna Carta 800
- Platinum Jubilee celebrations
- Film screenings with refreshments
- Sponsored local walks
- Barn Dances and Quiz Nights
- Coffee mornings and afternoon teas



Our latest venture has been 'Come for Breakfast' to encourage the 8.00am Service to meet up with the 10.00am members for a choice of Continental or Full English. This lively gathering is now a quarterly event.

“We have achieved so much in bringing people together, raising funds and the visibility of St Mary’s and having fun. Personally, I have gained very good friends and a feeling of helping our society in a small way.”

“Deep friendship has arisen from our service to the Church - helping, supporting, caring for each other. We would not be who we are if this group was not God given.”

Family and Children

Family Service

A simple service of worship for children and parents with craft activities, talk, music and drama. The service is currently being held every 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month at 11.30am following the 10.00am service. The service features children's songs, a parable with interactive talk, craft and prayers.



Jesus calms the storm

Lego Club

The Lego Club usually meets in the Rutherwyke Room every 3rd Sunday for children over 5. A story and illustration from the "Lego Bible" are read and discussed, then the builders try to create the theme of the story. Pizza and chips or pasta are served at 5pm.

There is a wonderful fun atmosphere and a great deal of constructive genius.



Baptism of Christ

Noah's Ark

Noah's Ark is our Thursday morning term-time toddler group, welcoming parents/carers/grandparents and children from birth to school age. We have a strong core of regular attendees and average around 16 children per week but could accommodate more. We offer an indoor play area within our Rutherwyke Room, serving refreshments for adults and children throughout the morning.



Weather permitting we have a secure outside play area with a small Wendy house and plenty of transport options! We always have a seasonal guided craft, and finish with either a singing session, a story with plenty of bubbles or a highly enthusiastic ball toss. We vary the toys weekly and are avid purchasers from the local charity shops.

The group is incredibly friendly and welcoming, everyone mingles and chats. The ethos of the group is that this is a time when you can sit with other adults, enjoying a conversation with tea or coffee, while your children play in a safe environment. Attending adults are kept up to date with church services, festivals and events.

A simple love of small children and their families is what keeps our volunteers coming back every week and committed to the group. The morning generates a happy vibe throughout and we are privileged to be a part of these families' lives.

Letter from Revd Ben Beecroft, Area Dean

Welcome from Reverend Ben Beecroft Area Dean, Runnymede Deanery, and vicar of St Paul's, Addlestone. I am excited as Area Dean to welcome your exploration; as Runnymede Deanery, we are a supportive network of ten parishes where the clergy meet together regularly for prayer, encouragement, shared hospitality and mutual support. We are good at providing cover for each other and serving together with a co-operative rather than competitive spirit, with examples of churches sharing resources and collaborating when possible. A diverse deanery in many ways, we are united in our love for God and passionate about partnering in the Gospel for our area. St Mary's Church has 3 Deanery representatives reporting back to the PCC.

The aims of the deanery are:

- Listen to, understand and meet through common action the needs of member parishes
- Help parishes fulfil their local mission as part of God's work worldwide
- Be a network for the sharing of resources and expertise in different areas of ministry
- Be a channel of communication and representation with the Diocese, other churches, Runnymede Council and our whole borough/deanery community.

www.runnymededeanery.org.uk

Our Patron - Keble College, Oxford

St Mary's, Thorpe is one of around 70 parishes in the patronage of Keble College, Oxford. Keble College was founded in 1870 in memory of John Keble, priest, poet, and leader of the Oxford movement. The College has a firm commitment to the support of its College livings, many of which are in the Catholic tradition of the Church of England. Alongside providing regular guidance and advice to parishes, this includes an invitation to an annual Corporate Communion service at Keble, and occasional Parishes Days and Keble Clergy Conferences. The Chaplain, Fr Max Kramer, is always happy to be contacted about matters relating to College livings and open to exploring new ways in which the College can support its parishes and clergy.

www.keble.ox.ac.uk



Church Visit to Keble College May 2023

Eco Church

In line with the Guildford Diocese goal of reaching Net Zero by 2030, the PCC are working to reduce our carbon emissions. We use green electricity and have upgraded our boilers to be more efficient. In the churchyard we have put up several bird boxes and bug hotels. We intend to continue working together to achieve greater reductions.



Our Aspirations for 2024 - 2028

Our Church Development Plan, inspired by our Vision, outlines our priorities as we seek to be disciples of Christ in the 21st century. Central to this plan is our desire to:

- Offer high quality engaging worship to God whose love is seen in Jesus Christ
- To help all who meet us or use our buildings and grounds to find something of God and be drawn into a relationship of faith
- To offer a secure and non-threatening context in which to grow spiritually
- To be a hub for Thorpe reaching beyond worship to offer hope and love in a challenging world.

Transforming Church, Transforming Lives

Our mission for Thorpe is rooted in Transforming Church, Transforming Lives; the strategy for our Diocese of Guildford. Our vision is about growth in our personal faith and as a Church family, which in turn will positively impact on the flourishing of the wider community we serve. We have identified three goals:

Growing Disciples

- Sharing Everyday Faith
- Growing our Stewardship
- Establishment of WhatsApp groups for Prayer, PCC, Welcome Team and Wardens
- Building our choir and fully utilising our music traditions and electronic organ for worship and outreach

Growing Diversity

- Expanding our work among children and young people:
 - Through Family Service, Noah's Ark, Lego Club, Faith & Fun and new activities
 - Build on our very successful Christmas Crib services
 - Seek to employ a Family & Children's Worker
- Continuing our excellent relationships with Thorpe Primary School and TASIS
- Continuing to experiment with new ways of being "church" using new technology where appropriate

Growing Community

- Building on our community partnerships with:
 - Runnymede Foodbank, Thorpe Primary School and TASIS, White Lodge Centre
 - Runnymede Borough Council, TWRA and Thorpe Neighbourhood Forum
- Reaching out to Thorpe Park Resort to initiate and develop a strong relationship
- Continuing Tea and Talk, hospitality, social events and charitable giving
- Championing the environment as an Eco-Church

The Challenges Ahead

We have identified 5 specific challenges which we need to focus on in the next five years:

- An ageing congregation and the need to reach out to young adults and families
 - Reduced but stable attendance at Eucharist services
 - Reduced Family Service numbers post Covid
 - Missing age group of young families and adults
- The need for a strong on-site presence communicating with the children, parents and teachers of our local schools
- To offer an innovative variety of services in style and schedule to attract those outside the church
 - Trying new styles of services within our traditions
 - Offering different service/activity timings
- Making church relevant in the lives of busy people
 - What do our village community members want or need? Where? When?
 - How can we help?
- To broaden our income base to meet increasing financial demands

Statement of Needs

The keystone of our faith and worship at St Mary's is the Eucharist and therefore, it is essential that we are led by a priest with Eucharistic-centred spirituality. We need a minister with a deep-set heart for the Holy Communion that expresses itself in an ongoing commitment to sharing the Lord's Supper in our weekly services and festivals.

We are looking forward to appointing a minister who:

- Prioritises prayer in both personal life and modern catholic Eucharistic worship
- Welcomes and embraces the diversity of people and worship
- Is comfortable meeting newcomers where they are and bringing them into our church family
- Has experience of and a heart for developing young families and children work
- Is eager to build on our strong relationships with our schools
- Has experience of traditional and more innovative worship styles, with a focus on meeting the needs of new Christians
- Has a strong appreciation of our music tradition
- Provides relevant teaching and preaching to reveal God's truth in the Bible
- Leads in a manner to encourage the spiritual growth and gifts of individuals
- Is a strategic thinker able to lead, prioritise and encourage collaboration to evolve and achieve our Church Development Plan
- Is motivated to connect closely with the community and a pastoral heart for ministry
- Demonstrates a lively and curious interest in developing their own understanding of doctrine and theology and a keen desire to share that knowledge through preaching and teaching
- Is interested in the environment and will support our efforts to minimise our impact on the natural world and encourage similar change in our community
- is enthusiastic, motivational, approachable, adaptable and a strong communicator

Who We Are Praying For

We are praying for a priest who will share our love and commitment to the sacramental ministry of the church, who will embrace and enhance our worship within the traditions which support our faith, providing stability and continuity, whilst we remain open to transforming church and lives as the Holy Spirit directs us.

We hope that all who visit St Mary's Church will feel a profound spiritual connection, grow in faith and quickly develop a sense of belonging. Our tradition is about being accepted, included, welcomed and spiritually fed, irrespective of who you are.

In summary we are looking for a Vicar who will:

- Root us in the Eucharist
- Deepen our faith and explore its mystery
- Engage with younger people, children and schools
- Reach out to the community
- Develop our stewardship and financial resources
- Embrace and encourage our rich musical tradition

and is a realist with a sense of humour who likes a challenge!



What We Love about St Mary's

As a newcomer, if you ask St Mary's folk what they love about their church they will tell you that it's the beautiful church, the fact that it is a true village church, and perhaps mention the tranquillity of the churchyard. If pushed they will admit to the wonderful beauty of the interior and the very real sense of peace when you come in. They will praise the choir and organists, and the organ music that lifts hearts and spirits. But as you chat further they will reveal their appreciation of the uplifting prayerful worship and the Communion services; their eyes will light up and they will talk about the delight they have seeing the school children visiting the church. They will tell you with a smile that it is the lovely church family and all the welcoming friendly people that they love; and above all the joy of being and working together.

"A warm, welcoming and supportive congregation of which to be part. St Mary's oozes enthusiasm and camaraderie in working together to create the feeling of 'belonging'. We support and care for each other; our vicar; our building; and we have fun! We enjoy the spiritual life and prayer which surrounds us when we meet for worship together. "

There is a very present joy and enthusiasm that binds our church family together and we hope you will feel led to come and join us.

What We Can Offer

St Mary's Church and the village of Thorpe can offer you:

- A welcoming and friendly church family
- Vibrant and joyous community outreach
- A strong supportive and willing management team
- Beautiful medieval church with versatile seating/open space
- Active Social and Fundraising committee
- Spacious vicarage and secluded garden
- Fully resourced and versatile Parish Centre
- Up to date audio visual technology
- Strong connections with successful local schools
- A commitment to the Diocesan Clergy Wellbeing Covenant which can be downloaded here: [Clergy - Diocese of Guildford \(cofeguildford.org.uk\)](https://www.cofeguildford.org.uk)
- Life in a quiet beautiful village in an outstanding location with countryside close by and excellent transport links

Transport links into London and the South West are very good as Thorpe is close to the M25 at Junction 13, with easy access to the M3. Thorpe is also close to the A30, and the A320 runs through the west of the parish linking Staines with Chertsey and onto Woking to the south. Nearby Staines-upon-Thames (north) and Woking (south) have large town centres with many shops and facilities, and the mainline stations in these locations offers frequent 25 minute fast services into London.

Thorpe is well served with two nearby hospitals: St Peter's Hospital in Chertsey (15 mins) and Ashford Hospital near Staines-upon-Thames.

With five lakes nearby there are a number of water leisure facilities available including Thorpe Park Resort, Thorpe Lakes: Wakeboard, Waterski and Wakesurf, and Thorpe Lakes Aqua Park.

Thorpe Parish

Thorpe parish is one of the ancient parishes of Surrey and is centred on Thorpe village with the surrounding towns being Egham, Staines-upon-Thames, Virginia Water, and Chertsey. There is considerable interest in new housing developments and several are awaiting approval. One such project is a retirement village which will be sited within half a mile of the church. Thorpe village contains 28 listed buildings, many of which are centred around St Mary's Church and Church Approach. Other principal buildings include TASIS and Thorpe Church of England Primary Schools, the C17th Red Lion pub, and a general store with a Post Office.



The village sits on slightly rising ground amidst five gravel lakes with the River Thames forming its eastern boundary. It is surrounded by a green belt of fields, lakes and woodland creating a feeling of pastoral enclosure. The village is characterised by narrow tree-lined winding roads.



Thorpe War Memorial



A friendly Amateur Dramatic group which is celebrating its 70th Anniversary this year.

Some Nearby Attractions

- St Ann's Hill
- Great Cockcrow Railway
- Thorpe Lakes
- Thorpe Park Resort
- Chertsey Meads



Community Schools

TASIS England

TASIS England is an International American day and boarding school situated next to St. Mary's Church serving over 660 students from 69 countries. Some of its property consists of the old Parish manor house (previously an Anglican convent and women's refuge) as well as a number of the old houses surrounding the church. It is a significant employer of teaching staff, local secretarial, security workers, grounds, maintenance and housekeeping staff.

Strong relations with the church have benefited from an excellent Head of School, who is a member of St. Mary's congregation and governor of Thorpe C of E Primary. TASIS England holds its Christmas service at St. Mary's and occasionally hires the church for training and examinations. The school generously allows its car park to be used by the congregation on Sundays and, with prior notice, for other services over Christmas and Easter holiday periods.

Thorpe Church of England Primary School

Thorpe Church of England Aided Primary School is located in the heart of the village. The school has seven classes and capacity for 210 children from 4 to 11 years old. The school has a very supportive Governing Body, many of whom are regular members of St Mary's congregation. The school has a large field, a trim-trail, as well as an outdoor swimming pool. The school has a satellite building, the Rainbow Room, which is used for wrap around care from 7.30am to 5.30pm as well as small group work during the day.

The Headteacher is a strong supporter of St Mary's and is a member of the PCC. The school has a good reputation in the community and events put on by the school are well supported by its neighbours. The school has a well-organised and enthusiastic group of parents, known as FOTSA. They raise considerable amounts of money for resources and to support pupil activities and learning.

"The school community has always valued the relationship we have with St Mary's. Both teachers and the leadership of the school have benefited from the wisdom and guidance of the Vicar at St Mary's and look forward to nurturing a positive relationship with the new minister and the PCC going forward. The children at Thorpe are very much looking forward to having a Vicar at St Mary's. We are thankful to our Foundation Governors who have always offered a good balance of challenge and support and have been an excellent link between the church and school."

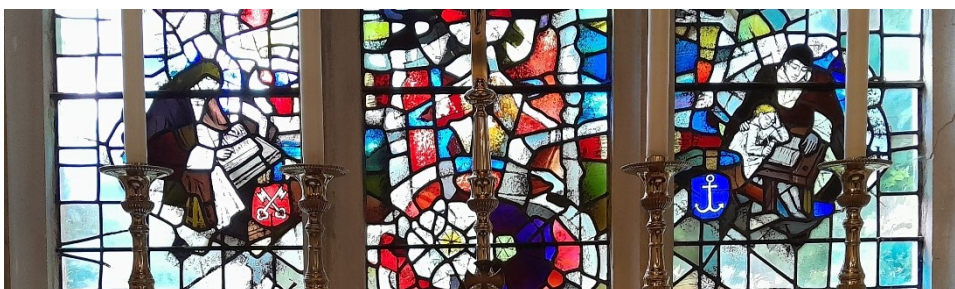
Helen Southgate

Headteacher, Thorpe Church of England Primary School

Parents record their family attendance at St Mary's Church as part of the application process for their children to attend Thorpe Primary School. We recognise this provides an opening for discussions to retain their interest in the church and encourage ongoing attendance and would like to build on this going forward.

Thorpe Nursery Pre-School

For children aged 2-5 years it offers sessional daycare Mon-Fri during term time. We currently have little interaction with the Nursery and see there is potential for outreach here.



The tradition of involvement in local organisations is strong at St Mary's. Our East window references a former neighbouring convent, now the site of TASIS, and the Thorpe Church of England Primary School.

Governance

Thorpe PCC - Charity no: 1176929.

The PCC supports the Vicar of Thorpe and Churchwardens as we work to achieve the objectives of our charitable instruments and policies, alongside the Diocesan goals encompassed in Transforming Church, Transforming Lives.

The PCC has a Church Development Plan, with progress regularly reviewed at PCC meetings, along with reports from each of our vision teams. The PCC meets in the Rutherwyke Room at least 6 times a year on the third Monday normally after a Eucharist service in Church. On occasion we hold Extraordinary meetings with the Standing Committee or PCC members. The Standing Committee typically meets two to three weeks before each PCC meeting.

The PCC has developed a wide range of policies which are annually reviewed and updated, and available from our Parish Office.

To assist the Parish, there are three paid roles (Director of Music, Parish Administrator and a cleaner).

Day to day management is currently led by the Churchwardens, Standing & Finance Committee, and our PCC.

The quinquennial inspection of our buildings was carried out in August 2022 by our architect, Mike Staff of Nye Saunders, and the recommendations are being completed under the supervision of the churchwardens. We were delighted to receive a very good report with our buildings in an excellent state of repair.

A schedule is kept for regular maintenance tasks ensuring compliance with routine safety and inspection standards for utilities, boiler, organ, tower, and bells etc.

Finance and Stewardship

Our Stewardship Giving Scheme is the mainstay of our income, providing around 75% of funds from 60 annual pledges of planned giving. Giving during 2022 was 4% higher than the previous year, showing a positive recovery in our income since the pandemic. Fundraising activities and lettings of the Rutherwyke Room, as well as a not insignificant income from occasional offices, all support our church financially.

St Mary's has benefitted from subsidies toward our Parish Share over the past 5 years. These will finish this year for which the requested amount is £63,007 and will be met in full. We are working with the Diocese to draw up a plan for a further subsidy starting at £25,000 in 2024 and reducing annually until 2028 by which time it is envisaged the church will have grown its congregation and income base to be able to pay the Parish Share in full.

We have had the benefit of a number of bequests over the years which has enabled many projects to come to fruition as well as maintaining the fabric of our historic church.

Our Education Fund is a restricted deposit account for the sole purpose of benefitting the religious education of the children in the parish. It supports our weekly Noah's Ark club for parents and toddlers and in June we paid for Thorpe Primary Year 6 pupils to travel to Guildford Cathedral for a Leavers Service.

We also operate an unrestricted Works Fund deposit account which is used to fund capital projects. Over recent years this has funded works on the paths surrounding the church, a paved patio area for outside gatherings, the re-pointing of the East elevation and Tower as well as the installation of the upgraded Audio/Visual system. This year, following a generous donation and successful Faculty application, we installed a new Viscount 3 manual digital organ which has greatly enhanced the provision of music in church and created a host of exciting opportunities for recitals, concerts and teaching to the wider community.

The APCM Report and Accounts booklet for 2023 and several previous years are available to download at www.stmaryschurchthorpe.co.uk/about

History of St Mary's and Thorpe

Thorpe, or 'Torp', meaning village in Old English, is listed in the Domesday Book of 1086. It was an agricultural community until the second half of the C20th when gravel extraction and concrete manufacture, as well as the construction of both the M3 and M25, gave it a more industrial economic base. This has recently shifted to that of a commuter settlement with many residents travelling outside the area for employment.

There is no definitive date for when St. Mary's was first founded but the building incorporates stonework from the Norman, Tudor, Victorian and modern eras. In 1963 a Roman cinerary urn dated to 120-150 AD was unearthed in the churchyard establishing the site as having some ceremonial significance nearly 1900 years ago.

Evidence of a flourishing community, with a church or chapel to attend to its spiritual needs, can be found prior to 675 when Chertsey Abbey was endowed with five dwellings given by King Frithuwold (The King of Surrey ruling under King Wulfhere of Mercia), one of these being the chapel of Torp.

Following the Norman invasion construction of much of the Chancel and the Norman arch began as Chertsey Abbey was rewarded for supporting William the Conqueror. Abbot Hugh is thought to have been instrumental in the expansion of St Mary's in 1110.

The nave has three bays with two arches of two chamfered orders towards the nave and a single order towards the aisles. The columns are scraped-down C13th work and the second column on the north is octagonal instead of round. The side aisles are early Victorian and the windows in the aisles and transepts have modern tracery but in the 14th century style. The internal nave roof space is old but hidden by plaster supported by three oak cross beams and the external roof is tiled. In the 1980s the church was re-ordered during which the Victorian pews, tiled floor and heating pipework was removed and re-floored with Portland stone and single, solid oak chairs. There are a number of noteworthy C16th memorials and brass throughout the church.

The imposing East window was created by the renowned glass artist Laurence Lee and installed for Christmas 1973. It depicts Mary with the Christ-child surrounded by smaller scenes including the Annunciation, a monstrance and *pieta*. Above the High Altar is a tester by Sir Ninian Comper depicting the seven qualities of the Holy Spirit. A further seven wooden figurines of various saints situated in the chancel and Benedict chapel are also by Comper.

The Lady Chapel (South transept) was formerly known from the C15th as the chapel of St Nicholas. The exterior wall of rubble and stone is thought to be older than the Norman Arch and is made of mixed material (including marble and tile) from an earlier building either on site or nearby. The stained glass is Victorian and features the Nativity (East wall) and SS James and John (South wall). The North transept is of a similar age to the South but an extension was added in C19th which today is a chapel of prayer dedicated to St. Benedict.

The church Tower is constructed of early Tudor brick and houses a ring of eight bells. The original 3 bells installed in C17th and C18th were recast into four in 1958 and four additional ones cast in 2015 in celebration of Magna Carta 800. All eight bells were cast by the Whitechapel Foundry.

More information can be found on our website:

www.stmaryschurchthorpe.co.uk/about