

St John's Church hensingham



Parish Church
Profile

Who we are

St John's is a vibrant conservative evangelical Anglican church located in the historic coastal town of Whitehaven in beautiful West Cumbria, between the mountains of the Lake District and the Irish Sea. The church has a long history of faithful Bible teaching and we are seeking a Curate who loves studying the Word and sharing it faithfully; allowing us to learn together as we come to know God more intimately. The congregation is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural (unusual for our semi-rural locality) and we delight in being a church family that embraces newcomers from 'every tribe and tongue and nation'.

We are Gospel Centred, Jesus Centred and Bible Centred.

Our three main aims are:

- Enjoy God from His Word
- Love one another
- Share God's Word so that others can love Him too



As a congregation, we are significantly more diverse than the parish as a whole, with a large number of our church family from backgrounds including Chinese, West African, Iranian and Eastern European. Our desire is to work to integrate these different groups coherently into our fellowship.



Where We Are



Hensingham is a parish in the town of Whitehaven - a Georgian port on the Irish Sea coastline - which in 2018 was named the 2nd happiest place to live in the UK.

Whitehaven is one of England's 40 "gem" towns, largely due to its historical importance and preserved Georgian and Victorian architecture. Having played a large role in British history, the port is now a popular marina, boasting spectacular sunsets. There are many leisure opportunities in the area for children, teens, adults and seniors. The coast offers a multitude of sporting, cultural and dining possibilities and is on the fringe of the beautiful Lake District National Park.

You'll find opportunities to climb, sail, hike, dive, surf, golf, swim, cycle, mountain bike and join the leisure centre, or the local athletics stadium. We have a multitude of castles, theatres, art clubs and museums along the coast, alongside a growing foodie community with dining opportunities for every palate.

Locally, Whitehaven and its nearby towns host the West Cumberland Hospital and an array of primary and secondary schools and further education opportunities in sixth forms and colleges. Our nearest universities are Carlisle University and the Ambleside campus of Lancaster University.

Our unemployment rate is almost half the national average, with our main employment coming from the energy sector, the health sector and tourism.





Our Church

The foundation stone of St John's was laid in 1911. The church building and attached hall are generally in very good order; we have a rolling maintenance programme determined by the quinquennial inspection and an approved budget to cover those areas of work. Recent improvements include new LED lighting and a new audio/video system, with modifications to the chancel area to improve usability.

Our church hall which can seat 150 (in addition to a lounge seating 25) was built in 1989 and is linked to the church via a foyer.

In addition to refreshments and fellowship after our Sunday services, the hall is mainly used midweek by our various children's groups and becomes a great venue for our regular bring and share lunches. The lounge also doubles up as the church office.



Sunday Services

9am Holy Communion

A traditional Service with around 30 attendees



11am Morning Service

A vibrant service with a regular congregation of 155. A variety of services including all age services and the Lord's Supper. Children's groups for ages 3-6 and 7-11 run for every service except the All Age. There is also a lounge area with video if parents want to give younger children more space.



Sunday Evening Prayer Meeting

Once a month in person and all others on zoom



As well as our Vicar, Licensed Clergy Person (volunteer) and Lay Reader, we have a number of preachers from our church family on our preaching rota. Our Clergy and other members of the team also preach regularly in our Mission Community churches. We also encourage our mission partners to preach when they visit.



What we Have

- ❖ Two stipendiary posts that are funded by St John's and a vision to grow the staff team.
- ❖ active youth work at all age levels with every group growing in number
- ❖ faithful expository Bible teaching at the heart of all our services
- ❖ wide involvement of church members in many areas of service
- ❖ sound buildings, facilities and finances
- ❖ a strong, supportive evangelical Mission Community
- ❖ a welcoming church family with cultural diversity
- ❖ a skilled music group with wide intergenerational participation
- ❖ a history of training leaders, planting a congregation and a desire to do more
- ❖ good relationships with the Deanery and Diocese
- ❖ episcopal oversight from the Bishop of Ebbsfleet



Our Parish

The Hensingham parish houses around 5000 adults and is near to primary and secondary schools and a hospital. Sellafield Ltd, the health authority and the local authority are large employers in the area - resulting in a low unemployment rate. The parish is large with many surrounding private and social housing estates. Our church is in the Diocese of Carlisle, the Calder Deanery and the East Whitehaven Mission Community.

Our Mission Community

The Mission Community includes St. Andrews Mirehouse, St. Bridget's Moresby and the new independent church 'Church on the Moor' in Cleator Moor. Our clergy and other members of our preaching team regularly preach at the other Mission Community churches. We all come together in fellowship at events such as Ash Wednesday, Lenten Studies, and Theology Breakfasts. Paul Kerry is the ordained Minister of St Andrew's and St Bridget's. Paul studied at both Oak Hill Theological College (undergraduate) and Wycliffe Hall (postgraduate). He was previously Curate at Houghton and Kingmoor Churches in Carlisle.

In addition to his role at St John's, the Curate will have responsibilities towards our Mission Community partner churches

The Curate will be housed in the modern and spacious St Andrew's Vicarage, Hollins Close, Whitehaven CA288EX. The parish has given their kind agreement to this for a period of 5 years.



St Andrew's vicarage



Paul at St Bridget's



St Andrew's

Youth Work

The youth work at St John's is thriving and we are grateful to offer several midweek & Sunday groups that focus on different ages and interests, but all share a common purpose of bringing people closer to Christ and discipling them. It is a blessing we have such a large number of volunteers helping to run these groups. When recruiting leaders and helpers, we follow the Safer Recruitment practices laid out by the Diocese of Carlisle.

Sunday Groups

During most 11am Sunday services, the children leave part way through to attend:

Adventurers 3-6 year olds enjoy a mix of crafts, games and bible teaching

Springboard our 7-11 year olds group, aimed at preparing older children to be part of the full church service once they reach secondary school age. The children enjoy crafts and Bible teaching

Midweek Groups

Our midweek groups are very well attended by our church families and the local community. They focus on building laughter, fun, fellowship and friendship alongside growing together in God's word.

Explorers 7-11 year olds meet on a Tuesday evening in the church hall and enjoy games, crafts and Bible teaching.

Pathfinders 11-14 year olds meet after Explorers on a Tuesday evening for fun games and study of God's word.

CYFA 14-18 year olds meet on Monday evenings for some rather competitive fun before a period of bible study and discipleship



Growth

Bible Study Groups

Six bible study groups meet weekly with material chosen by church leadership. We also have a bible study group for age 18-30s and a Chinese bible study group, who study in Cantonese and provide outreach to the local Chinese community

Theology Breakfast

We would like to resume theology breakfasts. The group met approximately monthly on Saturday mornings for a cooked breakfast followed by an exploration of different theological topics, with a wide variety of speakers.

Discipleship Course

We are looking to develop a Discipleship Course to help deliver our vision of being Passionate Disciples and this is something we would love our Curate to take forward.

Apprentices

St John's has a history of appointing apprentices, with a particular focus on addressing the great gospel need in West Cumbria. As part of that programme, one-day-a-week training at North West Gospel Partnership is included. Evangelical Bible-teaching churches are rare in this area so training new church leaders locally aims to address that need.

Church Plant

Following several years of prayer and preparation, in September 2022 a new church was established in the nearby town of Cleator Moor by a number of St John's congregants with the full blessing and support of the PCC and wider church family. The church is not Anglican but it is part of our Mission Community. The Church on the Moor is fully independent of St John's and is a member of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) & Medhurst Ministries.



Church Organisation

Our PCC is made up of clergy and elected members of the congregation. It meets a number of times a year to ensure the orderly running of church business and the delivery of our church vision.

Finances. For the 2024 financial year our income was £216,000. Reporting in 2025 shows that a stewardship campaign resulted in our General Fund returning positive after a period of increased expenditure in 2024.

The PCC voted unanimously to give its parish offer to the Diocese through the Ephesian Fund. While we have a good relationship with our Diocese, this was to stand with other churches nationally over the Prayers of Love and Faith. The PCC also voted to prohibit these prayers to be used at St John's.

The Standing Committee has the authority to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. It is composed of the clergy, the church wardens, the lay reader, and the treasurer. The PCC secretary acts as note taker on behalf of the PCC.

We have three part time staff members outside of the clergy:

- ✿ Church Coordinator
- ✿ Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Debt Centre Manager
- ✿ Apprentice (currently vacant)

The PCC has resolved that St John's is a two-minister church. The Associate Vicar, whilst an office holder of the Diocese, is funded by the parish and this arrangement will continue.

We are blessed with a large bank of volunteers who contribute to life at St John's:

	Flower Arrangers	Refreshments team
Pastoral visiting team	Cleaners	Audio/Visual Team
Baptism Befrienders	Welcome team	Sidespeople
Youth workers	Grounds team	CAP befrienders
Musicians	Safeguarding	Service team (reading/prayers)
Study group leaders		

Outreach

Evangelism Outreach

We want to reach out to our local community and we have a team of volunteers who are building links within the parish. We have used the following resources in our evangelism outreach: Christianity Explored, Hope Explored, Essentials, Outreach UK resources, Good News Newspaper and Pocket Testament League pocket bibles and testimonies. We are about to launch Word 121 with our CAP befrienders (see below) and their clients. We also are blessed to have access to various Lenten and Advent daily reading studies written by clergy, including previous curates, with whom we have close links.

Children's Outreach

In addition to our midweek groups, each Spring since 2014, we have run an annual four day 'football school' holiday club for 50- 60 children (7-11 years) at our local Sports Academy. The event has attracted children from the local estates as well those from our own church. The programme uses a mixture of football skill training with Bible study and an opportunity to share the gospel during the day, and also to the parents at the awards evening on the final day.

Social Outreach

St John's is the lead church and accountable body for the local Christians Against Poverty debt centre - CAP Whitehaven. It was formed in 2013 within a partnership of 5 other local churches: St. Andrews, St. Bridget's, New Life Church, Emmanuel Church and Woodbank Community Church. The centre comprises a Debt Centre Manager, a Debt Coach, befrienders who work alongside them and a host of volunteers who regard themselves as evangelists who provide debt relief. Within the framework of St. John's Church policies, procedures and working practices this includes arranging debt management plans, providing CAP Money budgeting courses, weekly food support through FareShare and pastoral care.



Outreach

Schools Outreach

We have a strong working relationship with Jericho Primary School, built up over the past seven years. Our clergy take 1 or 2 assemblies per term and also receive invitations to speak with classes and hold special services for Harvest, Easter and Christmas. The school attended four carol services in the church last year and have booked again for 2025..

Our clergy take weekly assemblies at Hensingham Primary School, who also had a carol service in the church last year.

We maintain links with the Northern Inter-Schools Christian Union (NISCU) who work in schools across Cumbria to introduce young people to the gospel.

Seniors' Outreach

It's a joy to hold monthly communion services and annual carol services in three of our local accommodations for seniors: Johnston House, a 10-bedsit sheltered accommodation house, Walkmill Gardens, a 20-flat retirement sheltered housing unit and The Gables, a residential care home.

Each Christmas, we hold a Seniors' Party for around 75 senior citizens from our church and the local community where we gather together in the church hall for an afternoon tea, entertainment, carol singing and a short talk on the Gospel.

Christmas Outreach

Our Christmas Unwrapped event is a popular date in the local calendar - we invite the local community, our church family and many CAP families to join us for an afternoon of crafting activities, refreshments, bouncy castle, games, puppets and a short gospel message on the meaning of Christmas.

Residents of our local estates look forward to our carol singing around the community. Currently it's a four night event, but we keep receiving requests for more!

Our candlelit carol service is another popular event in the local calendar and is always very well attended by the community as well as our church family.



Mission Partners



We value our partnerships with other missionary organisations, locally, nationally and overseas.

The PCC has resolved to set aside 10% of our annual income for our missionary giving, with the missionary allocation split 1:3 between social and evangelism respectively.



Mountain Springs



CUMBRIA CHRISTIAN YOUTH CAMP (CCYC)

Training Incumbent

In June 2024, Simon (Si) Walker became our new Vicar. He joined the church as our curate in 2011 and served as our associate vicar until the retirement of Fergus Pearson in 2023.

Si is from Northumberland and has a passion for seeing gospel ministry thrive in Cumbria and equipping others to serve. To this end Si has trained 8 Ministry Apprentices at St John's, one of whom led our first church plant, Church on the Moor.

Si trained for ministry at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford (2008 - 2011). Prior to that, he was a Youth Worker at St Thomas' Oakwood (London), during which time he benefited from attending lectures at Oak Hill Theological College.

Si is married to Mim and they have five children (4 to 16 years) whom they home educate.



We're looking for

- ❖ A person who loves Jesus and worshipping Him with His people
- ❖ Someone who has great confidence in the power of Jesus to change lives and a proven track record of raising up disciples
- ❖ One who possesses a conservative evangelical theology which accords with St John's and informs the way you minister
- ❖ Expertise to develop a discipleship course that helps us enjoy God, love one another and share his word
- ❖ Someone keen to grow with the potential to help us explore further church planting and revitalisation
- ❖ A servant with a humble heart and compassion for the flock.
- ❖ A person keen to serve in the Mission Community as we will ask you to minister for one morning service a month at St Andrew's Mirehouse and to serve for 3 hours a week midweek. This will be helping with outreach in an area such as an after school club
- ❖ Someone excited by ministry in the North of England who may wish to apply for our Associate Vicar role once their training is complete. We would love someone who feels the call to leave their comfort for Christ and to be a labourer in this corner of the harvest field.

St John's Parochial Church Council has passed a resolution in accordance with the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests which means that this post is only open to male applicants.

Our Theology

As members of the Church of England within the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, we affirm the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, of which the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion are a general exposition. Standing in the Reformation tradition, we lay especial emphasis on the grace of God—his unmerited mercy—as expressed in the doctrines within the basis of faith of the Church of England Evangelical Council and the two paragraphs from CEEC Constitution 4.1.1 & 4.1.2. Please note that 4.1.2 upholds an orthodox position on human sexuality.

In March 2023, the PCC of St John's voted for the second time to pass a resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests to receive provision in this area. This brings us under the pastoral oversight of the Bishop of Ebbsfleet as well as the Bishop of Carlisle. We therefore require that the Associate Vicar, along with our Vicar, 'holds that God has created men and women equal in their essential dignity and human personhood, but different and complementary in function.' While we are complementarian, we believe that this is a second order issue. We hold a view of Christian headship that means we rejoice to work with those who believe differently to us. This past year, our Vicar has shared with the church his desire to cultivate positive complementarianism that acknowledges everything women can do, rather than simply what they cannot. You can read this [here](#).



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