

CARLISLE
DIOCESE

The Parish of St James & St Francis Barrow
Parish Profile



rising faith
BARROW

January 2026

Parish of St James & St Francis Barrow

PARISH PROFILE

INTRODUCTION

Situated within walking distance of the centre of Barrow and waterside, the Parish of St James serves the Hindpool area of Barrow-in-Furness, an inner-urban neighbourhood with deep historical links to Barrow's past as a centre for shipbuilding and steel. Springing up in the mid 19th century to house the increasing number of skilled workers drawn to Barrow, Hindpool is a closely knit and resilient community, with a strong sense of identity and a mix of social housing, rented accommodation and owner occupiers which values its schools and church and has a strong sense of its past.

Standing at the heart of Hindpool, St James' Church continues to be one of Barrow's best known buildings, and a testimony to the faith and aspiration of the families and clergy that founded the church. Valuing its sacramental and choral tradition, the congregation of St James are a small but committed community who are keen to participate, together with God and their clergy, in the renewal of the witness and ministry of the church, to re-connect with and reach their community with the good news of Jesus Christ. Together, with the congregation and the Bishop, we believe that this is a community where mission and ministry can and should regrow.

Situated next to St James' Primary school, the church is keen to renew its engagement with the parents, staff and children of the school and is looking for a Priest ready to revitalise and give energy to their service of the school which the congregation has continued through a period of vacancy, but which is ready for missional and experienced leadership if it is to grow and fulfil its full potential.

To the north of Hindpool, our neighbouring community Ormsgill (formerly cared for by the Parish of St Francis) is home to a larger, more recently built estate, where initial work by the Deanery Pioneer Evangelist has built valuable community presence and connection which, in time we would love to see mature into a New Worshipping Community.

Identified as a key church in our SMMIB funded Diocesan Investment Programme (the Cumbria Way), the Bishop and Congregation are seeking a missional Priest with experience of growing congregations to lead a revitalisation team consisting of the Priest, a Planting Curate and 0.5 Youth & Children's Mission Enabler in helping our church community discern a missional strategy and move into a new season of missional and spiritual renewal.

As a partner church in the Rising Faith Barrow element of the DIP, the Incumbent will be supported by our central team consisting of the local project lead (Rural Dean, Robin Ham) our planting and revitalisation Operations Manager and our Church Planting & Evangelism Enable (all based in Barrow) as well as being a member of a Deanery Chapter and Synod with a long standing commitment to collaborating together in mission and discipleship.

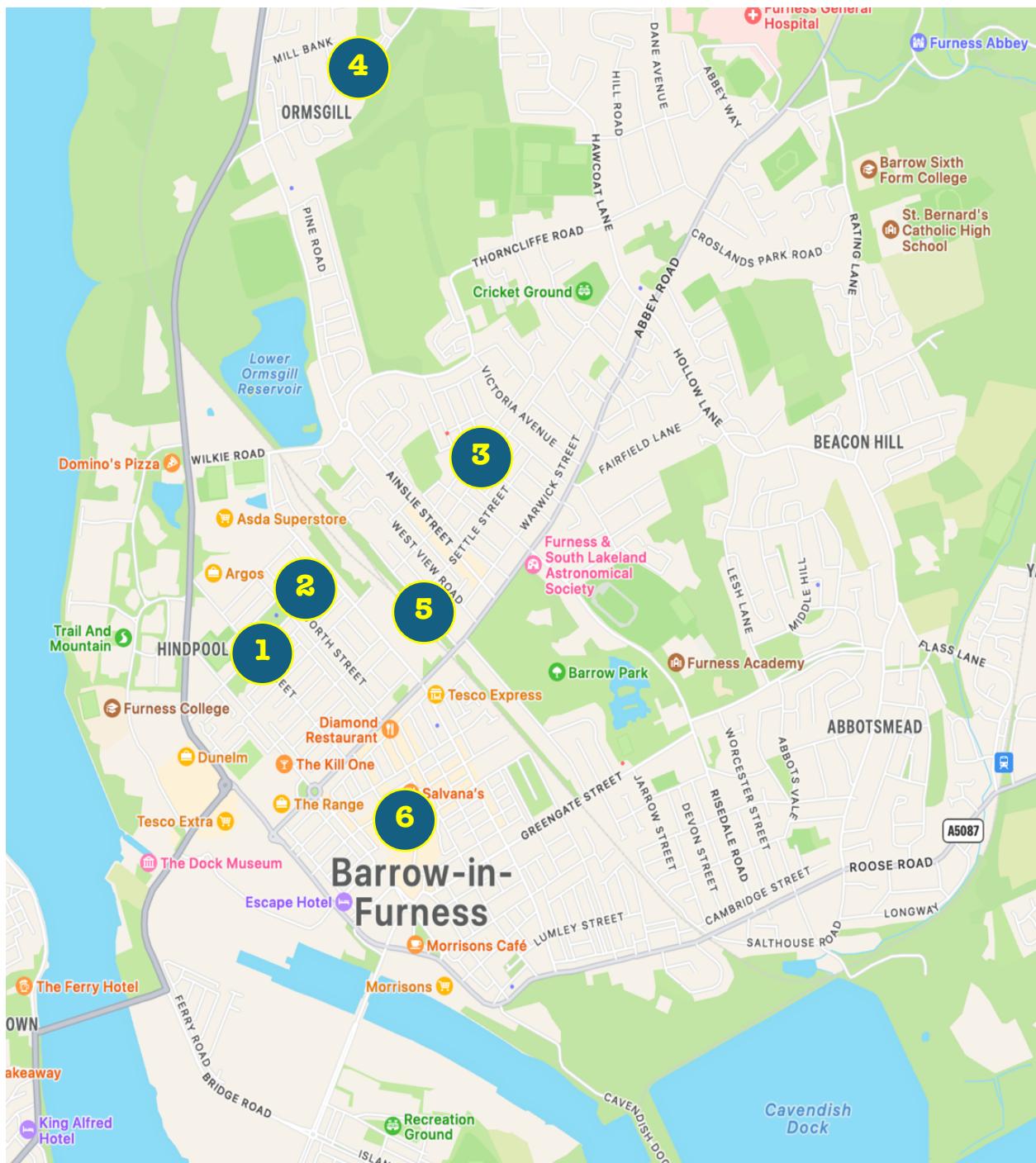
With the support of funding from the national church, we are hoping to, through working together, to reestablish St James as a strong sacramental and missional presence to the town and as a church planting centre with potential to serve the wider Diocese by modelling and championing growth

We would welcome enquiries and visits from Leaders with experience of growth who are able to celebrate both traditional and contemporary expressions of worship with a call to urban areas and growing younger and look forwards to working together to renew the mission of Jesus in this place.

Ven. Vernon Ross
Archdeacon of Westmorland and Furness
On behalf of the Parish of St James & St Francis

LOCATION

St James church is well positioned, just 0.7 miles walk from the centre of Barrow, 0.5 miles from the local retail park and about a ten minute walk from the town park.



The parish & nearby amenities -

1. St James Junior School
2. St James the Great Parish Church (Hindpool)
3. St Matthews Vicarage, Harrogate Street, LA14.
4. Ormsgill
5. Barrow in Furness railway station
6. Portland Walk shopping centre (& town centre)

OUR BUILDING

Founded in response to the rapid growth of Barrow-in-Furness in the mid-19th century, when the town expanded dramatically to in response to a boom in local iron, steel production and ship building the church of St James was completed in 1869, becoming only the second Anglican church in the town. Its size and Gothic Revival design (with its striking **150-foot spire**) made it not only a major place of worship but a prominent landmark on Barrow's skyline which continues to dominate the skyline and is well known across the town.

From its earliest days, St James was intended to be a central hub for worship and community life, with a longstanding association with young people (the first services initially taking place in the local school buildings). Once finished, St James could accommodate over **1,000 worshippers and became home to the breadth of the Barrow community – from civic leaders to factory floor workers.**

Despite heavy bombing during the blitz and decline of the fortunes of the wider town, St James has undergone several seasons of renewal including campaigns to renew its glass work after the war (1954), and later to restore the church's eight bells (2014) – all substantial undertakings which speak of local commitment to the church and aspiration that it would continue to provide a vibrant Christian witness to the town and its immediate community, the area of Hindpool.



THE AREA

Following a period of rapid industrial expansion in the 19th and early 20th century, Hindpool and Ormsgill both grew quickly to provide accommodation for the new populus of Barrow which grew as workers from across Cumbria, Ireland and Scotland arrived to take up new employment. Sat on the edge of Barrow's industrial centre, much of the terraced housing from that period remains today giving a sense of continuity to a community with a strong sense of local identity and shared story.

Expanded in recent years to include the Parish of St Francis and St Matthew, the church now serves an area which has struggled with the pressures of economic change and decline since the 1980s, with higher unemployment and net out-migration than the national average and a older (than average) population as young people leave to pursue work elsewhere in the country.

Recent changes in the wider town are expected to herald a change for both areas as BAE enters a period of massive growth and a new university campus is built, which together is expected to bring in thousands of new jobs to the community over the next 10 years.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

With close links to **St. James Junior school**, members of the church regularly visit the school, supporting religious education, confirmation preparation as well as regularly welcoming the school community to the church for services of celebration throughout the year.

An older and smaller worshipping community, our congregation are very committed to engaging with the wider community, hosting a **weekly warm space** (where people can come to enjoy a warm welcome, hot food and companionship), **Easter Activity Day** and regular community fayres as well as hosting special Civic events, our (very popular!) **Harvest Supper** and **Shrove Tuesday socials**.

As a church community we recognise the need to continue to extend our outreach to and service of the community and are seeking a revitalisation priest to build on the links we have and lead us in developing mission and discipleship further.





WORSHIP

Centred on the Eucharist, our **Sunday 10.30am Parish Communion** service (Common Worship). Is well supported by a **high level of lay involvement**, with members of the congregation reading lessons and leading the prayers of intercession and keen to work creatively and collaboratively with Clergy.

Historically Anglo-Catholic, we value the use of vestments, with a robed choir and servers, sanctuary bells rung and use of incense for special occasions like Christmas and Easter all being part of our worship together. We are however anything but "stuffy" and are regarded as a warm and welcoming worshipping community with a live and living faith.

Reserved in an Aumbry, Communion is offered to the sick and housebound by a small team of volunteers. When we are unable to have a priest present, the reserved sacrament has also been used for a service of **Communion by extension**.

A **midweek Communion** service is held on Wednesday mornings at 10am and sung Book of Common Prayer Evensong on the First Sunday of each month.

There is a monthly **Baptism** service on the 4th Sunday of each month at 12.30pm- we encourage these families to return to church the following Sunday to receive their lighted candles with the wider congregation present. On average we baptise 2 or 3 children each month and would welcome help to build on these relationships

Confirmation services are held annually and a small number of adults have been confirmed in the recent past and a confirmation classes run in our Junior School most years. We are currently seeing a small influx of new people returning to faith or exploring Christianity for the first time.

The church, having a large capacity, is sometimes used for civic services and events. Our current hymn book is "Common Praise" with "Hymns Old & New" also used occasionally. Appleford is the usual Communion setting.

BEYOND SUNDAY

In addition to Sunday worship, our enthusiastic Church Community also shares Holy Communion (by extension) on Wednesday mornings and celebrates **Choral Evensong** on the 1st Sunday of the month. All of our services are followed by opportunities for **fellowship**.

Music is very important in the life of St James. The Church **choir** practice weekly. We have a dedicated and enthusiastic group of bellringers; the **bells** are rung for services, celebrations and special events.

More recently we have developed a weekly **Bible study** group, which has attracted new worshippers to the Church and as a congregation we would welcome support to develop other opportunities to deepen our spirituality and knowledge of God as we seek to grow in mission (one of the themes highlighted by the congregational survey)

Members of the Church community organise an annual **Pilgrimage** to Walsingham, which is open to all and allows participants to explore their faith.

St. James has a **Mothers' Union** group and, whilst it does not meet regularly at the moment, the dedicated group look forward to welcoming new members.

We are also actively involved in the life of our **Deanery and Mission Community**, regularly attending and hosting '**Fire Pit**' which gathers both Anglican and local free church congregations to join together to pray for the town, learn together and fellowship once a month on a Sunday night.

FINANCE AND GENEROSITY

As with many churches in northern, urban contexts (and particularly in areas with higher numbers of retired, unemployed or younger families) finances have (for some time) been a significant challenge, which was compounded by the 2020 pandemic, which dramatically affected attendance and giving. We remain committed to being a generous diocesan partner, and (with the exception of 2020) have always paid our **Parish Offer** in full, drawing from reserves if required.

The beautiful building for which the PCC are stewards is both an asset and responsibility. Presently our regular income struggles to keep pace with increasing expenses, and we are aware of how quickly reserves can be depleted. Now facing some major work highlighted in the last **Quinquennial** report we are confident that we will be able to secure match funding for any grants due to the town's love for St James. Our architect has undertaken initial investigations to assess the full extent of work required.

As a congregation we are very aware that we are called to care for the wider community (our original parish of Hindpool and now also encompassing the parishes of St Francis & St Matthew). Our congregation is increasing as new workers come into the town with new expectations, ideas and needs. Our 'fundraising fairs' have been replaced by well attended open days where we welcome the community to join us for food and fun (provided free).

As a Diocesan Investment Programme (Rising Faith Barrow) church we have committed to growing in generosity and are committed to working with the **Generous Giving** team to grow giving and stewardship. As part of the **Cumbria Way** DIP the Diocese and national church have committed to financing a Revitalisation Priest (this post), planting Curate (from 2027) and half time youth & children's mission enabler to support us to regrow mission. We are grateful for this help and, with enthusiasm are ready to meet the challenges and grasp the opportunities ahead – financially, spiritually, and joyfully.

Item	2022	2023	2024
Income	£ 29,414.00	£ 45,801.00	£ 34,101.00
Expenditure	£ 29,963.00	£ 34,968.00	£ 40,164.00
Giving & Gift Aid	£ 22,992.00	£ 19,321.00	£ 20,416.00
Parish share paid	£ 13,200.00	£ 14,700.00	£ 14,520.00
Assets - Unrestricted	£ 151,937.00	£ 154,085.00	£ 156,347.00
Assets - Restricted	£ 29,017.00	£ 31,485.00	£ 31,882.00

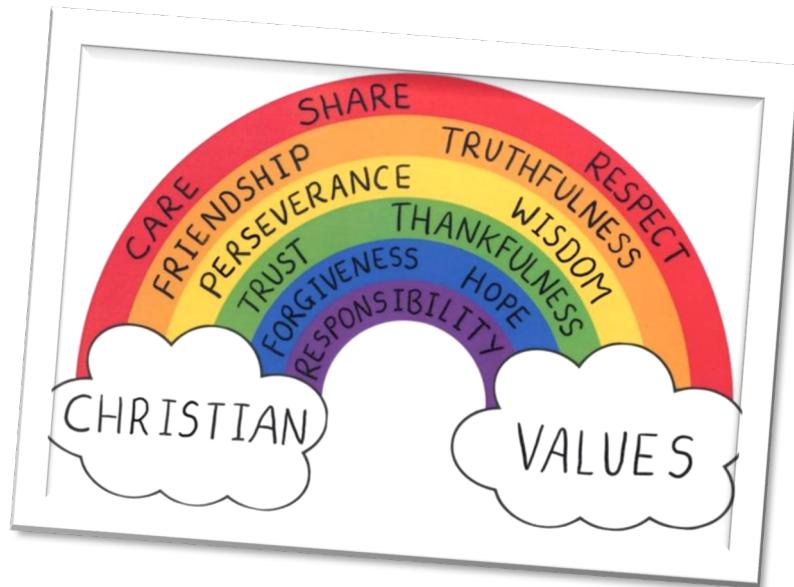
ST JAMES' JUNIOR SCHOOL

St James' Church of England Junior School is a mixed **voluntary aided junior school** serving children aged **7 to 11**, deeply rooted in its local community and Christian tradition. Located on Blake Street in the heart of Barrow, the school typically serves around **130 pupils** and has a strong emphasis on inclusivity and support for every child.

As a Church of England school, St James' values its Christian purpose and has a long standing relationship with the Church (a number of the congregation were themselves once pupils there!).

The **headteacher (Mrs Rushton)** leads the school with a focus on nurturing the whole child and championing a a welcoming, supportive culture that encourages learners to flourish. The school summarises its guiding ethos as "*Be Kind, Be Respectful, and Give Your All*",

The school promotes participation in a variety of extracurricular activities, including breakfast and after-school clubs, and celebrates achievements through events and assemblies that bring pupils, parents and community members together. St James' school seeks to instil a sense of belonging, shared responsibility and mutual respect in its pupils, helping them to become confident, caring and responsible members of society



ACCOMODATION

A four bedrooomed, modern detached vicarage is provided for the incumbent just a short drive away on Harrogate Street complete with study, garage, off-street parking and surrounded by its own garden. Further information relating to the property is available from the Archdeacon on request

VISITING THE PARISH

Prior visits, can be arranged via Archdeacon's PA. Please contact Pauline Cleasby (Executive Assistant to the Archdeacon of Westmorland and Furness) by email on pauline.cleasby@carlislediocese.org.uk

REVITALISING MISSION: RISING FAITH BARROW

Having endured years of challenge and downturn, Barrow is on the cusp of dramatic change, scheduled for substantial growth as a result of central government plans to massively expand the work of BAE and an education plan which includes the development of a new learning campus for the University of Cumbria, on 2.76 hectares of quayside land on southern edge of the town. As a result of this we expect to see the town quickly regrow by upto 30,000 in the coming years. As a Deanery and Diocese we sense God's call to re-engage with our community by investing in missional leadership in order to create new disciples through planting, church revitalisation and pilot work to develop missional chaplaincy.

The renewal of the missional energy of St James (a historically more catholic parish) in vacancy in a high density, estates area with an adjoining school (ripe for revitalization and a new congregation) is a key element of this.

Revitalisation of St James will enable us to renew the missional potential of the parish's liturgical and catholic heritage, train planting curates in order to revitalise similar parishes in the wider Diocese and, with the help of the Deanery Church Planting & Evangelism Enabler and Growing Younger team start new estates mission in Ormsgill (formerly St Francis parish) and establish a new congregation with its own strategy, leadership and rhythms to reach local families and young people (probably in the adjoining church school).

With support from the Rising Faith Barrow/Deanery team and Operations manager, and SMMIB funding of activity costs for the initial years, the Revitalisation Priest will work with the local team, congregation and Archdeacon to develop the capacity of the church through growing its missional strategy, growing new leaders and working to grow giving and financial sustainability.

Together with 'sister' projects at St Aidan's Newbarns (on the western side of the town), St Marks & St Georges and some Deanery wide capacity building we are aiming by 2031 to have -

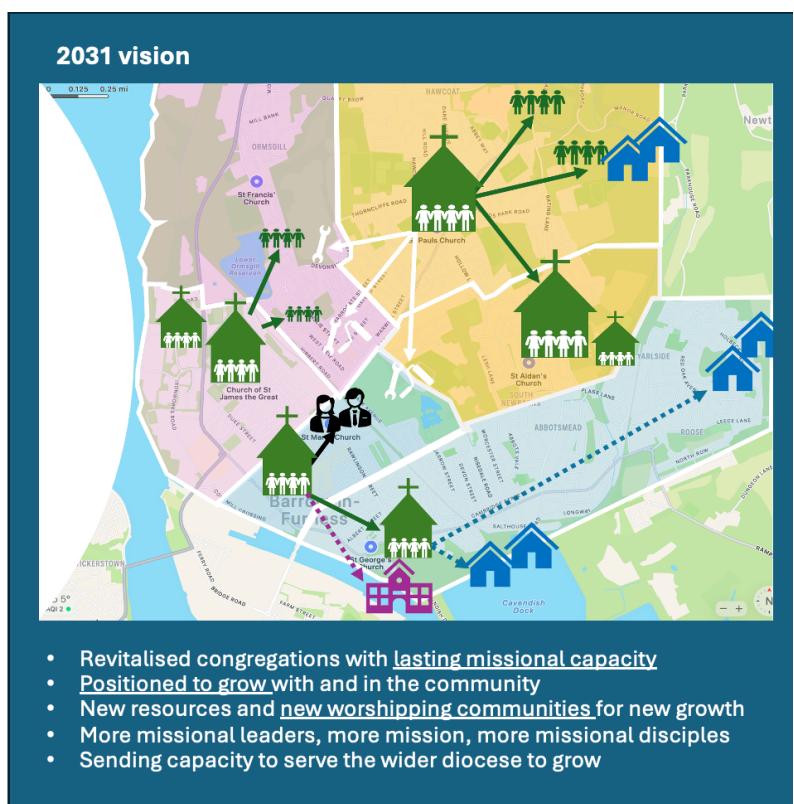
- Revitalised congregations with lasting missional capacity
- Positioned to grow with and in the community
- New resources and new worshipping communities for new growth
- More missional leaders, more mission, more missional disciples
- Generated 'sending capacity' so as to resource the wider diocese with new leaders to support church planting and revitalisation elsewhere.

Revitalising Barrow Missional impact?



2024 position

- 3 parishes in vacancy; 1 parish in abeyance
- History of church planting
- Emerging Chaplaincy opportunities
- 1 strong parish ready to revitalise and plant
- A fast growing (but deprived) town



APPENDIX: PARISH CONSULTATION

To support their assessment of the congregation's readiness to engage in a programme of missional renewal, and as part of their discernment and preparation of the parish profile, the PCC and congregation undertook a sequence of consultations and discussions to produce -

- i. A headline summary of the qualities they sought in a new incumbent and
- ii. An account of the missional issues facing the church

1, PCC CONSULTATION: WHAT QUALITIES ARE WE SEEKING IN THE NEW INCUMBENT?

Following consultation and reflection as a PCC, the parish produced a list of characteristics and strengths it felt were important to look for in the next incumbent, from which they identified **7 key qualities** -

Missional presence	Someone to be visible in the parish, connecting with the community and strengthening links with schools
Inclusion & community building	Someone inclusive, with good people skills and able to connect with a broad age spectrum
Heart for the wider community	Someone with empathy and an understanding that this is a deprived neighbourhood with a population that (at present) can be quite transient (but which historically has a strong community base).
Spirituality	Someone supportive of our catholic worship and strong music tradition, whilst willing to propose new things
Technical	Someone with computer skills (but who is not emotionally attached to their electronic devices and who prefers to get out into the real world).
Collaboration in Mission	Someone willing to work with other parishes , whilst maintaining our identity
Team Building Instincts	Someone willing to admit their shortcomings and ask for help or delegate.

2, CONGREGATION CONSULTATION

To support the discernment and prayer of the congregation, PCC, Deanery and Bishop, the Archdeacon commissioned an independent audit of the congregation to reflect on the missional opportunities and challenges facing St James. Unfamiliar as this was to the congregation, there was a high degree of participation, producing a rich and helpful insight into the condition and potential of the church in this season.

The following passages are a summary of the facilitator reflections on and summation of the congregational responses, focussing on 5 key areas, the facilitator noting '*This is a honest account of the issues facing the church from a congregation which values its history, is prepared to look with soberness at the current issues and has a clear aspiration to renew mission in Jesus' name in ways that serve the local community meaningfully and is ready to participate in and support this*'.

The 5 key areas assessed by the surveys were -

1. Buildings for Mission
2. Giving and Generosity
3. Growth, Mission and Evangelism
4. Culture & Church Tradition
5. Leadership

1, BUILDINGS FOR MISSION

The building featured regularly in congregants responses as a point of pride and a point of concern. Given the congregation's love of its building and concern for maintenance (and fears about its ability to fund this) it is important that the PCC/Church

1. Develop a long term account/projections of the needs and costs of maintaining the building.
2. Develop a missionally driven vision for the building – it is important that the building serves the mission of the church and does not dictate or limit the mission/life of the church.
3. Develop an honest account of the possibilities and limits of the building as an asset for mission – what it can and can't do in order to make informed decisions about the balance of spending and leadership energy

2, GIVING AND GENEROSITY

The congregation of St James expressed a sense of helplessness regarding finance and money (which tended to focus on the upkeep and cost of maintaining the building and organ) and whilst the congregation recognise the generosity of the local community in giving towards this, they are honest about the limitations of this.

Going forwards it is important that the church develop a vision for giving, generosity and finance which is 'bigger' than just funding work to the boiler/roof/organ (delete as applicable!) but which flows out of the more important question of '**what sort of people has God called us to be and what is he calling us to do?**'. It may help if the PCC and new Incumbent could commit to developing -

- A **clear vision** for mission. When churches do this it can be a huge help in shaping finance planning, praying, and prioritising how the church invest its time, money and energy.
- A **giving strategy** and budget plan to support and which reflects this.

3, GROWTH, MISSION & EVANGELISM

Whilst the congregation of St James does not make any explicit reference to evangelism or witness, there are **plenty** of references to **outreach**, connecting to the community and to acknowledging local needs (which include the elderly, poverty and the changing nature of the local community). **This is clearly a congregation that is aware of local change and local needs and which wants to engage with, care for and serve its community** and which has some good local relationships (e.g. with the school) to build upon.

Realistic about their limitations, the congregation are obviously willing and want to contribute to new mission being developed but describe a need/desire for leadership to direct this and support to strengthen this. Finding other partners, working collaboratively with other churches and the Barrow Pioneer worker and engaging with the training opportunities of the emerging Barrow Deanery programme (Rising Faith Barrow) are obvious ways to do this.

In both the survey's and supporting conversations, the congregation demonstrate an awareness at the ways in which the church and community have drifted apart.. and the challenge of finding ways to engage younger generations.. and the seriousness of the implications of the aging profile of the church. They recognise the importance of addressing this for the church to fulfil its mission and have a future.

....Several times (through the survey and conversations) this has been expressed in the desire that the new Priest is visible and present in the community. Whilst we would want this for all our Priests, the PCC should take care to avoid delegating missional responsibility to the Priest who should firstly be an enabler of the mission of the whole church, energising the witness of the whole congregation '*walk in this light all the days of your life [and] Shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father*'¹

Questions 7 and 8 of the survey (7, *Priorities/what should we attend to?* and 8, *How is God leading us?*) revealed a lot of consensus on the way ahead. Very positively these are far less building or Sunday-centred and demonstrate the congregations awareness that regrowth in reach, number and depth will depend on prioritising

¹ From the Order of Service for Baptisms, <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/christian-initiation/baptism-and>

new outward facing mission to the community and developing discipleship. Engaging with schools, with mothers and toddlers, with young people are recurrent in people's sense of what we must do to regrow the church and better represent the community, whilst home groups, learning, bible study and growing in prayer are referenced again and again as the resources by which the church can strengthen itself in God and as a resource for growth and maturity.

Question 8 also generated some really valuable 'prophetic' material which I think could be helpful for informing prayer during the vacancy and for orientating and pastoring the congregation as it begins to engage in and understand the work of revitalisation.

4, CULTURE & CHURCH TRADITION

Whilst the liturgical and choral tradition of St James' clearly matters to the congregation, it would not be accurate to caricature St James as an 'out of the box' Anglo Catholic church. So, whilst the church does deeply value the eucharist and good liturgy, they would readily receive a female priest, and are willing to support other forms of worship alongside/as long as their inherited traditions (which are regarded an important distinct of the church and part of its gift to the wider town) are sustained and valued. Choral life and bell ringing are (for the congregation) a significant element of this.

That said, a challenge for the congregation may be to a point of acceptance that, those things which have served them well as a congregation, may not work well for the many people outside the church to whom God is sending them. Compromise, **mutual** honouring and practicing preferring one another's needs (Romans 12:10) will be important in this (and is work that would be valuable to do given some of the wider political observations made, which honestly name some of the prevailing wider tensions that sit in the background as the town undergoes the turbulence of change).

5, LEADERSHIP

Through conversations with the congregation and PCC and the surveys a high degree of shared responsibility is evident in the life of the church, with members taking the initiative to sustain worship and community engagement throughout, working enthusiastically with retired clergy, deanery partners and the school throughout the vacancy.

The PCC is well administrated and positive and communicates and plan effectively and despite professing a nervousness about change has proven very open to new ideas and approaches. There is also evidence of some tiredness and anxiety at their ability to sustain the pace of engagement should aging deplete energy and numbers further.

The full report documenting and commenting on the congregational survey is available on request.