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Introduction

We are delighted to have the opportunity to tell you something about St Thomas Eccleston, and the position currently available for an Interim Team Minister.

St Thomas is one of four churches that form the St Helens Town centre team along with St Helens Parish Church, St Marks North Road and St Andrews Dentons Green. Although our four churches are within close proximity, they differ in tradition and occupy the differing socio economic areas which exist within the town.

St Thomas maintains a modern traditional approach towards worship and seeks to support and strengthen its links with the wider team through prayer, mission and social action. We believe in a God of love who comes to us in many ways; through worship, through the sacraments, especially the sacrament of the Eucharist; through prayer, through His word, and through fellowship.

The Eucharist is at the heart of our life together and the foundation of our mission and ministry. The Eucharist encourages us to have not only a theology of redemption, but also of creation. We understand mission as encouraging each other and the wider community to seek God through Christ and to ask and reflect on what he is saying and we are called to respond.

Mission and Vision

We believe that through our Eucharistic tradition we offer an important and specific role within the wider team ministry and the immediate community of which we are part. As such we are looking for a Priest who is able to recognise the value of this tradition, and also work closely with other clergy and church leaders within the team. Through this we would hope to grow and deepen our faith as individuals, and as a congregation to grow spiritually and numerically.

In partnership with the other churches in our team we want to focus on our mission to the surrounding community and town.

We know that we need to attract new, younger families into the Church, but we believe that with the right leader and the help of God, we can go forward and make St Thomas part of a ‘bigger church’, spreading the message of God’s love and making a bigger difference to our town and community.

What the role looks like

As such, we are looking to recruit an Interim Team Minister, for a fixed period of three years. The role will entail working closely with the team rector who is based at the Parish church in the town centre, and with the team vicar who will be based at St Andrews Dentons Green and St Marks North Road as being comfortable working across the traditions and churchmanship represented within the team, and the different styles of worship which are represented throughout.

The wider vision for the team is to work ‘better together’, raising up and encouraging ‘Missional Leaders’ who have a desire to develop and use their gifts, making disciples who make disciples. The interim minister, in cooperation with other clergy and leadership would need to be actively involved in developing this model for discipleship while encouraging and affirming St Thomas in the development of its own tradition and the part this has to play in the wider team.
This is a challenging role, and although we are very much at the beginning of new journey together as team, this has meant new and exciting opportunities.

Responsible to the team rector, the interim role is seen as one which will help move the team in a new direction, helping to realise the Bishops vision of a ‘bigger church, making a bigger difference’

Primary responsibility will be for St Thomas, but there will be a significant requirement to work across the churches, particularly helping to cover services and occasional offices at St Marks and St Andrews and the Parish Church.

The Characteristics and qualities we seek in the new Interim Minister

- To be a priest dedicated to a life of prayer and reflection on Holy Scripture. Seeking God’s will for the community they serve and looking for signs of the Kingdom
- To have a sympathy and understanding for the Modern Catholic viewpoint and that of the evangelical wing as reflected both theologically and liturgically with the team.
- To hold to the faith as revealed in Holy Scripture and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only means to salvation
- To have the ability to communicate and to listen to all age groups
- To encourage young people and work alongside them, particularly in the context of our church school and uniformed organisations, encouraging and introducing young families to become part of the wider church communities within the team
- To be happy to maintain the use of Common Worship, while seeking to develop new forms of worship as and when they are appropriate.
- To have the ability to manage people, and delegate as appropriate. To manage change and support others throughout.
- To be willing to work with other churches in the community, and build on ecumenical relations.
- To have a desire to continue with personal study and learning and to apply this in the nurturing the spiritual welfare of the community they lead.

General Description of the Parish

The shape of parish has changed considerably since the time when the church first began to serve the community; this is reflected across the town in the last 50 years
St Thomas stands very close to the centre of the town, the immediate area having been rebuilt in the 1970’s.
A high proportion of residents to be under 25 or over 60, many being unemployed and in poor health and there is a high proportion of single parent families.

In more recent years the parish has also embraced a new housing estate on the main Prescott to Liverpool road. This is mainly owner occupied family housing, but in addition there are some traditional town houses and some small commercial properties which can be found along some of the main access roads.
There are also a large number of single, pensioner households in the immediate area around the church.
Worship

Worship at St Thomas is in the Modern Catholic tradition of the Church of England. The principle service is Eucharistic and takes place each Sunday at 09.30; there is also a service of Evening Prayer.
Once a month there is a mid week Eucharist celebrated on a Wednesday at 11:30 prior to a parish lunch.
The office of Morning Prayer is currently said each Thursday and Friday at 09.30am with compline each Friday evening.

Candles and occasionally incense are used. Celebrants are expected to wear alb, stole and chasuble and a cope is available for feast days.
There is gospel procession at the parish Eucharist.
Baptism ministry remains an important part of church life at St Thomas, and baptisms are carried out within the context of the parish Eucharist, usually on the second or third Sunday of the month.
Wedding and funeral ministry are important.
On average 5 to 10 weddings each year with around 15 – 25 funerals taken in church.

St Thomas remains open to the ministry of women in the Church of England and there is no desire to change this.

Schools

We have a very strong link with the school of St Mary and St Thomas which heads up a Multi Academy Trust.
The school and uniform organisations join us regularly for services in church, and we visit school to take assemblies, lead the Eucharist and work with the children on faith projects.
The Reader licensed to the parish is currently the Chair of Governors.

Social and Fundraising

The church is a hub for our local uniform organisations, and our mid-week lunch club is well attended by members of the church as well as many others from across the team and beyond. We have small social and fundraising committee that meets regularly to discuss various projects and events throughout the year. Good support is given to the local food bank and a number of charities both national an international

Ecumenical Links

Strong ecumenical links are important to the wider ministry of the town centre team, and we work hard to develop these as much as possible.
The team has particular links with the local Elim, Baptist, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches in the area.

Church Building

The church building is an impressive, red brick building.
A community hall was built in 1980 on an adjacent site although this has been leased to the local community for the formation of a ‘sure start’ centre following the reordering of the church.
As the congregation declined in the early part of the century, the church it’s self went through a significant re-ordering, which saw the creation of a community space at the rear of
building. This now comprises of a large, open plan meeting space, several meeting rooms, an office, kitchen and toilets. The church is in a good state of repair, currently seeking quotes and information with regard to upgrading the main church heating boiler.

The building is surrounded by a small green area on two sides which the church owns.

**Accommodation**

The vicarage which is located on St Georges Road is currently being rented out by the diocese during for the current period of interregnum. It is expected however, that accommodation for the three year interim role would be discussed with the applicant.

We are committed to supporting our team vicar, to make sure that they get regular days off and holidays. We also would encourage them to take opportunities for training and retreats. We also think it important to cover reasonable expenses.