



Where all find a welcome and are nurtured in their journey with Christ.

Parish Brochure

Hello.

Is it you we're looking for?



St Mary's is a parish church in East Leeds. It is home to a vibrant community, with a regular worshipping congregation of around a hundred people attending its weekly Sunday morning services and many more joining for festivals.

Our worship is rooted in the Eucharist, with fully robed services, processions, and a rich liturgical and choral tradition which is well suited to our Grade I listed medieval church building.

The Church in Whitkirk enjoys strong links with the local area and its people, including through schools, community groups, uniformed organisations and local civic activities.

We are looking for a priest who can build on these foundations, bringing those on the edges of Church life into discipleship and confidently shepherding the current congregation on their journey with Christ.

Give me the details

This brochure is packed with information about St Mary's, but if you want even more detail you can find it in our full Parish Profile document.

Visit wkrk.uk/vp or scan this QR Code to download.



Where all find a welcome

Our mission statement begins with the words “where all find a welcome”, and this theme runs through all we do. We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to hear the Good News and to explore their own relationship with God.

Our pattern of services is designed to cover a range of tastes. It currently includes a weekly Sunday morning sung Eucharist which serves as our primary act of worship, a weekly Wednesday morning said Eucharist, and monthly services of Choral

Evensong and Compline which are suited to a more contemplative style of worship.

The regular worshipping congregation who attend St Mary’s in person covers a wide range of ages, from babes-in-arms through to those approaching their hundredth birthday, although they are predominantly middle-aged and older. That said, we know that the Church doesn’t stop at the door. We also live-stream our Sunday morning and festival services to viewers as far-flung as Canada, as well as viewers closer to home who may be unable to attend in person.

Together with our Home Communion team, this helps bring the Church to people who need it, rather than relying on them coming to us.

Outside of weekly worship, the festival and other notable services at St Mary’s are traditionally well attended by the wider community. In particular the service of Lessons and Carols and Crib Service regularly fill our building each Christmas, and the annual Act of Remembrance at the

local war memorial is joined not just by members of the congregation but also by the wider public, emergency services, veterans, councillors and MPs.

St Mary’s is an important part of the wider community, hosting events not just for the Church family but for everyone. From parties celebrating national events like the Coronation, to summer fairs, to exploring our history, to musical concerts and more, we’re proud to say “Welcome to Whitkirk”.



Our new vicar

St Mary's Church is looking for a priest to build on our existing strong foundations, bringing those on the edges of Church life into discipleship and shepherding our current congregation on their journey with Christ. They should welcome and encourage curiosity and questions from those seeking to understand or deepen their faith.

Our style of worship and spaces lend themselves well to someone with a strong presence who is confident in commanding a room. The liturgical and choral traditions at Whitkirk are widely appreciated by the congregation and offer an increasingly rare way to engage with faith. Our new vicar must be able to continue these traditions, but shouldn't be afraid to explore new ideas.

Strong pastoral skills are also a must; thanks to St Mary's wide reach and long history, many of those on the fringes of Church life and in the wider community may also have had poor experiences of engaging with the Church in the past which need meeting with a sympathetic ear and a kind heart.

On a more practical level, St Mary's is blessed with a strong group of skilled volunteers, who will benefit from leadership which is willing to offer both support and constructive criticism where necessary.



The Church is also home to many people who are not yet sharing their talents, and with encouragement could become more involved.

Our ancient building and rich history are sometimes at odds with our desire to grow God's kingdom in an accessible and sustainable way, so our new vicar must be able to think outside the box, balance sometimes conflicting needs and be bold in their vision.

At a glance

We're looking for a new vicar...

- Who can nurture people at various stages of their faith.
- Who is a strong and confident preacher.
- Who is happy to explore new ideas, but with an eye to our strong traditions.
- Who has strong pastoral skills.
- Who is comfortable leading an experienced team.
- Who values the accessibility and sustainability of God's kingdom.

The people

The congregation at Whitkirk are a kind, welcoming and generous group who are eager to serve both God and each other in a variety of ways.

The regular worshipping congregation on a Sunday morning varies from week-to-week but usually exceeds 100 people, with another 10-20 people joining online. For other services the congregation is smaller but consistent.

The congregation at Whitkirk covers all ages from babes-in-arms right the way to those approaching their hundredth birthday. However, it is skewed towards the older end of the local demographic, with most worshippers aged over 55.

St Mary's also sees a steady stream of families celebrating baptisms and weddings, aided by its long history and photogenic architecture, but can struggle to capture those families beyond these events.



Discipleship

We are blessed with over 30 distinct groups of volunteers, helping with areas of our Church life from flowers to finance, streaming to cleaning and pulling weeds to pulling pints.

In 2023 we held a recruitment event to discover where people might be able to contribute more. Despite a few new volunteers coming forward, this is an area we'd be eager to explore more with a new vicar.

We also see opportunities for development of leadership, potentially restarting home study groups or morning and evening prayers which sadly stopped during the COVID-19 pandemic.



At a glance

- **Regular worshipping congregation of 100-120 on a Sunday morning (90-105 regular communicants), with another 10-20 joining online.**
- **10-20 worshippers at other services of midweek said Eucharist, Choral Evensong and Compline.**
- **Predominantly middle aged and older, with some younger families.**
- **Majority of the congregation are UK-born.**
- **60/40 split between male/female.**
- **Working members of the congregation are employed in a wide range of sectors.**

The community

Whitkirk and the surrounding areas offer a rich tapestry of life, with new houses, offices and leisure parks only a short walk from civic parkland with history stretching back hundreds of years. A few minutes on the road either way can put you in the middle of a challenged council housing estate, or in idyllic suburban satellite villages.

The heart of LS15

The Church at Whitkirk has long been a focal point for the local community, to the extent that it was chosen as the centre point of the entire LS15 postcode area. This is reflected in the role it plays in civic functions such as the annual act of remembrance at the War Memorial, and service at Temple Newsam to celebrate the City of Leeds acquiring the estate.

St Mary's is also the place many in the area see as "the church", meaning our festival services are generally well attended. As

an example, in 2023 our Christmas Carol service was attended by over 230 people, and our Crib service by over 300.

A place to meet

Our Community Centre is home to groups covering all ages offering the full A-Z - amateur dramatics to Zumba - via uniformed organisations, sequence dancing, lunch clubs and more.

It's also available for private hire, and has been the venue for countless events such as birthday parties, wedding receptions, wakes, family reunions, talks and lectures, charity auctions and musical concerts,

Other Churches and faiths

St Mary's is part of an ecumenical group of Churches in East Leeds, working together to promote God's word.

The local area is also home to places of worship for Jehovah's Witnesses and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and St Mary's readily works with people, communities and organisations of all faiths.

Explore the map

We've created a digital map of places mentioned in this brochure, which you can find at wkrk.uk/pbm or by scanning this QR Code.



At a glance

Based on the last ONS census in 2021:

- **The parish has a population of around 13,000.**
- **58% of people are employed, 20% in education, 3% unemployed, with pensioners making up the bulk of the remainder.**
- **90% of the population are UK-born. 95.3% identify as "white".**
- **57% identify as Christian.**
- **There is a broad spread across age groups.**
- **Housing is predominantly houses and bungalows, with only 9% flats and apartments.**
- **There is a large amount of new housing being built in the area.**

Worship at Whitkirk

Regular worship at Whitkirk is strongly rooted in the Eucharist, with a rich liturgical and choral tradition which takes advantage of our ancient building. This style is highly valued by our congregation, and offers an increasingly rare way to experience a Church service.

Sunday mornings

For our Sunday morning sung Eucharist we have a fully robed serving team to assist the President, including a Liturgical Deacon and Master of Ceremonies.

We often make use of a full procession, including carrying the Gospel Book, incense, processional cross and lights.

The Gospel is often read from the body of the church.

Our worship is enhanced by our pipe organ and robed RSCM-affiliated choir, singing the hymns and parts of the liturgy.

At this service, we also reserve consecrated elements in our side chapel for the communion of the sick and housebound.

Wednesday mornings

The Wednesday morning said Eucharist is a smaller service, usually with only the President and a single server.

Choral Evensong

Our monthly service of Choral Evensong maintains the centuries-old tradition of the 1662 edition of the Book of Common Prayer, renowned for its rich and beautiful language.

Compline by Candlelight

A slower and more contemplative service, our monthly Compline by Candlelight offers a reflective way to end the day. It begins with a devotional address, then a 20 minute blend of singing, prayer and silence.



See for yourself

You can find a range of our services to watch online, along with their orders of service, at wkrk.uk/svc or by scanning this QR Code.



Outreach and mission

We firmly believe that some of the best work of the Church happens outside of the Sunday morning service.

Schools and education

We have strong links with local schools, regularly visiting to take part in assemblies, and are often invited to talk in lessons about the Church year and what it means to be a Christian.

We also welcome a number of local schools who hold annual services such as harvest festival or carol concerts at St Mary's, attended by large numbers of parents and carers.

Informal worship

Although most of what we do at Whitkirk is in a formal setting, our monthly Messy Church services allow people of all ages to engage in a more relaxed manner. These make use of games and activities tied to a biblical theme, and end in a short act of informal worship.

Nursing homes

We hold regular communion services at the local Colton Lodges nursing home, where the familiarity of the words and music are much appreciated by the residents.

Groups and courses

A lot of what we do is encouraging people to explore their own faith through discussion and shared thinking.

In 2023 we ran Pilgrim, a recognised, structured course of Christian learning. We also run "Faithbook", a group devised to explore what it means to be a Christian, what it means to follow Jesus and the difference it can make.

Our recurring group "Pints of View" meets in the local pub, and offers anyone an opportunity to discuss questions around faith and how it applies in today's world in a relaxed setting.

At Lent we run a variety of courses. This year, members of the congregation share their own personal experiences of the season in a course titled "Living in Lent". Last year the course was "Sight and Sound", exploring the intersection of art, music and

faith. In 2022, the course was based around "Screwtape Letters" by CS Lewis.

Parish retreat

In 2023 we held a parish retreat attended by around 20 of our congregation, including acts of worship, times for reading and private study, and a range of social activities.

Heritage

We support the national Heritage Weekend events, encouraging people to explore the thousand years of history at Whitkirk, as

well as how the Church has helped shape the local area in the past and continues to do so in the present.

The annual Whitkirk Lecture also occurs around this time, going into detail about an aspect of local history, the places and the people.

Open Church

We take advantage of our historic building by opening to visitors each Saturday afternoon through the spring and summer, offering a quiet space for prayer and reflection.



Our places

The church

St Mary's Church is a Grade I listed building with medieval origins and several later additions. It has a number of interesting features, including a 12th century font and the burial place of famous civil engineer John Smeaton.

Despite its age and the challenges it brings, our most recent Quinquennial Report in 2023 said "the church is generally in good condition and the PCC clearly look after the building well."

There are some outstanding issues to be addressed which were raised in the report, and the PCC has committed to managing these.



The Community Centre

Refurbished in 2018, our Community Centre hosts a huge range of organised activities. These include coffee after our services, exercise groups, social clubs, amateur dramatics, dance classes, uniformed organisations and more. Activities are run by a combination of the Church, local charities and businesses, and individuals.

The building is also a popular venue for private events such as family parties and wedding receptions, thanks to its flexible space, modern decor, and licensed bar.

We are constantly improving our building, and have recently installed solar panels and batteries to reduce our energy costs and environmental footprint.



Our finances

Giving

The average weekly giving is £12.30 per household, with 89% of that being Gift Aided.

In our 2023 stewardship campaign "Yours Lord" 31 people either joined our planned giving scheme or increased their giving amount, and this is an area we would like to explore ways to build momentum in.

Parish share

Although St Mary's hasn't fully met its parish share in recent years, it has been steadily increasing its contribution thanks to a combination of efficiency savings, careful spending controls, and boosted income both through giving and other sources.

Capital projects

A serious damp issue in the north-west corner of the church building is being addressed, overseen by our appointed architect. The PCC expect to appoint a specialist contractor in the near future to carry out the work.

The estimated cost of this work will be funded by a generous legacy donation.

Legacies

We encourage the leaving of legacies to the work of the Church, either for specific purposes or as unrestricted funds, and have benefited from these.

Other income

We have a successful track record in applying for and winning grant funding for specific projects such as restoration of our bells, replacement of the Church's York stone pathway with a safer resin alternative, installation of a defibrillator, and refurbishment of our Community Centre.

We also significantly benefit from the hire of the aforementioned Community Centre, along with income from its fully licensed bar which is open at events.

Working expenses

St Mary's has fully met all of its incumbent's working expenses, and expects to continue to do so.

Living in Whitkirk

The area

St Mary's is located in the heart of Whitkirk, a suburb in East Leeds. It's conveniently placed for local amenities including shopping and leisure, schools, and transport links including the M1 and M62. It's also only four miles from the centre of Leeds, a city packed with life, culture and history.

On the doorstep

Within a couple of minutes of the Vicarage you can easily reach both the church and Community Centre on foot, as well as a convenience store, public house and hotel.

Further afield

Within a 20 minute walk or a short drive you can easily reach a shopping centre, a retail park with supermarket, two sports clubs, a retail/leisure park including a cinema and gym, and a broad selection of both chain and independent shops, restaurants and cafes.

There are a range of schools accessible by walking or bus, predominantly rated good or outstanding in their most recent inspections.

The great outdoors

Whitkirk is neighbour to the Temple Newsam estate, one of the largest public parks in Leeds with ample open spaces and woodlands, formal gardens, a working rare breeds farm and a historic Tudor-Jacobean mansion.



The Vicarage

The Vicarage at Whitkirk is a spacious and well-maintained detached four-bedroom property with study, large enclosed garden, double garage and private driveway.

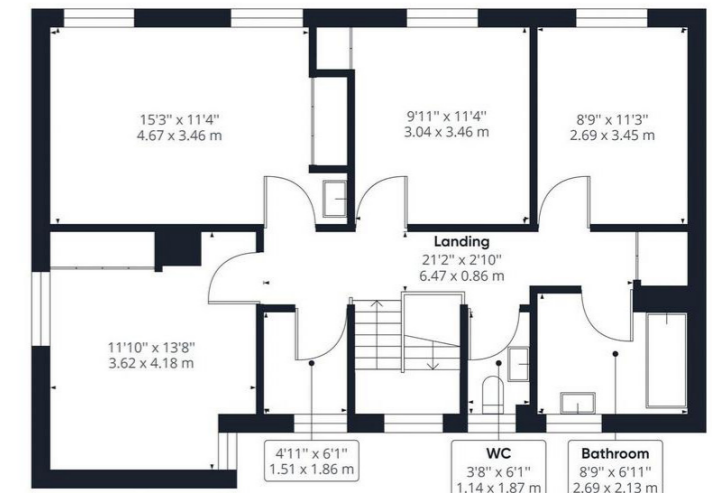
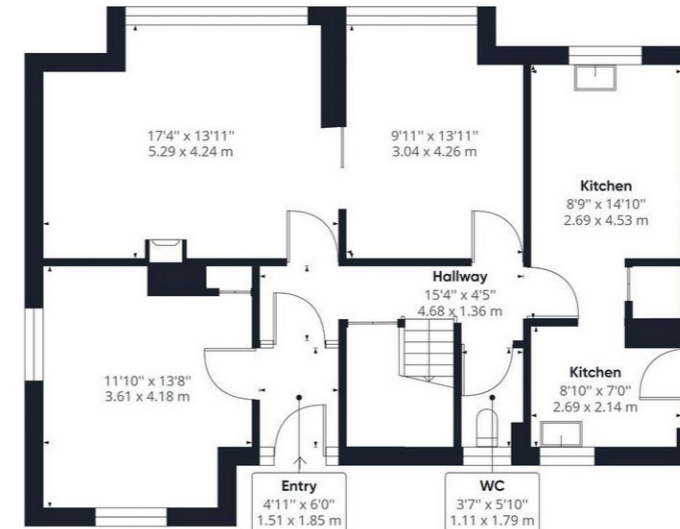
The study is accessible without passing through the rest of the house and offers generous space and light for work and meeting people.

Inside, the large south-facing living and dining rooms, kitchen and separate utility

give plenty of space for entertaining and family life. The kitchen and utility were refurbished to a high standard in 2023.

Upstairs the four well-proportioned bedrooms and smaller box room give plenty of versatility.

Heading outside the fully enclosed garden has an enormous amount of space, no matter if you want to kick a ball or kick back in the afternoon sun.





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