



Diocese of London

Willesden Area

St Thomas the Apostle, Hanwell

PARISH PROFILE 2023



Essential Information



**182 Boston Road
London W7 2AD**

Diocesan Parish Ref. 23/06

Registered Charity 1130519

<http://www.thomashanwell.org.uk>

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Section 1 Executive Summary

The parish of St Thomas the Apostle, Hanwell, in the Willesden area of the Diocese of London is seeking a new incumbent following the move of the previous Vicar after 11 years' with us.

Our style of worship is traditional with music playing an important role in our spiritual life. St Thomas' sees itself as a church for the whole community and a place of openness and tolerance. People of all faiths and no faith are welcome, and those who are full members of their own Christian congregation are welcome to share our communion. We are also brought together by our shared pride in the building of St Thomas', a rare masterpiece of 20th century English church architecture and a place that fosters a sense of calmness and devotion.

The parish is relatively small and compact with a population of around 8500. There are 130 on



the electoral roll and a regular congregation of around 60 communicants. Between 1995 and 2011 the Parish came under the pastoral care of the Bishop of Fulham but has since welcomed women priests to preside and preach. As with all other churches the covid pandemic caused disruption to regular worship and social connections. Online services were developed and now continue in parallel with the return of face to face worship. During this time our previous Vicar became seriously unwell and was on leave for almost a year. The PCC with the support of visiting priests of both genders and the congregation led the church through this challenging period. A consequence of this experience has been the development of a competent and resilient lay team which is now well

equipped to steer the Parish through the interregnum we are currently facing.

In January 2023 we consulted the views of our congregation by means of a written questionnaire and focus groups asking what was important to them and in what direction they would like to see our church community moving. The results have informed this parish profile and we have used parishioner quotes throughout this document by means of illustration.

Our challenges are similar to those faced by many churches – that of attracting and retaining younger people and maintaining a presence within our local community. Our vision for the future lies in building the younger end of our congregation whilst fulfilling the needs of the older members of our church community. We want to develop our style of worship especially enhancing our use of music and lay participation. We desire a more outward looking church both towards our local community and beyond, to embrace the issues facing our world in a reflective and proactive way.

Statement by Bishop Lusa

Thank you for your interest in the role of Vicar of St Thomas, Hanwell, in the of Diocese of London. I am delighted that you are exploring the possibility of applying for this role and I want you to know that there are many of us here in the Willesden Episcopal Area who are praying for those seeking to discern God's calling in this area.

As a Diocese, London has an audacious and ambitious vision, to see every Londoner able to encounter the love of God in Christ. To serve this vision, we have committed ourselves to be churches that engender Confident Disciples, foster Compassionate Communities, and enable Creative Growth. We also hold to the aspiration of building church communities that will reflect the rich diversity of our city, welcoming all people across ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritages, and safe places where we enable younger generations to flourish alongside others.

Here in the Willesden episcopal Area, we have been blessed with a rich diversity in theological and liturgical traditions. These have come with some remarkable examples of partnership and mutual support in mission and ministry across church traditions to enable the emergence of church communities that are authentically missional, intergenerational, and intercultural. The parish and Patrons are praying for a priest who will comfortably inhabit St Thomas' tradition that sets the Eucharist at its heart and committed to offer a musically rich experience of worship.

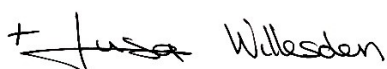
She/He will need to come with considerable emotional and cultural intelligence, deep spiritual resilience, and a demonstrable passion to foster a culture of generous hospitality to all. St Thomas' next priest will need the imagination, vitality, and commitment to attend to the expressed aspiration of the church for missional engagement with the whole parish, sharing the transformative power of the Gospel and drawing many in the orbit of Christ through the ministry of this community of faith. They will particularly need to offer the capacity to identify, harness, and release lay participation in the mission and ministry of St Thomas'. They will also need to be prepared to offer direction for a number of significant building maintenance projects as the church looks at maximising its buildings missional potential.

St Thomas is set in a context that is socio-economically and culturally rich in diversity. This is translated in the life of the church community, presenting exciting opportunities to develop ministry among families and offer a worship experience that is relevant and engaging to the breadth of generations present and participating in the life of St Thomas'.

Inevitably, there is an element of challenge to this venture, including the need to develop and release more capacity and establish stronger bonds across the rich mosaic of life experiences in Hanwell, paying particular attention to ministry provision for children, young people, and their families. We are trusting God's calling and are committed to the emerging vision of hope expressed by many at St Thomas'.

If this is something that you find exciting and daunting, then perhaps God is calling you to this role. Please keep reading, and if you need more insight into St Thomas' and the Episcopal Area, do get in touch with me or my colleagues Ven. Catherine Pickford, Archdeacon of Northolt or Revd David Neno, the Area Dean of Ealing Deanery, for an informal chat.

Yours in Christ,

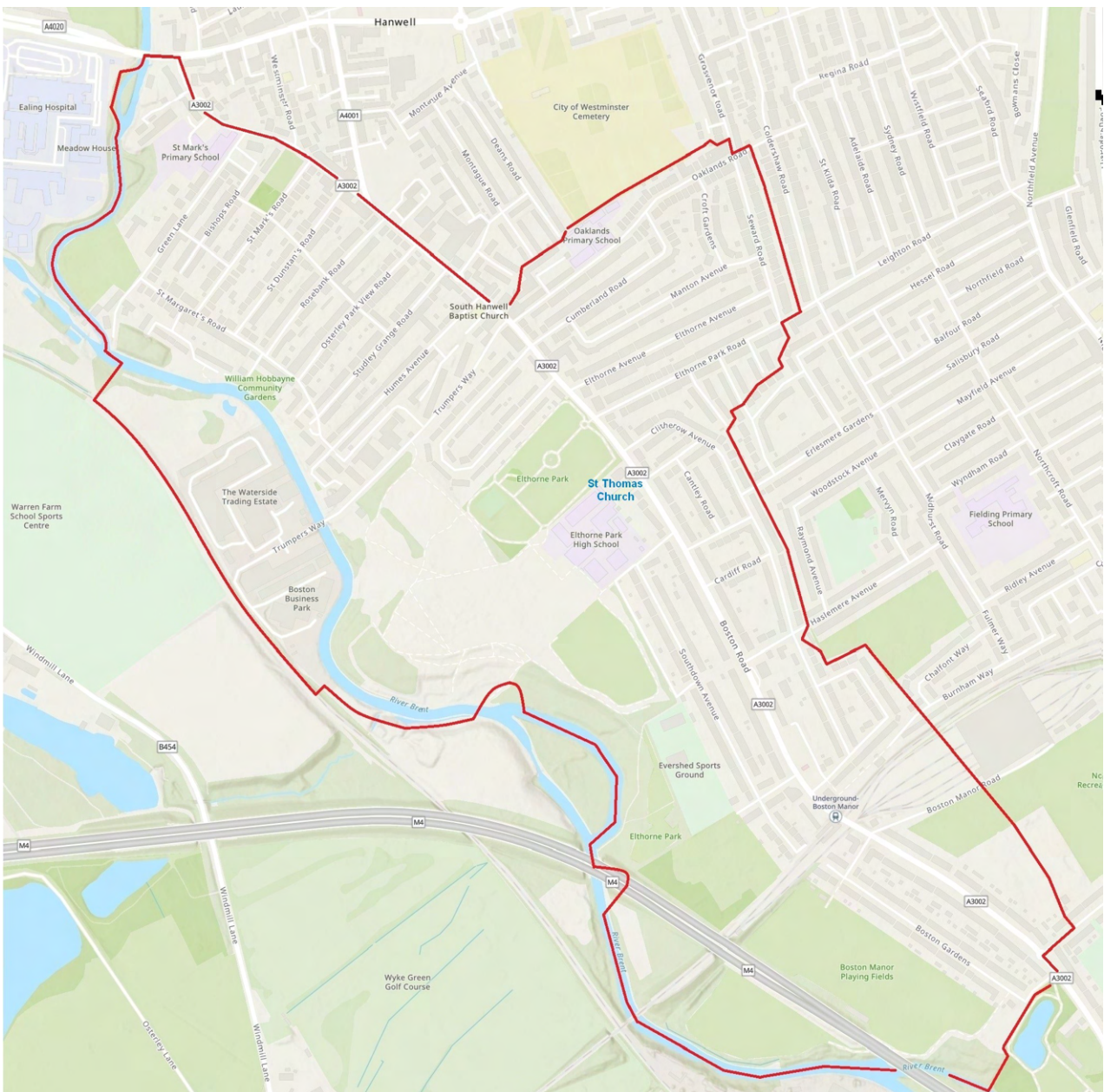
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lusa Willesden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross-like symbol at the beginning.

Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy
Bishop of Willesden

Section 2 OUR PARISH

St Thomas the Apostle is a suburban parish in the London Borough of Ealing. The majority of the Parish comprises residential housing forming the southern part of Hanwell. The parish is bounded to the west by open parkland and the River Brent, and these surroundings make Hanwell a very pleasant place to live. In fact, Hanwell was voted one of the top places to live in the 2022 Sunday Times Survey. We benefit from good schools, good transport links, open spaces, pubs, the river which doubles as part of the Ground Union Canal, and much more.

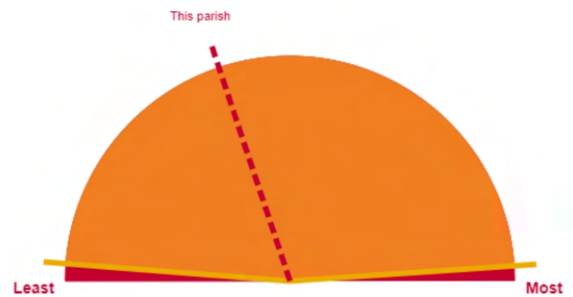
Boston Road, a major arterial route runs roughly north/south through the centre of the parish. The church site is on Boston Road, and roughly in the centre of the parish, making it ideally placed. To the east and south of the parish, the housing is mainly Edwardian and inter-war terraced and semi-detached family homes. Much of this housing is owner-occupied. The north-west area of the parish is known as 'Old Hanwell' where the houses are smaller and date from the beginning of the 19th century. Here, there is a mix of owner occupied and rented housing.



Overall Deprivation

The population of this parish is **8555**. It ranks **7456** out of **12382**, where 1 is the most deprived parish.

This means that the parish is relatively wealthy compared with other parishes in the country.



This diagram extracted from Church Urban Fund resources is based on 2019 information. The same source indicates that the parish has relatively low levels of child poverty, working age poverty, and pensioner poverty. There is very little social housing in the parish and relatively low levels of lone parenthood and people living on their own. Ethnic diversity is roughly at the average for London Diocese with 49% of the population who are UK minority ethnic.

When it comes to commerce and industry, there are no major retail outlets in the parish. We have three small parades of shops, which are mainly independent businesses. The shopping areas of Hanwell and West Ealing are within a 10 to 15 minute walk, and can also be reached by bus. Ealing Broadway, where there is a major shopping centre, several banks, restaurants, and a cinema, is a 12-minute bus ride away.

There is a small area of the parish at the end of Trumper's Way with light industrial units in a trading estate and business park. Apart from that, there is no other industrial stock.

Altogether there are three schools within the parish boundary. There are two Primary Schools: St Mark's at the northern extremity of the parish, and Oaklands, fairly near the centre. Fielding Primary School is just outside the parish boundaries, but its catchment area extends inside.

Elthorne Park High School, is in the centre of the parish and is immediately adjacent to the St Thomas' site. No Church Schools are associated with St Thomas. However, a number of children in the congregation attend Christ the Saviour C of E Primary School and Twyford C of E High School in Ealing.

Whereas St Thomas' hosts meetings of our affiliated Guides, Brownies, and Rainbows, the local Scouts and Cubs use a Scout Hut a short distance away in Trumper's Way as their base. Near St Mark's School is a community hall operated by the Eleemosynary Charity of William Hobbayne, a local relief organisation; this hall hosts several regular community group meetings and one-off events. Hanwell House is a residential home for the elderly with capacity for 52 residents. It is situated on Boston Road, a short distance towards the centre of Hanwell from the church. Nearby on the opposite side of the road is South Hanwell Baptist Church. In the other direction, about half a mile away is Boston Manor Station on the Piccadilly Line.

Section 3 THE CHURCH

OUR WORSHIP

Weekly Worship Pattern

After emerging from Covid lockdown, our normal pattern of worship has resumed. Our main Sunday service is a Sung Mass at 10:00 a.m. which has normal average attendance of about 60 adults, and 5 to 10 children and young people. During School Term time, Sunday School is provided in the adjoining Church Hall; those involved join the main service before the eucharistic prayers, and present what they have been doing during the Notices. The only other Sunday service is Evensong, with attendance of up to 5 people. Weekday Said Masses are offered on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons, with the Tuesday service being preceded by the Angelus. These two services, held in the Lady Chapel, attract a total of up to 10 adults per week, with some but not all, having attended on the previous Sunday.

St Thomas has a strong musical tradition. Our main Sunday worship is supported by accomplished organists and a small choir, all of whom offer their services freely, as part of their ministry. There is a director of music who works in conjunction with the celebrant to plan the repertoire and to practice and direct the choir. During the Liturgy of the Word, bible readings apart from the Gospel are delivered by members of the congregation. The intercessions are normally led by lay people. During the Giving of Communion, lay people act as chalice bearers. The Sunday liturgy is supported throughout by a Deacon, and on special occasions there may be several people acting as Servers.



Worship Style

When it comes to describing our worship style, simple labels will mislead rather than help. Certainly, we are a Eucharistic community. Our style is not evangelical – a characteristic that distinguishes us from all other nearby C of E parishes. However, many in the congregation would

"I love the music and liturgical settings and really appreciate all the work that goes into that."

not be comfortable in describing themselves of Catholic tradition, so it would be better to outline here what we do and what we don't do.

We rejoice in the fellowship of the saints and we gain strength from the annual, cyclic rhythm of the church's year, as reflected in the Lectionary. However, we are flexible to the extent that many principal feasts and major Saints Days are celebrated on the nearest Sunday when falling elsewhere. Our clergy and principal Server wear vestments of the appropriate liturgical colour, and we have a set of altar frontals to match. Incense is used, but is generally restricted to major festivals and major Saints Days, and there is a wish that usage is further reduced. Altar candles are used sparingly. A tabernacle in the Lady

Chapel is used to store the reserved sacrament. The church does possess a monstrance, but this is only used on one occasion per year and then very briefly. The sacrament of healing by anointing with holy oil is offered once per month during the main Sunday service, and there is a strong desire that this is maintained. It is said that the style of our worship is more reflective of English cathedral tradition, rather than conventional Anglo-Catholic practice. People like the fact that we have a nicely printed order of service and use the English Hymnal, rather than using a paperless approach involving side monitors.

Very unusually in the current age the celebrant faces eastwards during the Eucharistic Prayer. This is not out of theological conviction, but because of constraints not easy to

“I have found it to be a church where everyone is welcome whatever their background or wherever they are in their journey with God.”

resolve that are imposed by the architectural design of the sanctuary and chancel. In the distant past, experiments were

made with an altar placed nearer to the congregation, but by all accounts, these were unsuccessful. If this issue is felt to be important by the incoming incumbent, then we would be happy to revisit the matter.



Daily Office

It was the custom of the previous incumbent to make the weekday Daily Office of Morning and Evening Prayer a public event on several days of the week. During Covid lockdown, this practice was continued, with the Daily Office becoming a broadcast event via Facebook, along with Masses and Sunday Evensong. This proved to be very powerful method for holding the congregation together during lockdown. Post-lockdown, the practice of Facebook live broadcast has continued and has proved to be especially valuable in keeping the housebound involved within the worshipping community.

St THOMAS' COMMUNITY

Numerical data

At the last count there were 130 people on our church electoral roll. For our latest mission statistics, it was estimated that our total worshipping community comprises 140 people. Of these, 15 are children aged 0 to 10; 2 are young people aged 11 to 17; 88 are adults aged 18 to 69; 35 are adults aged 70+. Within this community there is a core of about 40 individuals who normally attend church every week.

Time, talents and treasure

As one would expect, it is generally people from within the core of the church who contribute generously of their time, talents, and monetary resources towards our work. In terms of talents,

we have many in the congregation who have professional or occupational skills but they tend to be very busy people if in paid work or having children to look after. As will be seen from the figures, we have a significant number of retired people, some of whom are committed to voluntary work within the community, and therefore can be quite busy as well.

In terms of monetary contribution, we have a total of 63 people currently enrolled in our regular congregational giving schemes (mainly bank standing orders, and the Parish Giving Scheme). It is several years since we last ran a generous giving campaign within the congregation, and it is recognised that we need to take such an initiative forward at an early opportunity.

Ethnic mix

In terms of ethnicity we are mainly white British. There are several families of Black Caribbean heritage, and as befits the cosmopolitan community of Hanwell, people with widely diverse backgrounds, including West African and Asian heritage.

Some significant history

From 1995 until 2011, the Parish came under the pastoral care of the Bishop of Fulham. During our previous interregnum in 2011 we voted to return to the pastoral care of the Bishop of Willesden. Since that time we have happily welcomed many women priests to preside and preach at our services, and quite recently a female curate was attached to the Parish.

During April 2021, our former incumbent became seriously ill quite suddenly, an illness from which he thankfully fully recovered. The consequence was a period of sick leave that lasted for about a year, which although difficult and unsettling for the Parish, especially as we have no Parish Administrator, made us stronger and more resilient as a congregation in many ways.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The mission of St Thomas is exercised mainly through fellowship events where people come to us, rather than us reaching beyond the church site to perform acts of community service. Having said that, we note that there is a strong retired contingent at St Thomas, some of whom are actively engaged in voluntary community work as individuals.

Regular weekly and monthly events

During school term times, we operate 'Thomas Tots' on a weekly basis in the church hall. This is a 'play and stay' playgroup for up to 5-year olds and their parents or childminders who stay through the whole proceedings. We have up to 30 children in a session. Besides providing active play for the children with individual and group activities, it's a good way for us to meet parents and childminders from the community.

On a monthly basis we hold an 'over 50's lunch' which is a bring and share midday event for church members, but open to all. This is a good way of getting to know church members

"St Thomas also provides a great environment for my children including affiliation with Scouting and Guiding."

much better than can be achieved in the busyness of a Sunday morning, and we often get to meet partners who are not regular church attenders.



Story Time at Thomas' Tots

We also offer film nights in the church hall once every couple of months on a Saturday evening, 'Pictures by the Park'. This attracts a core of churchgoers, who tend to bring friends and family members, these not necessarily churchgoers themselves. Occasionally since lockdown we have organised classical music concerts in the church on a Sunday afternoon, which brings in other people whom we would not otherwise meet. Our church building is very suitable for such events because it has a fine acoustic.

Occasional events

In addition to these regular or occasional events, we also organise a number of 'one-off' events each year, some being fund raising events for the church, and others for charitable causes. Before Covid there was an annual St Thomas pantomime, which made very good use of the stage in the church hall. Put on during early January for four performances, it was always performed to packed houses, and drew many who would not otherwise have come to the St Thomas site. It is hoped that we can re-start this initiative in the future.

"A sense of community and loyalty. I enjoy the extra events — music, panto, fairs, film nights, etc"

During the summer, we organise a Fun Run in the local park that adjoins the church, and in the open space beyond that bounded by the Grand Union Canal. This appeals to the more energetic churchgoers and their friends, and is a good fund-raiser. In October, we traditionally hold an evening meal event, 'International Evening' featuring dishes from across the globe. In November

we customarily hold a Christmas market in the church hall, which is usually well supported by the local community, even when other churches are doing similar on the same day. Also resuming last November after the Covid hiatus, was our Quiz Night.

In early 2023 we held a ceilidh for the first time, which was very well supported, attracting many people who are non-churchgoers. We had great fun, and raised over £1,300 for the Trussell Trust.

Hosting of community groups

We regard as part of our mission the hosting of other community organisations in our church hall. Without us, such organisations would find it difficult to operate in South Hanwell. Our affiliated Rainbows, Brownies and Guides meet weekly. Also weekly, on the artistic front we have a community choir and a musical theatre group that use our space for rehearsal. Yoga, Taekwondo, and children’s dance classes are offered by separate hirers. ‘Hanwell Neighbourly Care’ operates a morning drop-in session for elderly people, with tea, coffee and biscuits, and there is also a full lunch session provided by an Asian women’s support and self-help group.

“We should build on the strong sense of community at St Thomas’ to support each other and the wider Hanwell community.”

The ‘Trident’

Thanks to the efforts of some very talented members of the Church, we publish a monthly newsletter ‘The Trident’ that normally runs to 16 pages and serves both as an internal communication within the congregation, and as a means of reaching out to the wider community. Each month, a digital copy is published on our website, and we have about 60 subscribers who receive hand-delivered paper copies, and a further 50 who receive copies by email. Before the Covid pandemic, it was our practice to hand-deliver the Christmas copy of Trident to every household in the parish, as a way of providing information about our Christmas services. Distribution in this way was not resumed for Christmas 2022, and it is recognised that this is something that needs to be reviewed.

THE CHURCH BUILDING

Historic significance

The materials used for the building of St Thomas and the form of its construction were a testbed for Guildford Cathedral. The architect, Edward Maufe, had been appointed to design both buildings. Work on St Thomas was completed in 1934, and work on Guildford started in 1936. This explains the cathedral-like proportions of St Thomas and the ambience that pervades the interior. Given the historic importance of the building, and its uniqueness as a parish church, St Thomas is a listed building with Grade 2* status.



Building management

The simple historic facts have some important consequences for the incumbent. Although the building is reasonably young, maintenance issues are ongoing and significant. For example, the main roof of the building has already been completely replaced once. At the time of writing, we know that the lower roof on the south side of the building is life-expired and requires complete replacement. Such matters periodically require input of management time on the part of the incumbent, the wardens, and the PCC. We expect lay people to play a major part in shouldering the management load, but we would also expect the incumbent, as a person of influence, to be empathetic to the heritage of the building, and to be involved in the decision-making processes that are required of us.

A further consequence of the Grade 2* listing is that replacement of items must be on a like-for-like basis, which can therefore be costly. For example replacement bricks must be specially made at the current cost of £35 each. This places a particular burden on PCC finances that would not be there if the building were smaller, simpler, and of lesser historical importance. The result is a constant tension between funding that must be allocated to building maintenance or raised for the purpose, and availability of funding for mission. Despite these pressures, we know that the prominence of the building is a constant reminder to the community that there is a worshipping Christian presence in this part of Hanwell. We are therefore noticed, and by this means, people have been drawn into our Christian family.

“I love our church building – it creates a meditative space for me.”

The Nave

Befitting of its embryo cathedral status, the church nave has seating for 300 people. Since the seating is provided by individual wooden chairs that are not fixed to the floor, we have a large space that is infinitely flexible. Currently it is organised as 260 seats facing the chancel and a meeting area at the back with two small tables in the centre. The meeting area provides a space for young children and parents during the main Sunday service, and for some church meetings. As a community space, the nave is significantly underused, compared with our church hall which has roughly 5 times the footfall per week. There is certainly potential for developing the use of the nave for community events such as concerts — a possibility that the PCC would be keen to explore.



Side chapels

To the north side of the chancel is a Lady Chapel with seating provision for about 20 people. The Lady Chapel is used for Sunday Evensong, and weekday Masses. There is also a smaller Children’s Chapel; its main purpose currently is for weekday Facebook broadcasts of the Daily Office. The two chapels offer a more intimate space than the main nave, and might come into their own if the church building were to be opened in future for private prayer.

Organ and Bell tower

Our church organ is a very fine 3-manual Walker instrument built in 1897. It was transferred to Hanwell in 1934 from St Thomas', Portman Square — a church that was being closed at the time. The organ was extensively rebuilt about 10 years ago, since when it has proved to be an outstanding and very reliable instrument, and one that organists enjoy playing and practising on. The organ forms a very important foundation of our musical tradition and following.

“Music is a strength and must continue. I always feel cheered on leaving church.”

The church bell tower is provided with a single bell, operated by rope from ground level. Much of the upper part of the tower has been fitted with telecoms equipment that transmits local Wi-Fi. This enables mobile phone coverage and other communications throughout the whole of South Hanwell. A vital asset to the community thus makes a significant contribution to our church finances. As an operational asset, maintenance technicians require access on a fairly frequent basis, which means unlocking the church. Therefore, we have established procedures for this to take place without the need for the Vicar or any other church officer to attend.

THE CHURCH HALL

The facilities

The Church Hall is immediately next to the church building. There is a small car park outside the main hall entrance, which is used by visitors to all three buildings on the site (church, hall, and vicarage). The hall dates from 1964 and is typical of buildings of the period, being equipped with a stage, kitchen, and a single meeting room. Within the hall and positioned above the main entrance, there is a church office and a storeroom. The office contains a desk, computer, and printer, and is used for storage of those parish records that do not require secure storage in a safe. It should be noted that although there is a parish office, we do not have a parish administrator; there has not been such for several years.

Current usage

As a community facility, our hall is currently in strong demand, and sees plenty of usage not only in the evenings but during weekday working hours. Currently the hall hosts two weekly and two monthly regular events organised by the St Thomas Church family, as well as occasional ‘one off’ events. In addition, our affiliated Rainbows, Brownies and Guides use the hall on two evenings per week. A further seven community groups use the space on a regular weekly basis. On most Saturdays, the hall is available for children’s parties. The end result is that in a typical week it is estimated that up to 400 different people make use of the building. A more detailed description of some of the activities that take place is provided in the section entitled ‘Wider community involvement’.



Our well-equipped stage is put to good use

Harry Saville

The future of the hall

A major concern with this intensively used building is that significant investment is now required to ensure that it remains viable in the future. During the last five years we have commissioned a full condition report, and now need to move ahead with the high priority repair items. Part of the discussion on how we proceed depends on whether or not we consider the building to be suitable for our ongoing mission, or whether a building with a radically different design offering different facilities would be better. Such discussions on this subject that we have had within the PCC became stalled at the time of Covid lockdown, and have not seriously resumed yet. This will certainly be an issue for the incoming incumbent to become involved with.

CHURCH FINANCES

[The information in this section is based on draft accounting figures for 2022, which were still subject to minor change at the time of writing. For brevity, the abbreviation 'k' is used as shorthand for 1000.]

Income and expenditure

In most years recently we have been able to run a balanced budget, with income roughly the same as expenditure. Annual throughput of income and expenditure is normally in the region of £110k to £130k. 2022 was no exception.

Significant income items during 2022 (approximate figures) were: Stewardship (£41k); Recovered income tax (£10k); Telecoms rental (£34k); Hall hire (£15k). It was gratifying to see Stewardship income slightly higher than the year before, and hall hire income double that of the previous year as we emerged from the impact of Covid.

Significant expenditure items during 2022 (approximate figures) were: Diocesan Common Fund (£64k); Church maintenance and running costs (£21k); Hall maintenance and running costs (£8k). We have a policy of earmarking 10% of our Stewardship income each year towards Mission Giving; several payments totalling nearly £5k were made during the year to relief, development and missionary agencies, both local and international.

Our Common Fund payment is a contribution towards the cost of clergy stipends and housing, and Diocesan support. Our payment currently represents approximately three quarters of our budgeted cost to the Diocese. The difference is made up from Diocesan reserves, and the contributions of parishes that are able to offer more than 100% of cost. This is support for which we are extremely grateful and our aim is to move progressively to a position where St Thomas is covering 100% of cost.



Reserves

At the end of 2022 our total funds amounted to £327k. Of this sum £64k is a designated reserve for church and hall maintenance. £185k, which was received as a legacy in previous years, has been earmarked by the PCC for major building works. It is anticipated that with forthcoming renewal of the South lower roof of the church now a necessity, we will need major support from our reserves during 2023.



Section 4 The Vicarage

The Vicarage dates from the same time as the church — about 1934. It is a large five-bedroomed detached property. The main entrance is from a cul-de-sac off of Boston Road. The cul-de-sac runs alongside our church hall, the next property being the Vicarage; at the end of the street there is a turning space for cars and a back entrance to the adjacent Elthorne Park High School.

The front of the Vicarage overlooks parkland (Elthorne Park) and the rear of the property overlooks the garden and lawn, beyond which is the north side of the church grounds. A garage is provided for off-street parking. However, because of the limited width of the cul-de-sac, driving into or out of the garage with anything larger than a medium-sized family car is difficult.

The Vicarage is provided with double glazing throughout. Heating is by means of water-filled radiators powered from a gas-fired boiler. Downstairs accommodation includes a kitchen, pantry, utility room, toilet, lounge, dining room, and study. All of the main rooms are of generous proportions. The kitchen is provided with a large gas-fired hob and oven unit, and there is a washing machine remaining in the utility room. Upstairs accommodation comprises five bedrooms, a bathroom, toilet, and walk-in airing cupboard.

Proximity to local public transport is good. Buses 195 and E8 pass along Boston Road; Boston Manor Station (Piccadilly Line, Heathrow Branch) is half a mile away to the south; Hanwell Station (Elizabeth Line) is just under a mile away to the north.



The Vicarage seen from the garden. Road access is on the other side of the house. The end wall of the Church Hall is seen beyond the house.

Section 5 The Future of St Thomas'

OUR PRAYERS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

We asked our congregation to give us their thoughts for the next chapter of our life as a church community. A number of themes arose as priorities that could help guide our new Vicar. Some of those themes are set out below.

Many of the congregation felt that God was calling St Thomas' to become a **real presence** in Hanwell thus sharing God's grace in a tangible way. There was also a strong sense that we could be more outward looking by optimising use of our church building for community events and activities. Our church hall which has over 400 visitors from different organisations every week provides a great opportunity to reach out to those who may not normally attend church. A focus on being more outward looking will require more members of the congregation to volunteer to take part in outreach activities and those volunteers will need to be supported and encouraged.

“Traditional does not mean staying as it is — it is about keeping some of the traditional, and having new ones!”

Be an open church which respects past traditions but is forwarding-looking and where everyone is welcome irrespective of their background or wherever they are in their journey with God.

Engaging and encouraging young families with children was also a theme. It was felt that we could achieve that by having family services and organising activities which children could get involved with such as the St Thomas' Pantomime and Fun Run. Continuing to strengthen our links with uniformed organisations such as Girlguiding and Scouts could be another way to encourage young families to come to church.

Reducing the decline in attendance and retaining those who attend our services is a priority.

Strengthen our prayer life through means such as home bible study, Lenten prayer groups or perhaps talks from speakers who could help facilitate and support becoming confident disciples.

Create opportunities for participation in services as St Thomas' is blessed with a congregation with many talents who would welcome the opportunity to put those talents to good use.

Growing and deepening the musical life of St Thomas' by using the talents of our choir, encouraging participation by the congregation in the choir, leveraging our relationships with music schools to arrange concerts and widening our pool of organists.

Re-establishing our connection with local schools which will help us further connect with the local community and provide an opportunity for mission.

Have more of a focus on sustainability by considering what we can realistically do with limited resources.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

As we considered where we believe God is calling St Thomas', we have also considered some of the challenges ahead.

The challenges of navigating modern Britain as a Christian. As there are so many competing secular activities on a Sunday, we need to think of innovative ways of encouraging and supporting engagement with Christianity.

As custodians of a beautiful Grade II* listed church, we need to think of creative ways to ensure that we can maintain it for generations to come.



Section 6 Person profile for the Vicar we need

We would like to appoint a full-time stipendiary Vicar in the parish of St Thomas Hanwell, within the Willesden area of the diocese of London.

He or she will be an inclusive priest who is committed to traditional Anglican worship and compassionate pastoral care. We need someone with a collaborative leadership style; and an ability to engage with all ages and outreach into the local community.

In January 2023 we encouraged members of our congregation to complete a questionnaire and ran a focus group session during one of the Sunday services. We gained rich insight into what is important to people in our church community and what sort of Vicar we need. People's views were largely consistent and there was general agreement about the direction in which people would like to see St Thomas' moving.

“Need an open-minded Vicar who welcomes everyone irrespective of where they are on their faith journey”

OUR PRIORITIES

- 1. A Prayerful and spiritual Vicar** — we need a Vicar who will continue to lead worship in a traditional style with the Eucharist at the heart of the service. They will need to offer a high standard of liturgical leadership. They will need to appreciate the importance of music at St Thomas and be able to support the musical director to develop this strength.
- 2. A Vicar able to relate to all ages** — Our congregation spans all ages but is weighted towards the elderly. To date we have had some success in encouraging families to attend through the 'Tots group'. We need our new Vicar to continue work to attract and retain our children and their families by valuing their presence, listening to them, and encouraging participation in services and community activities. The new Vicar will also need to be aware of the needs of the elderly within our congregation and to encourage greater mixing among the congregation.
- 3. A Collaborative and inclusive Vicar** — we would like our new Vicar to encourage participation from members of the congregation in the service and the organisation of worship and prayer; to encourage them to flourish and develop their own individual ministries within the church such as leading prayers and even preaching. We would like our new Vicar to be keen to listen to and respond to people's views. We need our Vicar to have an inclusive and non-judgemental attitude and to respect people wherever they are on their spiritual journey with God, including those of other faiths and those of no faith. We would like our Vicar to exercise

“We want someone who is funny, gentle, and always kind. Must like children and respect everybody, even if they are little.”

leadership and discernment in developing the gifts of the laity for the benefit of the church and the individual such as singing, fundraising, organisational, and property maintenance.

4. **An Outreaching Vicar** — We need someone to continue to strengthen our connections with the local community and develop a strong presence and mission within Hanwell. Our new Vicar will need to be able to relate to the numerous groups who use the church and church hall especially the uniformed youth groups. This will require an energetic person who is skilled in interpersonal communication.

OTHER DESIRED ATTRIBUTES

- Ability to offer compassionate pastoral care to people within the congregation and the wider community particularly reaching out to those who are not able to attend church services.
 - Theological skills — an engaging preacher of concise, relevant and accessible sermons. The sermon is an important part of our Sunday service and gives the preacher an opportunity to challenge the congregation at times and encourage people to think. Many people would also like the chance to develop their belief and spirituality by means of smaller prayer or Bible study groups. We need someone who is a good communicator with an ability to link the Christian faith with wider issues within the local community and the world.
 - Ability to work with the PCC and congregation to develop a dynamic and shared sense of mission and service to others with tangible results
 - Team leadership — ability to lead and support a strong and effective team to carry out the vision/mission of St Thomas’.
 - Financially aware — to work with the PCC to ensure continuing financial viability of St Thomas’.
 - Interest and appreciation of the importance of maintaining the church building as a historic place of worship and prayer and also the church hall as a community asset.
 - Willingness to support the social events of the church community including the return of the annual pantomime.
 - Sufficient IT skills to enable regular digital communication with the local church community such as coordination of weekly online newsletter. To have oversight of the church website to ensure it is engaging, up to date and user-friendly.
 - Desire and ability to work collaboratively with other churches, denominations and faiths within the Diocese.
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