



Profile

St Thomas'
 CHURCH



praying

St Thomas
Welcome

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praying

Introduction

St Thomas' Church, Edinburgh is a member church of the Anglican Convocation in Europe ("ACE") and is thus within the GAFCON family. As a result of the call of our Rector, Rev David McCarthy, to one of our sister churches in Aberdeen, we are seeking a new Rector. It is for the Lord to call that person and for us to discern that call; but we hope the information in this Church Profile will be helpful.

History

St Thomas' was founded in 1844 as a Private Chapel in central Edinburgh. The original trust deed stated that we were a church "for the worship of God, according to the existing Protestant standards of the established Church of England". That trust deed reflects our orthodox evangelical theology; this remains our position, and we retain a passion for Bible teaching, prayer and evangelism.

In 1937 the decision was made to move both church and rectory from the centre of Edinburgh to Corstorphine in the expanding suburbs of West Edinburgh. In 1989 the St Thomas' Vestry decided to join the Scottish Episcopal Church. However, within a few years, it became apparent that the SEC had begun to depart from orthodox belief in the authority of Scripture. In 2016 the SEC changed its doctrine of marriage so as to include same-sex relationships. The justification offered in support of that change exposed an irreconcilable difference in their and our understandings of the authority of Scripture. The SEC rejected attempts made by a number of churches to find a solution. St Thomas' leadership and the overwhelming majority of our members decided that this was a step too far, so the decision was taken to leave the SEC. We did so in February 2019, at which time we adopted our current constitution, and became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation ("SCIO").





St Thomas' Today

Our constitution underlines our commitment to Scripture as the written word of God, references the Apostles' Creed and affirms the Jerusalem Declaration as the pre-eminent contemporary expression of the tenets of orthodoxy, underpinning our identity. We became one of the founding members of ACE, a group of churches that seek to bring together, under the authority of the Bible, faithful Anglicans, diverse in expression and contemporary in practice. The diocese of ACE has a sister diocese, the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE), and together we form GAFCON's Anglican Network in Europe (ANiE). We now receive episcopal oversight within that framework. The presiding bishop (Bishop Andy Lines) is based in the south of England, and he convenes regular online meetings of ACE clergy. Closer support, geographically, is provided within Scotland by Assistant Bishop Ian Ferguson, who is also supporting us as our interim Rector.

Worship

We meet every Sunday at 10.30am and our services are live-streamed. Children's groups run at the same time as the service. The first Sunday of every month is a service of Holy Communion. The pattern of other services varies. Sung worship is led by musicians on about three out of four Sundays and we currently find ourselves needing to use Worship Lyric Videos on the other Sunday. Members of the congregation read Bible readings and intercessions. Every third Sunday of the month, after the service, there is a short, traditional communion service. The church is blessed with two retired clergymen in the congregation. Two members are licensed to preach during the vacancy. A welcome team is on duty at each service and tea and coffee are served after the service. We have been told repeatedly that we give a warm and friendly welcome, and we see that as one of our strengths.

Location

St Thomas' is now a largely locally based church (though as an Anglican Church in Scotland, we are not a "parish church" and our Rector does not have the parish responsibilities incumbent on a vicar in England). Our church and halls occupy a prominent site on the busy A8 road, which is one of the principal arterial routes out of the west of Edinburgh, a city with a substantial student population. We are in a large suburban area, with extensive areas of housing (largely owner-occupied) on 3 sides. On the fourth (the south) side, we have the Gyle Park.

There are good local facilities. They include good primary schools, a well-regarded High School and easy access to private schools. We are close to the Gyle shopping centre, to a David Lloyd private sports centre and to Edinburgh's prime business park (Edinburgh Park). There is further housing in that area.

We have excellent transport links. There are bus stops very close to the church and frequent buses to and from the centre of Edinburgh and also to the airport, which is only 3 miles away. Trams to the centre of Edinburgh and beyond, and to the airport, are a ten minute walk away. Access to the Edinburgh Bypass (which links to the A1 south) is close at hand and there is easy access to the M8 (Glasgow and the west of Scotland), M9 (Stirling) and M90 (Perth, Aberdeen and Inverness). There are two railway stations within ten minutes' walk of the church, and they connect to the main rail network.

New Development

Hundreds of new homes are being built on a site about 1 mile from the church and planning applications have been submitted by developers for thousands more. We expect that many of those who buy those houses will be families with children. A new primary school is planned. We are the closest church, and we see this as a key mission opportunity.





Demographic

Over the years, Corstorphine has become a place with a slightly older and more stable demographic. The congregation has a majority of local members and reflects the older demographic of the area. However, it still gathers members from further afield, attracted to St Thomas' by the strong biblical basis of the teaching. Many of our members have a church background which is not Anglican. We are seeing the beginnings of ethnic diversity.

Size

We lost a number of members when we left the SEC and some of them were families with children. Covid lockdowns also had an impact on congregation size. We now have a membership of 98 and numbers attending Sunday morning service are generally in the 70s. However, numbers are now building up again with some new, mature members attracted largely by the teaching. Also, a few new families, mainly from overseas, have come into the area and to St Thomas', attracted by the welcoming and open nature of the congregation. Retention of such families is however a challenge, since we don't yet have a critical mass of young people to befriend the newly arrived youngsters. We see the rebuilding of our work with children and, in due course, teenagers, as a key priority.

Online

St Thomas streams its services live online. This benefits members in care homes, travelling or unable to attend a particular service. There are also a number of regular viewers from further afield who appreciate the online services. The streaming service also appears to be used by people who are considering coming to church, as a way of seeing what we are like before they visit.

Other groups

Prayer Groups: We meet for prayer every Sunday evening - once a month in person and online on other Sundays. On the third Thursday of each month, we hold our “Central Meeting” - an opportunity to hear a short message from the Bible and pray together. We are trialling a new prayer meeting after the service on the fourth Sunday of each month.

Home Groups: The church has an active set of Home Groups organised on a largely geographical basis, which meet weekly or fortnightly, in person or (occasionally) online to pray, study the Bible and support each other. The Home Groups are a key component in meeting pastoral needs, though not all members are in a Home Group.

Women’s Bible Study: “Rooted” is an active and flourishing bible study, prayer and friendship group run by and for the women of the congregation and beyond. Attendance is usually about 24. For some, this has been a way into faith.

Coffee Plus: We run a weekly open house on a Thursday morning offering tea, coffee, cakes, crafts and friendly conversation for church members and local residents alike. This tends to attract about 30 people and there are usually a few people who attend who have no other connection with church.

Carers and Toddlers: St Thomas's Baby and Toddler Group meets on Tuesday mornings in the Gyle Hall at the back of the church. We welcome mums, dads and grandparents to chat and have a cuppa while the wee ones play.

World Concern: We have a long-established World Concern Group (with its own funds, to which members give separately from their ordinary church giving) which supports a small number (usually about half a dozen) missionary partners working overseas or in the UK.



Meeting need in the community

We work with other groups to meet need in Edinburgh and in our local community. Bethany Christian Trust provides a daily service to serve homeless people in the centre of Edinburgh by providing hot drinks, food and clothing. St Thomas' members staff the van on the last Sunday of the month. We support Edinburgh City Mission's work amongst refugees. We partner with the West Edinburgh Community Support Group which, in the approach to Christmas, provides food and other items to families identified by the local schools as being in particular need.

Governance

St Thomas' is managed by a board of trustees. The trustees are the Rector, 12 other members of Vestry (elected or appointed), and 3 other Trustees who hold title to our buildings. Vestry meets 10 times a year and, with the Rector's agreement, it is chaired by a member of Vestry. (The default position is that the Rector is chair but, in practice, he has preferred to leave that task to the member appointed by Vestry.) In terms of our constitution, spiritual matters are the responsibility of the Rector, while Vestry have responsibility for the management of the whole temporal affairs of the church and of its property.

The members of Vestry also have a duty to assist the Rector in every way in their power in all matters affecting the spiritual welfare of the congregation.

In terms of our constitution, the Rector is employed by the church. We aspire to the highest standards in our employment practice, and we think it right to give our Rector full legal protection. There is, however, an absolute prohibition on Vestry purporting to give instructions to the Rector about the exercise of their spiritual ministry and it is provided explicitly that the Rector is entitled to decline to discuss confidential pastoral matters with Vestry.

The Rector is line manager of such employees as we have from time to time.



Property

St Thomas' owns the church building and grounds, including two separate halls. When not required for church purposes, our halls are available for rent (provided that the proposed activity is not in conflict with our Christian ethos). We also own a four bedroom rectory, and two other houses which are currently commercially rented to tenants. Title to all properties will remain with the St Thomas' Trustees. Neither ANiE nor ACE makes any claim on property owned by member churches and, by contrast with some other denominations, neither will put any pressure on congregations to convey title to them.

Financial Matters

Our accounts to September 2023 are available. It will be seen that our total income was £225,474 and our total expenditure was £204,496. We have significant reserves. None of our properties is burdened by a mortgage.

The Package

We offer a stipend of between £35k and £40k depending on experience, together with a Rectory and a full package of benefits. We also offer a generous non-contributory employer's pension which can be paid into a pension provider of the Rector's choice.

Further information/ informal discussions

We will welcome the opportunity to meet informally with potential applicants, to show them round our premises and to answer questions. In line with good interviewing practice, those church members who will be involved in the interview process cannot be involved in those informal meetings. If you wish to take up this offer, please contact the church office.

Selection Process

The appointment of the Rector rests with the property trustees in conjunction with the members of the Vestry and in consultation with the Bishop, who will be involved in the process either personally or through an appointed representative.

We will require the completion of an application form, which should be accompanied by a CV and the particulars of two referees (whom we will not contact without prior notice to the applicant).

Applicants will be expected to show that they already have the right to work in the UK.

The successful candidate will be required to be permitted to work with children and vulnerable adults under our safeguarding policy. Disclosure will be required. Further details are available.

After considering all applications, we expect to produce a long list of potential candidates and we will hold Zoom interviews in order to reach a short list.

The final selection process will be by a mixture of formal and informal interviews over the course of a day, when we will also show the candidates called for interview the buildings and the immediate area.

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We came to St Thomas' in September 2014. There have been many ups and a few downs during our time, the downs mostly relating to difficulties from before my time and the complexities of realigning the congregation within the Anglican Communion.

We have known much love and support from the leadership and members of the congregation. We have been very happy to be part of the St Thomas' community and are sad to be leaving.

St Thomas' people love the Lord Jesus and are:

United in Gospel mission to their local communities and to the World.

Welcoming, hospitable. and generous in giving their time and treasure.

Committed to the authority of God's Word.

Open to new ways of doing things, but always grounded in scripture and liturgy.

Caring and prayerful.

(Mostly) a joy to serve with!

There are wonderful opportunities opening up to develop evangelistic outreach in West Edinburgh and I believe that St T's is in a good place to do that.

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- Outgoing Rector, David McCarthy (unedited)