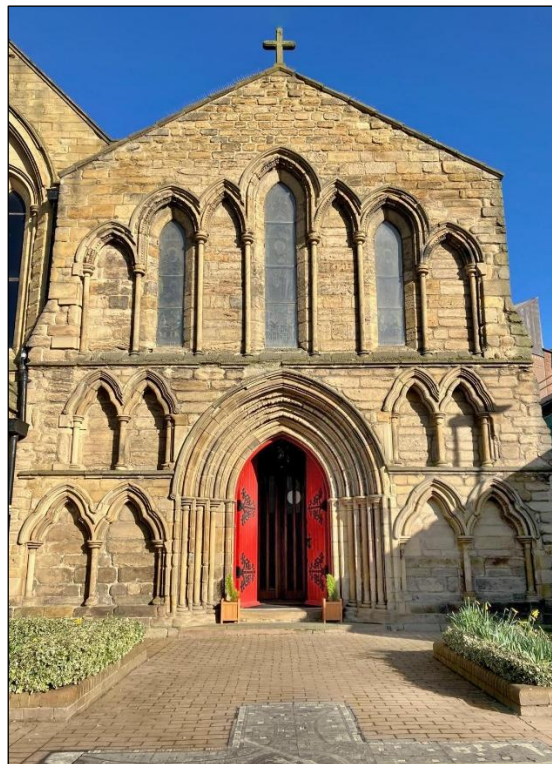


The Parish of Gateshead:
St James & St Bede, with St Edmund's Chapel
Parish Profile



March 2026

Introduction

Gateshead Parish is at the heart of Gateshead town centre and as a church community we have a heart for Gateshead. Our town is on the brink of significant change as the old flyover built in the 1960s will soon be taken down and the High Street is due to be redeveloped. We are praying for an incumbent who will help us think imaginatively about what God might be asking of us at this time.

We are a small and largely older congregation who love each other and our local community. New people have joined us for worship recently and we have a deep sense that God is doing something with us.

We are committed to supporting our new incumbent, working effectively together and partnering with others in our local community. We see our presence in the heart of Gateshead as a huge privilege, responsibility and opportunity in these changing times.



Image: satellite image of parish, taken from A Church Near You

① St James & St Bede Church Centre ② St Edmund's Chapel

About the Parish

The parish of Gateshead is in central Gateshead, bordered by the River Tyne, and contains Gateshead town centre. The area is served by the Metro and has good travel links. Gateshead Civic Centre, Police HQ and Law courts lie within the parish, as well as the headquarters of various businesses and local charities.

With the imminent demolition of the Gateshead Flyover there is a growing momentum and opportunity for the redevelopment of the long-neglected High Street, searching for an identity as a 'centre' for Gateshead.

In common with many town centres Gateshead has contrasting rich and poor areas. Accommodation varies from traditional terrace housing to modern river front apartments. There is student accommodation for Northumbria University and there are new estates recently built or under construction on old industrial land.

Gateshead College (Further Education) is within the parish and there are two primary schools, two health centres and various care homes.

Parts of the Quayside have been redeveloped with arts facilities over the past 30 years: notably the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and the Glasshouse International Centre for Music. Gateshead International stadium lies within the parish and the Sage arena and conference centre is also planned. Some industrial estates remain along the quayside – a reminder of Gateshead's significant manufacturing past.

According to the latest available data, the current population of the parish is 10,364. However, with the new estates this is likely to rise. In overall deprivation, Gateshead Parish ranks 566 out of 12,239, where 1 is the most deprived. There is a gap between the high-profile Quayside development and the everyday lives of many local people. Pensioner Poverty is higher than both Child Poverty and Working-Age Poverty. Life expectancy is among the lowest in Durham Diocese for both boys and girls. One-in-five left school with no qualifications. At 18%, the ethnic diversity of the parish is around the median across the Diocese as a whole.

About the Churches (Buildings)

The St James & St Bede Church Centre (SJB) and St Edmund's Chapel (SEC) lie about half a mile from each other on either side of the flyover. They have jointly served Gateshead Parish since the 1980s, following the closure of several other Gateshead churches. Through the '90s-'00s, there was a breaking down of the us-and-them divide between the two congregations, such that we now see ourselves as one church with two places of worship.



St James and St Bede Church centre

Photos taken by Rev Andrew Dowsett as part of our Vacancy Audit process

The **St James & St Bede Church Centre (SJB)** (originally a nineteenth century church hall) is accessible, in good condition and has a large kitchen. It is well used by various community groups.



The building is on a sloping site and the lower level is let to a Veterans group, 15 hours/week.

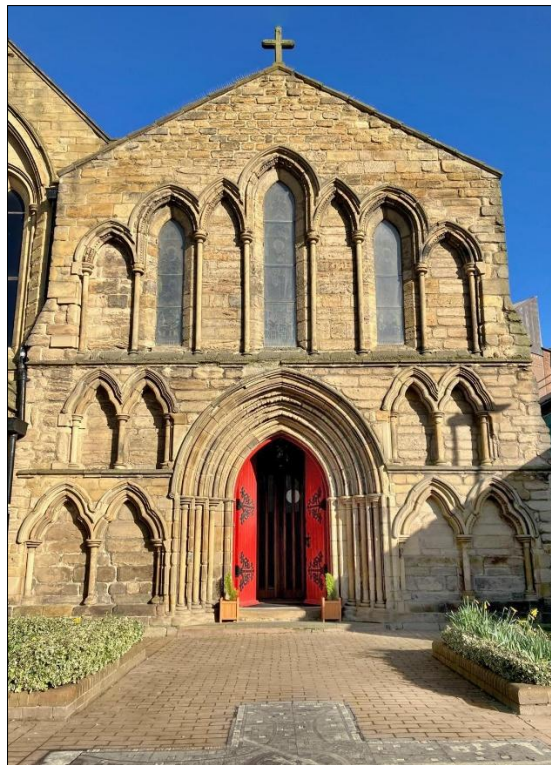


The upper level includes a large and flexible nave, which is used by church and community groups 35 hours/week. The photo shows Frets on the Tyne guitar group.

There are also two rooms to the front of the church: one is used as the vestry and office and the other has a sink and offers a quiet space which is ideal for small meetings.

Two regular acts of worship (one Anglican, one Eritrean) take place each week, both on Sundays.

St Edmund's Chapel (SEC) on the High Street was built in 1248 as a pilgrim chapel. It has Grade 1 listing and is the oldest building still in use in Gateshead. This is of massive psychological importance to our congregation, and of heritage significance to the wider community. The building is physically attached to the former Holy Trinity church, which Durham Diocese has let for some time to Gateway Dance Studios. This building is currently undergoing a Heritage Lottery Funded redevelopment, which will transform the site on the High Street. As part of this process, the Diocese is currently negotiating the sale of Holy Trinity to the dance studio. An accessible entrance to St Edmund's Chapel is part of the redevelopment plan.



St Edmund's Chapel main door

The church is currently used 11 hours/week, including three regular acts of worship (two Redeemed Christian Church of God, one Anglican).

Church Worship

Services of Holy Communion are held at St James & St Bede Church Centre at 10am on Sundays (lasting one hour), and at St Edmund's Chapel at 10am on Wednesdays (lasting half an hour), with the opportunity to stay for refreshments after both services. On occasion these are lay-led Services of the Word, and may include prayer for healing.



Midweek Holy Communion at St Edmund's

Our congregation have come from a wide variety of church backgrounds: some originally from St James or the Venerable Bede church with a high church tradition; others have belonged to non-conformist churches in the past. Our current worship is modern Catholic, but café church was very popular in the past. Alongside traditional Anglican worship we are open to trying new services which might reach out to different people.

Leadership is shared well across the congregation, including reading, leading intercessions and administering the chalice. We use the 'No organist No problem' music resource.

There are 26 on the electoral roll. 18 attend regularly on Sundays of whom most are over 60 and we have one teenager. From the Sunday congregation 9 also usually attend on Wednesdays.

In 2025 we had 3 funerals and no baptisms. It is likely we will have baptisms in 2026. There are very few marriage services conducted at either church.

In addition, both buildings host worship held by other denominations. The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG, a Nigerian denomination) Living Assembly meet in St Edmund's Chapel on Saturdays and Sundays. An Eritrean Church (part of Beth Christos, Newcastle) meet in St James & St Bede on Sunday afternoons. These arrangements have been broadly positive, but not without tensions, mostly due to cultural differences relating to expectations and communication.

At SEC there is an annual service held in July with the St Vincent de Paul Society of Newcastle Catholics to commemorate the martyr Blessed John Ingram.

At SJB there are annual Carols by Candlelight and Christmas Eve Christingle services, both of which are well attended. The RCCG congregation has joined with the host congregation, taking part in carol services at SJB,

There are also regular services at the St Mark's and Marigold care homes, and home communions, taken by one of the churchwardens. In addition we are linked to the King James' Hospital Almshouses and hold occasional services there.

We are well-connected with Gateshead Deanery; one of our churchwardens is the Lay Chair. We have greatly appreciated the support of deanery clergy through our vacancy.

Finances

Gateshead Parish Finances are stable. Income/expenditure is usually around £40-45k, and in recent years there have been modest surpluses or deficits. Income is predominantly from planned giving and rents. Planned giving rests largely on a small number of generous givers, and rental income is mainly from a few significant sources – so income is vulnerable to change. Expenditure is dominated by parish share and utility costs, with some spend on insurance and wages. General funds are around £10-15k and restricted funds around £90k, with funds dedicated to building improvements, relief of those in need, etc. There has been no significant building spend in 2025 but in recent time spend of around £5k has been made on both buildings. There is no 'sinking fund' to

provide for future works. The Parish Share requested by the diocese is not fully paid, but paying it in full is an aspiration. Fundraising for and spending money on building works at St Edmunds Chapel associated with the Gateway project is likely to be a significant feature and a small group is already thinking about this.

How we engage with Diocesan Priorities

Energising Growth:

Both of our weekly services have welcomed new people in the last 12 months who have now become regular. Our Christmas services attract many family members, friends and people from the local community who don't attend weekly.

There is good community engagement, with several different church and non-church groups using the church centre and the Chapel. These include Slimming World; Irish dancing; knit & natter; an art club; Pensioners' club and Frets on the Tyne guitarists. The Veterans' group at SJB operates a weekday Warm Space and signposting to other support. Members of the congregation are involved in some of these groups, and regular coffee mornings at SJB enable further conversation. On Remembrance Day 2025 the Veterans asked for help to arrange a service at the nearby War Memorial. This was well attended and much appreciated.

In the recent past one of our churchwardens has sent out daily texts sharing the words of Jesus and has built up a mailing list of people who receive these encouragements. This may be developed in the future.



Irish Dancing



Slimming World



The Art Club

Caring for God's Creation: We are newly registered with Eco Church and accredited with the Bronze award. There is some, but not a lot, outdoor space at both churches. We are committed to continue to engage with this aspect of ministry. The Gateshead East cemetery (now closed) is very close to SJB and is a potential resource for engaging with creation.

Engaging with children, Youth and Young Adults: The church has links with South Street Primary School and Bede Primary School and has managed to maintain these links through the vacancy. The schools have both fully embraced and welcomed the opportunity to come along to church for teaching on baptism and marriage. With our previous incumbent they have also attended sessions on Experiencing Christmas and Easter and a moving on session for Year 6 children.

Gateway Dance Studios, who operate from the former Holy Trinity church adjoining SEC, is a local charity working with young people. There may be scope for partnership with them here as they develop and grow. There is a shared awareness of local people, especially young people, having become detached from the simple message of Jesus' love and their worth, with wellbeing providing a point of connection.

Challenging Poverty: We are aware that ‘loneliness is a killer’ in Gateshead, and share this with other stakeholders on Gateshead High Street. Church-run activities such as the coffee mornings held every other month seek to address this. The community groups that take place in both church buildings are also part of addressing social isolation.



Knit and Natter at SEC



Coffee morning at SJB

In relation to food poverty, we support the local food bank, both practically and financially. In relation to housing insecurity, we support Oasis Housing, again both practically and financially. There are other partnerships within the parish: ecumenical with the Salvation Army and within the ‘Friends of Gateshead Town Centre’ group of local businesses.

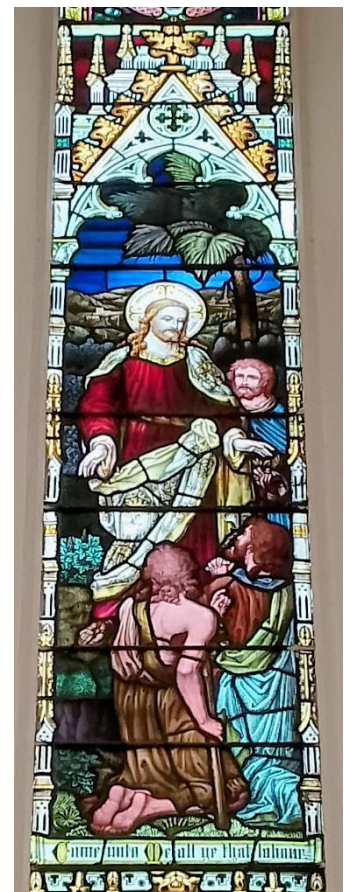
About the Future

We are conscious that central Gateshead is approaching a time of great change as the flyover will soon be demolished, and the High Street redeveloped. Our church buildings lie about half a mile from each other on either side of the flyover and so are in key positions for what comes next. Indeed St Edmund's opens directly onto the High Street. Just as the town centre is searching for a new identity we are aware of our need to be ready to change the way we minister in the new situation. We would like the church buildings to be better used in the places where they are.

The Gateway Dance Studio next to St Edmund's is part of the new vision and there is fresh opportunity for the church to be part of it too. One of our churchwardens describes this as 'a sense of something wonderful going on.'

The relationship between the church and dance studio owners is good, and there is good reason to believe that the project (and wider redevelopment of the surrounding area) will provide opportunity for St Edmund's Chapel to offer a spiritual resource for the community.

Within the Chapel the invitation of Jesus, 'Come unto me all you who labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest' is displayed, and we long for this to be more widely shared. There is scope within the regeneration of the High Street to reimagine St Edmund's Chapel as a centre offering hospitality to the 'spiritual, not religious' seeker; to offer a Listening space; perhaps to run a programme of conversations/Christian basics; or to operate as a chaplaincy to Trinity Square.



We have also recently learned of the 'Faith in the North' initiative to encourage pilgrimage, and it would be wonderful if St Edmund's could once again operate as a pilgrim chapel (<https://faithinthenorth.org/pilgrim-places/>)

The Chapel also has potential as a small arts venue; the building regularly hosted concerts and art exhibitions before the pandemic.

St James and St Bede church is a more flexible space with a large kitchen which has been used in the past for the Holiday Hunger initiative. We would like to continue to use this resource in the service of the surrounding community, to engage with people living in some of the new housing, particularly the over 55s housing under construction near SJB.

We have good links with two primary schools and we would like to build on these if possible.

About who we need

We are praying for a priest

- who is prayerful and feels God calling them to Gateshead
- who understands urban ministry and working within an area of deprivation and poverty
- who is down to earth, caring, listening, real and honest who will grow to love us and whom we will love and support
- with a good sense of humour and who is happy to muck-in!
- who is approachable and friendly and who can relate to all ages and all sorts of people, ideally including people from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- who will help us grow together as the body of Christ, deepen our love for each other and our outreach into the communities of our parish.
- with some experience of working collaboratively to empower and enable each member of the congregation to discover their calling and ministry.

Above all we are praying for someone who will help us to pray and discern God's way forward; who will help us imagine / discover a new identity at this moment of significant change in our parish and who will help us to bring about the change we need and want to see.

Our Assets

Despite the small size of our electoral roll and congregation we were greatly encouraged through the process of our Vacancy Audit, and we believe we have significant assets! Most of the following list were pointed out to us by our Vacancy Audit facilitator. We have:

- A thirteenth century chapel which is an Anglican presence in the heart of Gateshead where weekly services are held.
- A small congregation with a strong sense of mutual care who are both deeply faithful to, and actively involved in, the life and mission of the church in the local community.
- A strong sense of ministry to and within the community ('working with' rather than 'working for').
- A genuinely brilliant and passionate PCC with healthy relationships between members.
- Office holders with personal integrity who lead by example. We have two churchwardens, a Treasurer and Parish Safeguarding Officer; all are committed and bring significant experience to their roles.
- We hold to the ethos of Inclusive church, although we are not signed up officially
- A vicarage within the parish.
- A parish administrator who works 4 hours/week.
- Good links with many in the local community.

We are a genuinely supportive congregation and we would want to encourage any future incumbent to take their days off and holidays, to take time for prayer, retreat and spiritual direction and to be available to their nearest and dearest.

Details

If you think God might be calling you to work with us please contact Ven Katherine

Bagnall Archdeacon.of.Sunderland@durham.anglican.org

We would love to meet you.