



St Gabriel's Church
Sunderland

Parish Profile

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Welcome

Welcome to our Parish!

We are looking forward to welcoming a new priest to St Gabriel's, an evangelical church prominently situated at a busy crossroads a little over a mile from Sunderland city centre.

In our socially and ethnically diverse parish there are many challenges to outreach but this also means there are wonderful opportunities to share with people the Good News of Jesus Christ. We are ready to support and work with someone who will lead us into a new stage of growth in St Gabriel's and also social action in our community. We want to move forward in mission locally and in God's worldwide church.

We keep in mind the Diocesan Priorities of Challenging Poverty, Energising Growth, Caring for God's Creation, and Engaging with Children, Youth and Young Adults, and want to find fresh ways to pastorally and spiritually care for our older members whilst reaching out to new families and youth and upholding them all in their journeys with Jesus.

We look for someone who will encourage not only our service and teamwork but also our prayer life. We do not expect a priest to do everything for us but to inspire us to extend God's kingdom in our community.

We hope to be a blessing to whoever joins us in this vision and to become a church of true welcome to all.



Our Vision and Values



St Gabriel's Church

Our Vision

- W**orship
- E**ncouraging
- L**earning
- C**aring for our local community
- O**pen to the Holy Spirit
- M**oving into mission
- E**quipping disciples

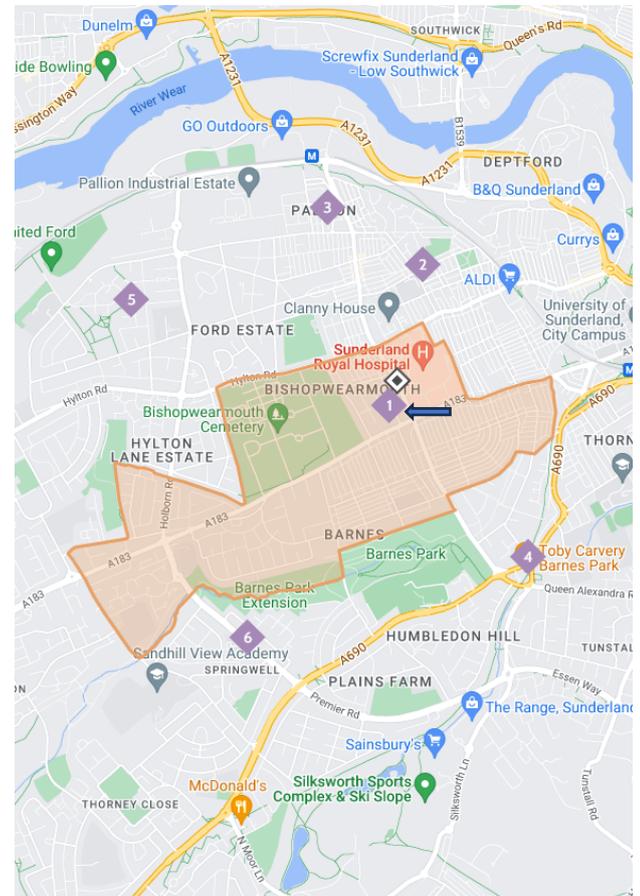
Our vision statement greets everyone as soon as they enter the church.

These are the aims we are striving for and all contribute to welcoming people into the Kingdom of God and supporting them as they grow in Christ.

Our Parish

The Parish of St Gabriel Bishopwearmouth is located to the west of Sunderland City Centre and is part of the Wearmouth Deanery. It consists of mainly residential streets but also includes Sunderland Royal Hospital, a Library which is run by volunteers, several primary schools, shops and Care Homes.

It is a diverse and mixed population consisting of various denominations and cultures. It is served by an excellent Public Transport system which takes you into the City Centre and also has a Metro which links us to train services and Newcastle airport.



Our Congregation

We are a friendly and welcoming evangelical church whose purpose is stated as being 'A living church, whose members seek to serve and worship Christ in the power of the Spirit, to the glory of God the Father', and to minister to the needs, especially the spiritual needs, of our local community and our church members.

In particular, we want to communicate the Christian gospel effectively to those around us. Although we have an older congregation, we are seeing growth and have had some younger members joining us recently, and we encourage those of all ages who want to take a more active role in the church's life and worship. The wide range of our congregation reflects different backgrounds, some remembering fondly the charismatic revival of the 1970s but others leaning towards more formal reflective styles of worship. Most are open to new expressions and the inclusion of cultural diversity.

Safeguarding is an integral part of the life and ministry of the church and we have an experienced and committed PSO and Deputy who keep the PCC and congregation well-informed. We aim to maintain a safe, nurturing and caring environment for everyone.



Worship

In any 'normal' year our **usual pattern of services** would be:

Sundays

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (first Sunday of the month)
- 10.30 am Holy Communion / Morning Prayer / Baptism / All Age Worship
- 2.00 pm Baptism by arrangement

Wednesdays

- 10.00 am Holy Communion (second and fourth Wednesday of the month)

Our Seasonal Services include:

- Eco Sunday
- Good Friday Reflection
- Healing Service
- Memorial Service
- Animal Blessing
- Harvest
- Remembrance Day
- Safeguarding Sunday
- Christingle Service
- Toy Service
- Carol Service
- Crib Service

At St Gabriel's we strive to make worship a joyful celebration of the Gospel and we use a wide range of styles from the Prayer Book, used for fortnightly Wednesday Holy Communion, to relaxed all-age services with more modern liturgy.

Our Curate (SSM) reintroduced 8.00 am Holy Communion on the first Sunday of every month, and we have 10.30 am Holy Communion twice a month, led by her or visiting priests (with whom we have built up wonderful relationships). The last Sunday of the month is usually given to baptisms and this service is very much geared to visitors who may be in church for the first time. In addition to Morning Prayer, which is often led by our Lay Readers, we have a range of special services. Once a year the Memorial Service ministers to those who have lost loved ones and is much appreciated. Our service of Wholeness and Healing is also encouraging and moving.

We invite representatives from our tithe charities to come and give insight into their current projects. We give a warm welcome to our CMS missionaries Andy and Kati Walsh when they are in the UK, as well as posting their letters on the notice board. Our Remembrance Day service is always well attended and we have 4 parade services a year when the uniformed groups join us.

Last year saw two innovations – Eco Sunday which will now be an annual event and the Animal Blessing Service, a happy and beautiful time for those who brought their pets.

We also involve the congregation, so it is not a passive experience. Many participate in leading intercessions or giving the Bible readings but we also include, from time to time, a testimony or hymn choice, singing by the children and solos from adults. Musical accompaniment ranges from use of the screen to traditional organ, from guitar to keyboard.

We are open to new creative ways of enhancing worship. We are glad that we have been able to include people from Iran, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Pakistan and India in active roles. We also include contributions from children when appropriate so that they feel part of the main church. In everything we do we hope to put Jesus at the centre.



Our Mission

Whilst we recognise our limitations with regard to the age of the congregation and experience of evangelism, many of our newcomers and some of our older members are keen to develop their gifts and to reach out to the community. We hope our new priest will lead us into a period of missional rejuvenation and help us to work together on strategies relevant to the needs around us.

In particular, we would like to focus on engaging with youth and young families, building up discipleship and training in leadership, and establishing St Gabriel's as a multicultural centre of mission.

In the past we ran very successful Toddler groups and we have been advertising for a new leader to start this again. This would provide ways to continue relationships with baptism families as well as serving the local community. Eventually the group could bring more children into the Sunday School and introduce parents/carers to the church.

Our coffee mornings are proving popular. They provide opportunities for many to socialise as well as for church members to get to know one another. We would like to extend the range, possibly holding a midweek coffee morning in church, advertised locally. Other ideas include an 'International Café' to which students and NHS staff could be invited, and coffee mornings with themed exhibitions.



Our Curate (SSM) has started to lead Holy Communion services in the local care homes, Barnes Court and Sycamore Lodge, to which all residents are welcome. It is also hoped links with local schools can be further developed after the long pause during the pandemic.

There are many groups who use our halls and rooms and, whilst we want to share the Good News with these people in our community, we want to do this in a sensitive manner. We hope our new priest will help us find ways to show what St Gabriel's has to offer.

We support global mission in many ways – through special appeals and also our tithe giving. We draw attention to news from our Compassion child, Isaac, in Guatemala and from our CMS missionaries Andy and Kati Walsh in Brazil. We hope that our Global Mission group will be able to restart and take these relationships forward as well as highlighting new ways to help our brothers and sisters in the persecuted church.

Courses to enhance growth would be welcome, e.g. Alpha for enquirers or 'Talking Jesus' for those needing more confidence in sharing their faith. We currently have a monthly afternoon Bible Study, led by one of our Lay Readers, but during Lent we usually run an evening course. We would be delighted for Bible teaching to be expanded.

However, we realise that undergirding all ventures, old and new, there must be prayer. Our hope is that the new priest will stimulate enthusiasm for corporate as well as private prayer so that together we may discern God's will for the next steps. At the moment the weekly prayer group is small in number, though faithful in commitment.



Community Engagement

We have started to develop ventures again since the pandemic and are hoping to gain new vision for this over the coming year.

Gifted Gabes, our craft group, meets every week and is growing in size: their creative talents are often displayed in our grounds and buildings.

Ladies' Fellowship gets together every fortnight, Mothers' Union once a month and our coffee mornings provide an opportunity for church members to invite friends and neighbours.

We want our church as well as our buildings to be a hub for the community. Every year Bishopwearmouth Co-operative Garden Centre arranges a beautiful Easter garden at the back of church and this has become a lovely tradition.





In addition to hosting local choirs and Sunderland Symphony Orchestra, we are deepening our relationship with the staff and chaplaincy at Sunderland Royal Hospital and hosted their celebration Carol service at Christmas.

Our Jubilee and Coronation parties have been attended by many people, even the Mayor, and have been times when the community can come together to share food and fun.

The Church forms links international, national and local through our tithe and charity giving. In Sunderland we have developed a relationship with Ashkirk House Homeless Household Project and the families they support receive gifts from our annual Toy Service Appeal. We donated to the Trussell Trust Foodbank at Bethany City Church in our Harvest Appeal.



We have started on the journey to becoming an Animal Friendly and Eco Church. This is focussing mainly on worship at the moment with Animal Blessing and Eco services but we want to make the church gardens a place where the community can enjoy nature and wildlife.



Youth and Families

Sunday School takes place on a Sunday morning starting at the same time as the morning service. There are approximately 8 children who attend regularly with ages ranging from 5 years old to 15 years old, and a group of 5 leaders who volunteer on a rotational basis. One Sunday a month we are piloting a Messy Church scheme with the help of Wearside Youth for Christ, with the aim to add variety for those children already attending and to attract new children.



There are a good number of uniformed organisations for children and youth, some of which are often oversubscribed. The groups are Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Rainbows, Brownies (2 groups), Guides, Rangers. All the groups are invited to take part in church parade family services 4 Sundays a year. Most of the children at Sunday School are also members of one of these groups. The Crib Service every Christmas Eve is always very well attended by the local community and it has become part of the Christmas tradition for some local families.

Barnes Infant Academy and Barnes Junior School are in the parish. Historically there have been links between the church and the schools where clergy have sat on the board of governors. We were pleased to welcome their first visit since Covid this year and we hope our new priest will further develop a relationship with the local schools.

Finance for Mission

There is no doubt the people of St Gabriel's have kind hearts. In every specific appeal or charity fundraiser they show a loving and generous response. We saw this particularly in our Heating Appeal which has raised over £30,000 for a more energy-efficient heating solution – a project which we hope to bring to fruition in the near future. However, we have also seen a continued downward trend in planned and regular giving over the past decade. This is, in part, due to the demographic of the church. Most members are over retirement age. Gift Aid, whilst well subscribed to by those who are eligible, is not possible for those who are not taxpayers. Any legacies left to the church tend to be small amounts and are few and far between.

Our finance team consists of the Treasurer and a Gift Aid Officer who takes on the administration for both the Envelope and Parish Giving Schemes. The Treasurer presents detailed monthly breakdowns of income and expenditure to the PCC and there is always an opportunity for trustees to ask questions. We endeavour to promote accountability and transparency in all financial dealings. The PCC places great importance on our tithing to The Leprosy Mission, The Bible Society, CMS, Tearfund, CSW, Wearside Youth For Christ, Durham Lesotho Link and Compassion, through which we sponsor Isaac in Guatemala. There is openness to funding future mission possibilities at St Gabriel's.

We are a church with a significant estate. Whilst a large portion of our income comes from the hire of our buildings, this, in turn, means there is a big financial implication in terms of maintenance of these older buildings. Many building issues, which have not been able to be tackled in the last 10 years, are now coming to the fore and are a drain on our current resources. Energy costs are also a significant concern. We would like to see the amount we can give in Parish Share grow in the coming years as we are currently only paying approximately half our Guided Pledge.

We are taking steps to try to promote a positive attitude to giving. We have recently invested in a contactless donation station and are also looking into ways to receive donations online. We never disregard the power of prayer in our financial situation and trust that God will guide us in the way He wants St Gabriel's to go forward.

Buildings for Mission

The site consists of a main Church Building from 1912, which is Grade 2 listed. It contains all the usual areas including an individual toilet in the Narthex. The building includes an Underchurch area with kitchen and toilet facilities.

Separate on site are:

A Church Hall building in sandstone with attached two modern classrooms, catering kitchen and toilet facilities.

The old Curate's and Caretaker's House, which is split into two flats and tenanted.

The Men's Institute built in 1920 for the men of the parish who returned from the Great War. This building houses three Snooker tables and a Table Tennis room.

The main Church Building is utilised for normal Worship Services, Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals and one-off events.

The Hall, classrooms and Underchurch are in use 90% of the week and rented to a variety of Community Groups (amongst other things activity classes, dog training and meals for the needy of the parish) and Church and uniformed organisations. There is a staged area in the Hall where groups such as Riding Lights have performed. We endeavour to support organisations such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous and other addiction-focused groups who use our premises.





Future use of these buildings needs to continue as, at present, the Church is reliant on the income from their use to continue to offer Worship, Prayer and Outreach/Mission.

The Church Buildings are mainly in good condition and no major items are outstanding from the 2018 Quinquennial Report, with the next one due in September 2023. All areas are accessible to disabled users.



There is an active Buildings Committee who have established a Priority List for a repairs and renewals programme, as and when funds allow.

The separate Men's Institute has its own committee but the PCC are responsible for the buildings, insurance and overall running.



We are registered as an Eco Church and have plans to find a more energy-efficient way of heating our church.



St Gabriel's Vicarage

The vicarage is located just across the road from the church complex. It is a pleasant, large two-storey detached house in its own grounds.

On the ground floor there are three sizeable rooms, comprising a reception room, a dining room and a study, respectively. There is also a large kitchen with a utility room. On the upper floor there are five bedrooms, separate bathroom and toilet, and airing/storage cupboards.

The house has UPVC double glazing and gas central heating.

There are gardens to the south, west and east sides. On the north side there is a concrete yard area with space for two or three cars, a garage and some outhouses.



Our New Priest



We are praying for a priest willing and able to:

- support and develop a wide range of styles of worship
- maintain a safe and welcoming environment for people of all ages, backgrounds and race
- give pastoral care and prayer to those in need
- work with us to reach out to our local community in a variety of ventures – the Gospel in action
- encourage and develop exploration of the Scriptures so that we grow in our discipleship and the prayer life of the church blossoms
- help members of the congregation develop their ministries and gifts and include children in all aspects of church life

We are praying for a priest who is:

- a person of prayer, humility and integrity, open to the leading of the Holy Spirit
- an effective team leader, enabling all in our church to work together in a shared vision
- a compassionate and experienced listener as well as an energetic pioneer, especially in mission
- a Bible teacher, keen to promote learning and to support the healing ministry and Eco-awareness
- confident with modern technology and social media
- committed to building relationships with local care homes, schools and businesses.