

St Mary's Parish Church Whitegate



NEWS FOR SEPTEMBER 2026



Our cover photo

Anne and John Blayney write:

We have been so blessed to have Canon Paul Dawson as vicar of St Mary's, Whitegate and St Peter's, Little Budworth for the last 7 years.

On Sunday 2nd August the two churches met together at St Peter's for a Lammastide service, a revival of an ancient tradition giving thanks for the beginning of the grain harvest.

This was also our opportunity to wish Paul and Fiona farewell as Paul led us in worship for the last time. The church was packed with many well-wishers, including members of their family to mark this momentous occasion, as not only was Paul leaving us but he was also retiring after many years serving in the Church of England. It was a joyous service with many different people playing a part. The choir, brought together for the service, sang an anthem written especially for Paul and Fiona by Andrew Millinchip, our Director of Music. Paul preached, crafting stories of his time working for the Bishop of Liverpool into another thought-provoking sermon. The service was followed by a bring-and-share lunch, with tables laden with treats, and much happy fellowship.

We want to thank them both for choosing to come to our small part of Cheshire. We wish them every happiness as they move nearer to their family in Chester and hope they very much enjoy retired life. We wish them all God's blessings in the future.

Weekly Reading Sheets: www.stmaryswhitegate.org/

Readings and prayers for September services are on the website. Each service sheet contains the readings and prayers specific to that Sunday. If you don't see the sheets straight away on the Home page, click on the Blog button, top right.

Mothers' Union. If you happen to be a member of the MU, please note the appeal, under CONTACTS, for someone to act as the Contact person. Have a word with Eileen Lees if you are potentially interested and willing to take this on.



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September Diary

1st	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsideside	L.B. Methodist Chapel
2nd	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
3rd	10.30 am	First Thursday Café	The Mews
6th	9.30 am	Feast of St Mary Family Service	St Mary's
8th	2.00 pm 7.30 pm	Bible Study at Commonsideside PCC Meeting	L.B. Methodist Chapel The Mews
9th	9.00 am 10.00 am 12.00 noon	Men's Breakfast Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	Village Restaurant, Blakemere The Mews St Mary's
13th	9.30 am	Trinity 15 Holy Communion	St Mary's
15th	2.00 pm 2.00 pm	Pastoral Committee Bible Study at Commonsideside	Dairy Cottage L.B. Methodist Chapel
16th	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
19th	3.00/3.30 pm	Pimms and Hymns	St Mary's
20th	9.30 am 9.30 am	Trinity 16 Morning Prayer Storytelling Service	St Mary's The Mews
22nd	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsideside	L.B Methodist Chapel
23rd	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
26th	9.00 am onwards	Church Big Clean – with Pastoral Lunch in The Mews c12.00 noon.	Church/The Mews
27th	9.30 am	Trinity 17 Holy Communion	St Mary's
29th	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsideside	L.B Methodist Chapel
October 4th	9.30 am	Trinity 18 – Harvest Festival Family Service	St Mary's

Whitegate Harvest Supper – Saturday 10th October

This event brings together supporters from church and village and promises a lively and delicious evening of good fun in great company. Everyone welcome!

On the menu, beef hotpot or vegetarian option, followed by apple crumble or pavlova. During the evening there'll be a game or two, and a quiz. The organisers are working hard to make it a night to remember. Don't miss it. 6.15 pm in the School Hall.



Pastoral letter from Jane...

*All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.*



This is the first verse of a very popular hymn which reminds us that God's love, power, and wisdom remain constant and secure, guiding us through both good times and unpredictable challenges. This is perhaps a reminder that we need in particular at this time.

September always means a lot of change. Children go to new schools or have new teachers. Young people go off to university. Parents have to adapt to a new normal. This year, however, in our benefice, we are going through a particularly big change. After 7 years as our vicar, Paul has now retired. He and Fiona have moved to their new home in Chester, and we move into a period of vacancy. We don't know who our next vicar will be, nor do we know how long we will have to wait, but we do know that there are those who will be working to sort this out as quickly as possible. In the meantime, the rest of us will be doing our best to keep everything in our church running smoothly.

Change and uncertainty can be stressful, but we can support each other by being patient and understanding, and all working together. You will probably remember Jesus' words to his disciples in John 13:

34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Let's take the opportunity of this time of transition to witness to our local communities both in terms of our love for each other in Christ, and in terms of our trust in God's unfailing love for us all.

Jane

Contacts

Vicar Vacant Please contact the Churchwardens with any queries.	Churchwardens Anne Blayney 07815 713012 Sandra Paskin 07950 125791
Curates The Revd Dr John Stopford 01606 558802 The Revd Jane Millinchip 07891 981293	Treasurers Gary Chadwick 07590 999169 Sarah Campbell-Woodward 01829 760438 treasurerwhitegatepcc@outlook.com
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NEWS Coordinator Roger Wilkes 01606 75738	Church Flowers Pam Davies 01606 557833
Mothers' Union The contact role for Mothers' Union is VACANT at present. Would any of the members be prepared to do that job?	Social & Fundraising Group John Blayney 07964 844642

An Important Message from Our Treasurers

St Mary's financial overview

It costs £1,800 per week to run our church. We bring in £1,300 per week. This calculation is taken from our income and expenditure analysis as at 31st May 2026. Our income in the first five months to the end of May was £27,348 and our expenditure was £39,456.

In common with other churches across the country St Mary's does not receive any central or government funding for the day to day running of the church. Our income comes from voluntary donations. To borrow a term from the BBC "we are funded by you".

We pay the diocese a "Parish Share", by far the largest portion of our expenditure. This predominantly covers the costs associated with clergy but also supports the diocese's

mission and ministry. Additionally, this contribution helps to sustain other parishes within the diocese. In 2025 St Mary's paid a parish share of £53,304. It is important to note that this amount increases annually, placing additional pressure on our finances and will continue to be paid during the parish vacancy.

We pay for a children's worker, an organist and a gardener to maintain the churchyard. We pay for gas, electricity, heating oil, insurance, organ tuning, general maintenance, safety checks and repairs, candles and more. . . . All from donations.

We look to make cost savings where we can, updating utility tariffs, entering into fixed price contracts to secure discounts or negotiating with suppliers and service providers. Last year we successfully claimed a VAT refund on some repairs to the value of £1,365 through the "Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme". This scheme has now been withdrawn by the government and replaced by the "Places of Worship Renewal Fund" that has limited funds and will prioritise churches (and other places of worship) in deprived areas. For us, this means our net costs for repairs will rise.

The cost of utilities has a significant impact on our resources. For example, in 2023 we spent £664 on electricity for the church, in 2025 we spent £1,104. In 2024 we spent £1,850 on oil to heat the church, in 2025 we spent £2747. Gas and electricity costs for The Mews have increased every year from 2022 when we spent £724, In 2025 we spent £1,687.

The principal source of income for St Mary's comes from planned giving, particularly through standing orders. To ensure the church's sustainability, we kindly ask you to consider setting up a regular donation if you have not already done so. For those who are already making contributions that way, we would be grateful if you could review your donation and, if possible, consider increasing the amount. We are aware that some standing orders were set up several years ago and may have lapsed or be due for renewal. If this applies to you, we respectfully request that you consider renewing your standing order.

If you are a UK taxpayer, Gift Aid allows St Mary's to increase your donation by 25% at no extra cost to you. By simply completing a Gift Aid form, the church can claim this valuable benefit on your behalf.

We sincerely hope you are able to support our efforts to keep St Mary's viable and functioning, so it can continue to serve and benefit the whole community. Thank you for your consideration and generosity.

If you have any questions or you would like to set up a standing order, please email treasurerwhitegatepcc@outlook.com.

Practicalities for St Mary's During the Vacancy

Whilst we are without a vicar, we as your churchwardens are your first point of call. Our phone numbers are in the Porch, in the News, and on the website.

Our pattern of services will remain the same. We are very fortunate that we have two clergy, Jane Millinchip and John Stopford, who, along with Teresa Finney, are willing to lead our worship. Occasionally we will instead have a visiting member of the clergy who will officiate for us. If there are any enquiries about baptisms or weddings, Jane will deal with these, while John will deal with all funeral enquiries.

Paul's retirement officially starts at the beginning of October (he is on annual leave and then pre-retirement leave before then). After that point we can advertise for a new vicar. A small sub-committee of the PCC (the two of us plus Julie Webb) have started work on creating our Parish Profile which is needed to advertise the post.

Before we can advertise for a new vicar, we need to think what we want from our next

vicar, and to be realistic about our future needs. Any decision about a new vicar will be made in collaboration with St Peter's. Before any decisions are made, we will provide an opportunity for everyone to learn more about the options ahead of us, and for all to offer their suggestions and opinions. We will take all of these into consideration.

As churchwardens we will have additional responsibilities during the vacancy. From time to time, small but important tasks will need doing in order to help the church to run smoothly. If you can help occasionally, please speak to us.

Your churchwardens, Sandra and Anne

THANK YOU

Fiona and I would like to say a very heartfelt thank you for your gracious and generous gifts on the occasion of our retirement and move to our new home. The final Sunday was a joyful occasion surrounded by friends and family. We count ourselves very fortunate to have been gifted the opportunity to spend the last seven years amongst you.

We are deeply appreciative of your presentation to fund a new summer house. We have always loved sitting outside but our new garden is too small for our existing summer house. Your kindness will be remembered every time we watch the sun set and enjoy a glass of something knowing we don't have to be up early the next day.

We wish you well in the times ahead and hope you will befriend and support your next incumbent as you have us.

As I write this it has been quite a week! Our final service with you and wonderful food afterwards. Moving house and discovering we have far too many things to fit into a much smaller house. And the arrival of our grandson, Tobias Christopher Paul Lodge, who decided to come a bit early and catch everyone on the hop. We might be slightly biased but he's the most wonderful little boy. Tobias derives from the ancient Hebrew name of Tobit, as in the Old Testament.

Thank you, not just for a wonderful send off but also for the years of friendship and shared service. This time has been a great blessing.

Yours

Paul and Fiona



From the *Social and Fundraising Committee* here is a reminder of

Hymns and Pimm's: 19th September 3.00pm in St. Marys Church, Whitegate.

Spend an enjoyable afternoon at the end of summer singing your favourite hymns while enjoying a glass of Pimm's.

Pimm's or non-alcoholic drinks will be served at 3.00pm, and you can join in singing the chosen favourite hymns from 3.30pm.

In preparation, a list of the 50 most popular hymns has been selected, and will be posted on the notice boards in church and The Mews. The list of hymns and voting slips will be in church, or obtained from a member of the church choir. The 10 most popular will be sung during the afternoon and additional glasses of Pimm's etc. will be available.

A box will be available in the church for the £1 voting slips and money, and you can vote as many times as you wish, or for your favourite as many times as you like, at £1 a time, but final choices must be made by **13th September** to allow for the 'hit parade' to be finalised.

This will be a cash only event, and entry tickets will be £5 each which includes the first drink. Extras can be purchased during the afternoon.

There will also be a raffle with tickets being sold on the day, so if you have any unwanted gifts in your drawer please let me have them and I can make up some prizes. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Carole Sweet 01606 883257

ST MARY'S WHITEGATE
PRESENTS

£5 PER GLASS

£1 PER VOTE

PIMM'S
-and-
HYMNS

SATURDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER
Pimm's @ 3.00pm | Hymns @ 3.30pm

SING YOUR TOP 10 FAVOURITE HYMNS WITH A GLASS OF PIMM'S, AS VOTED BY YOU.
£1 PER VOTE - VOTING FORMS AVAILABLE IN CHURCH.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT
CAROLE SWEET 01606 883 257

www.stmaryswhitegate.org CASH ONLY PLEASE