

St Thomas and St Edmund, Salisbury

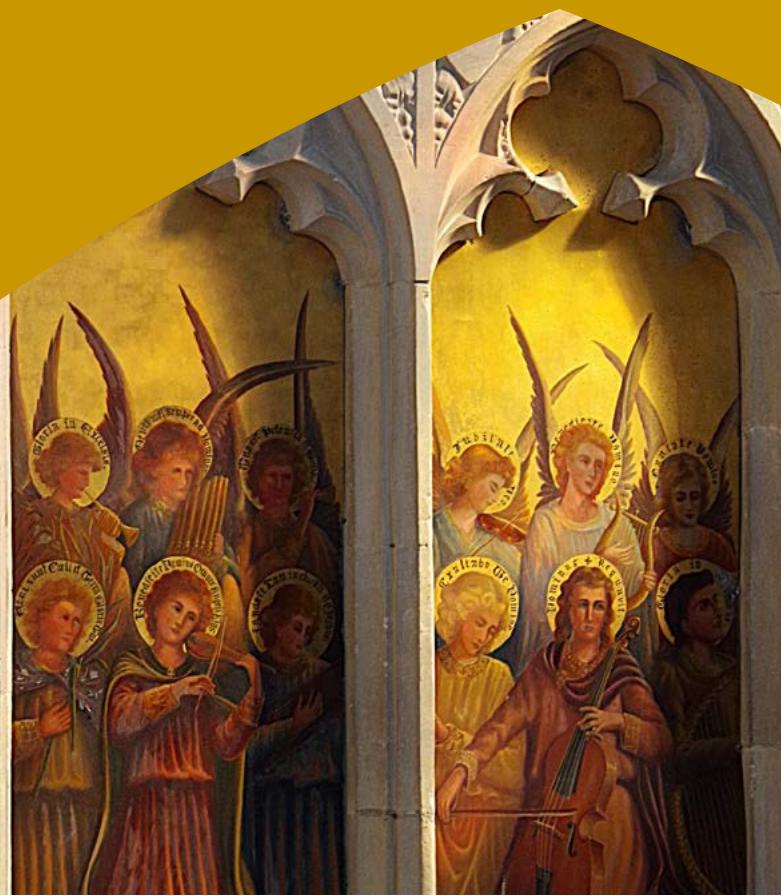
PARISH PROFILE



stthomassalisbury.co.uk

The Church of Angels

*Here are some
of our 238!*



Our recent renovation programmes have brought to life some of our older medieval angels (with some still waiting a much needed clean). This work is part of our ongoing work to maintain and enhance our wonderful heritage.

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Prayer for the vacancy

God our Father,
you have called us to be your people in this place,

We ask you to send us a new rector:
who loves you; is faithful and prayerful;
who will teach your Word;
who has real love for people;
who will lead your church effectively.

Guide all who will help to find this person, and send us,
not the person we think we want,
but the person you know we need
to help us fulfil your plans for us in the days and years ahead;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen



St Thomas's Church as seen from the Cathedral Tower

Letter from Bishop Andrew

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in the post of Rector of St Thomas and St Edmund, Salisbury: part of the See of Ramsbury in the Diocese of Salisbury. This is a super opportunity for incumbency in the beautiful heart of our cathedral city. With an established and excellent reputation in the wider civic community, St Thomas' offers a growing and committed team, with much local support from retired and assistant clergy.

I am looking for devoted and visionary clergy, who can inspire and lead our churches in Making Jesus known – our diocesan vision. While Wiltshire can appear a timeless landscape, our parishes are constantly changing to meet the needs of their people, and to proclaim afresh the good news of God in Christ.

In the Diocese of Salisbury, we place a high value on the encouragement and pastoral support of our parish clergy and, should God guide you to serve here, you will become part of a committed and collaborative team.

Please contact the Archdeacon of Wilts, Ven. Louise Ellis, or my PA Lynne Archer, if you need any assistance with your enquiry - and be assured of my prayers as you seek the Lord's will for your future.

Sincerely in Christ,

Andrew Ramsbury



Letter from Rural Dean

Welcome to Salisbury Deanery

The Deanery consists of seven benefices each holding their own mission, based upon the Diocesan Vision to 'Make Jesus known'.

The city centre parish of St Thomas and St Edmund plays a crucial part in the flourishing of city centre life. Positioned next to the economic and cultural centres of the city, there are many opportunities for both mission and pastoral service to many different kinds of people. There are also many new builds in the centre of the city, providing new opportunities for outreach to a residential area.

The Deanery is in a new phase. Two large, gathered churches have received important funding from the national church with the aims of increasing mission to the missing generations, serving those in the community who are in debt, and providing authentic experiences of God through music and the arts, across the Deanery.

St Thomas is another gathered church in the centre of the Deanery; the only gathered worshipping community which names itself as Inclusive Church and holds a more traditional choral Eucharist at its heart. Many people attend for these reasons. It has developed Ecumenical links with the United Reformed and Methodist churches over many years. It also has a vital role in engaging with the Civic life of the city alongside the Cathedral.

The next Rector of St Thomas will play a crucial role in increasing its outward focus to support mission, inclusivity and ecumenism across the Deanery beyond its already embedded links with the Cathedral, possibly in the second round of Diocesan bids for National Church Funding.

During the next year or so, three new Incumbents will be appointed across the Deanery.

Deanery Chapter meets every month for mutual support, learning and prayer. A commitment to this fellowship is key to deepen relationships, to build trust and work in partnership as we witness to Christ in the twenty-first century.

Revd Becky Roberts,
Rural Dean





Procession from the Guildhall Square
following the Act of Remembrance 2025

Welcome to St Thomas's

We are a single, large church in the centre of Salisbury with a congregation that has rebounded after the problems of Novichok and Covid. Our congregation comes from the town centre as well as from suburbs and villages around Salisbury, and is comprised of people who value an inclusive, sacramental, liturgical tradition. In this respect we are distinctively different from all the other parish churches in Salisbury. We have a large choir of all ages who lead worship with music from the last 400 years.

We love our historic church with its outstanding Doom painting, and in the last ten years we have raised the funds and carried out a redevelopment programme of cleaning and reordering the church, replacing pews with benches and chairs, and installing a beautiful new nave altar and font.

Situated as we are in the centre of town, we are visited by many tourists and also by those seeking a place for quietness and prayer, and we try to keep our doors open safely each day to allow this.

We are the civic church of Salisbury and our rectors have worked hard to support our councillors and business community through personal contact and with services such as the Mayor Making, Remembrance and Carols for Busy People. Our new layout gives us greater flexibility, and our bookings for concerts as well as services are increasing.



How we see ourselves

To inform this profile the congregation and people in the wider community were asked to complete a survey which began by asking what characteristics of St Thomas's they valued most. St Thomas's choral tradition is widely enjoyed, and participation in the choir has attracted many of our families and young people.

We are a friendly congregation, and we value the welcome St Thomas's offers, expressed in our 10.15 Sunday service which is followed by coffee and a chat; our team of welcomers who are on hand during weekdays for visitors to the church; and our Tuesday and Saturday coffee mornings, which offer a sociable space for all visitors and church members. We have a lot of volunteers involved in all aspects of St Thomas's.

Springing out of a sense of belonging are groups that meet to pray and study: including weekday morning prayer, our Palmer groups and the Contemplative Community group. Lent is a time when we can deepen our faith through programmes of talks, and we hold an annual quiet day in September. We are a mature church, and we value sermons and teaching that challenge us.

St Thomas's congregation values inclusiveness and seeks to treat all people equally, irrespective of their disability, economic power, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity or sexuality. In 2015 St Thomas's registered its membership of Inclusive Church.

Our Mission Statement, developed in 2013, is:

Welcoming, Praying, Transforming.



The Tuesday and Saturday coffee mornings

Our vision for the future

We have come to the end of the re-development project, and we pray for a new vision for the way ahead. Our parish survey has revealed some shortcomings which we'd like to be addressed.

Our children's ministry needs more strategic thought. During the Sunday 10.15 service we run a Sunday School and a children's corner for the under 3s. While there are always children and young families at both of these, more strategic thought would support children's work and strengthen the involvement of young parents in our congregation.

During Covid some of our regular social events such as Care and Connect for older people fell into abeyance and have not been revived. Additionally our strong team of LPAs has dwindled to a small number doing much-valued hospital and pastoral visiting. There was a clear wish expressed in the parish survey for greater attention to our pastoral care work in support of our older members.

Another priority was a focus on education and spiritual development for the congregation – not as an add-on, but a lifelong journey.

A lot of newcomers come to our 10.15 service, and we give them a warm welcome, but we don't have a means of inviting their contact details and following up.

The survey revealed a clear preference for a continued choral tradition, enjoyed by the congregation as well as by the choir itself.

Also building on perceived strengths, we want to continue and develop our civic involvement, creating further links with the institutions of the city.

Our new rector

St Thomas is a large, friendly, inclusive city centre church, which has come well through the disruptions of Novichok and the pandemic and has successfully completed a major redevelopment project. We are looking to our new rector to bring their own gifts and creativity to the task of leading us into the next phase of our life together, both consolidating and building on the rich variety of our existing activities, and helping us to see and take advantage of the new opportunities for partnership and service that God may show us. We welcome applications from men and women.

Key qualities and competencies

- A person of faith and prayer
- Good communicator and preacher
- Approachable and welcoming
- Both consultative and able to lead
- A sense of humour

Role description

- Will value and enrich our church traditions, while proactively managing change
- Will foster and deepen spiritual development and theological understanding
- Will build on our work with children and their families
- Will support pastoral care within our church community
- Will reach out to the local community, helping us to connect further with our town.



Our parish in Salisbury

The city of Salisbury

Salisbury is situated at the meeting of five rivers surrounded by downland. This beautiful city was founded in 1220 when the Norman Cathedral on the fortified hill of Old Sarum was abandoned and the building of the new cathedral began a mile to the south. The city is an attractive mix of old and new, from the cathedral's spacious surrounds in the Close to the medieval chequers, or grid pattern of streets, and from the central market place and surrounding shops to pleasant and expanding residential areas

The majority of people work in or around the city, and some commute further afield. Salisbury is on the main railway line from London's Waterloo Station to Exeter and the West Country. The population of 41,820 is served by a good range of facilities with a fair range of shops. Larger shopping malls and department stores are available in Southampton (22 miles away) and Bournemouth on the coast (35 miles away).

There are several excellent cultural centres, including Salisbury Playhouse, the Arts Centre, Everyman Cinema and a five-screen Odeon Cinema. The newly reopened City Hall hosts varied popular events and there is a strong classical music presence in the city and surrounding areas. The Salisbury International Arts Festival is an annual event in June. Concerts take place in the festival and at other times. The Five Rivers Leisure Centre offers a range of sporting, fitness and community facilities.

Salisbury has a diversity of well-regarded state and independent schools and colleges with a range of FE and HE courses. Sarum College offers ecumenical education, ministry training, conference resources and also good facilities for bed and breakfast.

Salisbury District Hospital, a mile to the south-west, is connected by regular bus services. Its departments include a specialist burns and spinal injuries unit, accident and emergency and a palliative care unit.



Salisbury Baroque and the Farrant Singers perform Bach's B minor mass as part of Salisbury Musick 2025

The parish

The parish boundaries were reset in 1973 to form one single, and relatively small, parish of St Edmund's and St Thomas's. The church of St Edmund was then made redundant and became the Arts Centre. The parish mainly covers the centre of the city and comprises shops, offices and service businesses and also has areas of residential property. The latter is a mixture of some large houses, flats above retail premises, some alms houses and, in redevelopments such as the Old Infirmary, a range of flats and town houses.

The population of the parish is about 3815, including those who work in businesses and professions or are self-employed or retired. The latter group has considerably expanded in recent years because of the building of retirement complexes. Many people have concerns about the lack of affordable housing in Salisbury.

The electoral roll currently holds 194 named people, 134 of whom live outside the parish. The congregation has a range of people from different socio-economic groups, and the age profile includes many older members, although there are also some young families.

St Thomas's links with the civic community are very strong. The annual Mayor-making occurs in the church and Mayor and City Councillors usually attend services twice a year. There are also strong links with the business community, and St Thomas's has for many years funded an annual Business Excellence Award.

We have good links with city centre churches of other denominations – especially Salisbury Methodist Church and Salisbury United Reform Church – with whom we share some Lent and Holy Week services.

The Salisbury poisonings and Covid

In March 2018, two former Russian citizens living in Salisbury, Sergei and Yulia Skripal, were poisoned with Novichok nerve agent administered by Russian agents. This was followed in June 2018 by the death of Dawn Sturgess by the same means. The first two victims were discovered on a park bench 50m from St Thomas's, and in the following days and months several commercial buildings and areas of Salisbury were completely shut down while forensic and decontamination operations were completed. These events had a severe effect on the local economy and especially the tourist industry. The Rector, together with the Bishop of Salisbury, held a service of cleansing to reclaim the city for the common good, leading a procession and sprinkling holy water near to the site where the victims were discovered.

In January 2020 St Thomas's was closed for several weeks to complete the redevelopment project. It had only been reopened in its new format for a month, including a memorable Night of Music, when the measures to combat the spread of the Covid virus required St Thomas's to close again. During the months that followed, ingenious online services were devised, in particular involving young members and their families to illustrate sermons, and the mixing of choir members' recordings of hymns. As the clergy and congregation were gradually allowed to return, the live streaming of services has continued, a link with the worshipping community of St Thomas's that is much appreciated by those unable to attend in person.

In spite of these blows, the businesses of Salisbury have largely recovered and tourism is thriving. St Thomas's numbers have almost recovered since Covid.



Worship

Regular services

The character of the worship at St Thomas's reflects its strong Eucharistic and choral traditions and its role as a broad church. Common Worship and the Book of Common Prayer are both used, and vestments are worn at all Eucharistic services. Preaching reflects our Inclusive Church identity, and the congregation values a serious engagement with scripture and a range of styles of preaching. Communion is offered to anyone for whom receiving is their normal practice.

Normal Sunday worship comprises:

- 8.00 am Holy Communion, BCP (said)
- 10.15 am Parish Communion, Common Worship Order One (with full Choir)
- 6.00 pm Evensong, BCP

Attendance at the Parish Communion has been gently increasing to around 180 (plus others watching online). Attendance at 8am and 6pm is significantly lower than our main act of worship, with fewer than 20 at 8am, and 15-20 at 6pm in addition to the choir. Attendance in the evening rises significantly for special services such as the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed, and Advent and Christmas Carol Services. During the 10.15 am service there is a small Sunday School for 3 to 8 year olds in St Michael's Room, and younger children are provided for in 'Tommy's Corner'. Junior members of the choir also have their own provision during the sermon.

Choral Evensong on Sunday has sometimes been replaced by Iona, Taizé or Celtic services.

On Wednesdays there is an 8 am said Common Worship Communion service with about a dozen people attending. At 8 am on other weekdays, Morning Prayer is largely lay led, with 3 to 8 attending.

Advent and Christmas

This is an exceptionally busy time of the year:

- Candlelit carol services are held at 6 pm on Advent Sunday and the Fourth Sunday of Advent
- The Christmas Tree Festival is held in the first week of Advent (see p.21)
- A Christingle service is held on a Saturday afternoon during Advent
- Carol services are hosted for five schools and other organisations
- Carols for Busy People attracts a congregation of 400 for a lunchtime carol service followed by mince pies and mulled wine
- Midnight Mass is celebrated at 11.30 pm on Christmas Eve
- On Christmas Day there is a said BCP Holy Communion at 8 am, and a very well attended family friendly Parish Communion at 10.15 am.





Advent star

Lent, Holy Week and Easter

- On Ash Wednesday there is the imposition of ashes at the 8 am Communion service.
- In the evenings of Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday, the St Thomas's congregation joins with those of Salisbury Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church for a joint service.
- Holy Week includes a Palm Sunday procession from the Guildhall; the shared Eucharist on Maundy Thursday; on Good Friday a joint Family Service at the Cathedral in the morning and the sung Liturgy in St Thomas at 2pm; and the Liturgy of the Resurrection on Easter Day.
- Special services in Passontide in recent years have included music and readings for Passontide, a largely Silent Eucharist, the Stations of the Cross, Celtic Evening Prayer and sung Compline.

Civic services

Twice a year, the Mayor, City Councillors and civic guests process from the Guildhall to St Thomas's for a special 10.15 am service:

- Early in the year, Charter Sunday celebrates the granting in 1227 of a charter establishing the City, the Charter Market and the Charter Fair
- Mayor-making takes place In St Thomas's on a Saturday in May or early June, and the newly elected Mayor, Councillors and guests attend the 10.15 am service on the following day.

The Rector is also invited to civic events in the Market Square: blessing the annual Charter Fair in October; the launch of the Poppy Appeal; and the service on Armistice Day (in addition to Remembrance Sunday mentioned below).



Remembrance

- On All Souls Day there is a Commemoration of the Faithful Departed
- The church hosts a service for Salisbury Hospice around the same time for about 200 people
- On Remembrance Sunday the clergy and choir of St Thomas's support the Royal British Legion and Salisbury Council's service at the War Memorial in the Market Square, followed by a procession of military, the Mayor, Council officials and uniformed organisations to St Thomas's for a service of about 450 adults and young people.

Occasional offices

In 2024 there were 4 baptisms, 3 weddings and 18 funerals.

Clergy

St Thomas's is fortunate to be able to draw on the talents of several retired clergy with Permission To Officiate and also two clergy who are providing the main clergy support during the vacancy:



Br Tom Clammer OC

Br Tom Clammer OC served as a parish priest in Gloucester City and then in rural Gloucestershire before becoming Precentor of Salisbury Cathedral. He retired from stipendiary ministry in 2019 and now works freelance as a theological educator and spiritual director. He is a professed brother of the Anglican Order of Cistercians.



The Rev'd Selina Deacon

The Rev'd Selina Deacon, first trained as a nurse then, after her ordination, she was curate in Westbury and served 10 years in ministry in Trowbridge. After moving to Salisbury in 2017, she joined the St Thomas's team in 2019. Although now retired, she continues to be an active member of St Thomas's clergy team.

Lay ministers

Our three lay ministers, John Boylan (LWL) Terry Stanfield (LLM) and Sara Whitmarsh (LLM), preach and lead appropriate services, among other responsibilities. They are an invaluable support during the clergy vacancy. Lay ministers also visit residential homes and almshouses to lead worship and sometimes administer communion.

Supporting worship

St Thomas's is an active church with many volunteers who support the services in a variety of ways: as sidespeople and welcomers; by reading the scriptures and leading intercessions; as sacristans, servers and Eucharistic assistants; and as flower arrangers.

There is also a 'tech team' who manage the audio equipment and film the 10.15 service for those watching from home.

Vergers and caretaker

Three part-time paid vergers and a caretaker support services and prepare for events – the workload has grown as event bookings have increased. They perform a myriad tasks in keeping the church working, including locking and unlocking the church and keeping an eye on the churchyard.



The three vergers



St Thomas's Choir

Music at St Thomas's

Choir

St Thomas's has always had a strong tradition of music-making, and music is central to the vibrancy of its worship. John Dempster, our inspirational Director of Music, has been leading the choir since 2006, and our organist, Ute Schwarting, has been with us for the last five years. The choir leads the singing at our main morning service and also at Evensong. There are usually 20-24 in the choir, including 8-10 boys and girls. At these services we use the latest version of Hymns Ancient and Modern, so there is a variety of traditional and contemporary hymns. Anthems from the Cathedral repertoire are sung at every service. Some members of the choir also play musical instruments that provide a different dimension to our worship. Our junior choir gives enthusiastic performances at some services.

Every year, the choir sings Evensong at Salisbury Cathedral on the first Sunday after Christmas.

The choir is affiliated to the RSCM and the choristers follow the 'Voice for Life' scheme which allows them to develop and progress through the awarding of coloured ribbons. In addition, many choristers, both children and adults, have gained their Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards.



The organ

The historic organ, built in 1792 by Samuel Green for Salisbury Cathedral as a gift from King George III, was transferred to St Thomas's in the 1870s and substantially rebuilt by Messrs Conacher in 1897. Extensive rebuilding of the original complex tracker-action in addition to some enhancements were carried out in 2019, and the organ now provides a fine accompaniment for the choir and congregation, as well as being played for concerts.

The bellringers

St Thomas's has an active and enthusiastic team of bellringers who practise every Thursday evening and ring before the Sunday services and at weddings, festivals and civic occasions. Seven of the eight bells date from 1771 and the other, the largest, from 1716. They were refurbished at a cost of £35,000 in 2003-2004, with most of the money being raised by the team. The ringers appreciate the custom of the Evensong officiant visiting the tower before the service to say prayers with the team.

Concerts

Music is a very important contribution to the cultural life of the city and, during the summer months, we hold informal concerts every Saturday morning, inviting local musicians to perform. These concerts provide a platform for musicians such as folk groups, choirs, baroque ensembles and bands, and they have become a popular feature of Saturdays in Salisbury.

Since the completion of our redevelopment project (see p.22), our new concert dais has enhanced St Thomas's as a venue for local and visiting musicians. In the last four months of 2025, the church hosted 21 concerts and events, so the church is well-used as a performance space, as well as a place of worship.

The Christmas Tree Festival (see p.21) is another wonderful opportunity for local musicians to entertain the thousands of visitors who come to see the array of Christmas trees. During the six days of the Festival, we organise sixty different musical groups and individuals to play for our visitors, so the musical accompaniment is as much of an attraction as the decorated Christmas trees.





Contemplative Community

Our Community

The congregation at St Thomas's ranges from those who have been coming to St Thomas's for many years, and some who worshipped at St Edmund's before the parishes were merged to many who have come more recently bringing with them a variety of church experiences from high Anglican to evangelical and charismatic, and of other denominations.

Praying and transforming: Study, prayer and action

Many seeking to deepen their faith draw on the many opportunities available in person and online. Locally we are fortunate to have Sarum College in the Cathedral Close which offers many long and short courses on theology and spirituality; but members also travel to retreats and courses around the country such as Othona in Dorset, Ammerdown, Greenbelt, and St Beuno's.

Exploring Discipleship Team

This group of the PCC has the remit to encourage theological and spiritual transformation. It arranges a regular Lent programme with weekly items including a discussion group, a soup lunch preceded by a short talk by a member of the congregation, and an evening programme ranging from talks on faith in art, prayer and spirituality, and a silent Eucharist. For the last few years we have had an annual Quiet Day, and in the past there have been a number of Parish Weekends at Hilfield Friary in Dorset.



Provision for confirmation is on an ad hoc basis, but the group would welcome ideas and encouragement to extend what we can offer both to mature Christians and enquirers. St Thomas's does not have a long tradition of regular fellowship groups and we would like to develop this provision. The following groups are now established:

Contemplative Community. This lay-led weekly evening group explores spirituality and community. Every week members share stories of their life and their relationship with God, followed by either silent prayer (every other week), or lectio divina, or a more general 'community' meeting. There are 16 members and the group is open to anyone who would like to join, including from other denominations or churches.

Palmer Groups. There are two groups which meet on Tuesday afternoon (12 members) and Tuesday evening (18 members). Both groups are lay led and offer informal Bible study with a contemporary application. Members value them for the study and for the opportunity to get to know others.

Prayer and Intercession. There is a board in the Lady Chapel for visitors to post requests for prayer; the Morning Prayer congregation offers up prayers for these requests during the week. A small group meets on a Tuesday for 30 minutes to pray for the parish.

Christian Aid. There is a long association with this charity and a number of members are active locally, in partnership with other local churches. We take part in Christian Aid Week by distributing envelopes and providing drop-off points for filled envelopes. It is our charity for the Lent appeal and receives other donations when appropriate.

Eco-church and Towards Net Zero. These groups have been established in the past, but currently are not meeting – they could be revived.

Charitable giving

The church tithes its income from stewardship giving, dividing the money between two main charities which it supports long term (currently The Episcopal University of South Sudan, and Alabaré – a local charity for the homeless and vulnerable), and two other local charities which change annually. Money is also donated from the Christmas Tree Festival (see p.21).

Pastoral care

We are a caring congregation with a lot of support happening informally. However, pastoral care of the congregation is an area which needs development. We used to have a large team of trained Lay Pastoral Assistants but this has fallen to just three (as well as lay ministers) who visit at home and in hospital, and take home communion where needed.



Children

A Sunday School meets regularly in the church – and is one of the oldest in the country. It is led by an experienced leader with a team of helpers ensuring that there are always two adults present. There are between two and ten children each week, aged from 3 to 8 years, meeting together. The children are introduced to bible stories, prayer, and fun craft activities, while parents can enjoy the church service. In addition young members of the choir leave the service for the period from the sermon to after the intercessions. They are given instruction in the choir room.

Younger children can play in 'Tommy's Corner' during the service with the supervision of a parent or carer. A number of people also take advantage of this facility during the week particularly on a Tuesday and Saturday when the coffee mornings take place. There are toys and books provided.

The provision for children is of concern to many in the church.

Social events

Coffee is served in church after the 10.15 service with many members of the congregation staying to socialise and to meet and greet new people.

Through the year a number of events may happen such as a Harvest bring and share lunch. Special events such as major birthdays are often celebrated with a cake and a glass of bubbly after the 10.15 service.

There is an Events Coordinating Group who help organise these occasions and also put on a number of fundraising events which reach beyond the congregation. These have included a lecture series on local history, a Makers Fair, Choir Festival, and a 'Night of Music'.



Sunday School meets in the St Michael's Room

Olive Branch

This is a small group of women from the congregation who meet once a month during the day for conversation and friendship in St Thomas's House.

Welcoming

The church is open throughout the week from 8am, until early evening. As a historic church in the centre of the city it attracts many visitors and tourists, and is on the route taken by local guides. A team of welcomers is often on hand to offer a personal welcome, working in pairs for a two-hour shift on as many mornings and afternoons as possible. In the year to September 2025, they covered eight sessions each week and welcomed over 10,000 visitors. It would be wonderful to be able to extend this ministry which can range from historic information about the church to pastoral and faith concerns.

Printed information about the church is available for visitors (in a variety of languages), and there are also leaflets and cards explaining aspects of the Christian faith. Access to information is also available online via QR codes.

Coffee mornings

A major feature in the weekly life of the church and an important part of its outreach to the community are the two coffee mornings held on a Tuesday and a Saturday from 9 to 12. These are the same days as the Salisbury Charter Markets and so attract many people coming into Salisbury regularly to shop and socialise, as well as tourists. Regulars come from nearby towns and villages, as well as locally, to meet with friends and to take advantage of the teas, coffees, and homemade cakes and scones available.

On a Tuesday the morning is run by a team from the congregation; funds raised are for the church. On Saturday different groups apply to run the coffee morning; some are church groups such as flower arrangers and bell ringers, and others maybe local charities; each group raises money for their own funds.



A coffee morning team in the 'pod'



Navy Larks perform at the Christmas Tree Festival

Christmas Tree Festival

This six-day annual event takes place in the first week of Advent with more than 100 trees contributed and decorated by a wide range of community organisations and charities. A daily programme of music is also an attraction with local schools, choirs, bands and music groups taking part. A large number of volunteers is involved to welcome, steward and provide refreshments for over 12,000 visitors. Entry is free with donations encouraged at exit; in 2024 over £21,000 was raised, which was divided equally between the church and two local charities.

Bookstall

There is a long established bookstall selling second-hand paperback fiction at the back of the church which is available during the coffee mornings on Tuesday and Saturday. It raises funds for the church, and is staffed by volunteers who also provide a welcome to visitors.

Communications Team

This small team of people coordinates the display of information in the church for both the congregation and visitors. They have put up notice boards and produced a booklet for new members and enquirers.

We have an excellent website and a team to manage IT; it includes a services rota to help coordinate worship.



Our buildings

St Thomas's

The Church of St Thomas Becket is a Grade I listed building which stands in its own square to the north end of the High Street, a few hundred metres from the Cathedral Close. Its site lays claim to being an active place of worship 800 years ago, prior to the building of the Cathedral; however, most of its fabric dates from the fifteenth century. It is a handsome, light church, which has been well maintained for decades and is in excellent order. Our church is accessible to all, and the recently reordered nave is the latest upgrade to an inclusive friendly building serving a vibrant community, connected to it visually through the glass lobby.

We have adequate facilities, including a pod in the north chapel beyond the recently rebuilt Samuel Green organ. The pod, comprising of a disabled friendly WC, food servery and flower room, enables the volunteers to host a multitude of social events throughout the year, alongside our worship.

The south churchyard is an attractive space secluded from the streets of Salisbury and enjoyed by office workers at lunchtime and visitors.

The tower has a ring of eight bells which are rung by our dedicated band of ringers twice every Sunday.

Redevelopment project

Major fundraising was carried out 10 years ago and the main phase of the redevelopment project was completed in early 2020. This included:

- Installing a glass lobby and doors at the west end;
- Cleaning and repairing the Doom painting and cleaning the ceiling of the first nave bay;
- Removing pews from the nave and side aisles and installing three-seat and five-seat movable and stackable wooden benches and chairs;
- Building a children's area;
- Installing a wooden altar at the centre of a movable platform; and
- Installing a wooden font in the middle of the central aisle.

We are delighted by the beauty and craftsmanship of the altar and font, designed to place the symbols of baptism and communion at the centre of our church and visible from the street.

Work is continuing on the Lady Chapel ceiling, carried out by professional conservators, revealing remarkable carvings.





Work on the Lady Chapel ceiling by McNeilage Conservation

St Thomas's House

Although we lack a parish hall, we do have St Thomas's House in St Thomas's Square, which was the former rectory, and is owned by St Thomas's. It contains meeting rooms used by the PCC and other church and community groups, a parish office, Rector's office, kitchen, 4 extra toilets (used for concerts) and has a sizable garden. Hire of the rooms (including for the diocese's Mothers' Union office) generates significant revenue.

Fabric committee and church maintenance

The Fabric committee works in support of the churchwardens and answers to the PCC. It includes four qualified engineers, two surveyors and the previous verger, and the team has considerable experience of project and facilities management. In the past decade major projects undertaken have included the restoration of the Doom Painting (one of only six in the country), the restoration of the Lady Chapel, the installation and mechanisation of glass doors at the west end of the church and replacement of the two gas boilers. There is a five-year works plan and budget that has been approved by the PCC and is based on an annual budget of £35k covering: annual maintenance (£10k), minor works (£15k) and roof fund (£10k). All the roofs of St Thomas's were fully replaced in phases within the last 25 years, and each year £10k is placed in a designated fund calculated to mean that as the roofs end their life spans there will be funds to renew them.

There is a major project underway, funded by a recent legacy, to renew and up-grade the lighting system throughout the church starting with control system, the South Aisle and the Lady Chapel, and then the remainder of the church in phases, depending on the costs and funding.

A part-time caretaker is employed for 5 hours per week. Cleaning the church is done by a team of volunteers once a week on a Friday morning. The north and south churchyards are 'closed churchyards' for which Salisbury Council has the legal responsibility for maintaining the trees, hedging and fencing, but a volunteer gardening team from the church maintains the grounds.

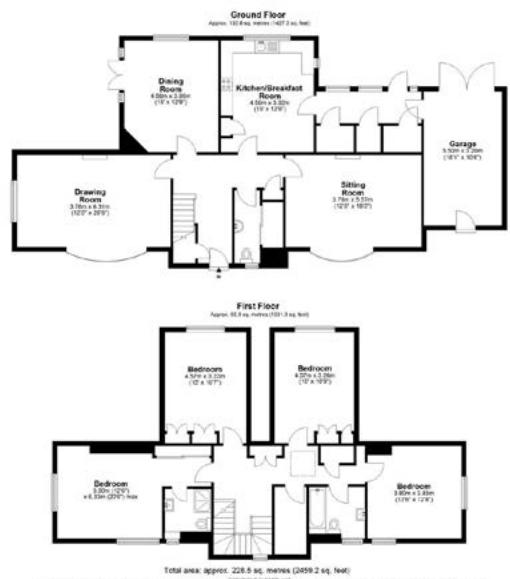




The Redevelopment Project included new benches, a new altar and the cleaning of the Doom Painting. *Credit: Anthony Topham*

The Rectory

The Rectory was purchased by the Diocese to provide a more suitable home than the former rectory. Little Bower in Campbell Road is an attractive detached four-bedroomed house with a garden in the north of the city, about 15 minutes' walk from the church. It is currently being rented out and details are on www.rightmove.co.uk/properties/169106072#/.



The Rectory

Parish administration

The PCC and sub-committees

The PCC at St Thomas's is understandably large (20 members) in a parish which regularly attracts 180-200 people at its main Sunday Service. Normally chaired by the Incumbent, it is currently chaired by the elected Vice-chair during the vacancy. Membership includes the churchwardens, the Parish Safeguarding Officer, Treasurer, Synod representatives and a number of elected members who hold office for three years with one third being elected annually. This process ensures both stability within the PCC and the opportunity for committed members of the congregation to seek election on an annual basis. There is no difficulty in filling places on the PCC. We are fortunate in having an efficient and committed secretary.

The PCC is well attended, meets eight times a year and has a number of sub-committees: Finance, Fabric, Safeguarding, churchwardens. These report to the PCC when necessary and relevant.

The PCC is varied in membership, engaged in process and committed to supporting the clergy working within the parish. While the PCC is fully competent in making decisions, it looks for an incumbent who can lead, who can give a steer on controversial issues, and is not afraid to engage in argument. Any incumbent able to do this will find the PCC supportive and fully committed.

Standing Committee meets fortnightly to carry out the work of the PCC, and includes the Rector, churchwardens, Parish Manager, PCC secretary, PCC Vice-chair and Treasurer.

Parish manager

The Parish Manager, Meryl Browning, (who with the PCC Secretary are non-voting members), is salaried, and works Monday-Friday mornings, partly from home and partly from the Parish Office situated within St Thomas's House adjacent to the Church. She manages the administration of the parish, produces the weekly newsletter and co-ordinates bookings for both the church and St Thomas's House.

Churchwardens

The churchwardens are normally expected to serve for two years, and are accompanied by two deputy churchwardens who help them with their duties. The current churchwardens are Michael Humphreys and Clare Tawney.



Safeguarding

Safeguarding is taken very seriously at St Thomas's and we aim to achieve best practice to prevent abuse according to the policies of the Church of England and Salisbury Diocese. We have a Parish Safeguarding Officer, John Boylan, to ensure that all volunteers receive the appropriate training and where necessary that they are DBS checked by our DBS verifier. We also practise safe recruitment for all roles, paid and voluntary.

We are committed to:

- The care and nurture within respectful pastoral ministry for all people: children, young people and adults.
- The safeguarding and protection of our children, young people and adults.
- The establishment of a caring community, which provides a safe environment where victims of abuse can report or disclose, concerns and find support.

Finance

Overall our finances are in good heart. We are able to pay our parish share in one deposit at the beginning of the year.

Team. This is led by our excellent and experienced Treasurer, Wendy Oliver, and includes the Gift Aid Secretary, and volunteer members. The Rector, Churchwardens, and Parish Manager are invited to meetings. The agenda includes matters which need decisions by the PCC. Meetings are held a week/fortnight before PCC meetings.

Accounts. The financial year is 1 January to 31 December. Accounts are audited annually and presented to the congregation at the Parish APCM. The 2024 accounts are available to see on the St Thomas's Church website. The Balance Sheet shows total funds at £1,022,595 of which St Thomas's House is valued at £261K and Equipment and Fittings £121K. In 2024, the Missionary and Charitable Giving amounted to £5K to the Diocesan Sudan Link and nearly £23K to National and Local Charities.

Giving. The majority of the congregation donate regularly through the Parish Giving Scheme, some use CAF, and others through weekly giving envelopes. There are safes at the west end of the Church for cash donations. There is a WiFi connection with a SumUp terminal to allow easy card donations. Average monthly planned giving is over £12K.

The Friends of St Thomas's Church. This was established in 2013 to foster interest in the church building from among those outside the congregation. The need for this fund to continue is being considered by the Trustees.

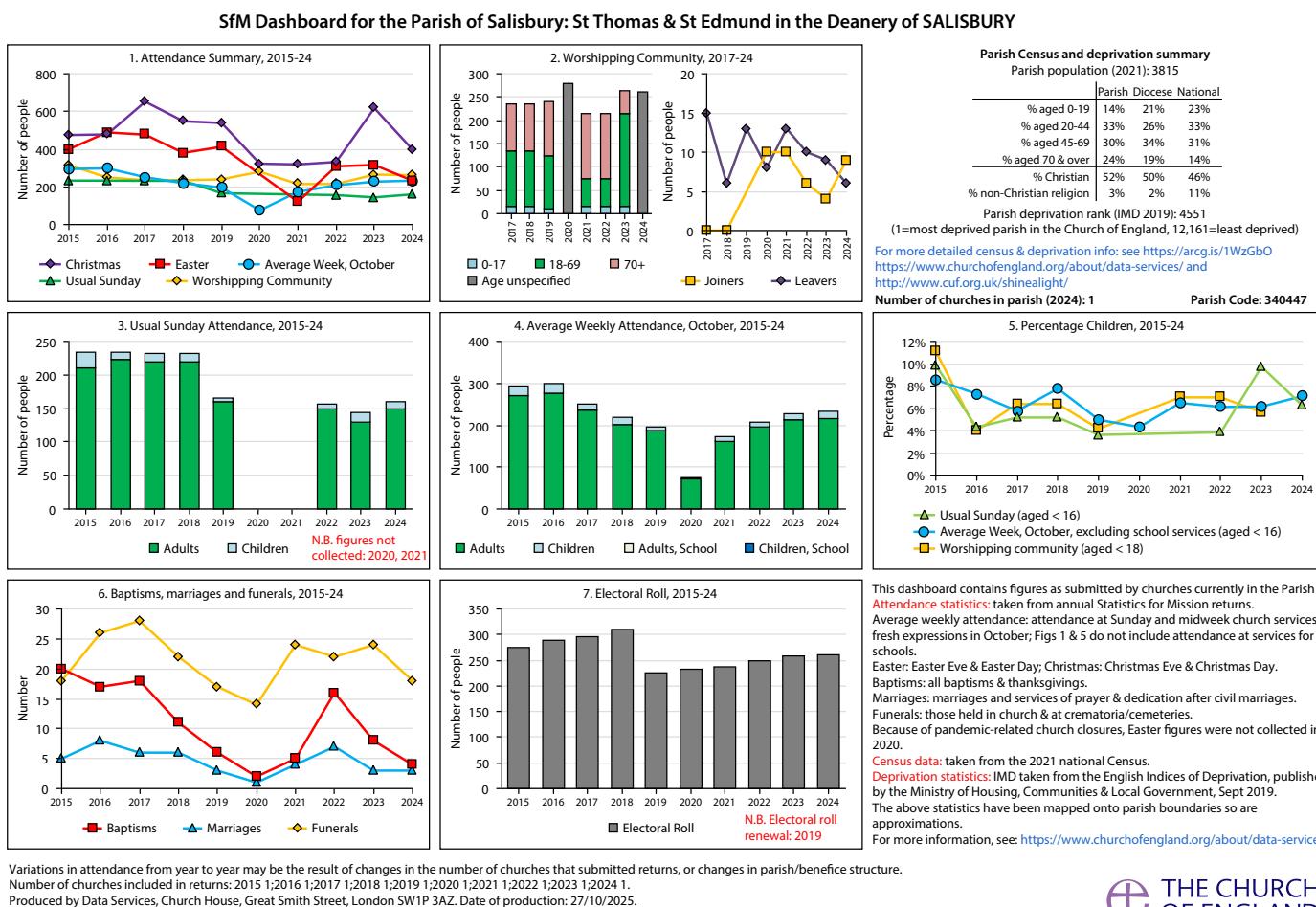


Church charities

Two charitable funds are distributed under the auspices of the parish: the Salisbury St Thomas and St Edmund Charity and the parish's share of the Fricker Charity. The Rector of St Thomas's is the designated recipient and distributor of the parish's share of the Fricker Charity funds, using the St Thomas's Charity Trustees to advise on distribution of those funds.

In 2024, the St Thomas and St Edmund Charity had an investment income of £4,234 and made grants totalling £4899. Receipts from the Fricker charity totalled £6000, and £4714 was disbursed. The trustees met 4 times in the year.

Statistics



Variations in attendance from year to year may be the result of changes in the number of churches that submitted returns, or changes in parish/benefice structure.
 Number of churches included in returns: 2015 1; 2016 1; 2017 1; 2018 1; 2019 1; 2020 1; 2021 1; 2022 1; 2023 1; 2024 1.

Produced by Data Services, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ. Date of production: 27/10/2025.

Every effort has been made to ensure that data are reliable. We would be pleased to be notified of any significant errors or omissions by email to statistics.unit@churchofengland.org

THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND





The Church of Angels

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