



St Matthew's Church Our Contribution to the Community

Background

St Matthew's Church has been part of the community since 1858. Today, St Matthew's is the place of worship for the Parish of Edgeley and Cheadle Heath (see Annex A for area covered by the Parish).

The Parish was formed in 2007 and originally included the churches of St Mark's in Edgeley and St Augustine's in Cheadle Heath. On Easter Day 2011, the three congregations came together as a single worshipping community at St Matthew's, following an extensive period of consultation with the congregation and the local community. This allowed for the consolidation of resources and release of funds through the sale of the two closed churches.

The purpose of this paper is to give an overview of the contribution St Matthew's Church makes to the local community and is based on the Church Urban Fund Churches *Community Value Toolkit for Church of England Parishes* (version 1, June 2006).

Our Contribution to the Community

A. St Matthew's, a centre of worship

A1 – Church Services and Attendance by Local People

St Matthew's Church is first and foremost a Christian centre of worship in this community.

This section looks at the regular services we offer and the average number of people attending these services. The majority of those attending services are from the immediate local area (that is, the Parish of Edgeley and Cheadle Heath) although a small number travel from outside the Parish. For special services, particularly baptisms, weddings and funerals, whilst the majority of attendees are from the local area, there are many who travel from different parts of the country.

Regular services

We have a regular programme of **Sunday services** (two services most Sundays, offering a choice of worship style), with a single Whole Parish Worship once a month. The overall average attendance is **97**, which is a mixture of adults and children, and reflects the ethnicity of our local community. On the last Sunday of the month, the second service is signed and we often welcome a few people from the deaf community, as well as signers who wish to know more about signing in church.

We have a regular service of Holy Communion every **Wednesday morning**, with an average attendance of **20**.

For those who are unable to attend regular worship services, St Matthew's offers **Home Communion** to a small number of parishioners. Over the last 3 years, there have been **9** regular Home Communion visits every month (two months by laity or Reverend Julie Johnson, third month by Reverend David Brewster). There is a small team of lay people who have been licensed to give Home Communion, under the leadership of the Pastoral Team Leader (Reverend Julie Johnson).

Although not a service, the church is open every Saturday morning, between 10am – 11.30am, for simple refreshments at the **Saturday Café**. This also gives people the opportunity to view the beauty of St Matthew's or have an informal chat with the Vicar. There is an average attendance of **15** each week, and there are long-term plans to increase the appeal of the Café and widen its remit.

Special Services and Events

Special services include Easter, Christmas, Harvest Supper, baptisms, weddings and funerals.

Over the last 3 years, our average **Easter Sunday** attendance has been **140**. There were also around **30** adults and children who attended the special *Journey to Easter* craft and family service event on Good Friday.

The **Christingle** and **Midnight Mass** services in 2012 attracted around **150** people, with over **200** people attending the 2013 services.

The **Harvest Supper** is held at the Pavilion (Cheadle Heath Community Centre) and over the last 3 years there has been an average of around **45** people attending (although this year, 2013, saw a sharp increase to around **60** people).

St Matthew's remains a popular venue for special family events, and the ease by which people can informally talk to the Vicar may be a contributing factor (a member of the clergy is available every Saturday morning during the Saturday Café, and all those who contact the church, by phone or email, are encouraged to go along to have a chat about their requirements).

Baptism services are normally held on the second Sunday of the month, although we try to accommodate families where this is not possible. Families can choose to have the baptism as part of the main service or at a separate time. Over the last 3 years, there have been an average of **39 baptisms**, the majority being children but some adults, with an average attendance of **115**.

Wedding services normally take place on Saturday afternoons, although mid-week services can be arranged. Over the last 3 years, there have been an average of **9 weddings**, with an average attendance of **85**.

Anyone can request a church funeral, regardless of whether they attended church or not. **Funeral services** are held following the agreement of the Vicar and the family and take priority over other activities which may be occurring in Church. In 2013, there were 13

funerals held in church, with an average attendance of **90**, with a further 24 funerals taken directly at the crematorium.

A2 – People who work at St Matthew’s Church

This section looks at the number of people who “make church happen”. These people may be paid or unpaid (voluntary) but without the significant effort they put in, St Matthew’s could not be effective.

Clergy Team

Only the vicar receives a stipend, all the other clergy are self-supporting. The **Vicar**, Reverend David Brewster, is supported by a small team of clergy: the Reverend Julie Johnson and the Reverend Sue Mayo (assistant priests) and the Reverend Peter Jennings (retired assistant priest).

There is also a team of **Readers** who support the clergy team. Readers are lay people who are licensed by the Bishop to carry out a variety of church functions, in support of the clergy. This includes leading services, preaching and taking funerals.

Ministry Teams

To enable the most effective use of our resources and to continue to turn our Vision into Action, **seven Ministry Teams** have been established under the guidance of a named leader (Worship, Discipleship, Communication, Children and Young People, Pastoral, Prayer, and Community and Social). Each team has between 1 – 4 members, with further specific support being provided by congregation members as required. These teams meet regularly, and both Team Leader and whole team meetings take place at least twice a year.

Administrative Support to Clergy/Vision

The **Vision Co-Ordinator** provides administrative support to the Vicar, and oversees the implementation of the Parish Vision (*Seeking God, Sharing our Gifts, Serving the World*). This post is to be established as a part-time funded post of around **7** hours per week, as of January 2014.

Community Development Manager

The **Community Development Manager** will be a part-time funded post (4 days per week, to be established in January 2014). The key aim of this post is to turn St Matthew’s vision into action by developing and co-ordinating projects which value the assets in our community, engaging with individuals and groups to develop their strengths and build sustainable relationships.

Voluntary Workers

St Matthew's is blessed with a strong team of **volunteers** who carry out housekeeping and maintenance of the church building, including flower arranging, managing the Saturday Café and other special events (such as Harvest Suppers and Church Fairs), and providing refreshments after regular Church services. There is a core of around **10** volunteers, who contribute a total of around **25** man-hours per week to the smooth running of St Matthew's. In addition, St Matthew's choir meet regularly to rehearse and are part of the early formal service every Sunday, as well as the monthly Whole Parish Worship. The choir also perform at the annual Family Fun Day and other special events by arrangement.

A3 – The wider role played in the community by people who work at St Matthew's

Members of St Matthew's Church have a wide and varied interest in the local community:

- Reverend David Brewster is a member of the St Matthew's Primary School Governing Body. Three congregation members are on the governing body of St George's Primary School, one at Great Moor Primary School (both in the adjacent Parish) and one at Alexandra Park Primary School.
- Pam Robinson, Vision Co-Ordinator, and Mark Baxter, PCC member, are members of the Edgeley and Cheadle Heath Community First Panel. Mark Baxter is also a scout leader for a local scout group (on a voluntary basis).
- Reverend Sue Mayo is a Trustee of the charity Shine Like Stars.
- Ernie Shaw, a congregation member and committed volunteer at St Matthew's, is a member of the Northgate Road Residents Association.
- There is a long-standing Mothers' Union group which meets monthly at St Matthew's, with guest speakers and other activities.
- Volunteers also help to run the Church Lads and Girls Brigade, which meets at St Matthew's weekly, during term-time.

St Matthew's in the Community

This section looks at the role St Matthew's has in the local primary and secondary schools, as well as the wider local community.

B1 – St Matthew's in schools

There are five primary schools in the Parish:

- St Matthew's, around 200 pupils (with which we have the closest ties)
- Alexandra Park, around 400 pupils
- Bridgehall, around 150 pupils
- Cheadle Heath, around 240 pupils
- Lark Hill, around 175 pupils

There is also a secondary school, Stockport Academy, with 1,150 students.

Through a programme of school assemblies, clubs and other activities, there is regular contact with around 1,000 primary school students and up to 1,150 secondary school students every month.

In addition, there is regular contact and visits from school groups to St Matthew's Church in support of the National Curriculum. In December 2012, the Year 6 group from St Matthew's school was invited to a presentation of *Bubblegum Christmas*, which was a project managed by the *Youth on the Edge* partnership between St Matthew's and Stockport Baptist Churches. Using a mix of drama, rap, multi-media, story boards and baking, this active presentation engaged the children with the true meaning of Christmas.

This was followed in 2013 with the same children returning for *Easter Unwrapped*, which used a similar format to explore the real meaning of Easter. The Year 6 teacher, Ms Kinsella, had this to say about the presentation:

"The enthusiasm and expertise of the session leaders was fantastic and really helped to capture the children's attention. There was a really good mix of practical activities, video clips, quizzes and discussions; I thought it was a superb session and wouldn't hesitate to recommend it (and the Christmas workshop) to another school."

In 2013, other schools have expressed an interest in attending *Bubblegum Christmas* and plans are being put in place to extend the sessions to all who wish to attend.

B2 – Children and Families

This section looks at the contribution St Matthew's Church makes to support children and families in the local area, both term-time and during the holidays.

Toddle Time

Toddle Time is a group for babies and pre-school children, with their parents/carers. It opened in September 2012, every Friday morning between 9.30am – 11am, term-time only. It costs just £1.50 per family group and includes a wide range of play activities, including a dedicated baby play area, trains and cars, craft, imaginative play and a quiet corner. There are drinks for adults and drinks and healthy snacks for the children, as well as group time for story time or sign and rhyme. The session is run by volunteers on a rota basis, with regular planning and review sessions.

Numbers have been steady since the first session opened – initially, the group exceeded its expected numbers and people had to be turned away, but the team had a creative re-think about the use of the space in the church and now more numbers can be accommodated. There are regularly over 30 children and adults at each session. All those who attend complete a registration form and are asked if they would like to be kept up to date with activities and events in church – those who agree are sent information as events are promoted.

At the end of the first year, a survey was given to those who attended and the feedback was extremely positive, with **100%** of those who completed the survey stating that *Toddle Time* was an asset to the community and that they would recommend the group to their friends. Suggestions for improvement have now been incorporated into the group, including a dressing up box, snacks for adults and more group time at the end of the session.

Youth on the Edge

Youth on the Edge is a partnership between St Matthew's and Stockport Baptist Churches and aimed at providing activities for children and their families during the schools holidays. The programme is a mix of Christian and secular activities. Between August 2012 and August 2013, this programme included:

- Swimming pool parties at the local leisure centre (which is under threat of closure, so it was important to use their facilities as a way of supporting them)
- Holiday club at St John's Church, Cheadle Heath (each summer, a Christian holiday club is run over 4 mornings, bringing a themed Bible character to life through drama, craft, games, jokes, quizzes, and so on)
- Holiday club at Stockport Baptist Church (each summer, a full day holiday club brings the Christian faith to life through drama, games and fun)
- Movie afternoons at either Stockport Baptist Church or St Matthew's Vicarage – a chance for children to have movie and snacks without mum and dad
- Day trips: to *Eureka*, the museum for children in Halifax, and a coach trip to Rhyl

All these activities are open to anyone in the local community and it has been very pleasing to build up relationships with children and families who come to several activities. All activities are subsidised and can be booked online through our website or in church during the Saturday Café.

Quotes from parents:

Day trip to *Eureka*:

“Many thanks for organising the trip last week, we had a great time! I have always wanted to take my children to Eureka but having three children have always been put off by the cost so it was great to be able to go this half term! My kids (aged 6, 4 and 2) all loved Eureka. We went with some friends so all had a great day out together.”

Swimming pool parties:

“I just wanted to thank you for letting me know about the swim/play sessions that St Matthews held at Avondale. Aaron had a ball! He loved it. For the first time he swam without me holding on to him and even took his armbands off. He did have a noodle to swim with but he's always been scared of going near them. We have even enrolled him on a course of lessons at Avondale so fingers crossed they go well. If you hadn't have told me none of this would have happened, so really wanted to thank you.”

B3 – Isolated and vulnerable people

Socially Yours

Socially Yours is a regular Tuesday afternoon group which is open to anyone who is isolated or vulnerable. This group now operates on a partnership basis between St Matthew's Church and Quality Care of Cheadle (which is a private company, operating the group on a not-for-profit basis). There are regular quizzes, crafts, food making, music and meals out for the group.

The group attracts around 12 regular members, some who attend with carers, but plans are in place to increase the membership by raising the awareness of the group through local networks and support groups.

B4 – Community Events and Activities

This section looks at the ways in which St Matthew's has engaged with the local community through “non-Church” activities.

Community First Aid Training Sessions

Thanks to funding from the Community First Panel, St Matthew's was able to run two first aid training sessions in 2013, a two hour session and a full day session. Two further courses are planned for the New Year. Training was provided by First Aid Stockport, with some

places available at a subsidised rate and other places offered for free. Whilst aimed primarily at parents and carers of babies and children, the training was open to all. Over **20** people were trained in basic, life-saving first aid and the feedback was very positive.

Quote from a parent who attended the two hour course:

“A good course, especially because it was provided within the community and at an affordable price. A good way to learn vital knowledge and also meet others from the community. Thank you.”

Table Top Sale

Two table top sales were held at St Matthew’s in 2013; the first was organised by the Cheadle Mum’s Group and was aimed mainly at the buying and selling of clothes and equipment for babies and children, the second was run by St Matthew’s as a fund-raising event.

These sales were another good opportunity to open our doors to our community and give people a chance to gather.

Craft Fair

This was organised by St Matthew’s Church as an opportunity for local craftspeople to showcase their goods and again, open our doors to our community and give people a chance to gather. It also helped to develop our online community links, as all participants at the fair were members of the Stockport Crafters Facebook group and all registration was carried out online.

Summer and Christmas Fairs

These fairs are the two major fund-raising events for the church. Donations are given by congregation members, and often local people, with stalls being run by volunteers. A small entrance fee is charged and, weather permitting, there are activities and play areas outside. Following feedback from recent fairs, local craftspeople are being invited to have stalls at these fairs, to give a better “mix” of goods and interests for buyers.

Heritage Open Day and Family Fun Day

In 2013, St Matthew’s took part in the national Heritage Open Days event, opening the church to visitors for three sessions over two days. During this time, early Parish records of baptisms and marriages were available for the churches of St Matthew’s, St Mark’s and St Augustine’s (on loan from Chester Archives). There was also a newly produced Guide to St Matthew’s, a display of clergy vestments, a table of memories, with old photographs and other memorabilia, as well as the connection to Wimbledon tennis champion, Fred Perry. Refreshments were available throughout the event. The event may not have attracted large numbers of people, but those who did attend stayed for a long time and were delighted with what they discovered.

The Family Fun Day is now in its fifth year. The Fun Day was established in 2009 as a way of making connections between our church and the local community, and over the years, it has grown into a real community event, with local organisations, clubs and support services being invited to participate. This year, the event was brought forward from its usual date to form part of the Heritage weekend, being followed on the Sunday by a celebration service and bring-and-share lunch. It is important that entrance and activities remain free of charge, as a way of blessing our local community.

The Fun Day this year included around 20 community stalls, as well as displays by a dance group and a keep fit class. The event was well supported by the local community, with over 200 people attending.

Quotes regarding Heritage Open Day:

“Delighted to find wedding certificates of all my grandparents; I wasn’t expecting to find records from St. Augustine’s too; lovely to stand in the church where they were married and to see their own signatures”

“Well presented information; particularly liked the guide notes; help was available if needed but not too intrusive; catered for the computer illiterates and the latest in technology as well; very friendly people”

“Very well written guide to the church covering all aspects; left to view at own pace; very enthusiastic and welcoming team”

It was pleasing to note that **4 new families** started attending *Toddle Time* as a direct result of information received during the Fun Day.

Supporting the Food Bank

St Matthew’s has been collecting donations from the congregation and delivering to the food banks at Chelwood Baptist Church and Hazel Grove Baptist Church for several months now. The collection point is available whenever the church is open, with donations from the public being encouraged during the Saturday Café. So far, it is estimated that our donations have helped to feed over 80 families.

Supporting other charities

St Matthew’s regularly supports other charities, through donations received through the offertory at special services or through specific fundraising events. In 2012, the following donations were made:

- Children’s Society - £190 collected at the Christingle Service
- Christian Aid - £512 from plate collections during Christmas services plus a one-off event during the year
- Harvest collection of food (plus money when donated) to The Wellspring (a local homeless charity)

- Christmas Gift collection to The Wellspring
- Ad hoc donations throughout the year, for example, to Christians in Schools Trust and emergency fund donations.

Our annual charitable giving is therefore around £1,500.

Our building as a venue for hire

St Matthew's church is also available for groups to hire and we have a favourable rate for community groups. Currently, the church is hired as follows:

- *Stockport Sling Library and Sling Meet* (support group for parents who wish to carry their babies and infants in slings) meets on the first Monday afternoon of the month
- *Child-minders* group meets Monday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings
- *Socially Yours* meets Tuesday afternoon
- *Toddle Time* (run by St Matthew's) meets Friday morning (term time only)
- *The Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade* meets Monday evenings (term time only)

B5 - St Matthew's on the internet

This section looks at our online presence and the tools we use to promote our activities in the community and encourage people to connect with us.

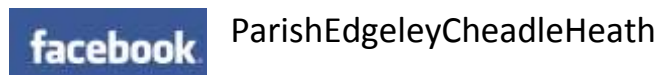
Website

The St Matthew's website was completely re-designed and re-launched in April 2013. The new website (www.edgeleyandcheadleheath.org.uk) is much more vibrant and user-friendly, with clear navigation and language, a consistent "house style", signed videos for those in the deaf community and the ability for people to register online for activities and events. In September 2013, 349 unique visitors viewed the website, with many returning multiple times. The website has been a contributing factor in some new members attending St Matthew's services.



Facebook

St Matthew's launched a Facebook group in autumn 2011. This site features regular updates of what is happening both in church and the local area, daily quotes of inspiration and photographs from recent events. There are currently 53 followers.



Facebook, continued

St Matthew's *Toddle Time* introduced their own Facebook page soon after the group was set up in September 2012. There are regular updates about events in the group, promotion of church and community events and photographs from recent events. There are currently 39 members of the group.

Twitter

The Twitter site was established autumn 2011, with a format very similar to the Facebook site, with regular updates of events and daily quotes. There are currently 500+ followers, with our events being regularly re-tweeted by local groups.



Annex A – Parish Boundaries

