



Ellesmere
Port
Parish

January 2024 newsletter

Happy new year to everyone. I trust our first newsletter of 2024 finds you well. The Christmas season is coming to an end as we move into Epiphany which we will be celebrating this coming Sunday in church. A time to reflect on the journey the 3 Wise Men took to find the Saviour of the World. We are using the start of Epiphany to come together as a church family for a party on **Friday 5 January** at St Thomas & All Saints Church from **7pm – 10pm**.



A time to get together for fun, fellowship and food! Bring and share food – sign-up sheet at the back of church. Bring your own drink and glasses too!

In preparing for this newsletter, I looked back at our newsletter from January 2023 where I stated that the year ahead would be full of uncertainty, with challenges that we know are coming and challenges we certainly don't know are on the way! However, I encouraged us all to be assured that God will be walking with us all the way and I now as we begin 2024 we can with great certainty say that God did walk with us through a massive year of change in the parish. I also talked about the time of transition requiring 'all hands-on deck' and for the most part that has been the case. Lots of folk have stepped forward and taken on new responsibilities and we pray that will continue into 2024. The closing date for applications for the rector's post is Monday 8 January and so please do continue to hold this in your prayers.

Before we leave Christmas 2023, I would like to thank everyone for the part they played in whatever way – big or small to our Christmas projects and for joining us in our services over the Christmas period. It was also good to welcome many visitors into our 2 churches. Just some feedback from a few of the initiatives:

£243 was raised at the bacon butty morning and this together with other donations has meant that a number of Christmas Gifts for a Stranger went to Forum Housing.

Angels of Hope - lots of angels found their way to people who needed to hear those words of hope!

Christmas Fair – grand total of £2,730.52 raised for church funds

32 goody bags delivered to the bereaved

Shoebboxes filled and sent with love to children overseas

The Advent and Christmas activities could not take place without church members giving their time and their treasure – so thank you.

Huge congratulations to Ken Salter who has been awarded a Bar to the Medal of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for services to the community in Ellesmere Port in the New Year's Honours List. This includes his service to the church, the Scout Association and for his many years of service as a school governor at Cambridge Road School, latterly serving as their Chair of Governors to name a few of his commitments to the community. Well done Ken!

Re-launched website – please do take a moment to have a look at our website – <https://ellesmereportparish.org.uk/>. There is still some work to be done on it but we wanted to go live for Christmas. A big thank you to everyone who has worked on this project.

BBC Podcast - "Black Gold - the story of Stanlow's oil" is going live on 1 February 2024. 6 podcasts focussing on the past, present and future of Stanlow. Gemma was interviewed extensively about the churches work in the community and Charmaine about her art. This podcast will be of interest to most but definitely with those with an interest in the history of Ellesmere Port.

News from Gemma -

Our young people have been very involved in the life of the church during the season of advent and have supported us in bringing in lots of our community into our churches. With two nativity services taking place, one in each church, both being a huge success. We even saw our beavers joining us and singing at St. Thomas and working with me to achieve their faith and their community badges.

We also saw our young people take over the greeting, readings and prayers at our December cafe Church service, and how fantastic they all were in their various roles. Furthermore, it is a delight to see the addition of Molly to the reading rota at St. Lawrence too. Our children and young people are really stepping up and stepping out with their contributions. Not to mention our tech wizard William, without his knowledge and expertise on our tech team, we would be lost! Thank you to all of you for your contributions, long may it continue!

Our Community Christmas Tree project was a wonderful way to share prayer within our town, and it was encouraging to see many of our schools getting involved and working with our children on this, allowing them the opportunity to think about prayer during this time. It was so nice to travel around the community and see the trees in various places, knowing that the town was covered in prayer - thank you to everyone who participated in this initiative.

Our FIG group worked extremely hard in sending out 195 hampers to families within our community just before Christmas. Thank you to all who supported this. The significant rise in numbers meant a lot more work, and shows the impact of the cost-of-living crisis upon our local community, please do keep the work of the FIG group in your prayers, as continued rise in demand means more funding is required, more volunteers etc. However, what a privilege to be able to support our community in this way, and to ensure that so many families have food on their tables for Christmas.

Father Christmas made visits to our Christmas fair, our family fun day, and to see Toms Tots - my goodness, what a busy fella he was in December! There were plenty of smiles around, and so many people in our community being welcomed into our Parish. Please do have a look at the videos on our social media. We really do have some excellent opportunities to share the light and love of Jesus, and this Christmas has really shown this, with the sheer numbers of people we have had through our doors. A huge, huge thank you to all of the volunteers who have helped in so many ways with all the community initiatives. The feedback from people visiting has been so positive, and when we think of our prayer for growth, I think of each and every member of our parish and the parts we play in reaching out to all these visitors (think about being a COG!), and the huge impact we can have - and I really do thank you all for your support with all the community work we are doing in order to continue growing our Parish.

Pastoral matters – please do let me know of any church family members that are sick in hospital or at home and would appreciate a visit.

Dates for January 2024

Friday 5	7pm	Epiphany Party at St Thomas
Sunday 7	10.45am	Café Church, Epiphany
Wednesday 10	2pm	TEA at 2 in coffee lounge at St Thomas
Sunday 14	4pm	ABC at St Lawrence
Tuesday 16	7.30pm	PCC meeting in coffee lounge
Sunday 21		Panto Day for Ignite and ABC families
Friday 26	1pm	PALS lunch in St Thomas Church Hall
Sunday 28	10.45am	Wedding preparation day at St Thomas

I think that is it for now.

Take care & God bless

Gill & the staff team