

Partnership with St James

Please use this document to prayerfully consider the proposed partnership with St James.

Here is some information taken from St James website

[\(https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/11418/\)](https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/11418/)

St James' Church was founded on this site in 1546. The present building dates back to 1763 but with some later additions. There is a peal of 12 bells, and these are still rung regularly. Sunday services are held every week, and a Food Bank and homeless drop-in operate during the week. Civic services also take place here, including the annual Mayor-making service. The area to the east of the church has now been turned into a memorial garden for the Accrington Pals. The building preparing for a major re-ordering. Much of the effort in the past went into supporting the 'new' churches in Accrington, and by the time they got round to thinking about a replacement building the First World War intervened and it never got off the drawing board.

There are some Georgian pews still in the building, but the majority are Victorian pews, with the addition of late-Victorian choir stalls. The Peel family are recorded on marble wall tablets. They lived at Accrington House (no longer in existence) and Knowlmore House at Slaidburn. A short history of the building is available from the church or in the Accrington Library.

Christian have been meeting at Trinity's church building for almost 200 years (1840). One of the things you see looking back over that time is the mission work of the people. There has always been a passion and desire for Jesus to be known in Accrington.

'St Mary's Church of England day and Sunday school were commenced as a mission from Christ Church during the time the Rev. R. N. Featherstone was vicar in 1876...' A quote taken from the book *Accrington Through the 19th Century*, by Richard Shaw Crossley.

In the early 1880's, a small group from Christ Church started a mission in the St Paul's district of their parish. They rented rooms on Elephant Street and Birtwistle Street. Soon these rooms became over-crowded with people, leading Christ Church to see this as an opportunity to put up a more permanent church building.

An Iron Church was put up, coming from another parish, replacing the mission rooms in 1885. The first service in the Iron Church was held on the 17th December 1885. What a great time to begin meeting in that building, as they remembered the incarnation of our Lord. There has been a worshipping community in that parish ever since. The Lord blessed that mission richly!

The Lord has always and continues to give His people opportunities to go in mission, taking the good news of Jesus out, making Him known, and seeing people become follows of Christ. We have been given such an opportunity as we think about partnering with St James church.

St James is a small, faithful congregation, with a heart to see God's Kingdom grow in Accrington. They have a desire to partner with us and can see the benefit of working together. The St James church building is in a prime location to build on the work that has happened and continues to happen there.

I believe God has given us this opportunity to further reach out with the hope of the gospel of Christ Jesus our Saviour and king.

Included with this document are the minutes from our ECC sub-group meetings with St James PCC. Three areas of mission have emerged from our meetings with St James, and from prayer and reflection.

1. COMMUNITY. You may have read in the news in recent months of the huge increase in people claiming Universal Credit. Currently 1 in 5 adults are claiming in Accrington. You will also be aware of the ending of the £20 top-up. We at Trinity have a heart for people in need and to share the love of Christ as we try to meet some of those needs. Clothed in Love has provided coats for those in our community and beyond who would otherwise go without. Our breakfast club continues to grow, with more people needing food and friendship. The Accrington Christians Together Food bank which operates from the St James building, continues to be used by a growing number of people. Those ministries go beyond providing food and clothing for individuals, couples, and families. They also begin to address the spiritual need of those people. There is an openness to conversations and prayer and speaking Christ into those conversations.

The pandemic and time in lockdown have had a wider impact on people beyond covid-19. Almost everyone has experienced the loss of someone they know during the pandemic. Whether close family or wider friends and family, we have all been confronted with the reality of death. So many people have been unable to grieve properly. We have the hope of the gospel to bring to people. Our only hope in life and death is Christ alone. There is a course called 'The Bereavement Journey' (<https://www.lossandhope.org/what-is-the-bereavement-journey-course/>), which has been produced to help people process their loss in a group with others who have experienced bereavement. 'Grave Talk' is another resource that provides a place for people to think about some of the big questions about death, dying and funeral.

There are several town wide events (Amazing Accrington) throughout the year that have provided great opportunity for engagement with the people of Accrington. The Lights Switch on, The Dickensian Evenings, the Food and Drink festival. Working with Accrington Christians Together, St James church building has played a key role in many of those events. IT has provided a central location for people to and hear and experience the good news of Christ and His love for them.

With the church building being in such a key location, it provides a place for groups and organisations to use. There are potential opportunities for groups and organisations to make use of a town centre location that enables us to build good relationships with various services.

2. FAMILIES. Before the Pandemic hit, we had begun to work with the other churches in Accrington with our young people. This was a great encouragement for us to share this work with other Christians. As things begin to get back to normal this is something that we will look to get going again.

But there is also a huge need to take the gospel to the young people of our town. Not necessarily with a youth club but in other ways and potentially working with other organisations. Sport is one such activity that appeals to and draws a good number of young people. We can look at working with various organisations (Accrington Stanley Community Trust, local police), to hold events in a central location and also be the spiritual care support and input for the young people.

Sunday morning church is no longer the thing to do for families. Many sports activities take place on a Sunday morning. It's not ideal but I think we must come to terms with living in a different world to

one 30 years ago. It does mean we have an opportunity to do something different. Doing something different has been on my heart for a while. An afternoon service providing a place for families to come and worship and build community. There are parents and families in both congregations (Trinity and St James) who go to sports activities on a Sunday morning. They give us a good starting link to families who may want to attend a church somewhere but there is no option on a Sunday afternoon. There is a massive harvest field for us here.

As mentioned above, families have enjoyed the opportunity to explore things like Christmas at Amazing Accrington events at the St James building.

3. WORSHIP+ DISCIPLESHIP. People have been worshipping on this site of St James church for hundreds of years. Wouldn't it be a great privilege for us to be involved in helping see that continue for hundreds of years more! St James currently has one morning service every Sunday, with 3 services a month at St Clements (Green Haworth). How good would it be to have a place to open for people walking by to pop in and pray! Or talk to someone. Or to just sit for a while. Revivals always begin in prayer. St James presents many opportunities for Exploring Christianity courses and discipleship ministry.

For the Sunday to work for both churches, the times of services will need to change. St James have said they would move their morning service to 9/9:15am so that our services won't clash. In response to that I would like us to think about moving our service time to 10:45am.

ADDRESSING SOME CONCERNS

FINANCE

St James have kindly provided us with end of year accounts, for the past few years. As you can see, and as you will hear from Andy, St James have met its parish share and it's running cost for the past number of years. This can give us some confidence that the day to day running costs can be met, or at the least come very close to meeting them. We do have to bear in mind the potential impact of the pandemic on finances.

St James does have around £140,000 in a restricted fund for building work. With anything to do with mission there is always an element of faith and trust in Christ and His provision.

BUILDING

Structurally the church building is sound. The roof is relatively new. A leak in the vestry has recently been repaired. There is a problem with damp in certain areas of the church but no beyond repair.

St James had in place plans to reorder the church building around six years ago. Everything was in place for this scheme to go ahead; for whatever the reason this did not happen. On the positive side, it does put us in a good position potentially moving forward with a reordering of St James as there are plans to work from, with a number of surveys having been completed.

The reordering of the building would need to be done in phases. Possible phase 1: ground floor level - main area: levelling the floor, removing the pews, a new heating system, screening off the back to become a welcome area, new seating, toilets and a kitchen area.

There are some grants available that we can potentially access. The Blackburn Diocese are currently in the process of employing someone to work with parishes with projects such as this. Revd Kevin Logan, previous vicar at Trinity, has also offered his help and experience with sourcing funding.

The building is in a prime position in the town, giving us a brilliant base from which to take the gospel out. It has the potential to be a beacon of hope and light to draw people to Christ.

My prayer and plea is that we take this step of faith, knowing the generous provision of our God and continuing to trust Him as we serve Him for His glory in this town.