



BATHGATE PARISH CHURCH

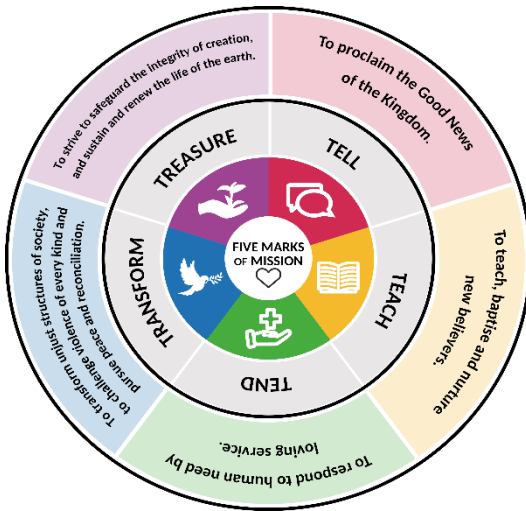
PARISH PROFILE
SEPTEMBER 2024

PROVERBS 23:18

*“There is surely a future hope
for you, and your hope will
not be cut off.”*

Bathgate Parish Church

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe". [Thibault 1844]



We seek to appoint a minister who is called to this new, exciting charge following the union of Bathgate St John's and Bathgate High. Our new minister will enable us to develop and deliver our vision for the furtherance of the Kingdom in Bathgate and inspire and lead us as we seek to demonstrate and implement the Five Marks of Mission.¹

Tell – We seek to develop our approach to worship, making it accessible to all. We seek to reflect our worship in a web presence.

Tend – We seek to maintain our nurturing of the young through Sunday School, Girls' and Boys' Brigades' and other organisations; to use our worship as a vehicle for teaching and to broaden the experience of our worshippers to allow them to take on more leading roles. We seek to create opportunities for fellowship within the congregation and with other churches.

Serve – We seek to maintain our care for and service to the community through the foodbank, pre-school, school links, community links, participation in Bathgate Churches Together, links with the Council Poverty Initiative and events such as thrift shops.

Transform – We seek to influence our community by giving the Christian perspective through our worship and reflecting this as part of our web presence.

Care for creation – We seek to promote the Christian perspective on care for the environment through our worship and reflect this as part of our web presence.

¹ Image credit Stephen Ogston

Introduction

We welcome you to the Parish Profile of Bathgate Parish Church, formed by the union of Bathgate High Church and Bathgate St John's in November 2023. The vacancy arises from that union. We aspire to gain a new minister who will play a leading role in shaping the life, direction and vision of the new congregation. We need targeted, focused mission that builds the maximum missional impact creating positive change in people's lives and sustained impact in the community we serve.

History of the charge

Both churches have a long and notable history as an integral part of the fabric of the town, emotionally rooted in the community we serve. Bathgate St John's, founded in 1895, was served by Rev Duncan Shaw for over 40 years until the charge became vacant on his demission. Bathgate High Church dates from 1884 on its present site and is the worship centre for the new united charge. Bathgate High was served by a long line of ministers but in more recent times had a period of unstable ministry. However, this has made the congregation resilient and self-reliant, with a flexible approach to worship and service to the community.

Bathgate Parish Church serves the town of Bathgate, which in the past had a strong industrial heritage through mining, steel working and the former British Leyland factory. The town itself has suffered from industrial decline. Additionally, since the reopening of the Bathgate train station and the lines to both Edinburgh and Glasgow, the town has become much more of commuter town, with peoples' lives shared between where they work and where they live. While there is still a sense of community this has diminished over the years, with fewer families having a Bathgate heritage and particularly with the addition of newer housing areas around the periphery of the town. These areas of new housing are a huge opportunity for missional development.

A high proportion of members are over retirement age and there are fewer families attending church than we would like to see. Both congregations have demonstrated resilience by continuing to offer worship, nurturing and service

throughout the difficult times of the pandemic and our union has made us stronger together.

Worship

Bathgate Parish Church follows a traditional pattern of weekly worship with a morning service each Sunday at 11:00. We have a flexible approach to worship. We look forward to a more stable worship environment with measures to build the maximum missional impact. We enjoy a mixture of contemporary and traditional worship. Members of the congregation regularly take part in the service and this is something we wish to develop.

Our Sunday School meets at the same time as morning worship and is usually in church for the first 15-20 minutes of the service. The Sunday School teachers and young people have provided specific input to the services on Palm Sunday, Harvest Thanksgiving and their annual Nativity.

Worship has been the key vehicle for the delivery of teaching and nurturing our fellowships and is the beating heart of our congregational life. Our worship provides the motivating energy that propels us to engage in discipleship, mission, service and the living out of the Kingdom of God in our daily lives. The union provides a unique opportunity to clarify these priorities with a rich legacy of talents, with people exercising ministry by leading our worship. We aim to promote a message of love and hope that can have a profound influence on the lives of people who hear it. It is at the heart of our fellowship, serving people and valuing the diversity of all who join us for worship.



Welcome Team

For each service a team of members from the congregation, working on a rotational basis, warmly welcome people at the main door.

Music in Worship

Music in our services is provided by:

-  Music group
-  Organist
-  Choir

The church has a strong reputation for music being an integral part of worship, when we join together as one body to praise God with one voice, strengthening bonds in fellowship. Our Director of Music works with a choir of 10-12 singers, providing anthems weekly, and a music group of 4 musicians who play a range of instruments including violin, cello, guitar and flute. The Director of Music is also our organist, using the traditional church organ as and when appropriate. The minister and the Director of Music work together to blend the musical content for worship. The musical accompaniment during the service is split between the organ and the music group. A recent survey suggested that the congregation sought to maintain a progressive outlook on worship which included both modern and more traditional music.

Audio Visual

We use data projection for hymn/song words, readings and signposting through the service. This has been expanded to the use of AV for images and other content during children's addresses and stand-alone audio visual reflections. We have continued to stream our services live since our return to the church following the pandemic and have both a website and an active Facebook page which are sufficient for the purposes of weekly worship for now. We have two PA systems which are now in need of replacement.

Membership

Congregational Roll

Our Congregational Roll has been attested and shows that Bathgate Parish Church has a roll of 472 full communicant, with 75 on the Supplementary Roll and 6 Adherents as of August 2024.

Kirk Session

At present the Kirk Session is comprised of 37 members with an almost equal split of gender. The Session meet on a bi-monthly basis with extra meetings as necessary



Church Activities

Youth Activities

Christian Education [Sunday School]

A Sunday School of 10-12 youngsters meets weekly following a set programme with mixed activities for different ages. The current age range is from 3-12, which makes it difficult to cater specifically for each of the set of age demands, though our committed and experienced Sunday School staff make it work.

The Sunday School joins the congregation for the first part of the service, which usually contains a Children's Address and a children's praise item.

The Sunday School also works hard to provide input to specific services throughout the year.

We have several volunteer Sunday School leaders. A separate crèche facility **with activities** is provided for children up to the age of 3.

We recognise the need for new ways of incorporating young people into our church, particularly in keeping children of high school age. We look to a new minister who will recognise the value of really communicating with our children and young people and invigorating the children's role in worship.

Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade

There is also a strong basis of Christian education through our youth organisations. We have both a Girls' Brigade and Boys' Brigade, both of which mostly have primary school aged members. There are very experienced leaders currently in place, supported by helpers. There is a mix of "church" and "non-church" families accessing these organisations, and while they are very successful in keeping the young people involved, there is less of an impact on being able to feed either youngsters or families into other aspects of church life. It is also desirable to attract more S1-S6 young people.

Pre-School Group

Our Pre-School Group meets twice a week with around 20 youngsters and 20 adults attending each session, from birth to age 5. We have a part time paid pre-school worker who prepares and leads both sessions with the support of volunteers from the congregation. This highly successful group has run for many years, with a huge number of children, parents and grandparents, who are not always church goers, meeting in fellowship and getting to know folk from the church. More recently there has been collaborative working with West Lothian Council, supporting their Poverty Initiative.



Other Church Organisations



We offer a range of organisations to support fellowship and nurture the faith through different groups:

- ✚ Food bank
- ✚ The Guild
- ✚ Country Dancing
- ✚ Flower Committee
- ✚ Pastoral Care Group
- ✚ Working Party
- ✚ Church magazine

Food Bank

The church runs an independent food bank, supporting those in need in our community. This is run by two teams of volunteers. Donations of money and groceries are received from our own and other local churches, schools, businesses and individuals. We average over 20 customers each week, including single people, couples and families.

The Guild

The Guild meets weekly from September to April. The members enjoy a varied programme of events/speakers and encourage the congregation to join them for social nights.

Country Dance Group

There is a Country Dancing Group which is held weekly and is always looking for new members to take part in dancing and fellowship.

Flower Committee

The talented artistic ladies of the flower committee create the floral arrangements which adorn the church each Sunday. After Sunday worship these are distributed to members of the congregation who are ill, bereaved or celebrating a special occasion.

Pastoral Care Group

The pastoral care group visit those members of the congregation who are housebound or in residential housing.

Working Party

This is a small group of church members who come together to tackle minor repair or maintenance tasks within the church buildings or grounds. For example, weeding, tidying the area around the church and small painting tasks which have been identified by the Property Convenor.

Church Magazine

Our church magazine is called Connected, published quarterly. We are currently seeking a new editor for the magazine and in the meantime church office staff/volunteers are compiling the magazine.

Church Life in Bathgate

Bathgate Churches Together [BCT]

In 1980 a consortium of churches in the town began aiming “*to promote harmony and understanding between churches and co-operates in promoting Christian witness and outreach in Bathgate and the world beyond*”. Christians from different churches met and prayed together regularly about encouraging the churches to get together, sharing faith and witnessing within the community. BCT meet four or five times in the year. The group looks forward to the time when, once more, they can have the input and experience of a minister.

Denominations

Within Bathgate, and the wider West Lothian Mission District Central, there are churches of various denominations:

-  St. Columba's Episcopal Church
-  EU/URC Congregational Church
-  Boghall Parish Church of Scotland

-  St. Mary's and St. Columba's Roman Catholic Church
-  Centrepont [Evangelical]
-  Torphichen Church

Parish Grouping

Overall there is a good relationship with these churches. As part of Edinburgh and West Lothian Presbytery's Mission Plan, Bathgate Parish Church is in a Parish Grouping with Boghall Parish Church and will work together in mission and outreach.

Joint Services and Events

There are joint services on occasions such as:

-  World Day of Prayer/Week of prayer for Christian unity
-  Holy Week
-  Remembrance
-  Advent and Christmas

Community

Bathgate is a town in the centre of Scotland. It lies at the very heart of Scotland's road network and is well served by rail links to both Edinburgh and Glasgow. The population of the town and the parish served by Bathgate Parish Church is 23,600 as measured in the 2022 census. Of this, approximately 5,000 live in Boghall, a large housing scheme on the east of the town, served by Boghall Parish Church.

Beginning in 2003, a major housing development called Wester Inch was built around the southern edge of the town. This development has around 1700 homes with its own primary school, providing an untapped missional opportunity.

Education and Health Provision

The town is served by good primary health facilities in Bathgate Primary Care Centre, with the closest hospital with A&E being St John's Hospital in Livingston. There are two non-denominational primary schools serving the centre of the town; Windyknowe on the western edge and Balbardie Primary in the centre of the town. Simpson Primary serves the Wester Inch development and Boghall also has its own primary school.

All of these primary schools feed into Bathgate Academy, with the exception of Windyknowe, which feeds into Armadale Academy as there is insufficient capacity at Bathgate Academy to accommodate all primary pupils from the town. There are two catholic primary schools in Bathgate, St Mary's and St Columba's, which both feed into St Kentigern's Academy in Blackburn.

As with most local authorities across Scotland, there has been some reduction in the funding for the community. Most council functions now centre on the Bathgate Partnership Centre which houses council offices, a library and community facilities. This is the 'one stop shop' for the traditional enquiries to the council regarding benefits, housing, employment, education and most other council functions. Councillors' surgeries are often held here.

Chaplaincy

There had been a shared responsibility for school chaplaincy in the town, but since most of the churches in the town experienced vacancies at the same time, this has not restarted effectively since the pandemic. This is an issue which may be addressed as part of the Parish Grouping arrangements. This provides an unprecedented missional opportunity that we must grasp.

Coffee Mornings

Our monthly coffee mornings are an opportunity for shared fellowship and are a well-known and valued event throughout Bathgate. Run by bakers and helpers from the congregation, our successful mornings regularly raise in excess of £500 which goes into church funds, or for a particular charitable cause.

Charitable Contributions

As a church we support outside organisations including the Scottish Bible Society, Christian Aid, Tear Fund, Childlink and Blythwood Care on a regular basis through individual donations and coffee mornings. We also have retiring offerings at selected services with causes chosen by our congregation.

Street Pastors

The Bathgate Street Pastors work in the community on weekend evenings to help those who are out enjoying themselves. The Street Pastors recently received a community award for their volunteer work.

Stewardship and Finance

The church has a Finance and Property Group which has oversight of financial and property matters. The annual report and accounts for 2023 are available on the church website.

The most recent quinquennial survey report was produced in August 2023 and did not identify any items requiring immediate attention and only two items requiring urgent attention. The report suggests five phases of further works.

A number of stewardship initiatives are in place, such as monthly coffee mornings and a twice a year thrift shop, along with fundraising to support the food bank. Further stewardship initiatives will be undertaken in the future.

Staffing

The church office is open five days per week, Monday to Friday, from 10.00 am to 12 noon and is staffed by volunteers. There is a paid Church Officer post of 15 hours per week. The church officer deals with opening and preparation of premises, bookings and lets. There is also a paid Director of Music post and a paid post of Pre-school Leader. This latter post is for 5 hours per week during the school session.

Church, Halls and Manse

The three buildings of Bathgate Parish Church comprise a sanctuary with hall, office and vestry attached, a newer hall, built in 1965 and re-roofed in the 1980s, and the church manse.

The sanctuary building dates from 1884, with a nominal capacity of 1100. The sanctuary has a traditional layout with pews in the central and side areas and in the balcony. The sanctuary is in need of some attention. The building is B listed and so is eligible for consideration for Heritage grants from various sources. Work is

required to stonework, the roof and stained glass windows. This will require a programme of phased restorative work over a number of years.

Adjacent to the sanctuary is the church office, vestry, a small hall and a kitchen. There is one toilet and one disabled toilet in this part of the building.

The Large Hall is a separate building, offering a hall of a good size, along with smaller rooms and toilets. The hall has a PA system with loop and has full wi-fi. A number of organisations use the hall, including Boys Brigade, Girls Brigade, Pre-school group, Foodbank and our monthly coffee mornings.

A number of office bearers recently met with the Presbytery Buildings Advisor in relation to preparing an outline plan for the future phasing of work required on the church buildings. It is anticipated that some of the funds raised from the sale of the former St. John's Church and manse will be utilised for this purpose.

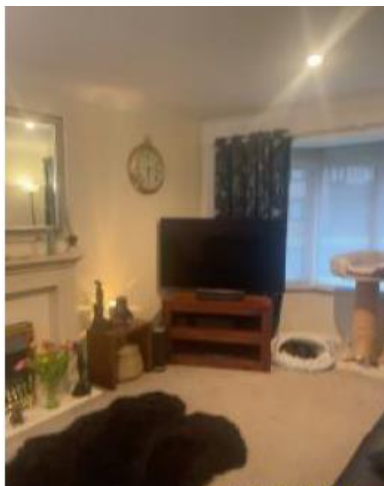
In future we would like to develop our accommodation to provide a modern, effective worship space, flexible spaces for church use and useable spaces for community use.



The manse

The manse is located at Hunter Grove, Bathgate and was built in 1989. The ground floor of the property comprises a lounge, study, dining room, kitchen with breakfasting area, utility room and WC. On the first floor there are four double bedrooms and a family bathroom. The master bedroom has an en-suite shower room.

19 Hunter Grove, Bathgate, West Lothian, EH48 1NN



Bathgate Parish Church sees our church as growing in faith, love and generosity, by nurturing our spiritual life, offering joyful services and supportive friendships. We look forward in hope towards a new minister who will reinvigorate and lead us in our mission and service to our Lord and our community.

Web Links

The Bathgate Parish Church website can be viewed at

<https://www.bathgateparish.com>

The Bathgate High Church Facebook page can be viewed at

https://www.facebook.com/BathgateParishChurch/?locale=en_GB

Parish statistics for the united charge of Bathgate Parish Church are not yet available, but the statistics for the two original congregations can be found using the links below

Bathgate Parish Church Parish statistics at

<https://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/church-finder/data/statistics/parish-profiles/020138.pdf>

Bathgate High Church – deprivation at

https://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/church-finder/data/statistics/deprivation/Dep_020138.html

Bathgate St John's – Parish Statistics at

<https://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/church-finder/data/statistics/parish-profiles/020140.pdf>

Bathgate St John's – deprivation at https://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/church-finder/data/statistics/deprivation/Dep_020140.html



Ministers and Deacons in Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriages – Act 1, 2015

Bathgate Parish Church has departed from the Church of Scotland's position, to permit consideration of ministers in civil partnerships and same sex marriages.