

A photograph of a priest in green vestments performing a Eucharistic rite. He is holding a host over an altar. The altar is set with three large white candles, three chalices, and a red cloth. The background features an ornate wooden altar screen with circular medallions and lit candles.

Parish Profile

St Margaret of Antioch

A safe harbour: open to God, inclusive of all

February 2024

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in St Margaret's, Lee.

This parish profile outlines who we are as a congregation, our values, challenges, and aspirations. Preparation of this document involved consultation with congregation members, the PCC, and our church school. It is an honest representation of where we are as a parish and what we hope to work through and achieve with a new Rector.



St Margaret's aims to be an open and inclusive Christian community, seeking to be faithful to God as revealed in Jesus Christ. We welcome and value in our shared pilgrimage and ministry all those made in God's image, rejoicing in variety of age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and mental and physical ability.

We believe in proclaiming the Gospel afresh for each generation, inspired by the Holy Spirit to build a loving and safe community that is rooted in prayer, worship, the sacraments, and faithfulness to Scripture. St Margaret's seeks to welcome our whole parish – the schools, care homes, and all our neighbours.

We embrace the Great Commission of Jesus Christ for the sake of God's just and loving purposes in the world, pursuing the five marks of mission:

Tell – To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.

Teach – To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.

Tend – To respond to human need by loving service.

Transform – To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.

Treasure – To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth



The Parish

St Margaret's has a diverse and vibrant congregation, including many young families with links to the church school; senior members who are active in our community; and numerous others from a wide range of ages, cultures, and identities. The welcoming and inclusive character of St Margaret's draws people from within and beyond the parish boundaries.

There are about 120 people on the electoral roll. Most Sundays see around 80 people attending. Festival services attract up to 250 people. Since Covid, numbers have increased with many newcomers arriving thanks both to our local outreach initiatives and to streaming of our main 10.30am Sunday service and online Morning Prayer.

From the church building, the parish extends southeast into Lee and southwest to Lewisham. It includes some of Blackheath, up to the edge of Blackheath Village.

St Margaret's is a relatively wealthy church in a parish with wide socio-economic disparity, from affluence to social deprivation – a difference reflected within our congregation. Measures of social deprivation put the parish in the bottom third of all parishes across the country.

The parish is a Crown Living and the Lord Chancellor is the patron.



Key People

We are privileged to be served by three staff and many volunteers. Paid staff include a parish administrator, vergers-caretaker, and finance officer. Our non-stipendiary Assistant Priest and our Reader lead services .

St Margaret's has dedicated volunteers: two churchwardens supported by a deputy, and a former churchwarden who chairs the PCC. Moreover, we have a director of music, a sacristan and servers; other volunteers lead Children's Church and a monthly Informal Worship service (for younger children) and Breakfast Club (for older children), as well as those that run our weekday outreach, social, and prayer groups.

Over the past decade, we have consciously engaged a younger generation of dynamic and enthusiastic people in the leadership of St Margaret's, alongside more established committed figures. As such, our PCC has vastly improved in diversity of age, skills, and identities.





Facilities

St Margaret's is fortunate to have a range of buildings for worship, outreach, community groups and social events. The church was built in 1841. The beautiful decorations inside the church date from an enlargement in the late 1800s and include a series of Victorian marouflages depicting biblical stories punctuated with extensive stencilling. The building includes access ramps, a lift, and a community meeting space in the west end of the crypt.

The Kingswood Halls is 250m from the main church building, and includes two halls with a kitchen and an annexe. The halls are used by uniformed and music groups, a Montessori nursery, other community groups and for social events. Hiring fees are an important source of revenue for the parish.

The parish office is in the Visitors' Centre next to the church building where we also let out a small amount of office space. The churchyard has a three-bedroom single-storey lodge, held in trust, where a Curate can live.

The ruins of a 12th century church are in a graveyard opposite the main church building. Three Astronomers Royal, including Edmond Halley, are buried in the graveyard.

There is dedicated off-street parking by the church and at Kingswood Halls.



St Margaret’s sits within the broad (liberal-central) Anglican tradition, embracing a variety of services. At the heart of our worship is both the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Sacrament, which we treasure equally. We are dedicated to being welcoming, inclusive, and joyful in our liturgy, without excessive formality.

The form of our services is highly adaptable to seasons, feasts, and special occasions. We encourage participation of the clergy and laity together, with lay members of our congregation performing diaconal roles at the altar, reading Scripture, and leading intercessions. Recently, some primary school-aged children have taken on roles as servers, acolytes and readers.

Our magnificent choir is one of the defining aspects of our Sunday worship and includes a number of paid choral scholars. The choir is led by a dynamic director of music. The canticles and responses are sung by the choir at our monthly traditional language Matins and Evensong services, together with an introit and anthem. The congregation delights in the organ voluntaries that conclude most choral services.

‘A respect for tradition and courage to change’

Our monthly pattern of Sunday worship is as follows:

	1st Sunday	2nd Sunday	3rd Sunday	4th Sunday	5th Sunday
8.00am	BCP Holy Communion	BCP Holy Communion	BCP Holy Communion	BCP Holy Communion	BCP Holy Communion
9.00am		Informal W Breakfast C			
10.30am	Choral Holy Communion	Choral Matins	Choral Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Choral Holy Communion
6.00pm	BCP Evening Prayer	Said Holy Communion	BCP Evening Prayer	Choral Evensong	BCP Evening Prayer



Worship

In addition to our Sunday services, the clergy also lead online morning prayer Monday to Thursday, streamed on Facebook, and a mid-week Holy Communion.

Our choir facilitates the direct engagement in worship from a diverse range of people, principally our congregation. Pupils from St Margaret's school are invited to join the choir and receive a high standard musical education. We offer choral and organ scholarships to students of Goldsmiths and Trinity Laban. This upholds the high standard of our choir and provides the opportunity to draw younger people into our choral tradition.

We are pleased that some older scholars have stayed on as established members of the choir, and we are always delighted when former scholars return to help with special events and services. The choir leads worship week by week and sings Evensong in a cathedral during the summer term, most recently in Southwark and Rochester, and works hard to maintain a musical standard of excellence at church festivals.

In addition to worship, St Margaret's is also committed to nurturing spiritual growth and discipleship. We run regular Open to God courses, studying books of the Bible as well as the history of Christianity; we have also explored religious art and film. Annual Confirmation classes are held.



Outreach

At St Margaret's, we have been pleased to see our outreach develop over the last few years – and we are committed to expanding this further. Our projects currently running include the following:

- **The Darby and Joan Club** is our most established community outreach (running since 1958), and provides a meeting space for senior citizens every Tuesday for two hours in the church crypt. It provides space for support, socialising, fun, and exercise – often including music, a talk, keep fit (in a chair!), painting, flower arranging, Bingo and quizzes.
- **Tea for Free** grew out of concerns about the social issues of isolation and loneliness. It runs for two hours on Monday mornings in the crypt, and provides a warm welcome, tea and coffee, and plenty of conversation.
- **Rucksack Music** is a time of music and singing for small children and their parents/carers in our community. It runs for an hour on Friday mornings in the crypt.
- **Make Lunch** is a relatively new and thriving initiative held during the school holidays in Kingswood Halls. Running from 10:30am – 4:30pm, Make Lunch provides a hot meal and entertainment for local families, many of whom are connected with St Margaret's school.





Outreach

- We actively support **LewCAS (Lewisham Churches for Asylum Seekers)**, which provides food parcels every week from St John's, Deptford. We supply St John's with weekly contributions alongside our Harvest Festival collection of non-perishable goods.
- Other outreach work includes our **Dacre Dig** community garden, open to all local residents, and based in the grounds of the Kingswood Halls – and the twice-weekly **Toddler Playgroup**, also held at the Halls. Both are sponsored by St Margaret's Church.
- There are weekly services at our two local care homes, **Rectory Court** and **Leah Lodge**, with many residents now attending St Margaret's

Our approach to outreach has focused on building partnerships with other organisations, such as Make Lunch, the Probation Service, LewCAS, and Dacre Dig. We play an active role in reaching out to those in need in our neighbourhood, working hard to establish a community within our church that is inclusive, welcoming, and open to everyone. We are proud to have people from all over the world engaged in the support we offer.



Children's work

On Sunday mornings, children over four are invited to our Children's Church in the crypt, which runs alongside the main 10:30am church service. This is on the first, third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of the month. On the second Sunday of the month there is an Informal Worship service at 9:00am (before Choral Matins) with songs, prayers, arts and crafts. We have also recently introduced a Breakfast Club for older children, which runs concurrently in the church crypt. Our Informal Worship is immensely popular, well attended and regularly draws new members into the congregation.

One of our recent endeavours is to include some of the older children as servers, acolytes and readers during the main Holy Communion services.



St Margaret's School

St Margaret's Lee CE is a one-form entry primary school, including a nursery providing part-time places for three- to four-year-olds. The school achieves consistently high standards and was rated 'outstanding' in its latest Ofsted review and 'excellent' in the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools report. "It is very special to have a village school mentality in Zone Three of London". The exemplary teaching staff at the school are supported by a governing body and a parents' association.

The school and church have strong links with one another. Many children at the school are actively involved in the Choir, Children's Church and Informal Worship, with parents also offering considerable voluntary support. Ideally, the Rector takes weekly assemblies at the school, and the school makes visits to the church for their own festival and leavers' services. The Rector is on the Board of Governors and the PCC elects six Foundation Governors.

"It is very special to have a village school mentality in Zone Three of London"



Cultural and social events

Our buildings host many events; there are four local amateur orchestras that put on regular concerts every year, with the Blackheath Choir holding their three annual concerts in the church (with weekly rehearsals at the Kingswood Halls). Through such long-term regular events St Margaret's Church is seen as a cultural hub, attracting loyal audiences from all over South-East London and beyond. The church, together with Kingswood Halls, hosts many music groups, exhibitions, lectures and talks, alongside a children's nursery, yoga classes, and a dance school at the Halls.

Although much of this activity was adversely affected by Covid-19, we have witnessed a return to a pre-lockdown thriving of bookings and events.

Uniformed groups – Brownies, Guides, Cubs, and Scouts – meet weekly in Kingswood Halls and attend four festival services a year.

‘Committed to celebrating all people, no matter what their background, family status, ethnicity, or anything else’



Money and Facilities

St Margaret's draws most of its income from financial stewardship (£100,000 in 2022) and rent of parish facilities (£155,000 in 2022). We hold cash reserves of approximately £600,000 in various accounts, most of which has been already allocated for the upkeep and upgrading of our buildings.

Several small charities, established by historic bequests, help support our charitable purposes. We are a relatively wealthy parish, allowing us to support less well-resourced parishes by paying more than the requested Parish Share.



Buildings

The current church building (dating from 1841) is Grade II* listed and requires a lot of maintenance. We are currently working through the 2022 Quinquennial Report from our architects.

The building had a major renovation 25 years ago, and a number of elements are coming to their functional end, and are currently undergoing maintenance and repair – particularly our AV system upgrade.

We are working towards the Church of England's Net Zero by 2030 goal – we completed an audit as a first step – and have achieved an Eco-Church Silver Award. We are investigating green initiatives, including moving Kingswood Halls away from fossil fuel heating, and we have new LED floodlighting.

St Margaret's rectory is a modern, two storey, four bedroom house on Brandram Road, next to the main church building. It has a large garden and single garage.

The church is close to Lewisham's vibrant town centre, Blackheath village, the Heath itself and Greenwich Park. Trains from Lewisham reach central London in less than 20 minutes.



Main Strengths

St Margaret's is a member of Inclusive Church, and we are committed as a congregation to being open, welcoming, and diverse as stated in our vision.

Our worshipping community is composed of people from various cultural, social, and theological backgrounds. Alongside this diversity of people is a wonderful variety of worship as detailed above. The heterogeneity of our community, worship, and theology makes St Margaret's a vibrant church.

We are enormously blessed by our choir, which for many years has continued to expand, pushing the limits of its excellence. Most people at St Margaret's would consider the choir to be the crowning attribute of our worshipping life.

At St Margaret's we take seriously our Christian calling to care for and love all our neighbours. As such, there are strong links between the church and the wider community, namely our school, local young families and elderly, and more recently, refugees. We always make an effort to welcome newcomers.



Challenges and looking ahead

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In mid-2022 St Margaret's was privileged to welcome a large group of Iranian asylum seekers, fleeing persecution for their faith in Christ. Sadly, they were recently made to leave their nearby hostel, and moved to other areas of London and the country. These past 18 months have significantly raised our awareness of the refugee crisis and the pressing humanitarian need it presents. We are inspired to continue the missional work of offering friendship, practical help, and spiritual guidance to asylum seekers (particularly Christians) in our vicinity.

In our congregation we consistently have good numbers of children aged 0-10 years and their parents. It is challenging to retain these members and nurture the faith of young people aged 10-18.

We know there is more we can do to welcome and include people whose identities have resulted in negative experiences of the church. For example, we are looking to further develop our welcome and inclusion of LGBTQI+ people. For both young people and LGBTQI+ people we are working on small initiatives to strengthen this area of work. We would welcome a Rector whose vision and skills help us drive this work forward, so that our congregation better reflects local demographics and becomes more truly the fully inclusive body of Christ.

Many of our challenges are connected with the wider socio-economic issues increasingly prevalent in our world. This includes poverty and living costs, loneliness and mental health, environmental sustainability (we are working towards an Eco-Church Gold Award) and the long-term cultural impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. To meet these challenges, we hope to improve our outreach work, particularly with regards to home visits, home groups, and working alongside local charities and local government.

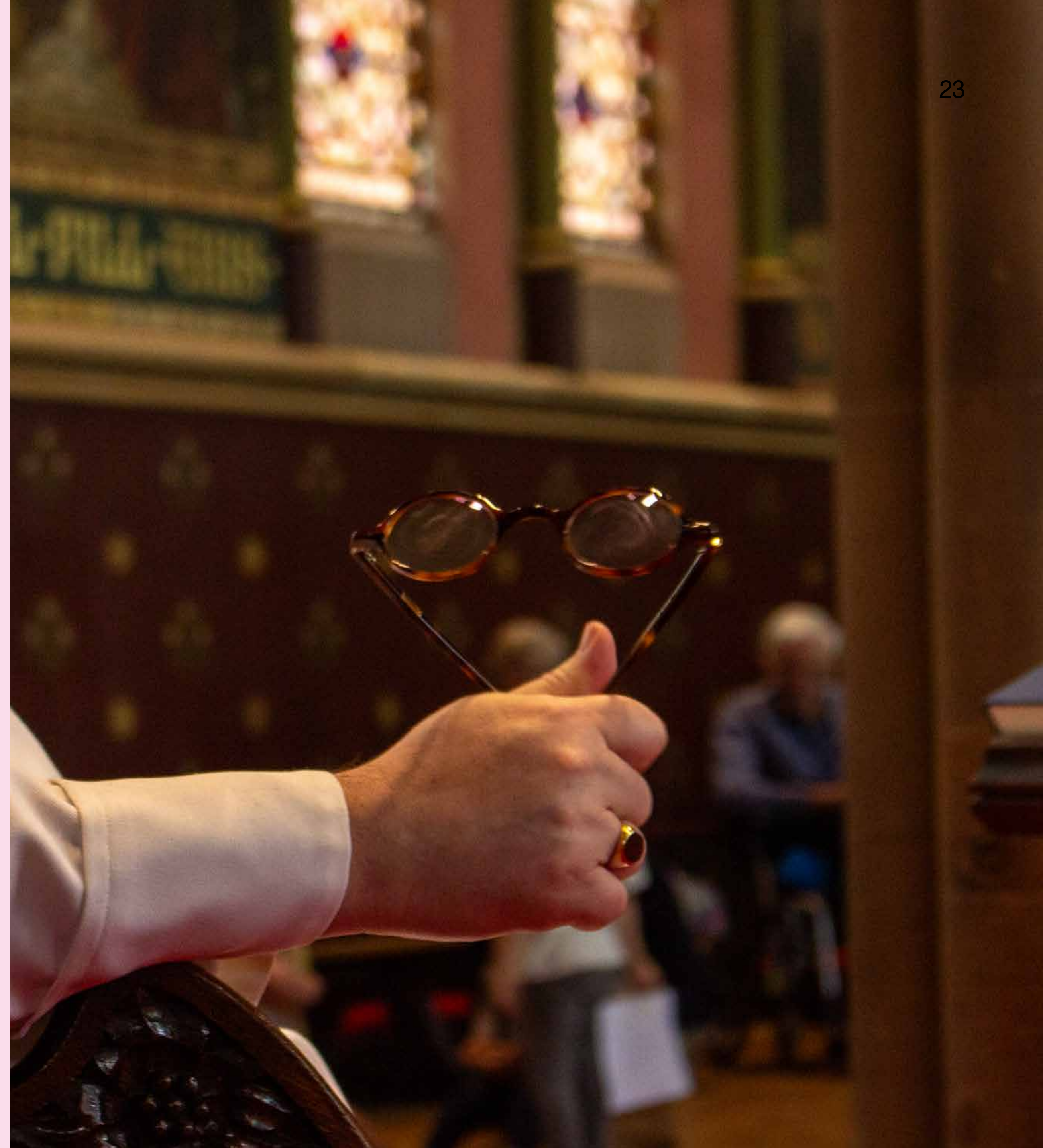
Other important aims are raising funds and increasing parish giving, as well as hosting more community events at the church.

'Empathy, intelligence, generosity, an endless capacity to listen to people and good humour' – what we're looking for in a Rector

Our Next Rector

St Margaret's is looking for a Rector who will comfortably embody our values of inclusivity and openness, being a warm and welcoming person. She or he will appreciate and support the choral and liturgical traditions of the church, while at the same time bringing fresh insights and new ideas. Many have expressed their desire for a Rector who combines theological proficiency with pastoral care skills – as thoughtful sermons and care for the congregation are both very important to everyone. St Margaret's would greatly benefit from leadership that exudes energy and enthusiasm for the numerous growing ministries here.

We expect the Rector to be actively involved in the day-to-day running of the parish. This includes line management of our three staff members, leading maintenance and upgrade projects for the church and Kingswood Halls, being on the Board of Governors for St Margaret's School and the Board of Trustees for the Lee Charity of William Hatcliffe.





Thank You

