



Parish Profile



Sharing the Good News of Jesus
with everyone

FOREWORD

From the Archdeacon of Totnes, The Ven. Douglas Dettmer



Thank you for your interest in the appointment at St Matthias in the beautiful Wellswood area of Torquay. For Torbay as for this diocese, St Matthias has long been a flagship parish church in representing its historically open Evangelical tradition with thoughtful teaching, graceful welcome, and attentiveness to the needs of the wider community. A comprehensive vision for worship, teaching, parish life and community service, well served by strong, dedicated ordained and lay leadership, has formed a church which continues to flourish in mission and ministry. A single-parish, single-PCC benefice with a very well equipped

and recently reordered church building, St Matthias is now ready to enter the next season of its distinguished history as it welcomes a new Rector. He or she will be blessed with friendly support from able colleagues and a firm foundation on which to build.

The **Right Revd Dr Mike Harrison** became **Bishop of Exeter** in November 2024 and since his arrival has continued to develop our diocesan vision for mission and ministry. Bishop Mike says: “The Diocese of Exeter’s vision to grow in prayer, make new disciples and serve the people of Devon with joy has evolved over the last five years, with a widespread post-pandemic listening consultation leading to the development of the [‘Next Steps’](#) strategy to support mission communities to flourish and be sustainable for generations to come. It’s a vision that fits with Jesus’ commission in Matthew 28.16-20, which is authoritative for me and I’m sure for many.



“Putting flesh on the bones of the vision, I would like to articulate five particular priorities for this next season of our life together. First, **Missional Leadership**: equipping and



resourcing the ordained and lay leaders of our Christian communities as best as we can to develop disciples and make new disciples. Second, developing a “**Missional DNA**” across our Christian communities, encouraging outward-looking, invitational churches, hospitable to outsiders and engaged with their wider communities. Third, cultivating an intentional **Vocational Culture** so that we are not asking *whether* God is calling me / us, but ‘*To what* is God calling me / us now?’ Fourth, **Children & Young People** being placed at the heart of

our life, mission and ministry. And fifth, a **Mixed Ecology**: understanding that we need different ways of doing and being Church. Alongside time-honoured Church we need all sorts of Christian communities which can engage with the 95% of our population who are as yet unengaged. I hope that these five priorities will become embedded at every level of our ministry going forward.”

Further information about our Diocesan Vision can be found at:

<https://exeter.anglican.org/who-we-are/vision-strategy/>

Deanery & Diocese

The parish is part of Torbay deanery in the beautiful English Riviera, with easy access to the superb Devon coastline and Dartmoor National Park. There are good road and rail links to the rest of Devon and beyond. The sharp socioeconomic contrasts which characterise the Torbay unitary authority area are reflected in the parish of St Matthias, which includes some of the wealthiest residential parts of Torbay and some of the most economically deprived.

In the diocese of Exeter we aim to be a diverse and truly representative diocesan community and particularly welcome applications from women and from people of global majority heritage. This diocese is a good place to be in ministry, and it is a particularly exciting time of growth and development in our diocesan life. May God bless you as you continue to discern whether you might be called to a ministry at Torquay St Matthias; do be in touch with me directly if you would value a confidential conversation about the post.

With my best wishes,

Douglas Dettmer, Archdeacon of Totnes

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Welcome

Thank you for taking the time to consider becoming our Rector.

We have been praying for our next Rector and hope that this Profile will help you discern whether God is calling you to join us. The Profile is intended to paint a picture of who we are, our vision for the future, the qualities we are looking for in a new Rector and some of the challenges we are facing.

St Matthias' is an active, well established, evangelical church in the heart of Wellswood, a suburb of Torquay, that serves its own immediate community and other parts of the town and seaside area. More information can be found on our website www.st-matthias-church.org: It is within the Deanery of Torbay and the Diocese of Exeter www.exeter.anglican.org.

We are an evangelical Anglican church with an ongoing commitment to applying biblical truth to contemporary life, personally and communally.

We believe in the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit to equip us as a church to fulfil this task.

We seek to grow as a welcoming, caring church proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ with a growing involvement in the local community.

We join in worshipping God in a rich variety of ways, encouraging lay participation and engaging all ages.

We want to enable everyone to know Jesus more and experience life in its fullness.

We seek to keep the church a vibrant, active, supportive and life transforming fellowship.

We have been through significant changes in the last decade, including a major reordering of the church building to make it a welcoming, visible and accessible space, with the vision that we would be a "Wellspring", a spring of living water in the heart of our local community, filled and overflowing with the love of Christ, reaching out to those around.



Our Mission

At St. Matthias' we believe we are here for these 3 things:

To worship God

We want to put God first in all things - to honour Him with our lives - and to get to know Him better.

To make disciples

We want to learn to follow Jesus more closely - and to help other people discover the joy and freedom of being loved and forgiven as a Christian.

To transform communities

We want to work with God to shape the world into the place He intends it to be - the Bible calls this "Kingdom shaped" - where mercy, love and justice thrive.

Our Core Values are:



Going Jesus' way



Knowing God's joy



Being generous like Jesus



Growing on the journey

[A downloadable version of our values with related Bible verses is available on our website here](#)

We are looking to appoint someone who will embrace our mission statement, and these core values, which were developed with extensive collaboration with the church and the community, and who will help us shape a vision for the next five years.



Our Next Incumbent

We are praying for God's chosen person who will be:

- a person of prayer, open to the Spirit, with a tried and tested faith
- a person whose life and ministry is rooted in the Bible
- a team builder with a collaborative and enabling style, geared to equipping and releasing others and able to delegate well
- someone with a burning desire to reach out into the community with the love of Christ, especially to those yet to have a personal encounter with Jesus
- a change agent, able graciously to lead the church through periods of change and growth, including people of all ages and backgrounds
- a person who will embrace different styles and traditions of worship with confidence, recognising their contribution to building God's Kingdom
- someone with a caring, sympathetic, pastoral nature, able to support and develop our pastoral ministry
- someone with energy, enthusiasm and resilience
- a person who has had experience in training and supporting other church workers enabling them to grow and develop in ministry
- a person with good communication skills who can effectively deliver Bible based teaching relevant to different groups in the congregation
- a person comfortable in their own skin and with a sense of humour

We are a busy Mission Community and this is a demanding role which will probably suit someone with previous experience of running a parish.

Our schools would value someone who enjoys engaging with children, who will be a visible and positive presence to them and will build supportive relationships with staff, pupils and families, and who is able to bring the school values to life.

We value women's ministry and would welcome a man or woman as our next incumbent.

We have run the 'Living in Love and Faith' course involving many of the church in discussions on the important issues raised. The dialogue was constructive and various differing views were expressed. No decisions were or have been taken.



Strengths and Challenges

We have reflected, with lots of input from the congregation, on the strengths of St Matthias' and the challenges we face.

Strengths

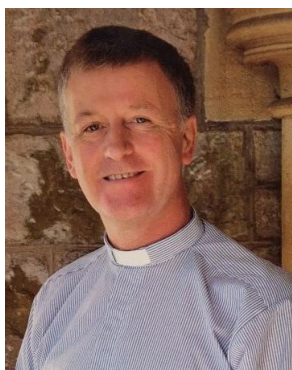
- Fellowship: a strong sense of Church family and community – seen as friendly and welcoming
- Bible-based teaching and commitment to the Bible
- Variety of services and catering for all ages
- Dedicated ministry team and strong leadership
- We have managed to pay our parish share every year
- Mission Statement and Core Values are at the heart of church life
- Strong commitment to outreach and mission
- Our position in the community: we are a community hub with a well-used and valued Church Centre
- Home groups and other opportunities for fellowship outside church

Challenges

- Lots of initiatives but too few people to carry them out
- We need to change and adapt to a changing world (new patterns of church attendance especially since Covid)
- We need to find ways to ensure different congregations feel part of one church family
- We have been blessed financially BUT will need to increase giving to support a larger team
- Need to develop a vision building on our Mission Statement and Core Values
- More people are unchurched



Meet the team



Associate Minister
Paul Barton



Curate
Claire Reynolds



Assistant Clergy
Dallas Ayling



Youth & Children's Lead
Helen Baker



Churchwarden
Clare Whittaker



Churchwarden
Cheryl Bevins



Ordinand
Sharon Hiley



Ops Co-ordinator
Sylvia Barratt



Centre Management &
Church Administrator
Pere Snow



Safeguarding Officer
Sue Davies



Pre School Leader
Liz Sampson



PCC Secretary
Ester Luscombe



Treasurer
Margaret Mundy



Corporate worship, celebration and teaching

We endeavour to develop and offer styles of worship, both in music and teaching, which promote spiritual growth among people from different backgrounds and who are at different stages in their spiritual journey.

St Matthias' is committed to all members of the congregation, whatever their age or background. We want all members of the fellowship to feel that they belong and can play their part in the life of the church.

Our current pattern of **Sunday services** is:

8am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) is greatly valued by some of our church family and remains an important part of our weekly worship despite small numbers.

9:30am "Explore" services are our informal café-style services attended by a mix of age groups, including families with young children, with lively worship. These services are currently held in the Hall and have refreshments before, during and after. The average congregation is approximately 30 to 40.

11am is our morning service in the church with between 80 – 100 people and a further 10 to 20 watching online. The style of these services is slightly more traditional with a mix of organ, keyboard and pre-recorded music and singing led by a small group of singers. The broad pattern for these services is:

Common Worship Holy Communion First, Third and Fifth Sunday.

Morning Worship Second and Fourth Sunday, using a variety of different liturgies.

Praise@5:30 is a monthly informal time of contemporary worship where the younger people are encouraged to help lead the worship and teaching.

Prayer Ministry is available at all the 11am services and we try to have a focus on prayer for healing on the fifth Sunday.

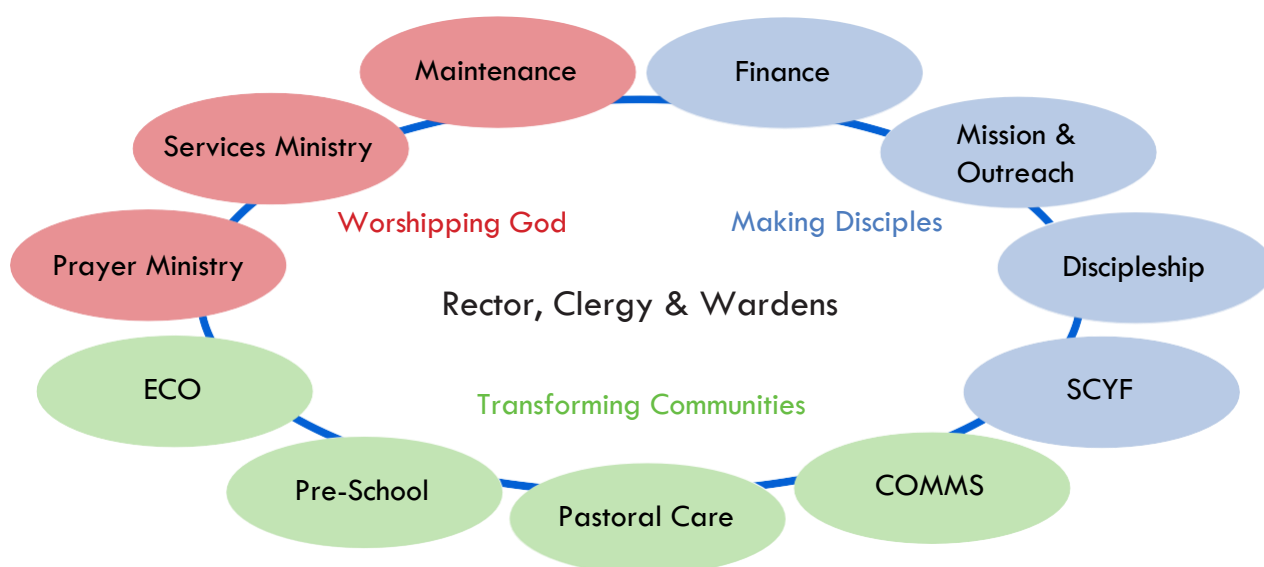
Morning Prayer is held online on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. There is a 9am Holy Communion on Wednesday, followed by refreshments.

The PCC and Action Groups

We have an active PCC as well as many volunteers, forming a reliable, hard-working team. The PCC currently has 17 members, including 3 Deanery Synod members and an experienced Safeguarding Lead. It meets around eight times a year.

More information about the PCC and copies of the most recent Annual Report and Financial Statement can be found on the website ([St Matthias' PCC](#)).

Over the last few years, as part of our strategic plan, we have put in place Action Groups, covering all aspects of our church life, which are linked to the various aspects of Focus within our Mission Statement, with the aim of sharing responsibility and empowering and enabling laity to work in unity towards our goals and to deliver our priorities.



Young People

St Matthias' has always been a church with a strong desire to minister to families, children, youth and schools. In April 2025 we appointed an Emerging Generations Team Leader, Helen Baker, to coordinate and develop our existing dedicated teams as well as step out and try new ideas and deepen our relationship with our local community and schools. She also takes a leading role in the informal Explore services and the monthly Praise@ 5:30 service.

Explore

Over recent years, trying to include all ages in one service proved to be increasingly difficult, resulting in loss of families and children, exacerbated by competition from other activities outside church. The pandemic only added to these difficulties.

However, there are exciting changes. With the provision of an informal weekly café-style family service, the numbers of regular families and children are increasing and the services are full of life.

Messy Church

Messy Church is held about six times a year to celebrate events such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas. About 20-30 children attend with their families to take part in an interactive Bible story, prayers, songs, crafts and a meal.

Toddler Group

One morning every week the church becomes a hive of activity with toddlers, parents and carers. Great fun is had with toys large and small. There is a Bible based story, a simple craft and songs.

Mummy and Me

Mummy and Me was started by our previous Children's and Family worker to provide support to parents and babies under 12 months old.

Upwards of 30 mothers and babies regularly come. Some of these babies are brought for baptism and their families get involved in other aspects of church life.

Youth Group

Our Youth Club is also experiencing a very encouraging turnout of young people from year 6 and up. Many do not have a church background and are choosing to stay on after Youth Club for Christian teaching. They have recently undertaken Youth Alpha and are now undertaking a discipleship course. Many have chosen to commit their lives to Christ. Several have taken on leading roles in our Praise@5:30 services, writing and performing in dramas, writing and leading prayers and occasional talks.

This year we took our first group of young people to SPREE Southwest. Over 2000 young people from the wider area camp at a venue in Exeter and have a fun time learning about Jesus, worshipping, playing and growing friendships.



Schools and Pre-School

Schools

We have 3 church primary schools in our parish.

- Ilsham Church of England Primary Academy which is next to the church;
- Warberry Church of England Primary Academy located a short distance from the Church;
- Ellacombe Church of England Primary Academy, which has been added, jointly, to St Matthias' and St Mary Magdalene parish.

All 3 schools are part of an academy trust with a fourth school in a neighbouring town. Once a year all 4 schools in the academy meet up for an 'Ethos Day'. Children representing the schools come along to learn about a theme and then take it back to their schools. Activities have included learning about Jesus as Light of the World set in our local Kent's Cavern and this year they learnt about Pentecost and the event was held in the church.

We have very regular contact with Ilsham and Warberry schools. A team consisting of volunteers and clergy go into the schools every week to take assemblies and read from 'Open the Book'. Several members of the team are school governors. The schools visit the church for services throughout the year and other activities such as the Easter Experience are put on for them.

The schools are very keen to foster closer working and welcome input from St Matthias' helping them to deliver initiatives such as reflective prayer spaces as well as encouraging further church visits. Many of our youth come to Youth Club after being invited when they reach Year 6.

Secondary schools

Whilst the only Church School, St Cuthbert Mayne, is out of our parish, we have secondary aged children who attend a variety of schools in the Bay and historically have been able to have some involvement in them.

Pre-school

St Matthias' also has its own pre-school, on the church premises, with an employed staff of 6 people but managed by a Management Committee made up mostly of church members.

The pre-school is part of the church for financial purposes and staff are employed by the PCC.

The pre-school currently takes children from 2-5 years and also offers an After School Club and a Holiday Club for children of primary school age. It offers a wonderful outdoor environment and Forest School activities.

A team of church members and clergy regularly attend to teach Bible stories.



Church Life

There is a lot going on throughout the week and a significant number of the congregation are involved in leading or helping to organize groups and activities for church members and the community. Here is a sample of some of the things which are happening in the Church and Centre.

Home groups

There are currently 9 Home Groups with about 70 members meeting at different times and on different days of the week. Members find them valuable for support, fellowship and the chance to study the Bible and pray together. We run an Alpha course once or twice a year and come together for a teaching series during Lent.

Welcome Space

On Wednesdays the church is open to welcome people for refreshment and a space to meet and chat with others. A small group from the church provide refreshments, whilst others mingle with those who largely come in from the community.

Eco Group

We have an enthusiastic Eco group which has helped the church to secure a Bronze A Rocha Eco Church Accreditation award and is currently leading us on the path to Silver. The group has sought to bring together Christians across the Bay to work to raise awareness of sustainability, climate change and biodiversity and held a very successful EcoFest in the church with many local environmental organizations and seminars on climate change and biodiversity.

Girls Allowed

A group of women at St Matthias' meet monthly for friendship and activities and welcome non-church friends.

St Matthias' Gospel Choir

There is a gospel choir run by one of our worship team which attracts a mix of singers from the church and the wider community and joins us for worship at Christmas and Easter.

The Friends of St Matthias'

The Friends of St Matthias' was set up as a charity in 1997 to raise funds for maintenance and enhancement of the church buildings and grounds. Over the years they have funded or contributed to many projects and are currently funding the reroofing of the Church Centre.

English Language Group

This group meets in the church on Wednesday mornings. The group was started in 2022 to provide free English lessons to support local Ukrainians fleeing the war. This group has now welcomed others who need to improve their English.





Ecumenical activities

We have good links with other churches and Christian groups in the area such as:

LiNX Christian Youth Trust: this is an organisation founded by a group of churches including St Matthias'. It employs six staff and as well as going into most of the Bay's secondary schools to teach PSHE and RE lessons and run clubs it also organises regular activities across the Bay for secondary age children.

Christians Together in Torquay: an organisation which aims to unite churches in Christian activity. Examples include a monthly prayer meeting, a walk of witness on Good Friday and periodic combined services (the most recent on Palm Sunday was hosted at St Matthias').

Torbay Street Pastors: people from St Matthias' have been involved in this work for many years either by providing prayer support or being a visible presence at the harbourside, helping to keep a calm atmosphere and provide a safe haven for those in need.

Salvation Army Food Bank: several members of the congregation support this important work, which is run centrally from the Salvation Army headquarters.

Torbay United/YUM Bus: Torbay United was established during Covid to help coordinate Christian social action around Torbay. Part of its current work, supported by several of our congregation, is a mobile social supermarket, run from a converted St Matthias' mini bus, which visits various parts of Torbay to provide essential food for a minimal fixed charge.



St Mary Magdalene Church homeless initiatives: We support financially and with volunteers the important work reaching out to the homeless carried out by St Mary Magdalene which is located in the heart of Torquay.

Our Parish

Torquay

Torquay is situated on the beautiful South Devon coast, with a stunning sea front and surrounded by areas of outstanding beauty. The towns of Torquay, Brixham, and Paignton form part of the borough of Torbay which has a resident population of 139,000 (2021 census). The population increases significantly in the summer with holiday makers and tourism is a major industry.

Torquay, like many other seaside towns, has areas of significant social deprivation with issues of addiction, poor housing and homelessness. It also has a higher than average proportion of retired people, many of whom move to the area on retirement.

The Parish

We are a combination of three parishes; St Matthias', St Mark and Holy Trinity which came together in 1979 (when the buildings of St Mark and Holy Trinity became redundant). More recently we acquired part of the neighbouring parish of Ellacombe.

We are in the unusual position of being a Mission Community with a single church building. The church is located at the heart of the "village" community of Wellswood, which has an array of local shops, cafes and restaurants and active community organisations, many of which meet in the Church Centre.

The parish, runs to Torquay sea front and includes some of the most affluent parts of Torquay but also some very poor areas with high levels of need. It has a population of about 8,000 people with a mix of housing, including grand Victorian villas, terraced streets, HMOs and care homes.

Despite being characterized as urban the parish includes several miles of very scenic South West Coastal Path with a number of beaches and green spaces in easy walking distance of the church.





The Church Buildings

St Matthias' Church is a Victorian building dating from 1857 and built in the Gothic revival style. The church completed a major reordering in December 2019 so that it is now a light and open space with a full kitchen at the back of the church.

The main, open nave area has flexible seating and is used for toddler and baby groups, concerts and other events, church family meals and services in different formats. There is a small side chapel which is used for Prayer Ministry and small services. Glazed entrance doors have opened up the building to the community and allow passers-by to see into the building.

We have a spacious and well-equipped Church Centre, opened in 1986, which is physically connected to the church, containing a large hall with kitchen, two lounges, a library and an office. The Church Centre is used by approximately 1,500 people from the church and the community in an average week. A lower hall provides facilities for the church-run Pre-school.

As part of the reordering we created a Piazza outside the main, newly-glazed West entrance which connects us with the local community. We use this for outreach events and outdoor services as well as mingling with coffee on sunny days. The church grounds also include a wooded area used for Forest School and a small garden as well as car parking.

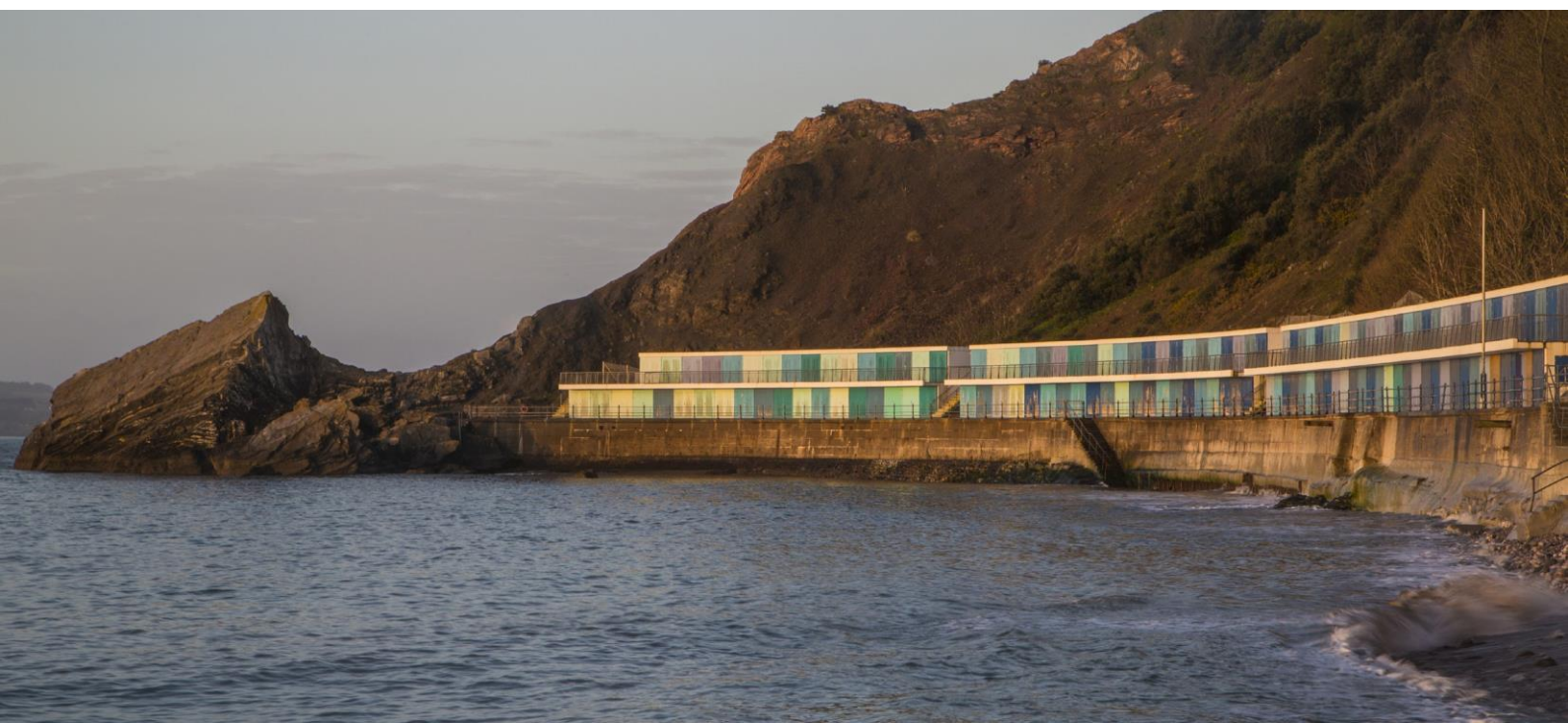


The Rectory



The Rectory is a four-bedroomed, detached house with a detached garage. It is in a very pleasant cul-de-sac, just two minutes' walk from the church and close to two of our church primary schools.

In the last 12 months it has undergone extensive remedial and modernisation work to insulate it to a high standard, and it has also been redecorated and had new flooring on the ground floor.



What we can offer you

We hope that you will find being Rector of St Matthias' fulfilling and rewarding; we also recognise that it will be demanding, although it need not be lonely; you will have a PCC and Staff group to work with you.

We will do our best to support you by:

- accepting you and loving you for who you are
- respecting your calling and your authority under God
- praying for and with you
- looking for opportunities to encourage you
- being prepared to take risks alongside you and learn from our mistakes
- making sure you have time and space to relax and find refreshment

We trust that if God is calling you to St Matthias' you will relish the opportunity to help shape our future and provide the leadership to take our church forward to grow in faith, hope and love and be a vital force in bringing's God's love to our community.

Is God calling you here?



To share the Good News of Jesus

