

St Michael's Church Weeton



A Short Guide

Welcome to St Michael's. When you first come into St Michael's Church through the porch door on the north side of the building, you step into a beautiful 19th Century Church that you can at once feel has been looked after and loved by many generations of people who have worshipped in this Parish.

The church was built on land that was donated to the village by the 13th Earl of Derby. Much of the land in this part of the Fylde belonged to the Earls of Derby. It was built by funds raised by public subscription in 1843, and extended by adding the chancel in 1846.

Our Parish consists of the villages of Weeton with Preese, Westby with Plumpton, and Greenhalgh with Thistleton. One of the loveliest parts of the Fylde, just a few miles from the market town of Kirkham, the City of Preston, and many coastal resorts, Blackpool being the major one, and smaller quieter resorts of Lytham St. Annes, and Fleetwood.

Just inside the church is the font. It is a stone font that was presented to the church by Oliver and Ellen Stirzaker in memory of their daughter Mabel. It is always used for baptisms instead of the original font that is set against the wall just to the left of the church door.



To the right of the font is our disabled toilet, built from money raised by the sale of the vicarage in 2009. Past this are steps that take you to the choir on the right, and the organ loft on the left. The organ is a single manual that was designed and built by T. & C. Lane of Earl Shilton in Leicestershire. Although it is now powered by electricity, it still has the capability to pump the bellows by hand. At the back of the church there is the bell rope used to ring the single bell in the bell tower. This is rung before the start of all services held in the church to summon people to worship.

From here, looking down the church, towards the east, you get a wonderful view of the whole church. The altar, pulpit, prayer desk, and pews are all original. There are doors at the end of each pew; built to allow a certain amount of privacy for individuals and family members, also to keep away any uncomfortable draughts.



The altar, where the Eucharist or Holy Communion is celebrated, and the offertory is received, is situated in the sanctuary that has a beautiful tiled floor, with two chancel steps, and a brass altar rail. The altar has been moved away from the west wall, as in many churches, following a change to the church's liturgical

practice from 1964. Before then, the Priest would always face the altar when celebrating the Eucharist, (*Latin: Ad orientem* - facing east). Often the altar is not covered by a full altar cover, this allows the beautiful wood carving, that matches the pulpit and prayers desk to be seen. On the wall behind the altar on each side of the window there are two large panels that contain the words of the Ten Commandments. You will see the beautifully embroidered Mother's Union banner on the wall to the left of the altar.

Access to the pulpit, on the left when looking towards the altar, is made by a flight of five steps. The pulpit is where the vicar preaches his sermon. It has a book-stand that can be adjusted by means of a wooden screw. Fixed on the wall by the pulpit there is a crucifix, this reminds us of the sacrifice Jesus made when he died for us on the cross, and on the floor just by the pulpit there is a large candle in a tall candle stick. This candle is the Paschal candle, and is lit at every service in church to remind everyone that Jesus rose from the dead at Easter and gave us the promise of eternal life.



Opposite the pulpit is the prayer desk where the vicar sits, and to the left of the prayer desk is a door that provides access to the vestry, where the vestments the vicar wears when leading services in church are kept, together with the many practical items needed for the running of the church. The vestry also has a further door that opens up to the churchyard.

In front of the prayer desk is a brass lectern, from here the Bible texts allocated for the particular day are read.

St. Michael's also is the proud possessor of some wonderful stained-glass windows. The large window on the west wall is a patterned window and allows full light to enter the choir and organ loft.

The window behind the altar and the window by the organ are both original. The window behind the altar depicts the Old Testament story of Elijah; when Elijah

was told by God to travel to Zarephath, east of the Jordan, to warn the people living there of a forthcoming famine and drought. On the way, God told Elijah to rest by a small stream - the Brook of Cherith, where he obtained water, and ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and evening. The picture also shows Elijah being ministered to by angels. When the brook dried up, Elijah then went to Zarephath.

The smaller windows on the north and south sides were added in the 1960's replacing the original windows. Starting on the left-hand side of the church by the altar, moving in an anti-clockwise direction, they tell the story of the Passion of Jesus, the last days of Jesus before he was crucified.

In the first pair of windows, one shows the Chi-ro sign, this is an oft-seen symbol in many churches on vestments, silverware and wood carvings, it comes from the first two letters of the word Christ or Christos in (*Greek* - Χριστος). The other window shows a chalice, this is to remind us of the time Jesus shared the Last Supper, ending with him sharing the wine with his disciples on the upper room

In the next pair of windows, we see pictures of the three nails that were used to nail Jesus' hand and feet to the cross. The other window shows the hammer used to drive in those nails, and the tongs that were used to remove them from Jesus' hands and feet.

The next two windows depict the cross on which Jesus is crucified and the scroll that was placed above Jesus on the cross. The writing on the scroll reads: I N R I, these are the first letter of the words in (*Latin: Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum*), this are translated as Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews.

The last two windows on the north side of the church show the robe that Jesus was made to wear, when the Roman soldiers mocked him as being a king and the dice that were used by the Roman soldiers when they gambled for his robe when it was taken from Jesus after he was nailed to the cross.

Moving across to the south side of the church, to the left of the organ loft, on one of the windows there is a picture of the lantern, this reminds us of the time when Judas Iscariot went out into the night to meet the Roman soldiers who came with lanterns to arrest Jesus, and the next window has a picture of a sponge on a hyssop branch, and a lance. The sponge that was soaked in vinegar was offered to Jesus to drink, and the lance was used by a Roman soldier to pierce Jesus' side.

The next two windows have pictures of a small bag, and a cockerel. The small bag contained 30 Pieces of silver. This was the reward given to Judas Iscariot for betraying Jesus to the authorities. The cockerel reminds us of Peter, who was told

by Jesus that he would betray Jesus three times before the cockerel crowed. Very early in the morning after Jesus' arrest sadly the cockerel crowed.

Moving towards the altar, the following two windows show a whipping post and scourge, and a ladder. The first reminds us that Pontius Pilate ordered Jesus to be scourged before taken to be crucified. The ladder was used to take Jesus' body down from the cross.

The last two windows have pictures of a lily and a crown. The lily represents the Blessed Virgin Mary who bore Jesus, and was there at the foot of the cross when Jesus died. The last window has a picture of a crown. The crown reminds us that Jesus is risen from the dead, and rules now as King of the World - Christ the King.

On the walls between the windows are a number of monuments and plaques. All of these show very important times of the history of St. Michael's.

If we start by the porch door, there is a picture to the left that contains the baptismal roll, this shows the names and baptism dates of the latest children that have become members of Christ's Church through baptism.

Moving down the church, we pass a large wooden box on the wall, this contains the electricity meter and the switches for the lights and heating for the church.

Further down the church there is a stone monument that has been put up by the friends and family of Rev. William Sutcliffe, the first vicar of St Michael's who served the people of this parish for twenty years.

Underneath this is a wooden plaque that lists all of the vicars that have served here at St Michael's together with the respective dates.

Crossing to the south side of the church, to the right of the lectern there are two stone war memorials. These contain the names of the men who gave their lives for our country while serving in the armed forces. Under this there is a shelf that is used to hold the poppy wreaths given on Remembrance Sunday.

The next memorial is a brass tablet that shows the family crest of the Earls of Derby, donated by the servants and estate staff for 15th Earl of Derby.

On the right of this, there is a picture that contains the wording that is written on the foundation stone dedicated for this church, placed by Thomas Clifton Esquire of Lytham Hall, on St Michael's Day, 29th September 1842, in a service lead by Rev. John Pedder, vicar of Kirkham.

I hope that you have enjoyed your short journey around our church. It is a sacred space whose very walls are filled with the prayers and praises of thousands of worshippers. Please feel free to take advantage of this beautiful and peaceful place.



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