

# ST LUKE'S - THE CHURCH WITH ITS OWN FOOTBALL STADIUM!



Although Everton F.C. started life as the St Domingo's church team in 1878, it is now closely associated with another place of worship. St. Luke the Evangelist, nestled between the Main and Howard Kendall Gwladys Street Stands, contributes to the uniqueness of The Old Lady. But why does the stadium have a church in such an unlikely spot?

A wooden Church of England mission hall predated Goodison Park by at least nine years. Therefore, since its opening in 1892 the stadium has had to grow around this sacred spot. In 1899, the first Bishop of Liverpool laid the foundation stone of a parish church to replace the wooden building. The architect, James Francis Doyle, was known for the White Star and Royal Insurance buildings in the city centre. His original designs for St Luke's included a tower and spire but these were rationalised. Construction of the adjacent parish hall commenced in 1908. A ceremonial tile was unveiled by Edith Chavasse - wife of the second Bishop of Liverpool and mother of Noel Chavasse (who would be awarded the Victoria Cross twice in The First World War).

Over the years the church has formed a close bond with its footballing neighbour. Reverend Harry Ross, parish vicar from 1977 to 2010, was officially appointed as club chaplain in 1994 and became a leading figure in the Everton Former Players' Foundation. Funeral and memorial services

have been held for a number of Everton's finest servants, including Brian Harris, Harry Catterick and Andy King. Deceased parishioners and Everton supporters are commemorated in the church's remembrance garden. This beautiful, reflective space is open on match days and after Sunday morning services.

For many fans, both home and away, a visit to St Luke's forms part of the Goodison pre-match ritual. Church volunteers welcome supporters and emergency services in the parish hall where tea, coffee and sandwiches are served. Upstairs, the EFC Heritage Society lays on an array of magnificent displays and stalls as well as hosting collections for the KitAid charity. In 2016 the church came to national attention when the BBC's Football Focus was broadcast live from the hall before an FA Cup tie against Chelsea. Rev. Frank Cain, the 12th vicar in the church's history, was appointed in February this year in succession to Ellen Loudon.

The Friends of St Luke's was founded in 2012; those interested in getting involved may do so via the church's website: [www.stlukeswalton.org](http://www.stlukeswalton.org).



by Rob Swayer