

Parish Profile
for the
Church of St John the Evangelist, Preston, Brighton
Preston: St John with Brighton St Augustine and St Saviour

Committed to working to enable our church and local communities
TO KNOW · LOVE · FOLLOW JESUS

We are a Welcoming, Inclusive, Friendly, Creative
and Outward-looking church, in a central/catholic tradition.



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SECTION 1 – VISION AND STRATEGY

Using the analogy of which **season** we consider our church to be in, we feel that we are now definitely in **Spring** and are looking to the future with a sense of new possibilities. Having come out of our time of winter, we are excited by the opportunities which are unfolding before us and look forward to nurturing growth, as we cultivate our faith and mission with our new leader.

- Since 2017 our Church family has come through a difficult time during which we lost a number of friends from our congregation. This was a painful time of adjustment; however, it was dealt with prayerfully and with the positive intervention of *Bridge Builders* and support from the Diocese. Our experiences over this time have ultimately led to a smaller, but more committed, spiritually strengthened and contemplative community, with a healthier approach to dealing with conflict.
- As a positive we are now blessed with new members of our congregation who have joined us since 2017. In addition many people have felt able to step up and take on new roles and new responsibilities within the Church. This has enabled more people to strengthen their commitment to the church and feel a greater sense of inclusion.
- As we are now ready to move forwards on our journey of faith we are looking for someone to lead us into a positive and constructive future. We hope they will both deepen our faith and enable us to be a positive blessing to our local community.

We have recently reviewed our vision as a Church community. We are committed to fostering spiritual and numerical growth and to engaging more effectively with our local community.

KEY POINTS re VISION and STRATEGY

- **Mission:**
To be a reflective, growing and financially viable church.
To support and nurture each other in discipleship.
To reach out to our surrounding community, seeking to meet deep human needs through the spiritual teachings of St Francis, St Augustine and the Celtic church, etc.
- **Connection:**
To make our faith and worship understandable and accessible to all.
Moving away from traditional ways of hierarchy and passive worship in order to make our liturgy engaging to all.
Recognising the gifts of all and encouraging broader personal and collective engagement, including lay ministry.
- **Well-being:**
To address the big questions of our existence, the human condition, suffering and death, through spiritual exploration with the aim of bringing the love, hope and peace of our eternal God.
- **Strengthen wider Christian community;**
To complement our *HTB* focussed neighbours by offering our more traditional style of worship. To actively engage with our local community by offering a safe place for stillness and contemplation. To make connections with the wider secular community by showing our shared concern for environmental and humanitarian issues.

SECTION 2 – THE BROADER CONTEXT

About the Parish

- The Parish population in 2018 was 14,764 - for detailed statistics on the parish please see the tables at the end of this document.
- It should be noted that our neighbouring parish would like to discuss the possibility of changing the boundary between our parishes. If approved this would mean moving some residential streets and moving Varndean High School and Balfour Primary school from St John's parish into their parish. It is estimated that this will reduce the population of St John's by about 2,000. The request has been made because the last pastoral re-organisation left them with a smaller parish area.

As this proposal was only made to the PCC after the vacancy began they decided that it was a matter to be considered by our new incumbent.

- Our parish operates within a culture which covers a huge range of generational value systems, but it has voted in Green Councillors and generally shows liberal concerns for environmental and humanitarian issues. Predominantly white, European, we accept that our parishioners over 45 will probably have had some past experience of *church* and will therefore have some preconceptions of what they expect from a Church service, which may be dated and inaccurate so we need to make our services easily accessible to all. However many people below the age of 45 will have little or no experience of Church services or any personal connection with the teachings of Christianity. With the prevalence of new technology some people make their connections to the world as a whole through social media and this can become increasingly stronger than local, face to face community. Therefore it is important that the Church has a relevant message given in a meaningful way on social media to reach out to as many people as possible in our wider community.
- We acknowledge that in the wider community there are some negative values attached to *The Church*, (historical abuse; acceptance of the slave trade; discrimination in various forms) which are real barriers which some people need to overcome before they can even consider attending a Church service. As a Church community we want to demonstrate that we do understand these concerns and we are committed to being welcoming and inclusive in a non-judgemental way by offering a stronger and more positive value system in our everyday encounters with the wider community.

Finance

St John's has been operating a managed deficit over the last few years, which has been funded from savings and financial asset sales however we are actively working to improve our financial situation. To do this the PCC has put in place new and rigorous financial procedures which include forming a 'Finance Working Group' composed of three PCC members. This group focuses on financial monitoring, reporting and planning and preparing formal budgets for approval by the PCC. The bookkeeping and accounting is undertaken by our paid Finance Administrator who works closely with the Finance Working Group,

The total assets at 31/12/20 were £158,595. This includes £76,000 which is set aside for our 'Parish Reserve'. The amount for the Parish Reserve is reviewed annually.

During 2020 the income was £72,346 and the expenditure was £76,157, albeit this was a very abnormal year due the pandemic. The equivalent figures for 2019 were income £102,377 and expenditure £123,378.

In 2020 we paid £30,000 towards our Parish Ministry Costs. We have been able to increase this figure to £40,000 in 2021.

Looking to the future, the PCC is developing plans to address the financial shortfalls and to fully meet our Parish Ministry Costs as soon as possible.

- We plan to have a Stewardship Campaign in early 2022.
- We have purchased and are setting up a digital payments function for the church to be used at services and parish events.

For a number of years we have actively encouraged church members to contribute financially via the 'Parish Giving Scheme'. Currently we have 27 donors of whom 23 also Gift Aid their donations.

The giving via PGS represents a significant proportion of our planned giving.

SECTION 3 – THE VICAR WE NEED

We are seeking a leader who will be ...

- A person of prayer.
- Someone with the skills and experience to enable us to deliver our vision and strategy.
- A good communicator.

We hope our new leader will be able to help us to ...

- Develop a generous church culture and help us to improve our financial situation with the aim of meeting 100% of the Parish Ministry Costs as requested by the diocese.
- Build up the congregation both numerically and demographically.
- Develop discipleship and encourage everyone to learn and to grow in faith, affirming and encouraging the involvement of the laity and supporting lay ministry.
- Encourage spiritual reflection and development.
- Be able to lead us in worship in a style that makes this accessible and engaging for everyone.
- Reach out to and engage with families and young people in church, including actively supporting Messy Church and making links with the uniformed organisations connected with the church.
- Reach out to and engage with members of our local community, from nurseries and schools to care homes and everyone in between! Be able to address with confidence the similar values we hold to our secular demographic and to offer traditions that speak to both Christian and Agnostic alike.
- Expand the work of providing space for a community which is rebuilding from the pandemic to enable them to feel heard, valued and included.

SECTION 4 – ABOUT THE PARISH

- **The Parish** is close to Preston Park Station; it is bounded by the main London Road (A23) and there is a very good local bus service. The church is situated in an attractive residential area with local shops, schools and easy access to central Brighton with the sea front, theatre, cinemas, shops, restaurants and lots more!
- **Housing**
The housing in the parish is a mixture of Victorian terraced properties, substantial semi and detached 20th Century properties, purpose-built blocks of flats and some much older properties in Preston Village. Some of the larger houses in the parish have been subdivided into flats or bedsits.
- **Population**
The parish has nearly 35% of people living alone so this is a possible source of loneliness and isolation. It is a comparatively wealthy parish which has limited ethnic diversity.
- **Preston Park**
A significant area of the parish is occupied by Preston Park which is a very well used outdoor space. The area includes a cricket pitch with a cycling track, tennis courts, children's playground, two cafes and a rose garden. The large area of grass is used for football, parkrun, Keep Fit groups and more.
Preston Park is also used for large events such as exhibitions, circus, concerts, Pride and more!
- **Preston Manor** is situated on the edge of Preston Park and it is open to the public as a 'museum'. The old parish church of St Peter is in the grounds of Preston Manor. The church is maintained by the Churches Conservation Trust and it is opened by volunteer key holders.
- **Schools within the Parish**

Primary Balfour Primary School
 St Bernadette's Roman Catholic Primary School

High Schools Varndean High School
 Dorothy Stringer High School

6th Form Varndean 6th Form College
 Downs View Link College for 16 -19 yr. olds with significant learning difficulties

Children's Nurseries – there are 10 Children's nurseries within the Parish

SECTION 5 – ABOUT THE CHURCH

- **We consider ourselves to be a welcoming and inclusive Church family**
- **Our Congregation** is predominately aged 60 plus but we are an active and involved group. Our most senior member can say she has been at St Johns for 100 years!
- We follow the Common Worship lectionary throughout the year observing the Church's liturgical seasons. We use different service books in different seasons with the Preface, Confession, Eucharistic prayer and Blessing appropriate to the season. We use the liturgical colours appropriate to the season throughout the year.
- One of our key objectives as a church is to make our faith and worship accessible to all.
- We aim to recognise the gifts of all and to encourage broader personal and collective engagement. We have started to include space in some services for individual contemplation.
- We have encouraged our lay leaders to share biblical and spiritual reflections in our services.
- We have actively explored and engaged with the spiritual aspects of Christianity including the Celtic traditions and the teaching of great spiritual thinkers like Francis of Assisi, and St Augustine and this is a direction in which we wish to continue to travel alongside our established style of worship. Many of our non-Eucharistic services are taken from Wild Goose, an Iona inspired worship which allows time for shared activity and meditation.

Our Regular Services

Sunday morning

Eucharist at 10am using Common Worship with hymns

Wednesday morning

Said Morning Prayer at 10am

We did have a Wednesday morning said Eucharist at 10am before the lockdowns began but now, because of the vacancy, we have substituted a service of Morning Prayer which is being led by the laity.

Special Services

We have all-age interactive services for Mothering Sunday, Harvest Thanksgiving, Remembrance and we have a Christingle and Carol service the Sunday before Christmas and very well attended Crib services on Christmas Eve.

Attendance on Sunday morning

In 2019 (pre pandemic) the average Sunday morning attendance was 49 and in 2021 (for the Sundays we were open) it was 36 up to the end of November.

Electoral Roll

There are 77 people on the ER of whom 42 are resident in the parish and 35 are non-resident.

Growing in Discipleship

Over a period of years before the pandemic we were running two Pilgrim Courses each year in the Church which were well attended. Many of the sessions were led by various members of the laity. It is planned to re-start running the Pilgrim Courses early in 2022.

In 2019 we ran *The Bible Course* using the workbook and the videos shown on the television in the Vestry and we hope to be able to run this course again in 2022.

We have a Bible Study group which had been meeting 15 to 18 times a year in the home of a church member for more than five years before it was suspended due to the pandemic lockdowns and restrictions. In November 2021 it was possible to resume meeting and we plan to continue with the normal pattern of meetings in 2022.

Several members of the congregation have already completed the *Living Faith* course and so far one person has gone on train as an ALM and another person will start their training in 2022 or 2023.

Outreach and Activities

Healing Ministry Team

We have a small, dedicated and well-established Healing Ministry team. Since the pandemic it has been necessary to adjust the format of the ministry but at present once a month at the end of the Sunday Eucharist members of the team are available to pray individually with anyone from the congregation.

The Healing Team are also active in praying for individuals who are in need and for the whole Church community.

During the pandemic lockdown we set up a dedicated email address for prayer requests and this has continued since the church re-opened.

Requests for prayer may be sent to stjohnsprayerbrighton@gmail.com

Messy Church was started in 2012 and was running once a month until the 2020 'lockdown'.

During lockdown we kept in touch with many of the families who had been coming to Messy Church by sending regular email updates. We also gave them all a booklet and activity sheets at Christmas 2020 as we were unable to have our usual Christmas services.

In October 2021 we were able to restart Messy Church and we plan to continue in 2022 when we hope to be able to re-build the numbers and the relationships we had prior to lockdown.



At Messy Church each session includes a Bible Story and a prayer activity followed by different craft activities related to theme of the day. This is followed by a buffet with rolls, cakes, etc. which is served in the church.

Love and Loss Café

The monthly Love and Loss Café was a new initiative in 2021 and was started in response to the effect of the pandemic on many people, particularly the variety of losses that people had suffered and the isolation that many people felt at that time.

The Love and Loss Café has been well received with a number of people attending who have no other links to the Church. At present we intend to continue with the project once a month as long as there is a need for it.

Each session consists of a guided meditation followed by tea and cake and the opportunity to chat in a relaxed atmosphere. The session finishes with an optional short act of worship based on Celtic prayer.

Prayer Walking

In December 2019 members of the congregation went Prayer Walking – praying a blessing on every home, person and activity in the parish. The prayer walkers left small hand knitted angels in public places in each road with a tag attached with a greeting from St Johns. In Holy Week 2021 the prayer walkers left small envelopes containing a few seeds with a similar message from St Johns as an environmentally friendly outreach to our local community. It is planned to do the Prayer Walking again in Lent 2022 and to leave small envelopes with seeds as before.

Preston Friday Club

A friendly Group that has been together for 21 years which meets in the Crowhurst Hall. The programme includes a variety of interesting talks with guest speakers, music, quizzes and games.

Preston Coffee Pot has been meeting for many years after the service on Wednesday mornings when the church is open for anyone to drop in for tea/coffee and a chat.

Links with Schools/Preschools

Over the years, some of the schools in the parish have held carol services and Christmas concerts in the church.

Dorothy Stringer School have held their annual Carol Service at St John's for many years and were able to do so again in 2021 having missed 2020.

In recent years Balfour Primary School have held Years 3 and 4 Christmas concerts in the church, one in the morning and one in the afternoon in the early part of December.

For the last few years one of the local nurseries, Hopscotch, has invited the children's parents to their Christmas celebration at St John's.

A Generous Church

Retiring Collections

We regularly have a retiring collection when there is an appeal from the Disasters Emergency Committee. If appropriate we will also have a retiring collections when we have visiting speakers at the Sunday morning service.

Christian Aid

Each year we have a collection for Christian Aid during Lent and in recent years we have supported the Christian Aid Harvest Appeal – in 2021 we raised £432 for the Harvest Appeal.

The Children's Society

We have a collection for The Children's Society at our Christingle service and a number of our congregation have collecting boxes for The Children's Society.

Sponsored walks

Our recently retired Vicar used to accompany her dog when he went on a sponsored walk which was a very good way to raise money for good causes!

Toilet Twinning

Two of our congregation had planned to do a sponsored walk to Santiago de Compostela in 2020 but this had to be postponed due to lockdown and travel restrictions. However the donors still gave the money and as a result we have been able to 'twin' the toilets in the Church Hall and in the church.

Food Bank

For several years we have had an ongoing collection for Brighton City Mission Foodbank. In October/November 2021 we have been happy to be able to provide a space in the church vestry for them to temporarily store the extra donations of food they received from local schools as Harvest gifts.



Mary's Meals Backpack project

We have been actively supporting the Mary's Meals Backpack project for more than six years with members of the congregation providing the necessary items for children attending school and packing these in a bag which is then sent out to children in need via the charity Mary's Meals.



FSW has been working with families in Sussex in need of support since 1890. Their base is at Garton House which is at the southern end of the parish.

For several years we have supported FSW with our annual Christmas Gift Service when we bring presents of toys and games for children which are then distributed by the team at FSW.

Outings

Pre pandemic we had a programme of outings which were open to all church members and friends and family and it is hoped to be able resume our outings when the situation allows.



Our trip to Eltham Palace in 2019

Pastoral Care

Our Pastoral Care system had been in place for many years, with various structures. Most recently all the members of the congregation were in one of three 'Pastorate' groups, each led by three lay people who were responsible for making the minister aware of anyone in their Pastorate group who was ill, unexpectedly absent or in any particular need. The Pastorate groups also organised social events for their members to get to know each other.

We had planned to restructure the Pastorate system but the events of 2020/21 changed this as everyone was focussed on reaching out to and helping the whole extended Church family through a difficult time with weekly round robins, pastoral letters, contact phone calls etc. At present we are concentrating on trying to keep in touch with everyone through the period of the vacancy so restructuring the pastoral care system is something we hope to be able to look at with our new incumbent .

A Safe Church

We are committed to safeguarding and we have two Safeguarding Officers who ensure that all PCC members, Messy Church helpers, Lay Ministers of Communion and all the Church leadership team have completed the relevant safeguarding courses and that they take a refresher course when needed.

We have a Parish Safeguarding policy and safeguarding is always included on the agenda for all PCC meetings.

Inclusive and Welcoming

St John's is committed to being open and welcoming to everyone. We had hosted a service for 'Gay Christians and their Friends' on Pride day for many years for the people who had participated in the Pride parade as our church is next to Preston Park where the main Pride event is held. However in 2019 the group decided not to hold a service, so instead we opened the Church during the *Pride Day* so that we could offer the use of our toilets and offer free refreshments as a service to anyone walking past, as a sign of our hospitality and welcome for everyone. It is hoped we will be able to open the Church again when *Pride* next happens.

Music

Until 2017 we had a robed choir which was discontinued when reduced numbers made it impractical. Since that time the congregation has taken up the baton and the singing! This evolution has proved positive, enabling to make the shift away from performance led worship and towards making our services more accessible and engaging for all.

Going forward we are open minded about how the role of music in our worship evolves, albeit we do not wish to return to the formal performance led music tradition of the past.

At our services we sing a mixture of both traditional and modern hymns accompanied by the piano. The hymns for each service are printed on a sheet so it is possible to have a wide variety of hymns.

There is a pipe organ which was not played during the lockdowns so we consulted the organ builder to find out what maintenance would be required to restore it to a playable condition. As it would require a large sum of money spent on it the PCC took the decision that at present it is sensible to 'mothball' the pipe organ and instead to use the concert standard grand piano in the church to accompany hymns and to provide occasional music etc.

The Church employs a pianist/organist who plays for services. She is a classically trained pianist and provides a range of high-quality music in addition to accompanying hymns.

Uniformed Organisations

The 6th Preston Park Brownie Pack meets on Tuesday evenings in the Crowhurst Community Centre.

There are two Rainbow groups: the 6th Preston Park meet on Wednesday evenings and the 7th Preston Park on Tuesdays.

Also on Wednesdays the Guide Company meets after the Rainbows.

In October 2021 we were approached by the Deanery youth worker about a Boys' Brigade company who were looking for a new 'home'. We have had very productive initial conversations with their leader and are hopeful that they will start meeting in the Crowhurst Community Centre in the new year.

Concerts in the Church

The Church is used sometimes hired for concerts.

Brighton Orpheus Choir have held their Christmas concert at St John's for over 20 years singing classics such as Haydn's Creation and Handel's Messiah.

The Brighton and Hove Music Service has also used St John's for occasional concerts featuring youth orchestras and groups from the city's schools.

Most recently, Brighton and Hove Arts Orchestra (a community orchestra) has held both summer and Christmas concerts at St John's. The Christmas concert is free admission with a retiring collection for local charities working with the homeless in Brighton and Hove.



Brighton & Hove Arts Orchestra concert

Our Parish Team

- We have an active and engaged PCC which meets regularly throughout the year. Since lockdown started we have moved some of our PCC meetings to Zoom as this has enabled us to have monthly meetings during the vacancy.
- We have a part time Parish Administrator who organises the parish administration, produces the service books, organises the rotas and edits the monthly parish magazine.
- We currently have two Authorised Lay Ministers.
- We have a team of five Lay Ministers of Communion and at present three of them are taking Home Communion to people who are unable to come to Church.
- We have a group of lay people who lead the intercessions for services.
- We have a group of lay people who regularly read the lesson at services.
- **Halls Bookings**
We have a Halls Administrator who deals with all the bookings for the halls.
- **Maintenance**
We have an Associate Warden who oversees the maintenance of the Church, the halls and the grounds.
- We employ cleaners for the church and the halls.
- We employ an pianist/organist to play at services.
- **Flower Team**
We have a committed Flower Team who produce beautiful arrangements in the church and who will also do the flowers for weddings and other special services. Members of the congregation are able to make a contribution to 'sponsor' the flowers on a particular Sunday either in celebration of a special event or in memory of a loved one. More recently the flowers have been in a small basket which can then be taken home.



Our Church Building

The Church of St John the Evangelist is situated on the corner of Knoyle Road and the main A23 London Road. It is close to Preston Park Station and Preston Manor and Preston Park and about two miles from the sea front and the various shopping centres. There are good public transport links via bus and train.

The Church was designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield started in 1901 and opened in 1926. It is a Grade 2 listed building and was designated a world heritage site in 1999.

The Church was dedicated in 1902 and over the years there have been various additions to the fabric.

In 2019 the Bishop of Lewes, Right Reverend Richard Jackson visited on the centenary of the Feast of Consecration and he led a powerful and moving re-dedication and blessing of the Church, the People and the Mission.

- The Vestry and offices were redecorated and completed late summer of 2019. The Vestry is now used for meetings, training, learning and social events.



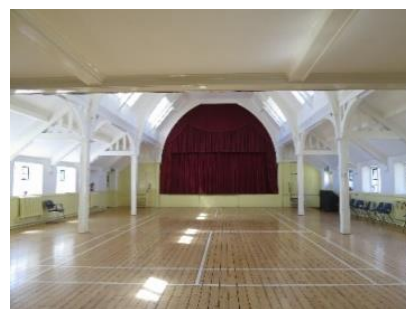
- **Facilities**
A small kitchen is installed at the back of the church with two toilets, one of which has disabled access and baby changing facilities.
- **Maintenance**
The Associate Warden for Fabric is responsible for overseeing the maintenance and servicing of the building services within the church as well as the fabric of the church and reporting to the PCC.
- The lighting system in the church was replaced in 2006.
- The church was completely redecorated in 2008.
- The boiler room was completely gutted and new condensing boilers and equipment were installed and commissioned in Autumn 2018.

Church Halls

St John's has two halls located next to the church in Knoyle Road.

- The halls are run by volunteers who are both members of the congregation. An administrator who deals with the bookings and payments and a premises manager who oversees the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings. There is also a paid cleaner for the halls.
- The halls provide a substantial, essential income for St John's, although we are aware that we should not be relying on this to support the church finances to such an extent.

The **Knoyle Hall** is a large, airy space with level access, accessible toilets and baby changing facilities, a kitchen and a stage.

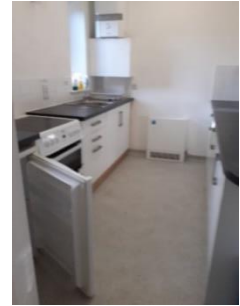


- The boiler in the Knoyle Hall has been upgraded to a condensing type.
- The electrical installation was upgraded to current NICEIC regulations in 2018 and LED lighting installed.
- There are plans (in the early stages) to upgrade the kitchen which have necessarily been delayed due to lockdowns in 2020.
- The hall is hired out and used regularly for a variety of activities including badminton, Tai-Chi and Taekwon-Do.
- There is a parent-led playgroup meeting weekly in term time.
- The Preston Park U3A meets monthly.
- It is also regularly hired for children's parties and other social events.



The Studio upstairs in the Knoyle Hall is used by a ballet school four days a week

The **Crowhurst Community Centre** was reopened in 2015 after a major refurbishment including an extension with a kitchen and accessible toilets.



- The aim of the Centre is to provide a good smaller space suitable for uniformed organisations, community groups and classes
- Sadly, in the summer of 2021 the 29th Brighton Scout group was wound up. However the Centre is still used by Guides, Brownies and two Rainbow groups.
- We are currently in talks with a Boy's Brigade group who are seeking a new home.
- The Centre is used regularly for classes in yoga and Tai-chi and other regular users include a local textile group, a social club for the deaf, Baby College and an NHS sponsored group working with older people to prevent falls.

The Vicarage

- The Vicarage is a detached family house with 3 bedrooms, kitchen and utility room, study and a split-level living area, There are front and rear gardens and a detached garage with driveway situated at the end of the back garden.
- The house is in Preston Drove on the corner of Bavant Road and is close to local shops and to Preston Park.
- The vicarage is a 3-4 minute walk from the church.



Statistical information from Chichester Diocese website

Deprivation rank (1=most deprived, 12,338=least deprived)	10,014
Parish population (2011 census)	14,292
Parish population (2018 update)	14,764
Parish number of occupied households	6,301
Area (square miles)	0.9
Population density (people per square mile)	15,098
% aged 0-4	5.8
% aged 5-17	15.5
% aged 18-29	16.1
% aged 30-44	24.7
% aged 45-64	25.6
% aged 65 and over	12.3
% White ethnicity	90.7
% Asian ethnicity	3.2
% Black ethnicity	1.3
% Mixed ethnicity	4.0
% Other ethnicity	0.8
% Christian	37.8
% Buddhist	1.1
% Hindu	0.7
% Jewish	0.8
% Muslim	1.1
% Sikh	0.1
% Other religion	0.8

9.3

48.3

% Religion not stated

Church Urban Fund poverty lookup tool

[More info](#)

Parish Code

100119

Parish local name

Preston: St John w Brighton: St. Augustine and St. Saviour

Parish legal name

Preston: St John with Brighton St. Augustine and St. Saviour

Benefice

Preston St John w Brighton St Augustine and St Saviour

Benefice ID

10/271BJ

Deanery

Brighton

Deanery ID

10401

Archdeaconry

Brighton and Lewes

Archdeaconry ID

104

Diocese

Chichester

Diocese ID

10

