

St Barnabas, Bexhill-on-Sea: Parish Profile

November 2022



St Barnabas Parish Church,
Cantelupe Road (corner with Sea Road),
BEXHILL-ON-SEA TN40 1JG

Deliveries and SatNav: TN40 1JJ

Tel: 01424 210036 (answering machine)
Email: barnabas1jg@gmail.com
Facebook: @StBarnabasatBexhillOnSea
www.achurchnearyou.com/church/4783/

Churchwardens:
Judith Marshall 01424 733043
<judymmarshall@btinternet.com>

Angela Wylie 01424 216625

Welcome to St Barnabas

We are a welcoming, friendly church grounded in its Anglo-Catholic history and tradition, that has broadened into an inclusive broad church with a gentle middle-of-the road emphasis.

Positive steps are being taken to outreach to the local community.

St Barnabas is a Grade II listed building, priority A on the At Risk register. This is being addressed by a Transformation project, using a recent bequest as “seed money” for obtaining grants.

About the parish

Standing proud at the edge of Bexhill town centre, St Barnabas is the second largest building to the iconic De La Warr pavilion, now a renowned cultural and performance centre. The church is a short walk from the Bexhill train station and a block from the sea.

In the town there are many fine restaurants, cafes and distinctive individual shops.

The sea front is idillic for all age groups to enjoy.

The parish has a community of low-waged families and singletons in the Victorian terraces in central Bexhill and a community of mainly retired people in flats and care homes in the nearby area with the church in between.

The population of this parish is 3937. The parish ranks 1559 out of 12382, where 1 is the most deprived parish. See Appendix 4 for more parish data.

There is a Victorian Heyday Festival planned for the whole month of June 2023 reflecting our Victorian heritage, the objective of which is to increase the connections of the church and congregation with the local community. This will lay the ground for the Transformation project, which will equip St Barnabas with the accommodation which will enable greater association with the community.

About the Church

The church as a worshipping people

Services and Christian outreach

In recent years St Barnabas has broadened out to become inclusive of all traditions, and now settled as middle-of-the-road. Our desire is to welcome everybody from whatever worship tradition they come from, and of course the enquirer. We are a diverse and open group of people seeking to create an authentic community of faith and life together.

For a short spell, St Barnabas had a priest-in-charge who was incumbent at All Saint's, Sidley. It should be noted that our churchmanship is very different to All Saint's. Whilst we retain some of the previous high church tradition, we do not actually embrace all the Anglo-Catholic expressions of worship and behaviour, as these are counter to our desire for outreach and mission to the unchurched local community.

Sunday morning Eucharist is held weekly, which has in the past included a healing service on one Sunday of each month. Before Covid, attendance was approaching 50, but has since fallen to 30. Attendance at Christmas and Easter is quite low, as congregants go away to family, or are entertaining family with them.

There are two regular midweek Eucharist services, on Tuesday and Friday mornings, which are much appreciated by those who cannot attend on Sundays services. (Some people worship elsewhere on Sundays, locally where they live outside the parish, or to accommodate their spouses.) They have been well-attended until the Covid pandemic (up to 20), and are again edging up to 10 or 12.

Until Covid, communion is regularly taken out to a few housebound.

At Christmas and Easter, a group of the congregation have visited care homes for hymn singing or short services.

Congregational giving has declined, but we are eager to fundraise, and enjoy doing so. Covid has affected the level of use of the church building for concerts and craft fairs, etc.

The church only rarely holds the occasional offices of baptism, first communion, confirmation, wedding, funerals, and memorial services.

In the recent past there have been well-attended courses of teaching held after weekday eucharists, or as “away days” in a local meeting room.

Music for worship

The music used for worship is traditional hymns and some contemporary praise songs. Our aim is to choose hymns and praise songs that echo the church’s seasons. The church has a set of Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New.

At present we have no regular musician, and are having to rely on CDs to match our hymn book. Until recently, a piano was used. We also have an electric keyboard piano and electric organ, which is used for funerals.

The original pipe organ is in disrepair and not usable. There is current interest in whether to repair it, or sell off the parts.

The church and the community it serves

St Barnabas has a heritage from the first priest of social outreach. St Barnabas has variously given to Africa and Asian missionaries, employed a parish nurse, built boy’s and girl’s schools and built daughter churches of St Augustines (now its own parish) and St Andrews (now closed).

Our proposed Transition project will enable us to re-engage with the local community and its needs.

Our current community activities includes:

- The Homelessness Unity Group (HUG) is housed in St Barnabas, offering to the homeless and lonely (known as guests) a full English breakfast twice a week and a cooked meal on Saturday evenings. There is a shower and laundry facilities. Support given to those with emotional and physical

needs, with form filling, telephone calls to government and council agencies, transport to hospital, official meeting or court.

- Pat's Chat Room, a totally informal bereavement group where we share our deepest pain when we are ready. We cheer each other on, we cheer each step we make. We laugh and cry together. We are open to all.
- AA meet at St Barnabas once a week.
- A jazz group meet twice a week.
- A children's stage performance training by a professional Performing Arts tutor (West End singer / actress and performer) This helps children to boost their confidence through fun and motivational classes.
- Various choirs and an orchestra occasionally practice and perform within the church building — this is due to its seating capacity and good acoustics.
- A craft fair run by the community. Until COVID this ran on a monthly basis, but has now dropped to approximately four times a year.
- A Knit and Natter group.
- Other community groups use St Barnabas occasionally for public meetings — Bexhill Town Council, Bexhill Heritage, Bexhill Forum and other public groups.

Bexhill Heritage use St Barnabas as a *poste restante*, and we hope to build closer relations through our Victorian Heyday festival.

The church building and resources

St Barnabas was designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield, built 1891, following a gift of funds to the retired vicar of St Peter'. Pews were never installed.

The church shows a variety of medieval styles. The nave has four bays, and is very tall with clerestory windows. The north aisle walls are relatively low and each bay is demarcated by buttresses with offsets. The west end of the nave has a tall West Window, with stained glass showing bible stories, and commemorating those who died in the Great War. Below, there is a lean-to narthex porch, with a north entrance.

There are choir stalls and a chancel screen.

In 1908/1909, an additional wide south aisle was added, designed by Blomfield and Sons, doubling the size of the church, and with a Lady Chapel with three-windowed apse. The north and south aisles are linked by circulation space (the original south aisle) now with a flat roof.

All windows are set-in sandstone mullions and tracery.

Below the south aisle is a lower hall.

The uniqueness and downfall of St Barnabas is its vastness of internal space, though it has the good acoustics. In its earlier life it was known to seat 600 to 700. Occasionally we seat 400 for a concert, and about 100 for public meetings.

The building needs significant restoration, and adaption to the contemporary needs of the congregation and community. The windows and roof need substantial repair, with total repairs priced at £1Million.

With the recent bequest of £800,000, we have undertaken a feasibility study by Ten Spires CIC, led by Paul Whitnall, with a view of adapting the church for more flexible and hospitable use, i.e. separate rooms for different activities, and far more use by the community, along with more toilets and kitchen areas. The objective is to make the church building self-financing, so its future is assured. A leading church architect, John Bailey of Thomas Ford and Partners, has been appointed by the PCC. This project has been supported by Archdeacon Edward Dowler, and Dr Katherine Prior, a diocesan fundraising advisor. The PCC is shortly to engage with the DAC and local authority.

Grant funding for this project will be sought from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and other funders, by using the bequest as “seed money”, along with development of the greater church site to provide alms houses.

Parish Finances

Total unrestricted income in 2020 was £47,534, of which £29,597 was voluntary donations. This is typical for the parish.

Total expenditure in 2021 was £45,349. Restricted income reserves were £3,427.

Until the bequest, St Barnabas has just been covering basic running costs, with nothing left for repairs, future projects, or financial investment in pastoral initiatives. Financial reserves were modest.

The PCC have resolved to use the bequest as “seed money” to enable a Transformation project, rather than simply spending it on repairs.

The Vicar we need

Our vision is to re-establish ourselves as the **active** Parish Church of central Bexhill, and of the retirement accommodation to the east. Also **we are there** for those in Bexhill who find themselves not at home with the make-up and more fixed churchmanship of the other Anglican parishes.

We would like our new Vicar (male or female) to be somebody:

- who knows and loves our Lord Jesus Christ,
- who preaches the word of God,
- has a pastor’s heart and loves people,
- who is faithful to the received tradition of the Church of England.

We are looking for somebody:

- with a warmth of humanity and a sense of humour,
- but with a great ability to manage their work and time,
- who can encourage and enable teams of laity,
- who has the drive and energy to help re-establish our church, and to be a presence in and around the Town.

We are looking for a priest who will support and work with our Transition aims and objectives.

Appendix 1: Deanery and other Bexhill churches

Battle and Bexhill Deanery now comprises 17 churches (as St Andrew's Bexhill is closed). The Rural Dean is the Revd. Jonathan Fraiss.

Churches Together in Bexhill (CTiB) aim to encourage and foster engagement of members of all traditions within the Christian community of Bexhill. They look for positive relations with goodwill with those of different faiths or no faith at all within our town. The initiative for CTiB seems to be mainly with the Baptists and Methodists.

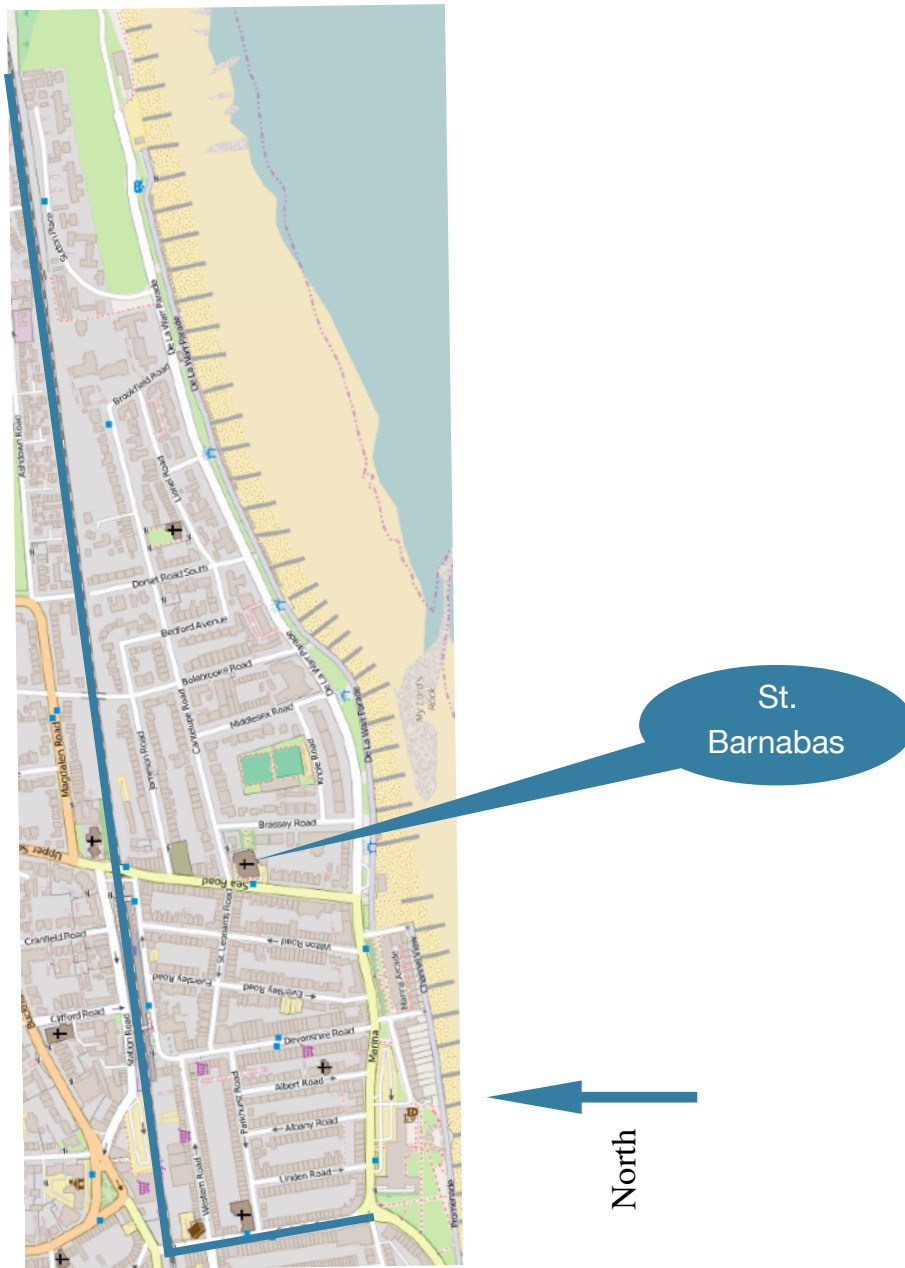
Within St Barnabas' parish are the following other churches:

- Bexhill United Reform Church, Cantelupe Road
www.bexhillurc.co.uk
- Religious Society of Friends, Albert Road
www.bexhillquakers.org/blog/

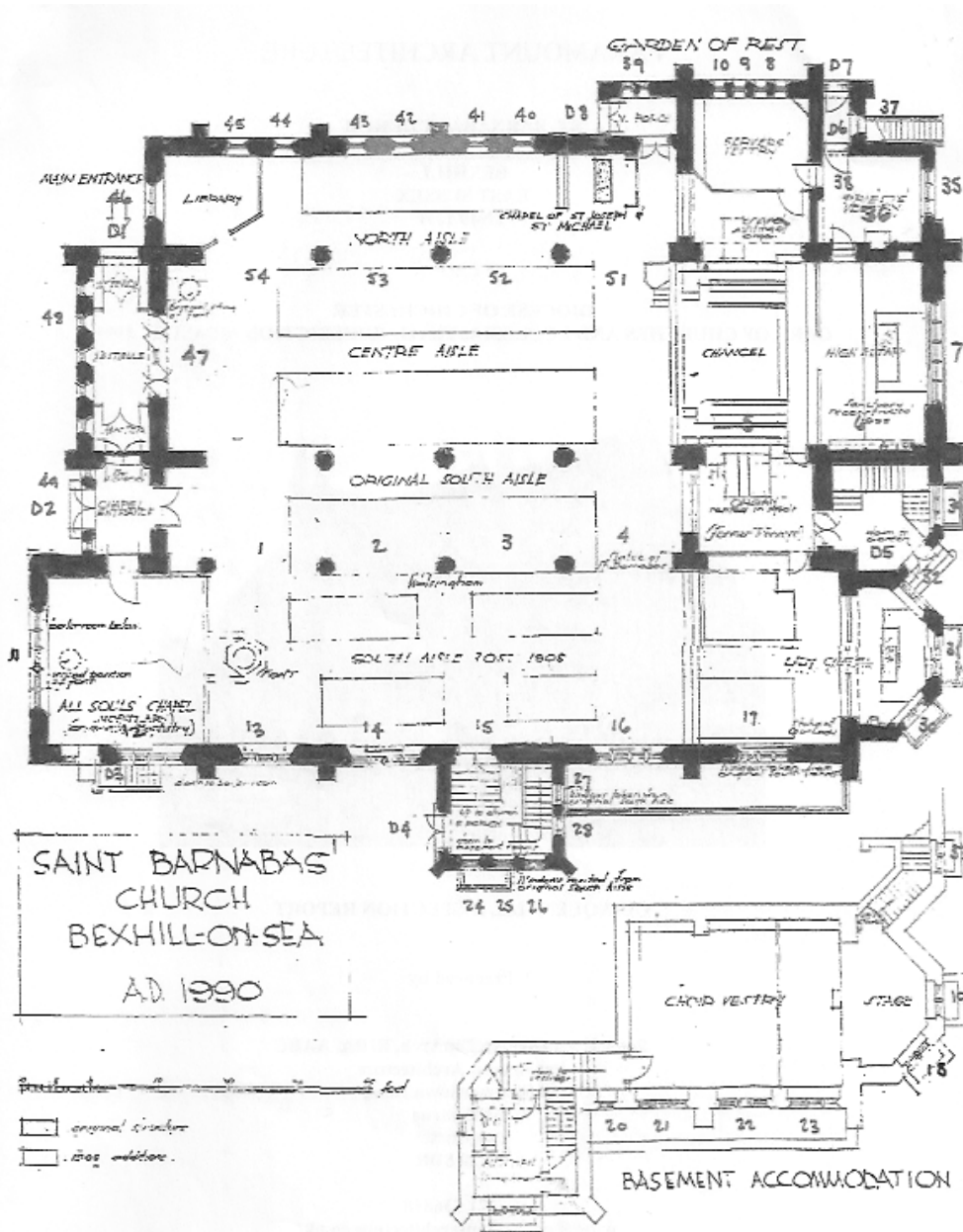
Also, churches close to St Barnabas' parish in the North that draw their congregations from the area are:

- St Mary Magdalene (RC), by the railway station, on Sea Road.
www.stmmbexhill.org.uk
- Beulah Baptist Church, Buckhurst Road
www.beulahbaptist.co.uk

Appendix 2: St Barnabas Parish Boundary



Appendix 3: Plan of St Barnabas church



Appendix 4: St Barnabas Parish Data

	LOWEST IN NATION	LEAST IN DIOCESE	THIS PARISH	MOST IN DIOCESE	MOST IN NATION
Child Poverty (% of children in poverty)	1%	2%	24%	43%	58%
Pensioner Poverty (% of pensioners on low incomes)	2%	3%	17%	34%	73%
Working age poverty (% of adults receiving key out-of-work benefits)	1%	3%	15%	27%	44%
Life expectancy (boys) (life expectancy at birth)	68 yrs	73 yrs	76 yrs	85 yrs	92 yrs
Life expectancy (girls) (life expectancy at birth)	75 yrs	78 yrs	81 yrs	91 yrs	94 yrs
No qualifications (% of working age adults without any qualifications)	0%	5%	29%	40%	52%
Social housing (% of households living in social rented housing)	0%	0%	3%	68%	87%
Lone parenthood (lone parent families as % of all families with children)	0%	4%	39%	47%	59%
People living on their own	5%	17%	58%	60%	74%
Older population (% of population who are aged 65 and over)	1%	3%	37%	59%	59%
Ethnic diversity (% of population who are not white British)	1%	2%	10%	37%	97%

Appendix 5: St Barnabas Photos





Painted in 1922 by Miss M. Tongue of Arundel and shows French influences.
The frieze shows images of various saints

