



## St. Alban's Gossops Green and Bewbush Parish Profile



### Section 1: Introduction

Following the retirement of our previous vicar, St. Alban's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has produced this Parish Profile to describe how the parish of St. Alban's Gossops Green & Bewbush serves its community at present, what our hopes and aspirations are for the future and make a case for some of the exciting opportunities that we hope our new priest will want to be part of.

We have set out the historical and geographical context to our parish and our style of worship, showing diversity in our congregation and especially the way in which young people feature in our worship.

We have outlined our mission and will demonstrate how a vicar with energy and drive would complement the talents we have and help us to continue to develop our church. At a time when the world is struggling with war, famine and extreme weather events we aim to be a centre of prayer, active involvement in support of others and a healing place for people of all backgrounds, age and ability.

We demonstrate we are a growing parish with attendance figures steadily increasing from the time of the pandemic. Our outreach will be demonstrated by examples of the many ways we support the local community.

The church as a building has presented us with challenges and these will be outlined in a later section, with our aims and intentions for financing these briefly described.

## Section 2: The broader context

St Alban's Church is situated in the heart of Gossops Green, one of the 14 neighbourhoods in the 'new town' of Crawley. The new town concept was derived in part from the 'garden city movement', and developments for the new town of Crawley began in the 1950s. Detailed plans for Crawley were based on the idea of 'neighbourhoods', each with a local centre featuring a church, shops, a pub and community facilities.

The nucleus of the new town consisted of Crawley itself, a small market town, the 19<sup>th</sup> century settlement of Three Bridges and the Domesday Book village of Ifield. The original plan for a new town of 50,000 inhabitants in nine neighbourhoods has now expanded to 14 neighbourhoods housing circa 120,000 people and a large industrial estate to the north of the town. The most recent housing development is that of an estate between Crawley and Horsham, Kilnwood Vale, for whom St Alban's is the nearest Christian church. There has been much development in recent years to upgrade or replace the original 1950s buildings.

Today, Crawley is a vibrant multicultural, multi-faith community. Of the West Sussex districts and boroughs, Crawley is by far the most ethnically diverse, with people of an ethnic minority accounting for 38.2% of the population in the 2021 census. The most common minority ethnicities in Crawley were given as Asian or Asian British ethnicities (15.4%, equivalent to around 18,200 people) – particularly those of Indian (6.2%) and Pakistani (5.2%) ethnicities – and the Other White ethnicity (10.5%, equivalent to around 12,500 people).

Situated close to Gatwick airport, Crawley offers extensive leisure, shopping, commercial and transport facilities. The main line into London from Three Bridges makes for trouble-free commuting and Brighton is also within easy reach. The airport is a major source of work for the inhabitants of Crawley. A proposed second runway that is being considered (with a decision reached in December 2024) may attract more people to the area through enhanced employment opportunities.

The population of Gossops Green and Bewbush is 14,117 with 5,362 households. Schools in the Parish are as follows:

- Gossops Primary School
- Holy Trinity CoE Secondary School
- Waterfield School Bewbush
- Bewbush Academy
- The Barn Pre-School
- Giggle & Grow Pre-School Bewbush
- Stepping Stones Pre-School Gossops Green

## Section 3: About the parish

The parish is part of the Deanery of East Grinstead and the Diocese of Chichester.

The Parish of St. Alban's Gossops Green and Bewbush only came into being in 2017. Prior to this St Alban's in Gossops Green and St. Mary Magdalene Church in Bewbush were part of the Parish of Ifield, a team ministry comprising four churches; St. Margaret's Ifield, St.

Alban's Gossops Green, St. Leonard's Langley Green and St. Mary Magdalene in Bewbush. The reorganisation into two Parishes meant we had one vicar and services had to cease at St. Mary Magdalene. It was hugely challenging for the faithful worshippers there but they were welcomed to join St. Alban's, along with many of the congregation from St. Leonard's Church, which was also closed.

Following the constitutional changes St Mary Magdalene Church became known as 'The Barn' for reasons explained below.

Amenities in both neighbourhoods include a Medical Centre, a Dentist, local shops and take aways. In Gossops Green there is also a Veterinary practice and an Indian restaurant. There is a Catholic Church in Gossops Green with which we exchange invitations to services and events and a Youth Club. The neighbourhood has plenty of green space including parks, woodland and a large Mill Pond.

## Section 4: The Church



### The church building and resources

**St Alban's Church** was consecrated by the Bishop of Chichester on 17th February 1962; we have recently celebrated our 60th anniversary. The building is practical, furnished with comfortable chairs, and the whole interior has a light and modern appearance.

Of note are the five contemporary stained glass windows at the liturgical west end which bring light and colour to our place of worship.

Contemporary Stations of the Cross in the side aisles were specially commissioned in the early days of the church. Since the church was reordered 'in the round' in the 1990s there has been greater flexibility in the way the building can be used and it emphasises that we are one in the spirit - that we 'believe, we share, we worship and we pray' - literally around the altar.

There is both a choir vestry and sacristy as well as a small side chapel where the sacrament is reserved and mid-week services held.



**St Alban's Vicarage** is situated on Gossops Drive adjacent to the church. Built in the early 1980s, the accommodation on the ground floor comprises a hall, study, dining room, living room, kitchen and cloakroom (with WC); upstairs are four bedrooms, bathroom and separate toilet. The study and cloakroom are separate from the private part of the house. There is a drive, a detached garage, a small front garden and a large rear garden.

The Vicarage is within walking distance of Ifield Station and has bus routes on the doorstep serving Crawley Town Centre, Horsham and Gatwick Airport.

There is a church hall adjacent to St. Alban's which combines the original wooden building with a brick-built extension comprising a kitchen and toilets. It is well used both by private

hirers (Rainbows, Slimming World, Alcoholics Anonymous) and for church (parish administrator's office) and community purposes. The Hall is the home of the Heart of Welcome café and has been used regularly as a pop-up vaccination centre.

In the church, water ingress problems in the tower have been stemmed which has partially resolved issues with this structure, however scaffolding currently remains due to deterioration in the brickwork.

A new heating system was installed in 2023, which was most welcome as we had managed with a faulty underfloor system that was very expensive for several years.

Future plans include the installation of a kitchenette in the church to further encourage and facilitate the provision of coffee after church services and other communal gatherings.

Further longer term plans include building a new entrance hall to make St. Alban's more accessible and to incorporate toilets within the church. At some stage we would be like to replace the church hall with a new multi-purpose brick building.

**The Barn** was consecrated as St. Mary Magdalene's Church in 1999. A 17<sup>th</sup> century barn (Grade II listed), it was converted with the aid of Heritage Lottery Fund monies, grants from charitable bodies and many donations from within Ifield parish. It is currently hired out to the Elim Pentecostal Church, a pre-school, and a dance training class. Responsibility for the upkeep of the building and servicing the needs of those groups hiring it remains with our PCC.

### The church as a worshipping people

The main focus of worship is the Sunday Sung Eucharist at 9.45 am each week, with teaching for the children at Junior Church. Normally about 60 people across the age ranges worship on a Sunday, the majority of whom are communicants. The ethnic and age mix is reflective of our community and can be seen in our many photos of church life here at St. Alban's. The majority of the congregation are on the electoral roll. Most live in the communities of Gossops Green and Bewbush, but about 30% come from other neighbourhoods in Crawley.

The style of worship is the Liberal or Modern Catholic tradition. Clergy and servers robe and process with a crucifer. The liturgy is based on Common Worship and makes good use of the full range of options available within it, reflecting the diversity of the congregation. Incense is used for major festivals.

A wide spectrum of music is used at St Alban's, augmented with a variety of modern Eucharistic settings and a wide range of traditional and modern hymns. We have a small choir that currently robes for services at Easter and Christmas, the Patronal Service, and for other services throughout the year according to need and availability.

There is strong congregational participation which has been remarked upon by visiting clergy and organists. Our modern electronic organ and an electric piano provide the accompaniment. The occasional use of tambourines and maracas for appropriate hymns ensures the children are involved in the musical part of our worship. Our Christmas Carol Service, with an augmented choir, is well attended by the community.

Other services and worshipful learning include a Eucharistic Service on a Thursday, Saturday Prayer Breakfast once a month, Bible Study group, Lent groups, occasional Sunday Evening worship including a Taizé service with our own instrumentalists providing accompaniment.

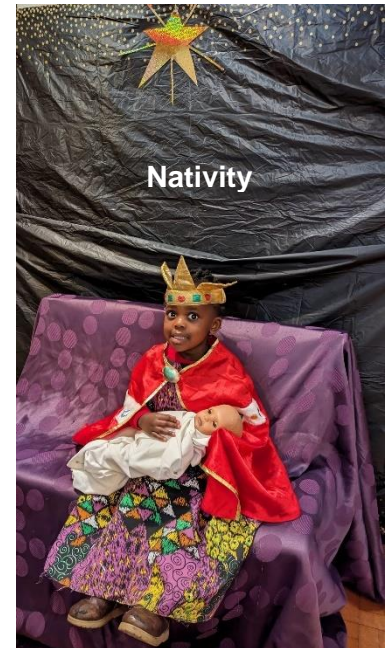
There is a Messy Church on Good Friday, a Christingle service, and the children are supported in running the Crib service on Christmas Eve.



Christingle



Artwork from Good Friday



Nativity

We are proud to have an Authorized Lay Minister and two Readers in training. They help enormously with keeping the prayerful and worshipful focus of our church community active and interesting especially while we have a vacancy. Our two Churchwardens work tirelessly - one of these, Sue Richardson, was recently awarded the Order of St Richard for her dedication and hard work in the service of the church. A pastoral team ensures communion can be taken to people in their own homes when requested. A Parish Administrator works in the office one day per week. Two members of the PCC are on the Deanery Synod.

St. Alban's is a place of worship frequently chosen by people new to the area. We have a reputation for always being a welcoming church, our sides people having good interpersonal skills so that newcomers are made to feel welcome while not under pressure to participate in the service in any particular way.

#### Jemma – 6th Crawley Scout Group Beaver Leader

"I first visited St. Alban's Church as a parent volunteer helping with 6th Crawley Beaver group. I met the previous vicar, Rev'd Ann, was made to feel very welcome and was informed about the Good Friday Messy Play. I came along with my two children, and we had an amazing time and from then on have been members of the congregation.

When I became a Beaver Leader later that year everyone at St. Alban's was supportive and helpful. They gave me prayer and advice and have always been behind me in my journey through Scouting and in Christ. We had the opportunity to decorate a tree for the Christmas Tree Fair and hand out Beaver leaflets which would boost our visibility in Gossops Green and Bewbush to help us to grow our group.

As the Beaver Leader I am very keen on growing the relationship between 6th Crawley Scout Group and St. Alban's. My group has plans to donate to the Harvest Festival this year and participate in the Christmas Tree Fair hoping to run a games stall."

Occasional offices in 2023: 6 funerals; 6 baptisms and no weddings.

**Local school liaison**

Traditionally there have been good relationships with local schools and nurseries, with visits by the vicar to take assemblies, talk about Harvest and other festivals and collect Harvest offerings. In order not to lose this vital connection, members of the congregation have taken on the liaison role. They have hosted groups of Year 1 children exploring the church building, have offered to run assemblies and are encouraging participation in the Christmas Tree Festival.

**The children and Junior Church**

We regularly have about 20 children attending our Sunday service. Many of them get actively involved by robing up and serving, or ringing the bells, participating in sermons and intercessions, reading the lesson, helping to give out our fully printed service sheets and generally helping out when we have fundraising events. We have a dedicated team of volunteers who run Junior Church which takes place during the service; they rejoin the congregation during The Peace. Four young people were confirmed in 2023.





## The church and the community it serves

Our **Mission Action Plan** comprises a number of activities and events that are structured around the Diocesan Strategy, focusing on growth, generosity, engagement and openness.

**The Mothers' Union (MU)** actively supports our mission through projects such as the **Rise Up Project to support Victims of Domestic Abuse**.



Prayer Tree for Victims of Domestic Abuse



Packing socks for Gatwick detainees

They issue socks for Gatwick detainees and attend a Carol Service at Brook House, Gatwick's Immigration Removal Centre.

The MU provide children's worship bags for use during services and posies for Mothering Sunday. They also hold an Advent Meditation.

Wild Wednesdays is a monthly social event held during the summer in a local pub.

**The Heart of Welcome Café** is run weekly by members of the congregation. It has a regular attendance of 25 people, having forged links with the following: Places of Welcome National Network; Crawley Wellbeing Walk; Age UK who visit monthly to help those with problems and to offer advice. There are also links with local councillors, NHS social prescribers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who visit to give talks on staying safe.

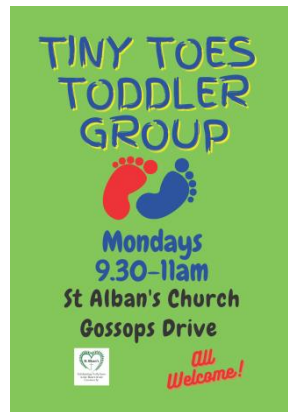
The Heart of Welcome Café has been selected by the Co-op as a Local Cause for next year. The Co-op Local Community Fund supports grassroots community projects.

Irene

*Coming to coffee morning is a life saver for me and lots of others who live alone. So these mornings really are good for us to talk over any health complaints we have. We also do other activities together which I and others find so helpful.*



## Tiny Toes Baby & Toddler Group



Our group is flourishing and going from strength to strength. We regularly have over 20 children with their adults each week and have about 50 families on our books. Each week we have a theme – based on this there will be a craft activity and maybe a song or story.

Refreshments are provided and served by our lovely helpers, and greatly appreciated by the children and adults alike. There are plenty of toys set out for all ages to enjoy.



We have children from babes in arms, crawlers, toddlers, to those nearly ready for pre-school. It's been wonderful following the progress of the children as they grow and develop.

The group is as important to the adults as it is for the children, for social interactions, support and well-being. The adults are mums, dads, grandparents and child minders and the families are a mix of nationalities, some live in our local neighbourhoods (approx. 60% from our Parish, in all over 90% are from Crawley), while others travel in from further afield including Crawley Down, Faygate, Pease Pottage and Rusper.

Tiny Toes has an active Facebook\* page and we are listed on other Social Media sites, so we get a lot of new families who find us this way, while others are brought along by friends who already attend.

We were successful in being selected as a Local Cause by the Co-op last year. This means we received donations from the Co-op Local Community Fund that can be put toward improvements needed to encourage greater use of our church and hall.

Tiny Toes is a very important and successful Mission Outreach for St Alban's church, leading to some families joining in other church activities, one of our families has had their child baptised, some come along to the 'Messy Church' sessions and the Christmas Services as well as fundraising events such as the Christmas Tree Festival & Fair. We did artwork for the Coronation display in church and created a memories book for our Vicar's retirement.

Julia - grandparent

*H and I love coming to Tiny Toes. It's big enough to be fun but small enough to be able to recognise and befriend people. It's such a warm and welcoming place to take my little Grandson and I don't feel at all out of place being Granny! The team are lovely and we are very grateful that they run Tiny Toes for us.*

Margot's mum

*Thank you for a lovely morning as always! Margot loved decorating the biscuits and reading the books. Always fun on a Monday morning with you all!*

Ava's mum

*It's so lovely coming to this group every week. Ava always enjoys it so thank you.*

\* Tiny Toes Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086326885149>

## Initiatives We Support

St. Alban's Gossops Green & Bewbush has links with the following:

**Crawley Open House** that provides support and services for those suffering the effects of homelessness, unemployment, loneliness and discrimination, **Family Support Work** that provides practical help and support to Sussex families in need, **Free Shop Crawley**, **Open Doors** Charity for Persecuted Christians, **Children's Society**, **Outreach 3Way** that provides support for adults with learning disabilities and autism in East and West Sussex, the **local schools and youth services**, **Scouts and Beavers**. **Link To Hope** Shoeboxes are donated and delivered every year.



Bread and soup lunches are held during Lent to make money for charities and donations are made to Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) as an emergency response as well as to local charities following Harvest Festival and the Toy Service.

A member of our congregation volunteers at the local **YMCA Chaplaincy**. St. Alban's supports this with prayer, donations and contributions to the Love in a Box appeal.

St. Alban's has embraced the concept of **Eco Church**. Activities have been underway to ensure we are ready to apply for the Rocha Bronze Award, such as the making of a bug hotel.

## Finances

Each year an annual budget is drawn up by the Treasurer and the Standing Committee and presented for approval to the PCC.

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Gossops Green and Bewbush was registered as a separate charity in 2021, Charity number: 1196796. The 2023 end of year accounts recorded an income of £79,077 and an expenditure of £66,033. The average parish ministry costs in this diocese for a parish with a full-time priest is £78,950. We are unable to meet this at the present time, but we are actively working to increase the proportion we give each year. In the past two years, we have increased the quota by 25%.

A significant proportion of our congregation now give via the Parish Giving Scheme, PGS, which has gift aid applied monthly, thus helping cash flow. We also benefit from the Revenue's Gift Aid tax reclaim facility. We have introduced equipment to allow contactless giving at all fund-raising events and are considering ways in which this can be utilised more widely.

Raising money for the general maintenance of all our buildings and for the work and mission of the church is a challenge. We have a building committee with its own account.

A copy of last year's accounts is appended.

## Fund-raising



Our small team of fund-raisers do a sterling job ensuring there are activities spread throughout the year.

They regularly run pop-up sales after the Sunday service, organise the Christmas Tree Festival and Fair, coordinate musical events, as well as cream teas, raffles, shared lunches and, when resources allow, a summer fair with stalls and entertainment.

Recruiting others to join them on the committee is one of the challenges facing the church community and for which we offer weekly prayers, so that we can increase our charitable giving and diocesan commitments.



## Our Self-Assessment

Below we demonstrate our assessment of how St. Alban's and Bewbush is doing. Members of the congregation were asked for their comments while members of the PCC undertook a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis.

We hope this illustrates that we are always learning, keen to grow as a church and communicate God's love as far and wide as possible!

Kerry - wheelchair user

*I'm grateful that the congregation supports inclusivity for those with extra needs and disabilities. I'm included in delivering the Bible readings in services and am still able to help in all fundraising events that provide Bring & Share suppers and table top sales. I'm also very much included in the church choir for Easter and Christmas services.*

Geoff - server

*Having returned to Crawley 12 years ago after a 40 year gap of working elsewhere, I started back attending St. Alban's where I had previously spent my teenage years with my parents. I was immediately made to feel welcome again. Everyone made me feel completely at home and took me into the church family with open arms and was made to feel very much part of the St. Alban's church life. The warmth and sincerity was there immediately. I enjoy singing with the choir on the occasions they are called into action and being part of the Servers team is very rewarding. I especially like celebrating Communion in the round. It really is a special church family celebration. It is also a great joy to see the number of children who now join the worship with their parents each Sunday.*

Cissy - new PCC member

*I first came to St Alban's church to attend a friend's daughter's first holy communion. What drew me in was how child friendly it was..I loved the children's corner at the back where my toddler could be entertained while I also attended the service.. the people were also very welcoming and made me really feel God's love in the community..there is always a friendly face..*

*5 years later..I am still here 😊 !*

Oliver - young person

*It's really great to be a worshipping youth member at St Alban's because they are so inclusive with us youths.*

- We have a strong music tradition, our own organist, and a choir for Easter, Christmas and Patronal services. During the pandemic the choir recorded hymns for the online services
- We are proud of our growing number of children attending and helping in services
- Members of the congregation offer particular skills e.g. flower arranging, working with schools, music, working with children and people with disabilities, accessing grants and many more
- We boast a well-attended Heart of Welcome café
- We have a strong and dedicated PCC and Church Wardens, one of whom, Sue Richardson, was recently awarded the Order of St. Richard for her hard work and dedication to the life of the church
- A website administrator on the PCC who ensures we maintain an efficient online presence and who enabled services to be streamed to the congregation during the pandemic
- A parish administrator who works with us weekly to produce service sheets and newsletters so that we communicate effectively with our community
- We have 58 families registered for our Tiny Toes toddler group and several people have joined the congregation through hearing about us this way
- We've been blessed with visiting clergy who want to preside during the vacancy
- A thriving Mothers' Union group who regularly contribute to our church life and community outreach

## Strengths



## Opportunities

- We're proud to have a multi-cultural congregation with new people attending services every month. We want to encourage newcomers to recommend us
  - Friends with experience of managing an interregnum have offered help and guidance
  - We've currently made nearly £850 for our church via EasyFundraising. We can encourage more people to raise money this way
  - We're the nearest Christian church to the new development of Kilnwood Vale
- We could:
- have a closer relationship with the Rural Dean
  - make more use of church for fundraising now the new heating has been installed, and make more use of The Barn
  - encourage people to make bequests to St. Alban's in their will
  - develop Men's Fellowship, and do Growing Good sessions

- Our financial position is currently not strong enough to allow us to meet our full diocesan contribution
- We lack members of the congregation who are aged 20-30
- We are currently unable to offer coffee after every Sunday service
- We have ongoing problems with the structure of the church tower
- We are paying for jobs to be done that used to be done by members of the congregation eg grass-cutting
- Our modern church is less likely to attract weddings than a traditional, older church
- Our church hall is old and ideally needs replacing.
- Our aim in the long term is to have a new accessible entrance to the church incorporating toilets and a kitchenette

### Weaknesses



### Threats

- We recognise that an ageing congregation means we have fewer people who can volunteer for tasks and responsibilities while we also benefit from their experience
- We might have less communication with schools and the community during the vacancy
- We may not get a new vicar to replace Rev'd Ann. However we may get a Priest in Charge
- The diocese might suggest we join with another parish. This could also be an opportunity if we join a team

## Section 5: The Vicar we Need

We see our next vicar as a person who will demonstrate:

### **Essential Values**

- A love for all people and a heart for mission and evangelism
- A desire to embrace and celebrate the multi-cultural diversity of our parish and town
- A willingness to work ecumenically and with other faiths

Ideally they would also be able to:

- Commit to supporting work with children and youth as well as with young families
- Take an active interest in the life of the local community, the deanery, the diocese and the worldwide church

### **Essential Key Skills**

- The ability to develop and deepen a community's relationship with Jesus Christ, leading us by prayer and example in our mission of sharing the Word of God with the people of our neighbourhoods
- Clear and proven leadership gifts and skills, especially the ability to communicate across all ages and abilities
- The ability to discern gifts, to develop, support and empower members of the congregation
- To be proactive in pastoral support - to care for the people of God, and to listen to them and their needs
- Have good administrative and organisational skills, including a working understanding of the finances of the church

### **In addition we would hope this person would:**

- Be able to develop and sustain teaching and learning
- Be able to reach out to the many people for whom Christianity is at present a closed book.