



The Benefice of Itchingfield with Slinfold


Parish Profile 2024



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Introduction From The Bishop of Chichester

Proclaiming the Mystery of Faith

In 2025 this diocese celebrates the 950th anniversary of witness and evangelisation from a mission base in Chichester, building on the earlier mission founded by St Wilfrid at Selsey. 2025 also marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea with its reminder of the formative claim upon us of the catholic creeds.

These anniversaries are more than historical footnotes. They speak powerfully about the richness of faith and mission that is our inheritance locally and universally.

Inspired by that inheritance, we seek to be a household of faith that is endlessly curious about how the Holy Scriptures and the sacraments of the New Covenant enable us to know, love and follow Jesus Christ in today's noisy and distracted world.

If God is calling you to join us in the task of proclaiming the mystery of faith in some part of this diocese, we pray that the contribution of your gifts and experience will enrich our witness and deepen your own discipleship.

We take very seriously the call to diversity and radical inclusion as characteristic of the Church's mission. For this reason we welcome applications from ordained women and Global Majority Heritage clergy, who are under-represented in those who serve this diocese.

+Martin

Set in the Sussex countryside, the Benefice comprises two beautiful churches which are open each day for all to enjoy, with regular weekly services. Whilst we cherish the continuity of worshipping parishioners through generations past, we recognise the challenge to remain relevant to the lives of people in the 21st century. Our congregations are generally older, and we want to connect more strongly with younger people so that our church community becomes more whole, more diverse, more vital. We know that people of all ages can feel disconnected from God, from their families, their neighbours, and themselves. We know that the ways in which the church is important in our lives may not be the ways that are meaningful for others. We want to learn and grow.

As a Benefice we are looking for someone to become a prominent part of our communities – to lead and guide us forward with hope and love. We are seeking someone with vision and good humour. In support, we offer a loving, friendly and committed church family which takes its responsibilities seriously. We know Rectors are only human, as are we.

There is much opportunity here: in our growing villages, thriving schools, social clubs and sports events. We want to develop the facilities that will allow our churches to flourish in the years ahead.

Facing the future, believing that our churches can serve more people, we are looking for someone to embrace this opportunity, engage with our local communities, and find new ways to grow our church family. If you feel called to find out more, we would love to share more about who we are, our vision for the future, and the exciting opportunities in our Benefice.

The Benefice of Itchingfield with Slinfold comprises two neighbouring parishes to the west of the market town of Horsham in West Sussex. The parishes lie within the Horsham Deanery and the Diocese of Chichester. The Benefice covers a large rural area of almost eleven square miles containing the villages of Slinfold and Barns Green and the hamlet of Itchingfield.

Its two churches, St Peter's Slinfold and St Nicolas' Itchingfield, each have their own PCC. Generally, the two parishes operate independently to serve the needs of their villages, with joint services held during August and for special events throughout the year.

There are approximately 4000 people living in the Benefice, with the electoral roll currently standing at 66 for Itchingfield and 114 for Slinfold. Average attendance at regular services in 2023 for St Nicolas' was 21 and for St Peter's was 28, and we are keen to work with our new incumbent to expand our reach and be welcoming to our neighbours, old and new. St Nicolas' and St Peter's are part of Horsham Churches Together, an active group with thirty-one member churches.

The Rectory is a comfortable, modern, four-bedroom home, just 100 yards from St Peter's in Slinfold and St Nicolas' in Itchingfield is a 6 minute drive away.

The picturesque village of Slinfold, within a conservation area, provides a village store/post office, a welcoming pub and Slinfold CE Primary School (OFSTED Good). For older children, the Rectory is within the catchment area of The Weald comprehensive school in Billingshurst (OFSTED Outstanding), with a number of other schools in the area. A bus service connects Slinfold to the major commercial centre of Horsham, about 4 miles away, providing a good range of shops, award winning local markets, restaurants and bars, together with excellent amenities including a large leisure centre, two cinemas and a theatre. A mainline railway station provides fast and regular links to Gatwick Airport (17 minutes) and London Victoria (56 minutes), and convenient access to the M23 ensures easy connectivity to major road networks.

There are some beautiful walks and cycle rides in the immediate countryside, with the popular Downs Link route and stunning South Downs within easy reach.



SERVICES DURING THE VACANCY

1st Sunday	9.30am Holy Communion (Common Worship) - St Peter's 11.00am Holy Communion (Common Worship) - St Nicolas'
2nd Sunday	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) - St Nicolas' 9.30am Holy Communion (Common Worship) - St Peter's
3rd Sunday	10.00am Family Service - St Peter's 11.00am Holy Communion (Common Worship) - St Nicolas'
4th Sunday	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) - St Nicolas' 9.30am Holy Communion (Common Worship) - St Peter's 10.00am Family Service - Barns Green Village Hall
5th Sunday	11.00am Holy Communion (Common Worship) - St Nicolas'

There is a 10am communion service at St Peter's every second (BCP) and fourth Thursday.
 As a Benefice, we are open to the idea of changing the service schedule and/or having more joint services in the future.

<

The Rectory, situated in Slinfold village, is a comfortable modern home about 100 yards from the church, opposite the primary school. Set back from the road, the front of the house is dominated by two magnificent horse chestnut trees. Originally built in the 1960s, the house has large windows giving it a light and airy feel. The house has oil-fired central heating (there is no gas in this part of Slinfold). The front door opens into a hall with study to the right, cloakroom and shower room to the left.

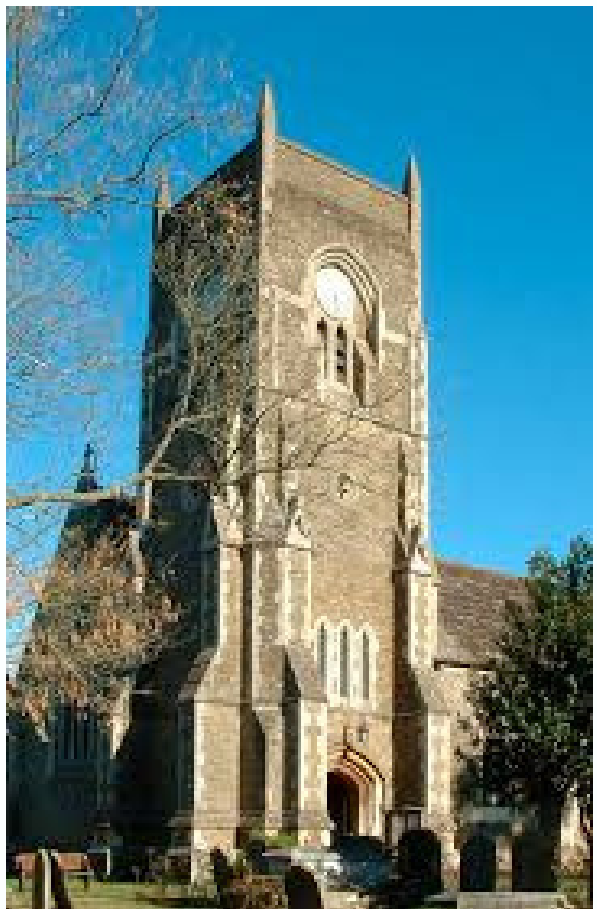
The generous-sized lounge has wood block flooring, open fire and french windows, with connecting doors to the dining room. The spacious kitchen has plenty of storage and a small utility room.

Upstairs are four bedrooms - two generous double rooms, one with an en suite and two singles. There is a small bathroom and toilet. One of the single bedrooms has access to a good sized walk-in loft.

The Rectory has a secluded garden laid mainly to lawn which has proved to be both child and dog proof. There is also a good sized garage.



WHAT WE CAN OFFER

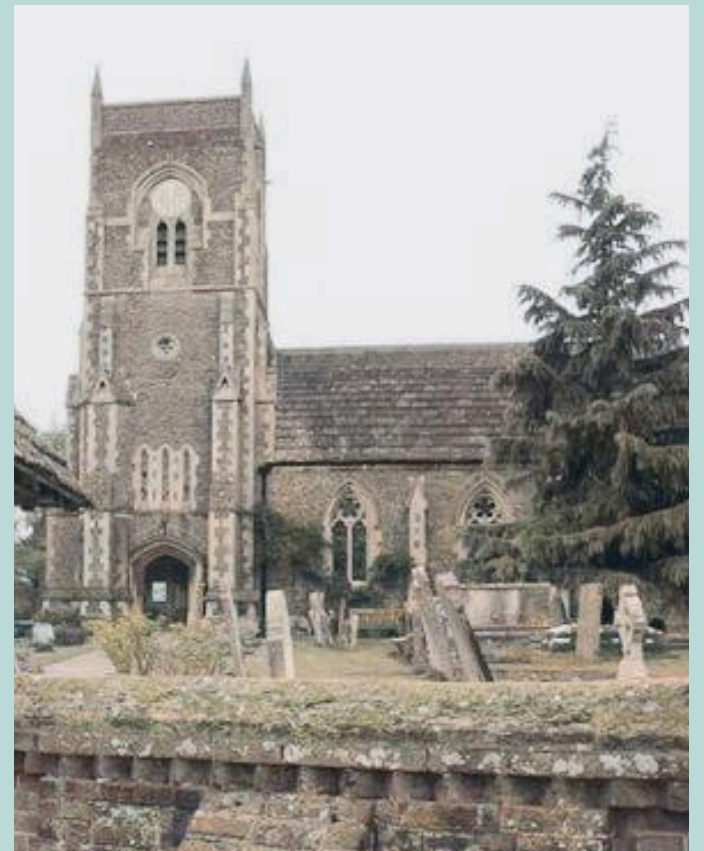


- o Supportive, cheerful, and capable teams within the PCCs and church congregations
- o Active participation in services: readings, intercessions, sidespeople, refreshments
- o An inclusive, friendly welcome to all new-comers
- o A strong commitment to music-making and worship
- o Churchwardens and Vergers who bring common sense, fantastic local networks and immense skills to ensuring the smooth running of services, and care of our ancient buildings and churchyards
- o Treasurers who provide clear, straightforward, summaries and enable responsible decision making by the PCCs
- o A retired priest who is a regular leader and participant in services
- o A Licensed Lay Minister who leads some services and is Deanery Lay Chair

WHAT WE ARE SEEKING

We are looking for a Rector who can lead our parishes as we serve the Lord and our neighbours. He or she will be a compassionate and approachable Christian leader with the following characteristics:

- o Imaginative in creating opportunities to root our churches within our growing communities
- o Ability to connect with young people and families, in schools and social settings
- o Energetic, with a positive mindset, able to harness momentum in collective action
- o Ability to inspire us, through example, Bible teaching and interpretation
- o Sensitive to pastoral needs, across all ages
- o Well organised, computer literate and comfortable using everyday technology





LIVING AND WORKING IN THE BENEFICE

Though the Benefice is characterized by its rural setting, it has a small number of industrial areas, and many residents are employed outside the parishes, in Horsham, Crawley, London, and at Gatwick Airport which is fifteen miles away. Sussex is a generally affluent area, but there are areas of relative poverty and need. People within the parishes are actively committed to supporting a healthy community life.

The Benefice is growing: there are three new housing developments in Slinfold and a further local authority site under construction. At Sumners Fields site in Barns Green there will be 32 new homes and commercial premises, and in Itchingfield, the Glebe / old school site is also allocated for housing. A new retirement development is planned at Wellcross, providing 141 homes, a wellbeing centre with sports facilities, shops, and restaurants. This creates more opportunities to welcome new residents to our church communities.

WORSHIP



'The warmth and friendliness of the church are felt by all who enter. The centuries of love shared in this church is palpable. The people at St Nicolas' have cared for me and supported me for 49 years.

I am so grateful.'

Mags

'I really love it because they ask people to read out prayers and bible readings. My favourite part is when we sing the hymns and eat the yummy biscuits.'

Max (age 7)

Within the Benefice, we enjoy various service styles ranging from the Book of Common Prayer to Common Worship, including Songs of Praise, Healing Services, and the contemporary style of our family services with music groups.



Our Children

Both churches welcome children of primary school age to join in monthly Messy Church which attracts between 13-25 children. Led by volunteers from our churches, the children enjoy songs, games and craft activities based around stories from the Bible. At the end of the session, the children are given a cooked meal.

New Venture Bible Study

New Venture is an ecumenical bible group which meets in Slinfold Chapel twice monthly. The group is open to anyone seeking to know more about, or gain a deeper understanding of the Christian Faith.



Reaching out to the community

Within the Benefice, pastoral care is a high priority. Visits are regularly made to Wellcross Grange nursing home and communion is taken to the housebound and sick in the local community. 'Slinfold Companions' is a friendly drop-in group held once a month in Slinfold village hall.

SAFEGUARDING

Both churches have a designated safeguarding officer and we are committed to:

- providing a safe, caring, environment for children and vulnerable adults
- protecting their rights
- protecting them from harm.





Slinfold and Barns Green have excellent educational provision. Each village has pre-schools and primary schools which have close links to both churches, with regular visits from the Rector. For secondary education, both villages are in the catchment area of The Weald School in Billingshurst (OFSTED Outstanding), and close to those in Horsham: Tanbridge House School (OFSTED Outstanding); Bohunt (OFSTED Good with outstanding features); Millais School (girls, OFSTED Good); and The Forest School (OFSTED Good). Muntham House School in Barns Green and Manor House School provide education for children with special needs. There are two independent co-ed schools close by, Farlington and the centuries-old institution of Christ's Hospital, situated on the boundary of Itchingfield parish which offers many bursaries to students from diverse backgrounds. Further education is available at colleges in Horsham and Crawley.





Both villages have a range of sports and leisure opportunities including excellent new facilities in nearby Broadbridge Heath and Bluecoat Sports centre at Christ's Hospital. Horsham and Billingshurst have large leisure centres.

Run Barns Green is an annual event attracting participants from far afield to its half marathon, 10k and 5k races. Over the years it has donated significant sums to local charities.

The wider area offers ample opportunity for outdoor pursuits. The popular Downs Link (on two disused railway lines) provides a long-distance route for walkers, horse riders and cyclists. It crosses the Surrey Hills, the Low Weald, and the South Downs to Shoreham-by-Sea. The South Downs and south coast are easily reached in forty-five minutes by car.

Horsham is a bustling market town with a good range of independent and high street shops; an enclosed shopping mall; pedestrianised Carfax with bandstand, market stalls and cobbled streets in the old town. The Capitol Theatre and Everyman cinema provide popular programmes.

Our local MP is Sir Jeremy Quin, Conservative. Horsham District Council has a Liberal Democrat majority since the May 2023 local elections.



THE PARISH OF ITCHINGFIELD

The Parish of Itchingfield includes the hamlet of Itchingfield and village of Barns Green, with a cluster of houses on Bashurst Hill. The economy of the parish is essentially rural with a small number of industrial units located in and around Barns Green.

The civil parish of Itchingfield has a population of 1800, of whom about 1,100 live in Barns Green, the social hub of the parish. St Nicolas' Church is nestled in the hamlet of Itchingfield, 1.5 miles north of Barns Green. Each month a service is held in Barns Green village hall which attracts a regular attendance of people who don't often come to church in Itchingfield. Our Remembrance Day service is held in the village hall with live link to the Cenotaph in London and is a popular and valued part of village life. We are keen to find new ways to serve the village.

*'St Nicolas', for me, has to do with
community and continuity;
it has come through the centuries and
is still here for us today.'*

Pat

*'Itchingfield church is lovely; the
community there is great and everyone is
really friendly. I sometimes do a reading
which is amazing, I love being able to
have the chance to talk and pray to God.'*

Zachary (age 10)

BARNS GREEN

Barns Green has a vibrant shop with Post Office counter, serving the community seven days a week. There is a welcoming pub, a much used village hall, playing fields, and Sumners Pond outdoor leisure complex. The well-supported annual pantomime sees locals take to the stage and creative talents backstage.

The village has many thriving clubs and societies with activities for all ages, including The Monday Club for over 60s, a Youth Club, Barns Green Players Drama Group, and various sports clubs.

The monthly BIG Mag goes to every household, with a regular section for St Nicolas' church, providing a useful reminder of what's happening, and of the skills and entrepreneurship of local tradespeople.



IN THE BEGINNING

Itchingfield is an historic village and civil parish in the Horsham district of West Sussex, situated between Barns Green and Broadbridge Heath, about four miles southwest of Horsham. The village's origins may be Roman. The name Itchingfield has evolved slowly over the centuries. In the year 1240 it was known as Hechengefeld, then by 1338 had changed to Hechynngefeld. It became Hechynfeld around 1379 and by 1400 was more recognizable as Etchynfeld. Up to 1700 it was referred to as Hitchingfield and from 1730 the 'H' was dropped.



ST NICOLAS' CHURCH



The church was built c.1125; the building retains two walls and several windows from the original 12th century building. The church has been extended several times, notably in the 18th and 19th centuries. In 1865 a major extension of the church was carried out and during this work a Norman altar stone was discovered and restored to the altar where it is still in use today. A special architectural feature is the 15th century wooden bell tower abutting the main church building. Inside the tower the original medieval staircase to the belfry remains in situ but is not now used.

CHURCHYARD AND PRIEST'S HOUSE

The churchyard has been extended several times and includes two Commonwealth War Graves. It is a designated conservation area providing a varied habitat for flora and fauna. Visitors find it a peaceful and reflective place.

Within the churchyard is an enigmatic little house, known as the Priest's House, originally outside the churchyard but now a prominent feature of it. Built in the early 16th century, it was probably a cottage for a cleric. After 80 or so years, another cottage was built on the west end and the whole building was used as an almshouse. There was a garden to the east of the house where residents could grow produce. Last occupied in the 1860s, the house is a unique example of the type of cottage that would have been a common sight in the area.



*'Being on my own, what I enjoy at St Nicolas'
is the friendship of people
and the presence of the love of God'*

Ros

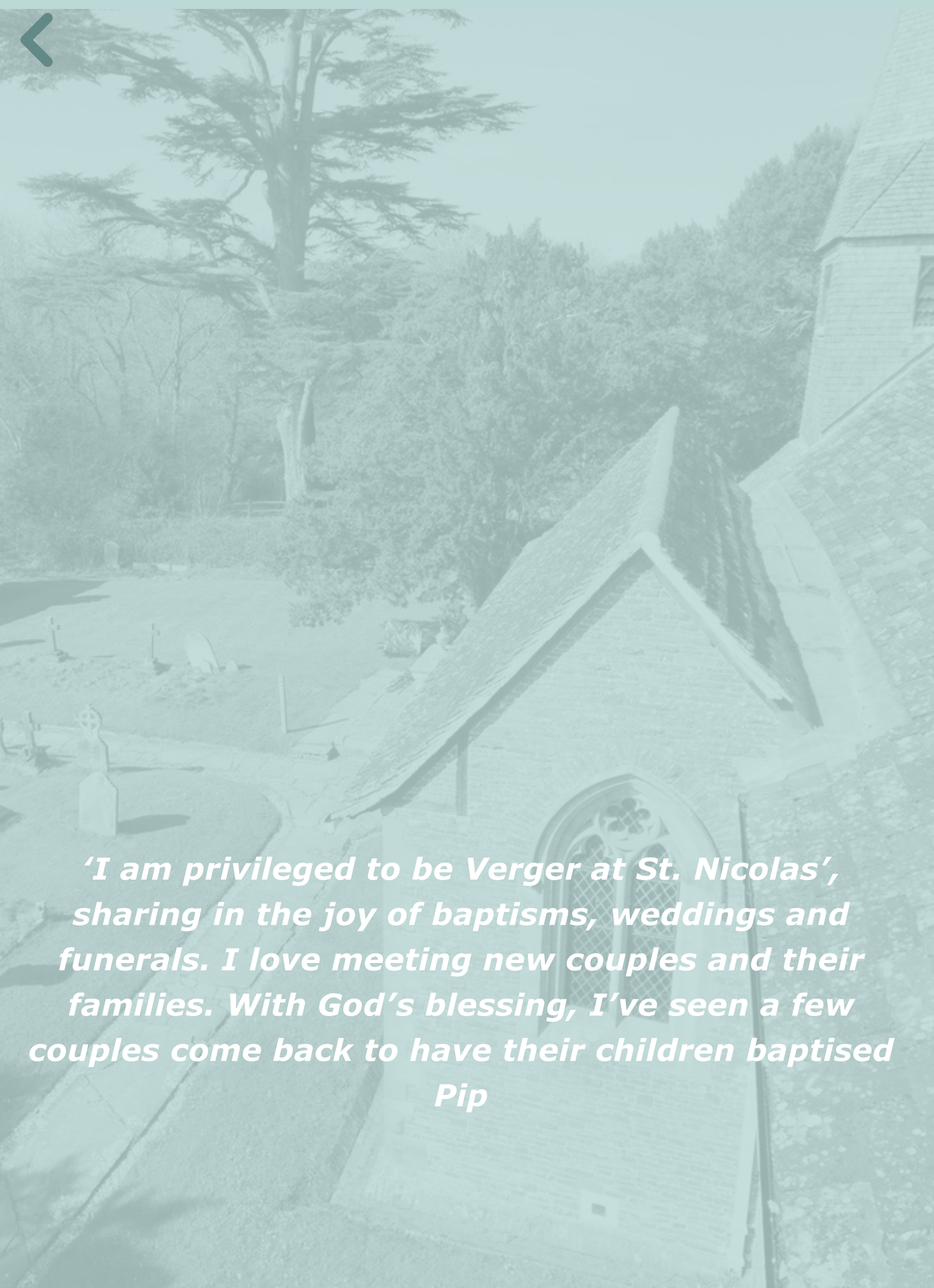
ST NICOLAS' BELLS

St Nicolas' has a ring of five bells, the oldest being cast in 1629. The bell tower is built entirely of oak; we believe it to be the only example of its kind in this country. The bells are rung regularly for morning service and festivals, and practices are held on Friday evenings.



'At St. Nicolas' I feel part of a Christian family which brings me joy and support in my faith. As a bell ringer, not only do I enjoy the friendships made there but I also have the privilege of ringing to welcome people before the services and in the celebration of weddings.'

Miriam



*'I am privileged to be Verger at St. Nicolas',
sharing in the joy of baptisms, weddings and
funerals. I love meeting new couples and their
families. With God's blessing, I've seen a few
couples come back to have their children baptised*

Pip

Members of the Fabric Committee have continued to ensure that the maintenance plan is being followed and kept up to date. High priority roof and gutter issues identified in the November 2021 quinquennial inspection report have now been completed by a specialist roofing contractor. Other outstanding priority works identified within the 2021 inspection report are being addressed.

Toilet & Tea Making Facilities

This is a long running project with an aim to install toilet and tea making facilities so much needed in the church.

Church Heating

The current church heating system is oil-fired and we are looking for ways to improve the carbon footprint and make the church eco-friendly in response to the wishes of the C of E.

St Nicolas' is a grade II* listed building, and we are working through the proper processes to agree a design for the refreshment and toilet facilities that is sympathetic to the ancient building. St Nicolas' would then be more accessible to church members, wider community, and the many visitors who pass through the door each year.

We have a dedicated fundraising team who are constantly coming up with original ideas for enjoyable events, sometimes using the church building to bring the community together, sometimes using other locations and festivals. Ongoing successful events include the Table Top Shop, the Floral Fringe Fair and concerts.



FUNDRAISING

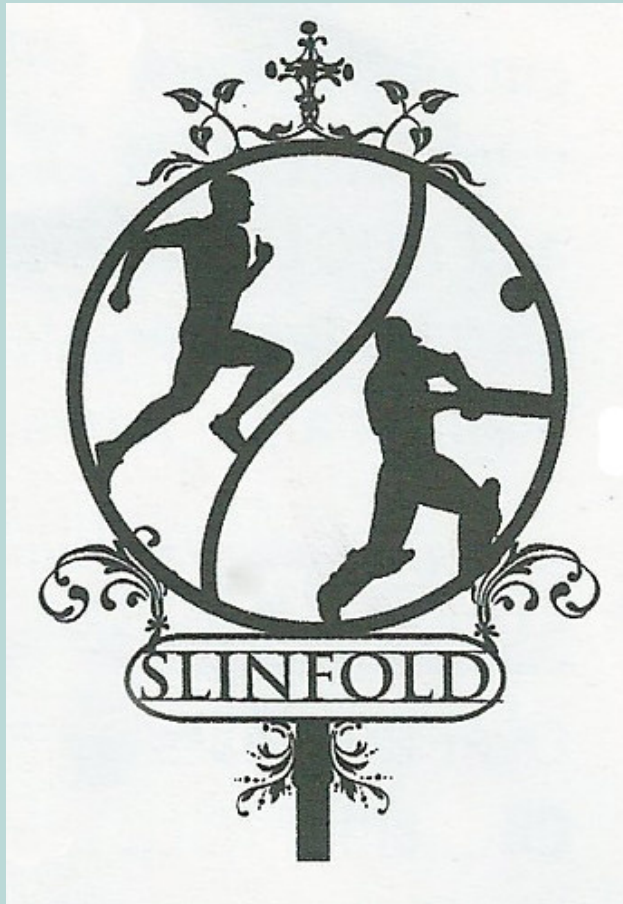
- General Fund income for both 2022 and 2023 was £38,500.
- The Parish Contribution for 2024 is £30,540, representing 75% of the full cost. The PCC remains very committed to increasing the amount of the Parish Share contribution each year.
- With rising costs, losses of £3,100 and £3,600 were recorded in the General Fund for 2022 and 2023 respectively (but a surplus had been recorded for the 8 years prior).
- General Fund reserves at 31 December 2023 stood at £27,000, sufficient to cover any loss in the short-term.
- Designated Funds at 31 December 2023 stood at £162,000. This is mostly legacy income, which the PCC has a policy to use for funding significant development projects in the parish.
- Restricted Funds at 31 December 2023 stood at £72,000. Of this, £44,000 has been raised to support the provision of new toilet and refreshment facilities at the church, and the remaining £28,000 must be spent on fabric.
- Surplus funds are invested through CCLA Investment Management.

THE PARISH OF SLINFOLD

The village lies 4 miles south west of Horsham. Surrounded by farmland and woodland, Slinfold's population is about 2000. Slinfold Church of England Pre-school and Primary School is controlled by West Sussex County Council, and has 160 pupils. There are three Foundation Governors and the Rector (who is one of the three) is an ex-officio member of the Board of Governors. The Rector has close links with the school and takes regular assemblies - as well as Christmas, Harvest and School-leavers' services in the church.

We have excellent cricket, football, and tennis clubs, all with junior teams and coaching, along with yoga and fitness groups.





Within the Parish are two residential homes for the elderly, Wellcross Grange and Silverlake Care. A brain injury rehabilitation therapy unit is situated at Wellcross. There is a Downland Housing Association development with 20 units for all ages. Saxon Weald social housing comprises 78 houses and flats in the village. Slinfold Parish Cottages administers nine homes for local residents within the parish. The Rector is an ex officio Trustee of this charity; most of the day work is undertaken by a very competent administrator.

The village shop supplies basic needs and the Post Office section opens on a Tuesday afternoon. Tesco and Homebase stores are within 2.5 miles of the village. Although there are no doctors' surgeries within the Parish, there are several GP practices which are easily reached.

The village hall is the hub for all social events, all age groups and interests: a weekly baby and toddler group and youth club, Monthly Companions Group, weekly Cosy Cafe Drop-in, Pilates, martial arts, short mat bowls and table tennis. A parish magazine, organised by volunteers, gives news of both Church and Village activities. There is a monthly Craft Market, Village Cinema, and touring theatre productions.

'Like its' namesake, St Peter's is the bedrock of our community. It's the calm, loving, faith-filled centre - a voice of reason, truth and justice from which the fundamental values of love, kindness, caring and sharing ripple outwards embracing each and every activity of our village lives. It impacts everyone, churchgoers or not, and is what makes Slinfold such a great place to live.'

Julia

Records show that there has been a church on this site since about 1230A.D. although it has been suggested from architectural details in drawings of the old church that it could be a Norman foundation dating back to the late 11th or early 12th century. The list of Rectors in the porch stretches back to 1400.

By the Victorian era the church was in considerable disrepair and it was calculated that rebuilding would be less expensive than repair. Accordingly, the old church was demolished in 1860.

Rebuilt the following year in Gothic Revival style, St Peter's had a spire, demolished for safety reasons in 1969, and gifts provided stained glass, a reredos depicting The Last Supper, a John Fincham pipe organ, a pulpit believed to be by Rev. J.A.Hatchett, a rood screen (removed in 1969) and 4 new bells (the tower also contains 2 older bells). The font was probably from the older building and could be as old as 14th century. A small memorial brass from 1537 commemorating Richard Bradbrydge remains in the chancel also one for the Cowper family of Stroud. Several memorial tablets are displayed in the porch, along with a medieval figure of a recumbent female which was reportedly retrieved from the river Arun near Dedisham, hence she is known as the Lady of Dedisham; at Easter the children give her a posy of primroses.

*'St Peter's sits in the heart of our village of Slinfold,
it is the centrepiece bringing us together as a community.*

A place of quietness, joy and friendship'

Vicky

ST PETER'S CHURCH TODAY

St Peter's has evolved over the years since the rebuilding. As well as the removal of the spire and rood screen, additions have been made, notably the kneelers, and more recently an annexe with toilet and disabled access. There is storage and a sink area for flower arranging and provision of after-service refreshments. The chancel has been re-organised to allow for more flexible use, including accommodating the Slinfold Concert Band who usually play for our Remembrance Day service and for the Service of Lessons & Carols.



The local Arts Society prepared a catalogue of church effects and approved 'The Trail for Children at St Peter's Church', an activity for young visitors, with pictures and questions. We also have a directory of the memorial stones in the churchyard and catalogue of the kneelers available for reference. Daily use of the church building is encouraged, e.g. school visits, handbells practice and concerts.

When I was confirmed at St Peter's last year I remember being told what a special church people found it to be. I feel that too.'

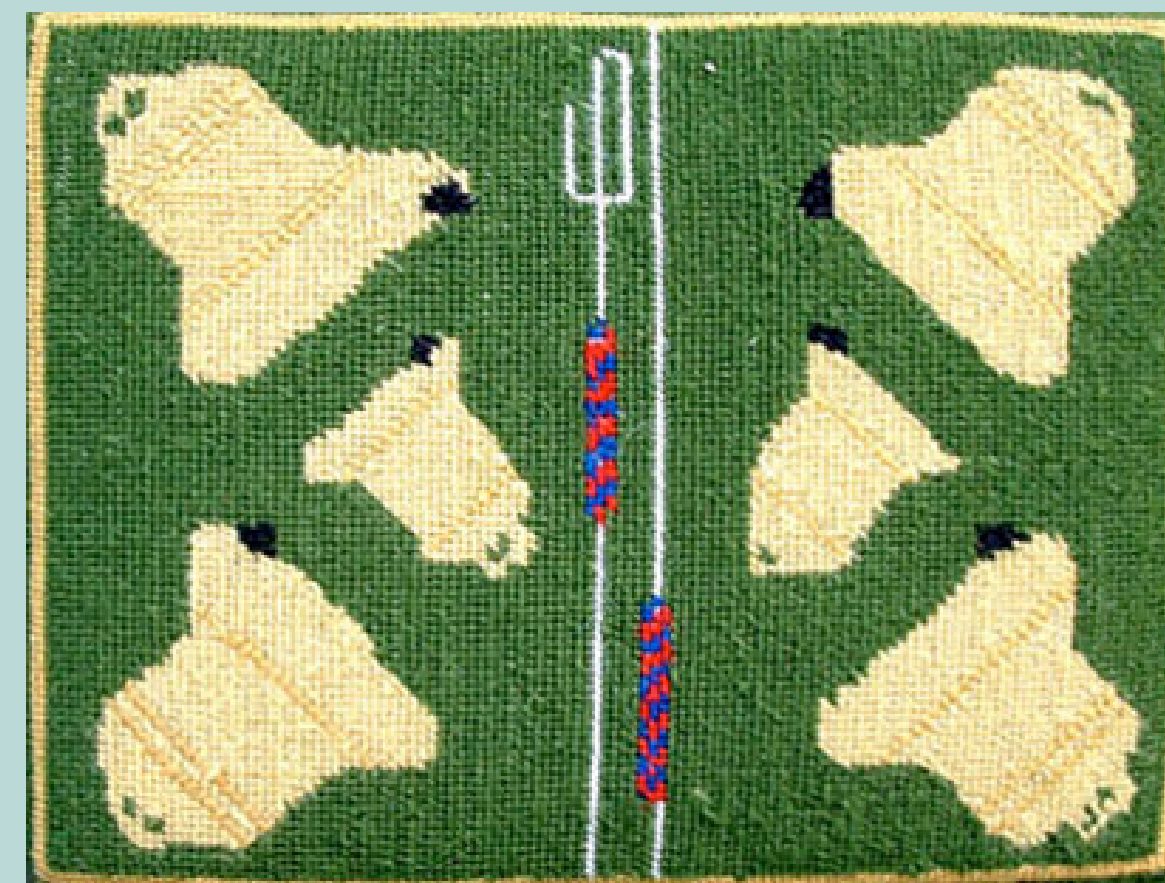
Clare

*'Just like the little lamb, St Peter's
accepts me as I am and affirms me.'*
Paula



The churchyard is open and includes three commonwealth war graves - two from the first world war and one from the second including a separate Garden of Remembrance. A dedicated group of volunteers from across the parish meet regularly to carry out grass and maintenance, keeping the churchyard looking beautiful.

The oldest bell (5), from 1704, is by Gulielmus (or William) Eldridge, last of the Eldridge dynasty of bellfounders initially from Wokingham, but latterly of Chertsey. The next oldest (2) and the only other one to predate the rebuild is from 1741 and was cast by Robert Catlin, a well known founder of St Andrew's in Holborn. The remaining 4 bells, installed during the rebuild, are by John Warner & Sons of Cripplegate, the company who cast the original Big Ben bell (This first bell unfortunately cracked during its public display before being hung in Westminster and was subsequently recast by another foundry). There is a thriving group of ringers who practice weekly.



'I love being in St Peter's. Worship has taken place on this site for hundreds of years and on spending time in the church, you can feel a spiritual benefit, a sense of peace. Those 'God moments' when engaging with visitors (whether local people, those from further afield or from overseas) are always special and it is lovely to learn how many people value having this church in the village'

Gill

*The Church of St. Peter
Slinfold
Peal of Six Bells*

Bell	Note	Founder	Year	Approx. Weight (cwt)
Treble	D#	John Warner	1861	4
2	C#	Robert Catlin	1741	4 ½
3	B	John Warner	1861	6
4	A#	John Warner	1861	7 ½
5	G#	Gulielmus Eldridge	1704	9
Tenor	F#	John Warner	1861	12 ½

ST PETER'S FINANCES



- Gift Aided Donations, Weekly Promise envelopes
- Occasional Legacies
- We are able to pay the full Parish Contribution
- Donations to missions and charities by the PCC
- One off appeals after disasters
- Appeal Fund for church redevelopment projects

OUR DEANERY CLERGY



Ven Angela Martin
Archdeacon of Horsham



Rt Revd Ruth Bushyager
Bishop of Horsham



Revd Martin King
Rural Dean of Horsham

The Church exists primarily
for the benefit of those
who do not belong to it.

William Temple (1881-1944)

