Parochial Church Council of Saint Alban and Saint Patrick Highgate, Birmingham

PARISH STATEMENT

Revised February 2017

The Context

1. Description of the Parish

The parish of St Alban & St Patrick is a historic inner-city Anglo-Catholic parish, just south of the city centre of Birmingham. Its origin was in a religious and educational mission to the unchurched in the high-density slum housing of the new industrial suburb of Highgate, begun in 1865 by the Pollock brothers, two priests inspired by the Oxford Movement. The church of St Alban the Martyr was opened in 1881 and the nearby daughter church of St Patrick was opened in 1896.

The area was redeveloped in the 1950s and 1960s with most of the parishioners being relocated elsewhere in Birmingham and the old terraced housing replaced by high-rise blocks and maisonettes. In 1966 St Patrick's was demolished and the two parishes amalgamated. Most of the 1960s high-rise flats and maisonettes have now in turn been demolished, replaced by town house designs, some social housing and some owner-occupied or privately rented, while others have been refurbished. Waves of new immigrants from many parts of the world have moved into the parish. A recent development is an increase in the number of refugees and asylum-seekers housed in the parish. Although poor and socially disadvantaged, the parish does not suffer from problems of crime and severe anti-social behaviour to the same extent as some other inner-city areas of Birmingham.

Like many such churches, from its foundation St Alban's has relied financially and in part for leadership on supporters living outside the parish. Urban renewal and consequent demographic changes resulted in a mainly extraparochial congregation, a number of whose members are from families formerly resident in the parish or which were early supporters of the mission, while others have been attracted by the theological, liturgical and musical traditions of the parish, for which the beautiful church building provides a perfect setting. Recent efforts to bring local residents into the congregation have had some success through the involvement of our previous priest-in-charge, Fr Nicholas lo Polito, and some others of the congregation in community organizations and activities.

Population

In the 2011 census there were about 4,500 people living in the parish, an increase of more than 1,000 from the 2001 census, and the population has continued to increase since then. The 2001 and 2011 censuses gave these ethnic and religious profiles for the parish:

Ethnicity	2001	2011	Religion	2001	2011
White	41%	30%	Christian	45%	32%
Asian	28%	26%	Muslim	27%	38%
Black	19%	27%	Other Religion	6%	6%
Mixed	8%	8%	No Religion	11%	17%
Other	4%	9%	No Response	11%	7%

In 2011 40% of the population of the parish were born outside the United Kingdom and 28% did not use English as their main language, with 8% unable to speak English well.

Unemployment, social deprivation and low income are common in the parish. The 2011 census shows 39% of the "working age" (16–64) population in receipt of an out-of-work benefit; 30% with no qualifications; and 19% in the NS-SeC "never worked and long-term unemployed" category.

Housing, Commerce, Institutions and Transport

The parish has a high proportion of both social and private rented housing (58% and 24% respectively in 2011), still including some high-rise blocks. It includes light industry and a small shopping centre, Horton Square, as well as two GP practices, a health clinic and five schools: three primary, one secondary and one special school.

Bounded on three sides by major roads, the parish is something of an island, with most public transport serving the periphery but within easy walking distance of the centre of the parish. A map of the parish is appended. There are no parking restrictions around the church and the vicarage has ample off road parking, but traffic congestion and parking can be a problem when pupils are arriving at or leaving St Alban's Academy, on Fridays around the time of midday prayer at the Central Mosque and at the time of Islamic festivals.

A Key Facility

An important resource for the local community is Stanhope Hall Community Centre, located in Ketley Croft about 500 yards from St Alban's Church. The Centre is owned by Birmingham City Council as part of its 'Wellbeing Services' and is run by a full-time manager supported by volunteers. The attendees and local volunteers come from many faiths and are commonly people who find life tough and seek succour and friendship within the local community. It is a secular organisation but one where Christ's work is put into practice every day in a quiet, non-confrontational way. It is a place where anyone can drop in at any time just to sit quietly, perhaps have a cup of tea, and chat to anyone who is around.

All the activities at Stanhope are free of charge, with those attending invited to put any donations they wish into a collection tin, which they do with remarkable generosity. Many of the activities are designed to improve the general health of local people both in the choice of food provided and in getting members active and "out of their chairs". In association with St Alban's Church, last winter Stanhope Hall hosted a winter night shelter for homeless men as part of the annual Birmingham Churches Night Shelter initiative.

The PCC provides some financial support for weekly free community lunches for about 40 people at Stanhope Hall and supports youth work there through a grant to the PCC from the Harlow Trust at Keble College. Several members of the congregation are involved in support for the community centre. Stanhope Hall Support Group, which provides management expertise and helps access funds, is chaired by PCC member Peter Marsh.

Other Places of Worship

St Anne's Roman Catholic Church

Situated on the border of the Parish but just outside it, St Anne's was the site of the original Birmingham mission of the Blessed John Henry Newman. Relations are friendly, with past joint participation in ecumenical Advent and Lent courses.

Highgate Baptist Church

This is our near neighbour, situated on Conybere Street opposite St Alban's Academy. We have very good relations with the Baptists, whose minister, Revd Paul Walker, is happy to work with us, and has participated in past ecumenical Advent and Lent courses. Our congregation is invited to the Church Anniversary celebration at the Baptist Church and other special events. Another church, The Redeemed Evangelical Mission (a.k.a. Power in the Word) also uses the Baptist Church building.

Other Christian Denominations

There are a number of "store front" Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in the northern, less residential, part of the parish. In the past St Alban's has played host to Pentecostal congregations and to different congregations of the Eritrean Orthodox church, which have since moved on to accommodation better suited to their needs.

The Seventh-day Adventists have a church on the edge of the parish.

Birmingham Central Mosque

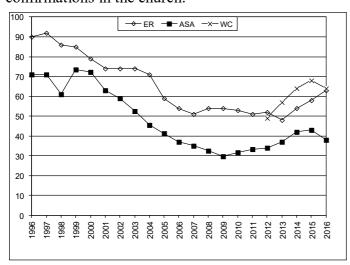
This is an important centre of Muslim worship in Birmingham. Friendly relations exist, especially through links with St Alban's Academy. The former Treasurer, now General Secretary, of the Central Mosque has been on the Local Governing Body of the Academy.

Church Information and Parish Data

2. Pattern of Church Life

The Congregation

The Electoral Roll has 63 members, 8 of whom (13%) live in the parish. For 2016 the average Sunday attendance was 38 adults and 8 children and the Worshipping Community (all who attend at least once a month) was assessed in December as 64, with 10 under 10, 3 aged 11-17, 31 aged 18-69 and 20 aged 70 or over. In 2016 there were two funerals, one wedding, four baptisms and 2 confirmations in the church.



The graph the left shows on congregation measured by the Electoral Roll, Average Sunday Attendance (16+) and the Worshipping Community (all ages attending at least once a month). The congregation declined for ten years from 1999 to 2009, but has risen slowly each year since then until the present interregnum, when there has been a setback. It is essential for the future of the parish that this growth is restored. Some of those who have joined recently have backgrounds denominations such as the Eritrean Orthodox church.

The majority of the congregation is drawn from outside the parish, from across the city and beyond. Some have personal and family roots in the parish and still travel in to the church from the suburbs. A good proportion are professional people. Many members of this diverse congregation have demonstrated great loyalty to the church and this has been expressed in commitment of time and effort and in generosity with money and expertise. Individual members of the congregation participate in diocesan bodies and in other bodies (heritage, civic, charitable, inter-faith and ecumenical). This often brings a wider perspective to parochial discussions. Recently a number of new members have joined the congregation from the parish and its immediate neighbourhood, and it is very important that efforts are continued both to maintain this trend and to bring the new and old elements of the congregation together.

In November 2016 Resolutions A and B under the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993 expired. The PCC passed these in 1994 by majorities of 68% and 89%, respectively, but did not vote on requesting Alternative Episcopal Oversight. A survey in 2015 indicated that the present congregation is divided on the issue of the ordination of women, with a wide range of views on either side, some strongly held, some nuanced. In January 2017 the PCC voted on a Resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration. This was not carried, with equal votes for and against. This outcome reflects the diversity of opinion in the congregation. We hope to continue to live amicably with our different opinions.

Regular Weekly Services

• Sunday 10:00 AM Sung Mass, average attendance for 2016 46, with a Sunday Club in our church hall, St Patrick's Room, for children. After the service tea, coffee and biscuits are served in St Patrick's Room.

- Thursday 12:30 PM said Mass in St Patrick's Chapel, average attendance 7.
- Saturday 9:00 AM said Mass in the Lady Chapel, average attendance 8, followed by breakfast of tea, coffee and toast in St Patrick's Room.
- As Academy Chaplain Fr Nicholas also conducted short multi-faith services in church at 8:40 AM on Fridays, attended by year groups of students and teachers during term time.

Liturgical Year

Choral Masses for major holy days falling on weekdays (if not transferred to Sundays) are normally held at 7:30 PM on weekdays or 11:00 AM on Saturdays.

Last year, during Advent we had a service of Christmas carols and readings at 5:00 PM on Sunday 6th December; on Christmas Eve we had a children's Crib Service at 3:00 PM and Midnight Mass from 10:30 PM (formerly 11:00 PM) and on Christmas Day, Mass at 10:00 AM. Epiphany is currently transferred to Sunday in the calendar that we use. On Candlemas we have an evening Mass, starting with a candle-lit procession into the church and followed by a St Blaise' Eve blessing of throats.

Lent starts with the imposition of ashes at an evening Mass, and Stations of the Cross are made on Fridays in Lent. Although it falls in Lent, we celebrate the feast of St Patrick, our secondary patron, with a Choral Mass. Holy Week starts with the blessing of palm crosses and a procession into church – if the weather permits this starts outdoors in the park opposite the church. The traditional Triduum services are held. The Mass on Maundy Thursday starts at 7:30 PM and ends with solemn transfer of the Blessed Sacrament to an altar of repose and a watch until midnight. The Solemn Liturgy for Good Friday starts at 12:00 noon and the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday starts at 9:00 PM with the blessing of new fire in the park if weather permits, or else in a more sheltered spot beside the church. Both Ascension Day and Corpus Christi are currently transferred to Sunday in the calendar that we use. We celebrate the latter with a procession of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction at the end of Mass.

During May, "Mary's Month", a shrine is placed before the statue of Our Lady. In the past a May Devotion service with a procession was held annually, to which members of other Anglo-Catholic parishes were invited. In June the feast of St Alban, our principal patron, is usually celebrated on the nearest Saturday with a buffet lunch after Mass. The feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated in August and in September we keep Holy Cross Day, which is the anniversary of the opening of the mission that became our parish. Recently we have kept the first Sunday of October as a Harvest Festival. All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day are both celebrated – the latter with a Requiem Mass. The liturgical year ends with the Solemnity of Christ the Universal King, celebrated with a procession of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction. at the end of Mass.

Each month one of the weekday Masses is a requiem for the departed on our chantry roll whose anniversaries fall in that month, and in November several of the weekday services are requiems for departed friends and relatives whose names are submitted by the congregation.

Services of Compline, Choral Evensong or Vespers followed by Benediction are arranged on special occasions.

The appended Parish Magazine for July includes the monthly Calendar of Masses, intentions and other services.

Liturgical Practice

The church community is proud of its ceremonial tradition with vestments, robed servers, incense used every Sunday and on major Holy Days, sanctuary bells used at every Mass and the Angelus rung daily. We have an impressive collection of vestments and other liturgical properties and a small team of dedicated and experienced servers.

The Blessed Sacrament, for many years reserved at the High Altar, is now again reserved in St Patrick's Chapel in a fine tabernacle, making this also the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

The church building, designed to draw attention towards the High Altar, favours Eastward facing celebration, with movement at the offertory from the centre of the church where the Liturgy of the Word has taken place to the High Altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Experiments with a portable nave altar placed at the crossing did not stand the test of time.

Shape of the Sunday Mass

We use Common Worship Rite I with options and variations under Canon B5(1) resulting in a liturgy similar in shape to the Roman rite, with the peace after the consecration. The Creed and Eucharistic Prayers use Common Worship texts, with prefaces from the (1975) Roman missal.

Worshipers are provided with seasonal service booklets produced by our Printing Unit (an example is appended), copies of *The New English Hymnal* and sheets with the readings and propers of the Sunday on one side and notices and prayer intentions for the week on the reverse.

The choir sings the proper to plainsong and the Kyrie and Gloria (in season), Sanctus/Benedictus and Agnus Dei using traditional Mass settings (sometimes in Latin); leads the responsorial psalm and the singing of the Lord's Prayer to plainsong; and sings a motet during communion. The Creed is currently said. In Advent and Lent the Asperges is used in place of the penitential rite and Kyrie.

The Old and New Testament lessons are read by lay members of the congregation. The Gospel Book is carried from the High Altar into the midst of the congregation where the Celebrant (or Deacon if one is present) reads or intones the Gospel. The intercessions are led (with a scripted guide) by a lay member of the congregation.

At the end of Sunday Mass the altar party stops before the statue of Our Lady while the Angelus (or seasonally the Regina Cœli or Salve Regina) is sung before the final hymn.

Children's Sunday Club

For the past two years we have run an optional Sunday Club for toddlers to 12-year olds. (For several years before this, not enough children attended for it to be practical to make separate provision for their needs on Sunday.) After the Gospel the children move from the church to St Patrick's Room, where they explore topics related to the scripture readings for the day aided by the *Searchlights* resource booklets, returning to the church at the Communion.

For the last year on the last Sunday of the month, instead of moving to St Patrick's Room for the Sunday Club, the children remain in church and take an extra part in the service, some reading the lessons, others bringing the elements from the back of church at the offertory and others assisting in the sanctuary together with the adult servers.

Occasional Offices

Infant Baptism normally takes place during the Sunday Mass. It is unusual for parishioners from outside the congregation to choose to marry at St Alban's, but parish funerals are less uncommon. A Requiem Mass is usual for the funerals of members of the congregation.

There are no set times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) and spiritual direction, which are available by appointment.

House Group

Originally formed by Fr Nicholas, the House Group of 4-8 local residents meets each Monday in the home of one of the group members. Initially it allowed them to explore different perspectives of the Bible and share experiences in a safe environment. The group then began the 3D course in September 2015 and then followed a structured course facilitated by Fr Nicholas.

When the course was completed the members of the group expressed a wish to continue to meet and possibly explore other courses. The current venue works well for them as far as childcare is concerned. One member reported: "The regular meetings have brought us closer together."

Devotion to Our Lady of Walsingham

The parish has a long association with the Shrine at Walsingham. A well-supported annual weekend pilgrimage to the Shrine has taken place in May for over 50 years, with currently about 20 attending. There is a statue of Our Lady of Walsingham in our church and the congregation ensures that a lamp for the parish burns continuously in the Holy House at Walsingham.

Assistant Clergy

In the past we have had the services of honorary assistant priests and other non-stipendiary clergy. We have enjoyed the occasional services of retired and non-parochial clergy who value St Alban's tradition and enjoy celebrating and officiating here. In previous incumbencies the parish has benefited from the placement of ordinands training at Queen's College, Birmingham.

Lay Assistants

There are currently no Readers. There are three Eucharistic Ministers (Bishop's Permission), one of whom takes the Sacrament to the housebound.

Church Music

St Alban's has had a long and distinguished history of Church music of high quality, which we are anxious to continue. We have a paid Director of Music and an unpaid Assistant Organist in post, both experienced musicians, and have previously also had both Organ and Choral Scholars. Many past organists have gone on to cathedral posts, and one is currently Professor of Music at Glasgow University. We are affiliated to the Royal School of Church Music.

The Director of Music writes:

Music at Saint Alban's has been important from the very beginning, as befits a church in the Anglo-Catholic tradition of worshipping with all the senses. Its role is to enhance the spoken word and Liturgy to take us, spiritually, to worship with the whole company of heaven. Plainsong was introduced early on, and hymn singing was important in drawing people into the church; indeed Fr. Thomas Benson Pollock was an eminent hymn writer. *The New English Hymnal* is used.

The building, with its excellent acoustic and spacious interior, lends dignity to the liturgy and music, enhancing both. The resulting style of worship is unique in the diocese, with many people travelling some distance to attend.

The current choir consists of about nine dedicated regulars, and several others who are unable to attend regularly. They rehearse on Friday evenings and before services. This number is a minimum for our requirements, and recruitment of more adult singers, and the establishment of a junior treble line is being planned for.

There is an extensive music library in the large choir vestry, which also contains a venerable Bechstein grand piano. There is another, modern upright piano in the church.

The main organ is a good, well maintained, medium-sized 3-manual instrument originally by Bryceson, and most recently rebuilt by Rushworth & Dreaper. It is suitable for use as both a liturgical and concert instrument.

There is also a chamber organ, which is a single-manual, manually blown instrument from the first half of the nineteenth century, mounted on a mobile platform. It is with us on indefinite loan.

The main musical service during the week is the Sunday choral Mass. At this service the choir sing the proper to plainsong, and also the Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus and Benedictus, and Agnus Dei of the ordinary. The Creed is currently said, but the Lord's Prayer is sung to traditional plainsong and perhaps in future the Creed could be sung to a suitable congregational setting – whether plainsong

or Merbecke or similar. When appropriate the sequence is sung before the Gospel. In addition the choir sings a communion motet.

The choir has built up a good range of settings of the ordinary, ranging from Renaissance (Hassler, Palestrina, Vittoria), through Classical (Haydn, Mozart) (occasionally with orchestra), to Modern (Darke, Sumsion, Duruflé). Plainsong settings (in Greek/Latin) are usually sung once a month, and are popular with the congregation.

In the generous acoustic, the intoning of the prayers, Gospel, Dismissal etc. is appreciated, and helps provide a clarity that a sound system cannot match.

We enjoy excellent relations with both the Birmingham Conservatoire and the University of Birmingham. The acoustics of the building are appreciated by such notable choral conductors as Paul Spicer and Jeffrey Skidmore, and it is regularly used as both a concert and a recording venue by the Conservatoire and others. We aim to continue to nurture and expand these external musical relationships.

In the near future, the Director of Music would like to:

- Recruit both adults and children to the choir, through workshops and open days.
- Establish a small orchestra to accompany Classical masses, and to embellish festal occasions.
- Have more regular Choral Evensong or Compline and Benediction offices, to enable us to make use of our resources, and also to invite other choirs to experience our wonderful building. This can offer people a different form of worship with which some are more comfortable, and therefore more likely to attend than what is rightly our main focus the Mass.
- Establish an organ recital series, to help fund the music and organ maintenance, and again to get people in, and appreciating, the church.

3. Description of Church Buildings and Facilities

The Church Building

Originally known as St Alban's, Bordesley, from its earliest days St Alban's was one of the best known Anglo-Catholic churches in the Midlands. Today it is known as St Alban's, Highgate, having been moved from Bordesley Deanery to the Central Birmingham Deanery in the 1980s.

Opened in 1881, the church is a magnificent Victorian Gothic structure designed by John Loughborough Pearson. A distinctive landmark saddleback tower designed by E.F. Reynolds was added in 1938. There are no tower bells, but we have an effective electronic bell system. A good impression of the outside and its surroundings can be gained from Google Street View (linked on the parish website, www.saintalban.co.uk, at the bottom of the left-hand panel as Find us with Google Maps), and the appended pictures give some idea of the beauty and dignity of the interior. The architectural importance of the building is recognised with Grade II* listing. The church is visited by groups from the Victorian Society, decorative arts societies and school groups and we take part in Heritage Open Days. Floodlighting was installed in 2000 with the aid of the Millennium Lighting Trust. The interior was sensitively relit in 2012, enhancing appreciation of the vaulting. There is an induction loop for those with hearing aids.

The church has two side-chapels, the Lady Chapel and St Patrick's Chapel, each used for weekday services. St Patrick's Chapel houses an important Arts and Crafts reredos by the Birmingham sisters Kate and Myra Bunce. Their work is commemorated by a Civic Society blue plaque, unveiled in 2015, on the exterior of the church. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in St Patrick's chapel.

Ancillary Buildings

Attached to the main church building are the sacristy, choir and servers' vestries, a wardens' office and our church hall, St Patrick's Room, built in 1984, which has kitchen and toilet facilities including a toilet adapted for wheelchair users. A path from Stanhope Street offers step-free access to the church through the new building. St Patrick's Room is used for parish lunches, refreshments after Mass, social and Friends' events and PCC meetings. Recently a permanent screen and overhead-mounted digital projector have been added to the room, donated by the Friends. We see St Patrick's room as a useful resource for the local community as well as the congregation. In the past it has been used for community group meetings, councillor's surgeries etc. In addition, over the years letting out St Patrick's Room has made a useful contribution to church income, but the room is currently under-used.

Church Grounds

St Alban's has no graveyard. There are plain garden areas on each side, between the church and Conybere Street and between the church and the vicarage. Following use as a site area during roofing and ground works from summer 2016 to February 2017 the garden on the Conybere Street side will require reinstatement.

Church Renovation Works

In 2012 the life-expired lighting system in the church was replaced at a cost of £131k, funded by legacies and major donations. Improved light levels in the nave make the church more welcoming and the subdued up-lighting of the fine vaulting enhances the appearance of the interior.

The latest quinquennial inspection identified the roofs and rising/penetrating damp damaging the interior as needing urgent attention. We also need to improve the church heating system.

During 2016 the low roofs at the east end of the church (the organ loft, the ambulatory and St Patrick's Chapel) together with the high-level roof of the south transept were renewed, amounting to about 20% of the whole church roof. Holding repairs were also made to the high nave roof to replace missing tiles. This work was funded by a grant of about £85k from the Listed Places of Worship Roof Repair Fund, together with VAT refund and our Restoration Fund.

The remainder of the roof needs renewing, because the Victorian tiles, which are not nailed down, are readily lifted by storms and, as the main roof is not sarked, after heavy rain, water penetrates through to the interior of the nave. As an indication of the urgency of this task, the condition of the roof led to the building recently being added to Historic England's 'at risk' register. A further, larger, grant and fundraising will be needed to complete the reroofing of the nave and side aisles. Our Restoration and Maintenance Task Group is working on this issue and hopes to submit the first stage of a grant application before the summer.

During winter 2016/17 the ground at the East end has been lowered and a French Drain installed to address damp, which was causing damage to the interior stonework. At the same time a long-standing defect in the sewer was repaired and the old lead water main was replaced with plastic piping. This work was funded from bequests, with VAT refund.

A recent bequest of £57k has been set aside towards the cost of improving the inadequate heating of the church but consensus has not yet been reached on the system to use.

The Vicarage

Situated adjacent to the church, at 120 Stanhope Street, the vicarage is a large well-designed threestorey house built in the 1960s. The ground floor has a large kitchen, two reception rooms, a large study, a toilet, a utility room and an integral garage. The first floor has four bedrooms and a bathroom with toilet, and there are two additional rooms on the second floor. There is gas central heating and the principal downstairs rooms have either secondary glazing or double glazing. A fully monitored alarm is fitted. There is a good-sized garden and the house is opposite a small public park on the former site of the church school, in a quiet road. A gated drive provides additional secure parking. For family reasons, our last priest-in-charge did not live in the vicarage. We look forward to once again having a resident parish priest.

Church Organisations

The Friends of St Alban's and St Patrick's

This association undertakes a range of fund-raising activities, including talks by speakers in various fields, suppers, garden parties, outings and other events. There is a membership of 51, 30 of whom are 'external' members not on the electoral roll, with various links to the church. Funds are used to "extend the resources of the PCC in order to maintain and enhance the beauty of the church ... and to maintain and improve its facilities". Such funds have been used to clean and restore paintings, buy a new piano, provide a new cooker and dishwasher for St Patrick's room kitchen, buy flower stands, install a board to commemorate former vicars, renew the church notice board, maintain floral containers outside the church, buy a trolley for use by the food bank, flower arrangers and sacristy team and buy a screen and projector for St Patrick's Room. A newsletter keeps members in touch with news from the church. The parish priest is ex officio president of the Friends.

St Alban's Church Printing Unit

The parish is fortunate in having a highly regarded Printing Unit (a.k.a. S Alban's Litho Unit, although the litho process is no longer used). This carries out work for the parish and other churches and organisations throughout the country, including monthly magazines for three other churches. Run by two church members on a voluntary basis, the unit provides a significant contribution to church income from its external work, which also brings St Alban's favourable publicity.

4. Administration and Finance

Financial Situation

The 2015 parish Statement of Financial Activities is appended; those for 2016 are not yet approved.

Planned Giving and Gift Aid

The congregation is noted for the generosity of its giving. There is a great variation in means within the congregation. A planned-giving scheme is in operation through envelopes or bank order, realising after tax rebate £24,979 in 2015. Additional open-plate giving contributed £4,271 in 2015 including tax rebate under the Small Donations Scheme. An annual Gift Day in November makes a major contribution to the General Fund (2015: £9,644 including tax rebate). In 2015 92% of net income from donors was covered by Gift Aid declarations or by the Small Donations Scheme.

The Diocesan Common Fund

St Alban's has always paid in full its quota to the Diocesan Common Fund; the sum of £24,072 due for 2017 is being paid in monthly instalments. This absorbs most of the income from planned giving, so it is fortunate that the PCC also receives grants from three Charitable Trusts.

Connected Charities

Three Charitable Trusts are connected to the Parish: the Trustees of St Alban's School, the St Patrick Fund (now administered by the Trustees of St Alban's School) and the Aspinall Trust. These distribute income from the capital derived from the sale of the sites of the former St Alban's and St Patrick's parish schools and from the bequest of Kathleen Aspinall, in accordance with the terms of their respective trusts. The PCC receives a total of about £14,000 annually for various purposes from these trusts. The incumbent and wardens are ex officio trustees of the Aspinall Trust.

Clergy Expenses

Appropriate expenses are paid in full up to an agreed annual limit, on receipt of detailed accounts. Car travel is reimbursed at diocesan rates. Secretarial assistance is not provided.

Structure of the PCC

The PCC currently consists of three ex officio members: the two Churchwardens, one of whom is also a Deanery Synod member, and a second Deanery Synod member; nine directly elected members: three each serving until the 2017, 2018 and 2019 APCM; and two co-opted members. By custom three former churchwardens also attend but do not have voting rights. The paid Verger also attends without voting rights and the Director of Music is invited to attend meetings dealing with church music. From the 2017 APCM the number of Deanery Synod members will rise to three.

Until 2016 the PCC remained an 'excepted charity', but income in 2015 exceeded the threshold requiring registration with the Charity Commission. The PCC is now a registered charity, number 1169941, as "The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Alban and St Patrick, Highgate, Birmingham" with the working title "St Alban's PCC, Highgate, Birmingham".

The PCC meets 5–7 times during the year, and has the following committees and working groups:

Standing Committee

This consists of the Churchwardens, the Treasurer, the Secretary and another member of the PCC. (Normally it would be chaired by the vicar.) Although this committee has the authority to transact business of the PCC between its meetings, in recent years it has met regularly only in advance of each PCC meeting to agree the agenda for the full PCC meeting; but during the interregnum and with major restoration works in hand it has been meeting monthly.

Restoration and Maintenance Task Group

Recently reorganised because of the major restoration works required, this group now consists of the Churchwardens and Treasurer and another PCC member with relevant expertise. It is charged with planning and overseeing restoration and maintenance work, together with the associated grant and faculty applications.

Ecumenical Committee

This group used to meet regularly with representatives of St Anne's Roman Catholic Church and Highgate Baptist Church, at times joined by representatives of other local Christian groups. In the past it has organised joint Advent and Lent courses with these churches, as well as an Advent service and a service to celebrate the week of prayer for Christian unity. It has also produced and distributed leaflets advertising the times of services at the three churches. However, recently it has been less active, overshadowed by the involvement of the priest-in-charge in inter-faith relations.

Liturgical Advisory Group

Although not a committee appointed by the PCC, this group consisting of the Churchwardens, Sacristan, Head Server, another PCC member and the Director of Music, normally meets with the parish priest to plan services.

5. Opportunities and Expectations

St Alban's Academy

St Alban's Academy, situated in new premises on Conybere Street, is sponsored by the educational charity ARK. When its recently added sixth form reaches full capacity, the Academy will have about 800 pupils. Until 2009 it was a Church of England Voluntary Aided school, and it remains legally a Church of England school, the only such secondary school in the city. It is the successor to the first school opened in the parish in 1871 in the original mission building. Admission is non-

selective, mainly by physical closeness to the school building, and hence is essentially a school for the neighbourhood. It includes students of many faiths but predominantly Sunni Muslims. This reflects the presence in the parish of the Birmingham Central Mosque, which attracts one of the largest Muslim communities in Europe.

The Academy was rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in a 2011 report, which highlighted the "outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development" among the students. A Guardian article in 2015 described St Alban's as "shaped by the bigger idea of multi-faith integration and inclusion". In his role as Chaplain, Fr Nicholas led the successful implementation of the inclusive religious ethos of the Church of England throughout the school in matters of both behaviour and teaching. Though the educational level of the students on entry is well below the national average and English is a second language for a majority, their eventual GCSE results are excellent and the Academy has attained national distinction.

The congregation is enthusiastic about the role of the priest-in-charge or incumbent as Academy Chaplain, seeing it as a renewal in 21st century form of the original vision of the Pollock brothers who founded the first school as an integral part of their mission. Members of the congregation serve on the Governing Body of the Academy and as members of the Trustees of St Alban's School, which provides some financial support to Academy activities, and owns land opposite the church (the former site of the school buildings) which is leased to the Academy for a peppercorn rent.

Other Schools in the Parish

Calthorpe Academy is a specialist school for pupils aged 3–19 with severe, often life-limiting disabilities, many in wheelchairs; it holds its annual carol service in the church. With increased numbers, two services were needed in 2015. The academy looks upon St Alban's as 'its' church. St Alban's considers this involvement with Calthorpe Academy to be a significant part of its mission to the community.

Chandos Primary School in Vaughton Street is adjacent to St Alban's Academy and is one of its feeder schools, but has had little contact with St Alban's Church.

St Anne's Catholic Primary School on Lowe Street is also a feeder to St Alban's Academy, but looks to St Anne's Roman Catholic Church.

Harper Bell Seventh-day Adventist School on Ravenhurst Street looks to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Stanhope Hall Community Centre

A number of members of St Alban's congregation provide strong support to Stanhope Hall as volunteers, and Fr Nicholas played an unofficial 'chaplain' role. The manager of the Centre has said, "We need community-minded people who will work for the benefit of the whole community, carrying on the positive work already in place to tackle poverty and homelessness. In particular, we hope that any new vicar will be accessible and can pull together different faith groups, community groups, schools, and key agencies in the area to enable them to work more effectively." The PCC concurs in the hope that the new incumbent will be equally involved.

St Basils Conybere Gardens

Situated in former Lench's Trust almshouses next to the church on Conybere Street, Conybere Gardens provides supported semi-independent accommodation for up to 36 single young people, mostly with troubled backgrounds. It is run by St Basils, a West Midlands charity dedicated to preventing youth homelessness by providing support and accommodation. Residents receive four food bags each week from the Highgate United Food Bank. We have invited residents to Shrove

Tuesday pancake parties, and we hope more can be done to foster relations with the transient population of young people there.

Links with the Wider Church

We support the Anglican Church in Malawi (which is linked to the Diocese of Birmingham) through annual donations both to the Birmingham diocesan Malawi Fund and directly to the Revd Canon Howard Nasoro in Zomba to assist with the school fees of students there. We know Fr Howard from time that he spent attached to our parish when training in Birmingham some years ago, and he has been visited in Malawi several times by two members of our Friends organization.

We also have a link to St Thomas' Theological College in Karachi, Pakistan, through the Revd Dr Pervaiz Sultan who was our priest-in-charge from 2011 to 2013 before returning to his previous post as Principal of the College. We have assisted the college through collections.

Significant Recent History

6. Key Events or Activities in the Recent Past

Growth

As mentioned earlier, recently the congregation has been growing: from 2012 to 2015 average adult Sunday attendance rose from 34 to 43 (26%), the 'Worshipping Community' from 49 to 68 (39%) and the electoral roll from 52 to 58 (12%) and to 63 in 2016. Over the same period the average number of children aged under 16 attending on Sunday rose from one to seven. Unfortunately with the interregnum we have suffered a setback with the average adult Sunday attendance decreased by five to 38 and the 'Worshipping Community' decreased by four to 64 (although the departure of the family of the priest-in-charge accounts for three of those lost); however, the average number of children aged under 16 attending on Sunday rose again to eight. In 2012 five out of 52 on the ER lived in the parish (10%), while in 2016 eight out of 63 did so (13%).

Training

The members of the House Group undertook a 3D course.

A former church warden qualified as a Faith Guide for St Alban's with the Institute of Tourist Guiding after training in showing religious buildings to those of other faiths or none.

One church wardens has attended a diocesan C2 Safeguarding course, and the other is to do so.

Recent Initiatives in Mission and Ministry

The House Group and children's Sunday Club described above were both initiatives in the last three years under the leadership of Fr Nicholas.

The **United Highgate Food Bank**, set up with St Alban's Academy on Fr Nicholas' initiative, and managed by a member of the PCC, uses our South Porch to store dry and tinned food donated or purchased from grants or with financial contributions from members of the congregation. After Sunday Mass church members prepare and distribute food bags for up to 25 people each week.

In 2016 our parish took part for the first time in the **Birmingham Churches Winter Night-Shelter** project, an initiative started in 2012 and coordinated by the charity Thrive Together Birmingham in which churches take turns to provide accommodation for rough-sleepers one night a week between Christmas and Easter. We used the facilities of Stanhope Hall Community Centre, which were more suitable than our own, and our volunteers joined those of Stanhope Hall to provide overnight welcome and care. Sadly we have been unable to repeat our involvement in 2017 during the interregnum, although we supported the project financially with our Christmas collections.

A Difficult Issue the Church has had to Tackle

With the expiry of Resolutions A and B passed by the PCC in 1994 under the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993, the question of a Resolution under the House of Bishops Declaration became an issue for the PCC.

The PCC at first believed that the only alternatives offered under the Declaration were either to accept the priestly ministry of women or to request alternative episcopal oversight, which some members would have found intolerable. However, clarification from the diocese revealed that it is also possible to request and receive only male ministry under a resolution without alternative episcopal oversight, and it is this that would have been requested if a resolution been passed.

In January 2017 a Resolution under the House of Bishops Declaration was not carried because it failed to achieve a majority in the PCC. However, the numbers of votes for and against were equal, indicating that this remains a difficult issue. So far we have managed to live amicably together with our different opinions and we hope our new vicar will help us to continue to do so.

Good News Stories

- The congregation is growing in number and better reflects the diversity of the parish.
- We now have enough children attending for a Sunday Club.
- Under the leadership of Fr Nicholas there has been a return to involvement in social mission within the parish.
- Thanks to the skills of a new member of the congregation, progress is being made towards the replacement of the life-expired Victorian roof and remedying other problems of the building.

Vision for the Future

7. Future Mission and Ministry

We are conscious that God's Kingdom, which we endeavour to serve, is not restricted to the boundaries of the Church, that the Spirit blows as the Spirit wills, and that we do not know whence the Spirit comes or whither the Spirit goes. In the multicultural environment of Highgate, where much ground is occupied by other faith communities, a part of our mission must be to witness through deeds, without seeking proselytes.

But we also believe that there are many in our neighbourhood who have not yet heard or understood the good news of Jesus Christ and that some of these may benefit from an encounter with Christ through the living community of St Alban's Parish Church.

We also know that St Alban's Church has always attracted people, not always from a settled church background and often from outside our parish boundaries, who have found here a serious, reflective approach to religious observance incorporated in the beauty and dignity of traditional catholic practice and traditional church music within the Church of England. We hope to continue to offer such people an attractive and transcendent spiritual vision.

As a PCC we hope to carry forward the threefold mission – religious, educational and social – of the Pollock brothers who founded our parish:

- We will strive to encourage the continued growth of our congregation to achieve a sustainable level of attendance and age balance.
- We will continue to support the work of St Alban's Academy through support of the role of the incumbent as Chaplain.
- We will continue to serve the local community through the United Highgate Food Bank and support for Stanhope Hall Community Centre.

As a platform from which we hope with God's help to achieve these goals:

- We will seek to maintain the distinctive liturgical and musical style of our worship, which makes best use of our building and the talents and experience of our congregation, while working to make all visitors welcome and helping those with a different, or no, religious background to understand the liturgy.
- We will work to secure the future of our church building by completing the replacement of the roof within the next few years, ending ongoing damage from damp and embarking on a programme of other repairs and regular maintenance.
- We will work to make more people aware of what we have to offer and to make the church building accessible to the public for longer periods outside our service times and to encourage additional users and uses for our building.

8. The New Incumbent

The requirements relating to the Academy Chaplaincy are not the remit of the PCC, but the PCC is mindful of their importance.

Our new vicar should be grounded in catholic spiritual tradition and have experience of work in a poor parish; should have sympathy with and, preferably, sound knowledge of traditional Anglo-Catholic liturgy and ceremonial as well as traditional church music; should be prepared to teach the catholic faith and to encourage the training of the laity for appropriate roles within the church.

Living in the vicarage, the vicar should be happy to be seen in the Highgate community as the public face of St Alban's and willing to continue and develop links with the Stanhope Hall Community Centre. This has particular importance as few of the congregation live in the parish.

The vicar should be prepared to undertake pastoral initiatives, and work with members of the congregation, giving leadership when necessary, but also giving due weight to the local experience of the laity, in exploring ways to develop our church's mission and continue to grow the congregation, particularly in raising the church's profile within the Highgate community and in helping local people to find the liturgy accessible, without compromising its character.

The vicar should be at ease with a congregation that is diverse in many ways: newcomers and longstanding members; young and old; those with sincerely held and well-reasoned different views regarding the ordination of women and other issues.

The vicar will show understanding, respect and love for members of the congregation and others of all views; will respect the liturgical and musical traditions of the congregation and seek as far as possible to make any changes perceived as necessary through discussion, dialogue and persuasion.

The vicar will continue ecumenical relations with other local Christian denominations and assist in maintaining respect and good will with our Jewish and Muslim neighbours through the Highgate Inter-Faith Group.

The parish offers to the right priest the challenge and privilege of building on 150 years of Anglo-Catholic mission – religious, educational and social – in this part of inner city Birmingham, which remains socially deprived and home to many who are unchurched.

Enclosures:

Map of the Parish Photographs of the Church Annual Report & SOFA for 2015

Papers from the APCM 2016 Ordinary Time Mass Booklet

July 2016 Parish Magazine

Fay Wilson

Christopher A. Smith

C. A. Smith

Churchwarden Churchwarden