



# Solihull Parish Profile

## April 2022





**“The Word of God continued to spread;  
the number of the disciples increased.”**

**Acts 6:7**

*God of Mission,  
who alone brings growth to your  
church,  
send your Holy Spirit to give  
Vision to our planning,  
Wisdom to our actions, and  
Power to our witness.  
Help our Church to grow in numbers,  
in spiritual commitment to you,  
and in service to our local community,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

(This prayer, from *Leading your Church into Growth*, has been used regularly in Solihull Parish.)



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## Welcome

Thanks for getting to this stage of your interest in our parish. We really hope that you will read on and be inspired to apply to be the next Priest-in-Charge (Rector designate) of Solihull.

The congregations of our churches - St Alphege, St Helen's and St Michael's - are praying earnestly for the right person to come to Solihull to bring their own gifts, personality and ideas to our parish of nearly 30,000 people.

We have a wonderful foundation for Christian mission here - lots going on, willing people of all ages, money in the bank and well-maintained church buildings - but we have so much untapped potential and we know we have plenty of stuff to fix: to turn outwards, rather than retreat inwards. Who will lead us, inspire us, teach us and organise us to better serve our communities? Maybe you?

Solihull is a great place to live and work with excellent state and independent schools (in particular our own Voluntary Aided St Alphege CofE Infant and Nursery School and St Alphege CofE Junior School), the Touchwood shopping centre (anchored by John Lewis and Waitrose), popular parks and leisure facilities and the home of major businesses, including Jaguar Land Rover and Stonegate Pubs.

We live in one of the most accessible parts of the country:

- just off the M42 which joins the M5, M6 and M40 at the heart of the country's motorway network;
- 5 miles from Birmingham Airport;
- and just 70 minutes to London from Birmingham International or 95 minutes from our local Solihull station, with the promise of under 50 minutes from the HS2 Interchange Station, which will be located within the Metropolitan Borough near the National Exhibition Centre.

The centre of Birmingham, the UK's second city, is less than ten miles away (or ten minutes on the train) with its young, vibrant cultural, business, sporting and entertainment hubs. Yet the open countryside, unspoilt villages, muddy fields and woodlands of Shakespeare's Warwickshire are just down the road.

So, what are you waiting for? Read on, pray and listen to God's call, maybe to plant new seeds here.

**“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it,  
but God has been making it grow.”  
1 Corinthians 3:6**



**Map of Birmingham diocese,  
its deaneries and parishes**





## The Church of England Birmingham

The Church of England Birmingham is geographically small (294 sq miles) but has a population of 1.5 million people. There are 182 Church of England places of worship. The diocese is blessed with a rich mix of people from a wide range of national and ethnic backgrounds and, while largely urban, includes the significant presence of rural village communities. The diocese covers not only the city of Birmingham, but also the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull, half of Sandwell, and parts of Worcestershire and Warwickshire. Alongside the historic Christian denominations are many younger church groupings and Christian networks, as well as the strong presence of other world faiths.

The Bishop of Birmingham, the Rt Revd David Urquhart, who retires in October 2022, is urging parishes to plan prayerfully for outreach and growth, under the banner *Transforming Church*. The Bishop of Aston, Rt Rev Anne Hollinghurst, holds a mission brief across the diocese under this theme.

Any priest appointed to this diocese, whatever their tradition, must be committed to engaging with those who have not yet come to faith, gathering people whose Christian allegiance has flagged and developing lay leadership and responsibility in the cause of the Gospel. The *Transforming Church* programme is designed to assist parishes in this task:

[cofebirmingham.com/transforming-church](https://cofebirmingham.com/transforming-church)

Under *Transforming Church, People & Places* (P&P) is a framework to re-imagine ministry to be sustainable and appropriate in the 21st Century and to help 'Set God's People Free.' The aim over the next five years is to increase the number of worshipping communities ('Growing churches at the heart of each community') and the number of disciples and leaders participating in them ('more, and more confident Christians'), by:

- *re-imagining* how we transform and sustain ministry with collaborative and accountable teams of ordained and lay leaders, deployed justly across our diverse population;
- *developing and equipping* our potential leaders, so that each worshipping community has an identified leader and team, though not necessarily ordained, full-time or paid;
- *investing* in new church plants, fresh expressions of church and context-specific ministries.



Our prayer is that, once implemented, the restructured diocese will be viable and financially sustainable for the long term, maintaining presence everywhere (albeit at a reduced level of paid posts), whilst supporting flourishing worshipping communities as the platform to build significant missional impact. By implementing P&P we are putting in place the platform for growth, rather than managing decline: [cofebirmingham.com/people-places/](https://cofebirmingham.com/people-places/)



## Our deanery neighbourhood

Part of the P&P framework merges 13 deaneries into 6 larger deaneries, each with its own full-time stipendiary Area Dean and with access to additional resources to help with book-keeping, giving, buildings and HR. The new Deanery of Yardley and Solihull came into being at the beginning of 2020 following considerable diocesan and local consultation.



Yardley and Solihull Deanery is part of the Aston Archdeaconry, and offers a wedge-shaped microcosm of wider society in the West Midlands and across much of the UK. It 'hangs' off three arterial routes into Birmingham: the A34 Stratford Road, A41 Warwick Road and A45 Coventry Road. The parishes in the north and west of the deanery lie in Birmingham, and many are 'Presence and Engagement' parishes serving areas with people of diverse ethnic backgrounds and with a majority of people who would identify themselves as Muslim or of faiths other than Christian. The parishes in the south of the deanery lie in Solihull, a separate Metropolitan Borough with its own sense of self and a large rural fringe. Residents here would more likely identify themselves as Christian or, increasingly, of no religion.

The deanery contains 23 parishes / united benefices, comprising 25 churches and 18 incumbents. Two of the churches (Solihull and Knowle) also have associate ministers and fairly large staff teams. The deanery contains eight church primary schools but no church secondaries, although the Tudor Grange Academy in Solihull is affiliated to the Church of England Birmingham. All of the church schools enjoy close relationships with their churches, and two (Olton and Temple Balsall) are members of the Birmingham Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust (BDMAT).

Solihull has traditionally been considered wealthy, though this is not wholly true of all parts of the borough. Parts of northern Solihull contain some fairly high levels of deprivation. The deanery includes 11 parishes in the most deprived 2% in the country. Several community support projects, including foodbanks and work with refugees and asylum seekers, are in or alongside local churches.

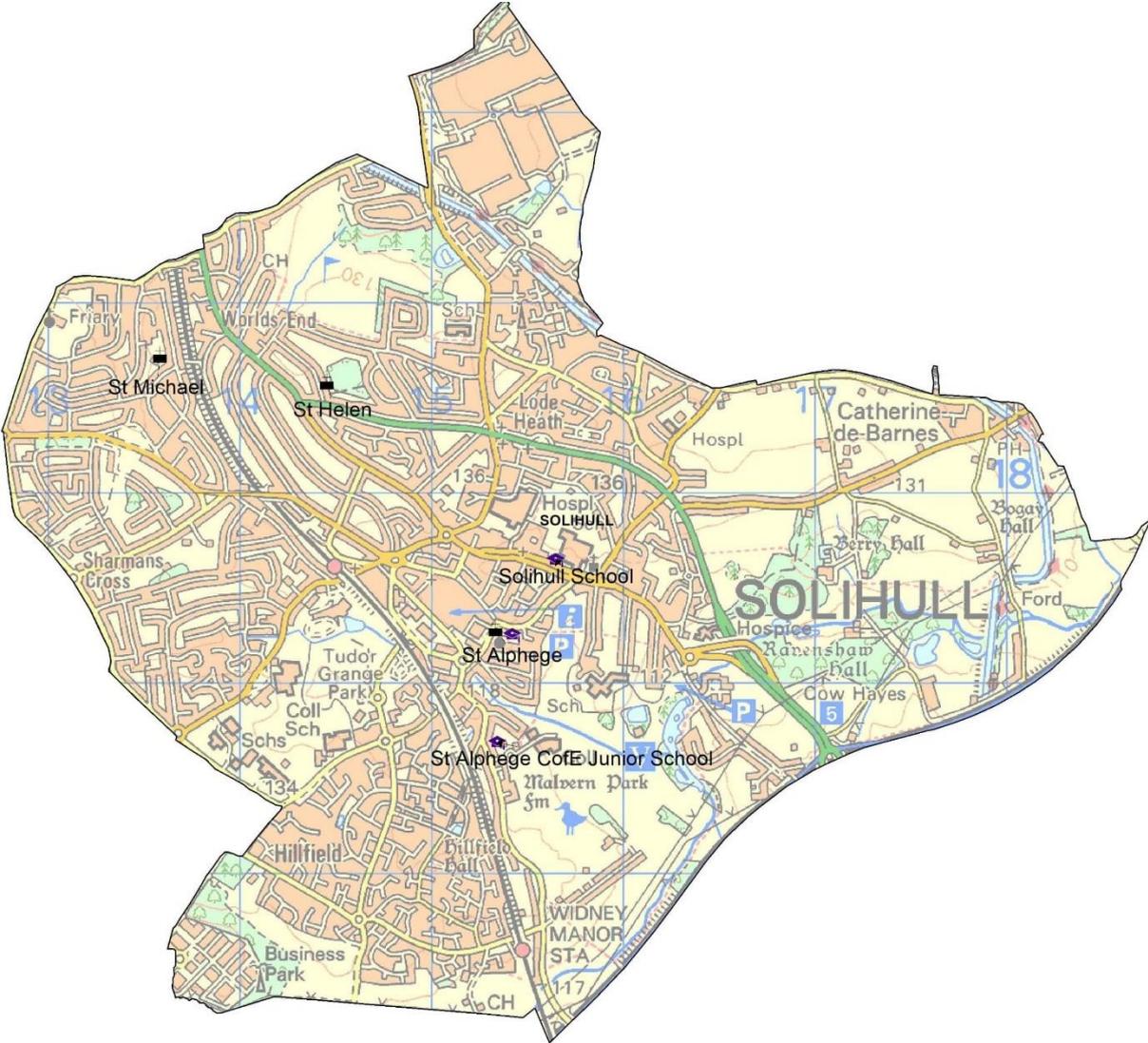
Under the People & Places framework, each new deanery is developing "Oversight" areas, a 'community of communities', comprising a cluster of local churches, Fresh Expressions, church plants, schools work and other context-specific ministry. Areas of cooperation and opportunities for collaboration will be identified, building a sense of unity, yet ensuring that the 'communities' are always outward-focussed, expressing God's love and concern for all people, and indeed for the creation:

- to develop a shared vision for mission and ministry together
- to build trust and mutual accountability within the oversight area
- to recognize the distinctiveness of particular areas of mission and ministry
- to identify the scope for collaborative working
- to enable and sustain the ministries of the whole people of God.

Solihull Parish is likely to cluster with the adjacent parishes of Olton, Hobs Moat and Elmdon.



Map of Solihull parish





## Solihull as a place

Solihull Parish is a large Anglican parish in the heart of the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull. The area of 6.5 square miles is centred on Solihull town centre, with the Council Offices and Touchwood shopping centre situated opposite the ancient parish church at the end of the High Street on top of Church Hill Road (the “soil-y hill”).

Solihull Parish had a population of 28,526 at the 2011 census in 11,625 households - that makes Solihull the third biggest parish population in the diocese of Birmingham. Solihull Parish is amongst the most affluent 7% of parishes in the country. The population of the whole Metropolitan Borough of Solihull is around 215,000.

In the 2011 census, nearly 85% of the population were of white ethnicity and 65% identifying as Christian, with 23% either not stating a religion or stating no religion. In the last ten years, the population has increased, and we expect the 2021 census to show the percentages of white ethnicity and identifying as Christian to have fallen.

Solihull town centre has a vibrant mixed economy and is a popular retail and leisure destination. Retail is centred on one side of the High Street by the Touchwood Shopping Centre (including John Lewis, a 9-screen Cineworld and the Core Theatre and Library) and on the other side by Mell Square, a 1960s development. Several pubs, restaurants and nightclubs occupy Touchwood, the High Street, Station Road and Poplar Road. Many businesses have an office base in central Solihull, including Paragon Banking Group, National Grid Metering and a UK Visas and Immigration Service & Support Centre.

Jaguar Land Rover makes the Range Rover and Land Rover Discovery at their Lode Lane plant in the extreme north of Solihull parish. Rover has been making vehicles in Solihull since 1945 and the original Land Rover was developed and manufactured in Solihull.

Solihull Hospital in Lode Lane provides local healthcare services within the University Hospitals Birmingham Trust. Spire Parkway Hospital provides private treatments. Marie Curie have built their new West Midlands Hospice near to the M42. BUPA have a Health Centre on Station Road. There are a number of “later life” developments in Solihull caring for the elderly, including the Star & Garter, Abbeyfield and Ardenlea (BUPA). There are two public cemeteries: Robin Hood with a crematorium and Widney Manor.

Major chains have hotels in central Solihull including Crowne Plaza, Ramada, Voco (St John’s), Premier Inn and Travelodge. Many visitors to the National Exhibition Centre stay in these hotels.

The town centre is surrounded by 20<sup>th</sup> century post-war residential developments: Sharmans Cross and what is marked on the map as “Worlds End” to the west, Elmdon Heath and Lode Heath to the north and more recently Hillfield to the south. To the east, at the end of Hampton Lane lies the small village of Catherine-de-Barnes, which has seen some recent small-scale developments. Many people commute daily from Solihull for work in central Birmingham and even to London.

Solihull is blessed with four large green spaces in Hillfield, Tudor Grange, Malvern and Brueton parks. Fitness and leisure are well-catered for at Tudor Grange Leisure Centre, the Arden Club, Widney Manor Golf Club and Olton Golf Club.



## Massive mission potential

**“Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in,  
that my house may be filled.”  
Luke 14:23**

The Bishop of Birmingham is urging parishes to plan prayerfully for outreach and growth, under the banner *Transforming Church*, to increase the number of worshipping communities - ‘Growing churches at the heart of each community’ - and the number of disciples and leaders participating in them - ‘More, and more confident Christians’. This vision springs from our underlying theology of the people of God (*The Laos* – the lay people) joining in where our missionary God is already at work (*The Missio Dei*).

Within this context, the vision we believe God is asking Solihull Parish to follow is encapsulated in the prayer from *Leading your Church into Growth*:

To grow the church:

- by growing in our faith and spiritual commitment;
- by introducing others to Jesus through teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers;
- by serving the local community, responding to human needs and making a difference to those we meet.

This vision, promoting the Anglican Communion’s ‘Five Marks of Mission’, is summed up in our parish strapline:

*Growing Disciples, Building Community, Transforming Lives.*

The imperatives to work for social justice and to safeguard the environment are implicit in transforming lives. The PCC have set up a committee to develop plans in this area, building on recent work at St Helen’s and St Alphege to gain the Eco Church Silver and Bronze awards respectively.

We recognise that in recent times we have been somewhat inwardly focused on the aspects of “church” that take place in our buildings: keeping the show on the road. The imperative to attract and nurture new believers has not always been front of mind. To follow God’s vision, we need to turn around and look to the mission field outside of our buildings. Our challenge is to progress from maintenance mode to outreach; to become a missionary society, rather than a membership club.

There are times in the past when we seem to have been more fruitful than we are at present. If we are brutally honest, we look back and recognise that we are currently under-performing as an effective parish. We tend to care for those who choose to come to us, rather than proactively attracting as many people as possible. What more could we offer to the 215,000 people who live and work in Solihull?

“St Alphege has a commanding presence in the centre of Solihull and is a great platform from which the message of hope contained in the Gospels can be proclaimed.”



To achieve outreach and church growth we need to generate more chances to meet people and to make the most of each chance for personal interaction and engagement. Touchwood shopping centre might call this “maximising the footfall” in our premises. Our church buildings could become attractive “all-day, every-day” destinations for the people of Solihull. We long to take the opportunity to build new communities and spread the Good News of the Kingdom.

## The Mission Field

There are so many areas of Solihull life where people might welcome some church partnership. We need to work out how we could significantly increase our touchpoints with the wider community:

- Schools and colleges
- Hospitals and care agencies
- Shoppers and shop staff
- Businesses and office workers
- Council activities
- Hotels and hospitality
- Night-time economy
- Entertainment
- Historical interest
- Physical and mental well-being

We need to prioritise these target groups and for each priority group construct a mission plan with sufficient resources. This would mean developing and equipping lay leaders, so that each potential worshipping community has an identified leader and team. For some groups it may mean investing in fresh expressions of church and context-specific ministries which don't look anything like our current worship.

With the help of the diocese's process and facilitation (Transforming Church Action Planning), the Mission committee of the PCC has begun trying to discern mission priorities for the next few years. In the summer of 2021, we undertook a parish-wide consultation asking four questions:

- What do you especially like about our church and why?
- What do you think are the biggest problems for our church?
- What would you like to see our church doing in the future that it doesn't do now?
- How could our church do more in the community?

We have had a very pleasing response rate with a total of 182 responses from individuals and groups of all ages across all our congregations and from the local community. A few quotations from the responses are highlighted throughout this document.

Key mission priorities emerge from the consultation:

- To nurture young people and their families in the Christian faith
- To provide learning opportunities to equip disciples and leaders on their faith journey
- To become more outward looking to serve the communities in our borough
- To encourage active engagement by church congregations and individuals on issues of social justice and climate change with the aim of moving closer to being carbon neutral

To a greater or lesser extent, we have been following some of these priorities implicitly for the last 15 to 20 years. We now need to re-energize our plans and build on this work, joining together better across all our congregations and with other churches in Solihull.

## Schools and Colleges

Schools and colleges are an obvious place for interaction with staff, parents and pupils. In addition to our own Federation of St Alphege Church of England Schools in Solihull (Infant and Nursery adjacent to St Alphege Church and Junior ½ mile away), many other schools lie in the parish:

- Primary (4-11): Greswold, Oak Cottage, St Augustine's Catholic, Tudor Grange Primary Academy (TGPA) Yew Tree
- Junior (7-11): Sharmans Cross
- Independent Primary (4-11): Eversfield, Ruckleigh
- Secondary (11-16): Lode Heath
- Secondary (11-16) and Sixth Form (16-19): Alderbrook, St Peter's Catholic and Specialist Science College, Tudor Grange Academy
- Pupil Referral Unit (11-16): Triple Crown Centre
- Independent: Solihull School (3-18)
- Solihull Sixth Form College (16-19)
- Solihull College and University Centre: post-16, post-18 and adult learning

There is already good interaction with some of these schools:

- The partnership with St Alphege Schools is vibrant, mutually beneficial and outward-looking. SIAMS report that "the strong links ... guide and support worship and religious education and contribute to the school's distinctive Christian character." Clergy and congregation offer strong support to the school as governors, leaders of worship and for pastoral care. Pupils, and staff attend a service at the Parish Church at the start and end of each term;
- Story time and school assemblies are led regularly by Solihull Parish staff at local schools. St Alphege Infant School visit the Parish Church every week for Open the Book;
- Journey to the Stable and The Easter Journey are held every year attracting children from several schools in the area;
- The Parish Church hosts annual Carol Services for several of these schools;
- Our pioneer minister provides volunteer family support at TGPA Yew Tree school;
- St Michael's Church have formed a close working relationship with Sharmans Cross Junior School – where their Sunday morning service is held – and with Oak Cottage Primary School;
- St Helen's Church have worked closely with Greswold Primary School.



Solihull School, founded in 1560, was set up using chantry revenues of chapels within the parish and maintains many strong links with the parish:

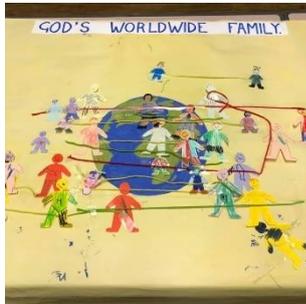
- a representative of Solihull School is a St Alphege Schools governor;
- the Rector (or representative) is *ex officio* on the Solihull School Governing Body;
- Solihull School has its own chapel and choir and employs a School Chaplain who has presided periodically at St Alphege Church on a Sunday.



## Lots going on

Some of these activities were suspended during the pandemic, but many continued online.

### Children, Youth and Families



Solihull Parish has been investing in work to nurture young people and their families in the Christian faith. A full-time Youth Worker was first employed in 2004, followed a couple of years later by staff to lead Children's and Families' work. They, their successors and support staff, together with a band of enthusiastic volunteers, have put on a range of term-time activities to support many cohorts of children from birth to adulthood. Meanwhile age-appropriate Sunday worship across the parish, such as All Age Worship, The Junction and Jigsaw, have evolved.

For pre-school, nursery, infant and junior school children and their families:

- **Praise & Play** is a weekly support network for families of pre-school children comprising praise songs, Bible stories, drinks and chat;
- **Messy Church** is held monthly after school for both church and non-church families;
- **Crib Services** usually attract over 1,000 adults and children over two hours on Christmas Eve;
- **The Junior Growth Group** meets fortnightly to help children learn more about their faith and to give them a good foundation in their relationship with God. It involves a mix of games, watching film clips, discussing bible passages and praying;
- **The Parish Puppets Team** plan, rehearse and perform sketches and songs using a variety of puppets to enhance worship across the parish.
- **St Alphege Minims and Junior Choir** offer opportunities for Christian and musical education
- **First Communion Preparation** is a course held for children from St Alphege and other local Junior Schools every Spring, leading to First Communion in May;



For young people at Secondary School and Sixth Form:



- **Relax** is a weekly fellowship group meeting for young people from Year 9+ giving the opportunity to relax, play games, have fun and chat;
- **Refresh and Junior Refresh** are each run fortnightly for Year 9+ and Year 6-8 respectively and consist of bible study sessions where the meaning behind the text is unpacked in its context, giving new insights to bible stories. Worship songs conclude each session;
- **Reflect** is the most popular weekly group when the young people bring their friends along to the group. The session is fun with games and pizza followed by prayer and reflection;



- **The Parish Confirmation Course** for youth and adults is held annually;
- **Summer residentials** include Spree Urban Saints camp and the Limitless Festival;
- **Social events** with a mix of fellowship, worship and prayer have included a Youth Ball, a Christmas Party, a regular Film Club, St Basil's Sleepout and the annual Lock in, Log out;
- **St Alphege Senior Choir and Worship Band** provide group fellowship alongside musical and Christian development opportunities.

6th Solihull Scout Group has a strong connection to St Alphege and usually parade to All Age Eucharists. It has been operating since 1960 under a sponsorship agreement with the church. There are two Beaver Colonies, two Cub Packs and two Scout Troops with over 150 young members and around 30 leaders and helpers. Brownies, Rainbows and Guides are all represented at St Helen's. Beavers, Rainbows, Brownies and Cubs attend St Michael's on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month.



## Growing Disciples

Outside of the regular teaching within Sunday worship, there are various opportunities for personal Christian development within the parish. These programmes are not yet structured to lead adults from a basic Christian introduction through growth as a disciple towards developing more confident Christians who could consider leadership roles. We need to organise the good stuff that is going on within a better framework of coaching and mentoring to support each individual on their discipleship journey.

- **Just Explore** is a 10-week course held in the parish at least once a year which explores key aspects of the Christian Faith and may lead to Baptism or Confirmation. The Christian basics course for adult enquirers and new Christians was developed in the parish around fifteen years ago and is similar to Emmaus;
- **Just Explore More** is a follow-on course which has lapsed in recent years;
- **Lent Groups** are organised with a common theme across the parish every year;
- **Home Groups** throughout the year are an important part of study and fellowship, particularly at St Helen's Church where many of the congregation are part of a Home Group;
- **Second Saturday Bible Study**, fellowship and coffee meets monthly;
- **Women's Theology Groups** are safe spaces for exploration through Bible Study of what it means to be a woman and a disciple;
- **Baptism Preparation** for parents wanting their child Christened is supported by dedicated volunteers and the Director of Children's and Families' Ministry;
- **Marriage Preparation** is a day for those who are shortly to be married in church with clergy and experienced church members, exploring the meaning of marriage;
- **New Door** is a ministry by trained, volunteer listeners for anyone recently bereaved or with a current problem. Contact is maintained with bereaved families on anniversaries and at Christmas and Remembrance to hear how the relative is feeling and suggest possible one-to-one or group sessions.

"Our Home Group is a source of great support and spiritual deepening."



Other previous attempts at discipleship development have included parish-wide courses such as CPAS **Growing Leaders**, Bob Jackson and George Fisher's **Everybody Welcome** and **Leading your Church into Growth**. Despite initial enthusiasm these efforts have not been followed through.

## Building Community

Members of the churches of Solihull Parish are very active in various ecumenical and diocesan initiatives in particular Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness (SCAH) and the diocesan Malawi/Birmingham partnership. There are several groups within the church community who meet for mutual interest, support, care, prayer and fellowship. Whilst these groups work well to sustain Christian friendships within our own large church community, we recognise that we need to organise more effective outreach to the wider Solihull community.

- **The Mothers' Union** local branch is thriving with many acts of care and support for patients in local hospitals, for refugees and asylum seekers, for women and children who have fled from domestic abuse and for dementia sufferers;
- **The Pastoral Link Group** take the reserved sacrament to those unable to get to church and visit the housebound;
- **Prayer Groups** meet regularly in each church to pray for current issues, worldwide, local and personal;
- **Weekly lunch clubs** are held for the elderly at both St Alphege and St Helen's;
- **Forget-me-not teas** at St Helen's is a monthly afternoon tea encompassing a simple act of worship with familiar prayers and hymns for those living with dementia and their carers;
- **Cameo Club** at St Helen's organises talks, film shows, rambles and social events for retired folk;
- **Arts and Crafts Together** at St Helen's meet monthly;
- **St Alphege Wives' Fellowship** meet to hear guest speakers, to visit nearby places of interest and enjoy monthly fellowship walks;
- **Christian Men Together** meet quarterly for Saturday breakfast followed by a stimulating speaker;
- **20s and 30s Group** get together for a mix of spiritual and social events;
- **Inbetweeners** is a group for those who don't fit naturally into one of the other groups to meet, socialise and pray together.



## Pioneer Ministry

Solihull Parish has begun to respond to the challenge of becoming more outward looking to serve the communities in our borough. After much discussion and prayer over several years, Solihull PCC decided to recruit a full-time pioneer minister with the brief to focus on those in the community with very little church connection. It is true that the community no longer comes to us out of tradition or duty, so we must seek people where they are. Their need of us to heal the broken-hearted is as great, if not greater than before. Since her arrival in November 2019, Suzette Maguire, a Church Army Pioneer, has embarked on a journey to:

- Understand the importance of listening to God and to the local community, getting to know people and being known by them; meeting them where and how they are.
- Discern points of need within the community and find partners to help respond.
- Explore creative and innovative ways to ensure a “church” presence within the community and at existing community events.
- Establish new forms and expressions of church, forming new Christian communities and enabling people who find it difficult to connect with existing styles of worship to meet with God.
- Work with Christians to deepen their discipleship, encourage a passion for mission, establish teams to work with, grow new pioneer leaders and train a team to take outreach forward

Suzette lives and works in the area around the former St Francis district in the north of the parish, which includes Lode Heath and Elmdon Heath. There is concern for the lingering hurt in that community caused by the St Francis church closure in 2004 which has been a hurdle to mission.



## Music

Music in worship is very much appreciated by all our congregations and this is strongly supported by feedback from our recent consultation.

- St Michael's have a long-established Music Group who play regularly to enhance worship;
- St Helen's have a rota of volunteer pianists to accompany hymn and song singing as well as pre-recorded songs to extend the repertoire;
- The Junction and All Age Eucharist at St Alphege have worship bands to lead participation in traditional and contemporary hymns and worship songs.
- St Alphege Church has a very strong choral tradition which has been built up over the last few decades.



In November 2021 St Alphege welcomed Chris Thomas as our new Director of Music, only the fourth person to hold the position in the last fifty years. Several notable former choristers have gone on to make careers in music and we are recognised as a choral foundation by the Cathedral Music Trust (formerly the Friends of Cathedral Music), a notable achievement for a parish church choir. There are separate choirs of boys, girls, women and men, who sing in different combinations for Sunday Sung Eucharists and Choral Evensong. The choirs also sing for the Principal Feasts and Holy Days, perform occasional concerts during the year and deputise for Cathedral Choirs during school holidays. The choirs not only provide beautiful enhancement to worship but also provide a Christian and musical education for the choristers, particularly among young people that the church might not otherwise attract. Musical outreach is an important part of the music ministry and continued during the pandemic through contact with local schools and the wider community.

“St Alphege is extremely lucky to have wonderful choirs and organists.”

The organ of St Alphege Church is a three-manual instrument by William Hill & Son, rebuilt by Nicholson & Co in 1977.

St Alphege choirs are supported by the registered charity The Friends of St Alphege Music (FoSAM), who fundraise to support them. FoSAM organise free lunchtime recitals in St Alphege Church to hear a variety of solo and group performances, by our own choirs and organists, by local singers and instrumentalists, and by young musicians from further afield. Each week these recitals attract around 50 people, a valuable touchpoint for the church with the local community.



## Different worshipping communities

**“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship,  
to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”**

**Acts 2:42**

As a parish, we value the Scriptures as God’s living word to us and the Sacraments as God’s transformation of the world. Our worship and prayer are centred around the Sacraments, particularly the liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Ministry of the Word. Our churches reflect a variety of traditions and worship styles.

The worshipping communities revolve around three locations:

- St Alphege Parish Church in the town centre and the Parish Centre on the same site, which includes the church hall – the Oliver Bird Hall or OBH - offices and meeting rooms with ancillary facilities for the parish;
- St Helen’s Church in a residential district to the northwest of the parish;
- St Michael’s Church at Sharmans Cross School with a chapel and rooms annexed to the clergy house, Oak Cottage.

Streaming facilities are available at all the churches. Since the middle of 2020 services have been streamed weekly and recordings made available on the parish YouTube channel.





## St Alphege

The people who attend St Alphege are blessed to worship in a building with many benefits:

- Ancient, beautiful building with its origins in the 12th Century
- Civic church in the centre of an affluent town
- Traditional location of “hatch, match and despatch” for the local community

The people who belong to the worshipping communities at St Alphege have many advantages with so much going on:

- Thriving groups of committed individuals catering for many and various needs
- Strong links to St Alphege Pre-School, Infant and Nursery and Junior Schools
- High quality choral music led by boys’, girls’, women’s and men’s choirs

The church tradition is modern Catholic with a liberal outlook. Apart from the Parish Eucharist the liturgy is largely formal. Prior to March 2020 there were three Sunday morning Eucharists - 8am Said Eucharist, 9.15am Parish Eucharist using contemporary language with children’s activities (St Alphege Kids), 11am Choral Eucharist using traditional language – followed by baptisms according to demand and Choral Evensong at 6.30pm. There were also three morning Eucharists during the week and a Wednesday Choral Evensong during term time.

All Age Eucharist on every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday at 9.15am began in the late 1980s in an attempt to involve young families and newcomers in church with the inclusion of hymns suitable for children. Modern worship songs with a worship band were introduced in 2005 to try to create a more accessible service for newcomers, young people and young families, but targeted at the whole Christian family of all ages.

Screens are used to project the service and hymn words at the Parish and All Age Eucharists.

Attendance at services was suspended for many weeks during the Covid pandemic with an online Sunday Eucharist and Choral Evensong live-streamed on YouTube and Facebook. Pre-booked congregations were allowed to return as lockdowns eased. Since October 2021 the pattern has increased to two Sunday morning services without the need to pre-book – 8am Said Eucharist, 10.30am Parish Eucharist with choir using contemporary language – and Choral Evensong at 5pm. All Age Eucharist returned in November 2021 at 9.15am with an additional Sung Eucharist at 11am every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday. One Sunday Eucharist and Choral Evensong continue to be live-streamed on YouTube to reach those not in church.

The tensions around these arrangements revolve around issues such as timing (families prefer 9.15am because of children’s sporting and other commitments on a Sunday) and music, which has been solved by a mix of hymns/songs and using both congregational and choral settings primarily in English. It will be for a new Rector to determine the future pattern of services.

The usual Sunday attendance across all the services in St Alphege Church was 205 adults and 34 children in October 2019 and is building back steadily from a lower base after the pandemic. Total Christmas attendance in 2019 was 1,636. During 2019 there were 64 baptisms, 22 marriages and 40 funerals held in St Alphege Church.

**St Alphege Bellringers**, many of whom worship in the parish or nearby, ring for Sunday services, weddings and special occasions. The dedicated band are keen to serve the mission of the church by ringing for additional services and important events. St Alphege tower holds a highly regarded ring of twelve bells with an additional 13<sup>th</sup> bell in a note that gives flexibility when ringing on smaller numbers. The bells are well maintained by the band who cover much of the maintenance costs from wedding fee income.



## The Junction

A well-attended Sunday School/Club and Creche with bible stories, craft and music ran in the Parish Centre adjacent to St Alphege Church at the same time as the Parish Eucharist, except for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month, but research found that parents felt that their faith was not being nurtured. In response, a parallel service “Easy Like Sunday Morning” began from 2008 on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of every month in the Parish Centre, at the same time as the 9.15am Eucharist in church, to provide age-appropriate worship for the whole family, with the congregations joining together for communion in the church building.

From 2011 the parallel service was renamed “The Junction” and became a weekly service, except on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday when everyone is encouraged to join together in church for the All Age Eucharist.

The Junction is family-focussed, appealing particularly to families with young children. The service is very informal in style with liturgy, music, and activities that explore the day’s bible reading, and there are age-appropriate groups.



The worshipping community at The Junction reached a peak of well over 200 adults and children in the early 2010s. In October 2019 the usual Sunday attendance at The Junction was 70 adults and 59 children. During the pandemic The Junction has continued every week on Zoom and came back in person from November 2021 with up to 40 families.



## St Helen's

St Helen's Church is known for its warm welcome, with its congregation enjoying the feeling of inclusion and encouragement along with their more relaxed style of services, grateful for the mix of modern and traditional worship with solid biblical teaching. They meet to praise and worship God in an open space with a strong community feel. Apart from the chapel, which is a place of peace and tranquillity, the buildings allow multi-purpose use. There are few times when the halls are not occupied by the local community including the Little Learners Montessori School. During the pandemic the grounds made outside services and gatherings possible.

Services are enhanced by a range of music accompanied by piano or pre-recorded songs. Pre-pandemic, every Sunday there was the main 10am Eucharist in the hall, with an 8am Prayer Book Eucharist and 6.30pm evening worship held in the chapel. Non-eucharist All Age worship, Jigsaw, has been trialled at 4pm once a month on a Sunday since 2018. Messy Church is usually on the 3rd Friday of every month from 4pm to 5pm. The congregation miss their vicar who has not been in active ministry for an extensive period.



St Helen's celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2022 having emerged on a post-war housing development where several young families came together as a prayer group, where they could nurture their faith in less formal surroundings. In fact, a strong house group tradition remains today. This group grew and was soon too big to meet in private houses. A plot of about an acre was given to the parish and a hut was bought and erected, mostly through do-it-yourself labour, and St. Helen's Church was born. A permanent structure and clergy house were built in the mid-1970s, a replacement chapel was constructed in 1994 and a youth hall added in 2001. The people of St Helen's are proud of their history and grateful for their flexible buildings which allow for an income stream which has aided them in being self-funding.

The usual Sunday attendance across the services at St Helen's was 68 adults and 5 children in October 2019 and it is building back steadily from a lower base after the pandemic. Total Christmas attendance in 2019 was 83. During 2019 there were 1 baptism, 0 marriages and 7 funerals held in St Helen's Church.





## St Michael's

The members of St Michael's church value the caring fellowship and welcoming community. There is a strong music group, which plays regularly for services, as well as a prayer group and a home group. The grounds of Oak Cottage are often used for worship and social events.

St Michael's Church started in 1955 as a home Sunday School which moved to Sharmans Cross School in 1958. The first church service started at the school in 1965 and weekly services started later that year. In 1992 Oak Cottage was purchased as a clergy house with adjoining rooms and a chapel which is licensed for weddings.

Before the pandemic, St Michael's Church met at Sharmans Cross Junior School every Sunday at 10.30am for Holy Eucharist with a small Sunday Club for children. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday non-eucharistic All Age worship replaced the eucharist at 10.30am with a 4.30pm Holy Communion in the chapel. There was a 10am Wednesday morning eucharist in the chapel. During the pandemic St Michael's congregation joined with St Helen's Church for Sunday worship, but since October 2021 St Michael's have returned to Sharmans Cross Junior School.

The usual Sunday attendance across all the services at St Michael's was 46 adults and 6 children in October 2019 and is building back steadily from a lower base after the pandemic. Total Christmas attendance in 2019 was 81. During 2019 there were 10 funerals of St Michael's people held in St Alphege Church or at the crematorium.





## Other denominations and faiths

Several Christian denominations have a presence in central Solihull:

- The largest Christian church in Solihull is Renewal Church near the Jaguar Land Rover plant in the north of the parish.
- St Augustine's Catholic church is at the far end of the High Street;
- Olton Friary is near Oak Cottage (and next to the local synagogue);
- Solihull Methodist Church is adjacent to the railway station;
- Solihull United Reformed Church and Solihull Quaker Meeting meet on the main Warwick Road;
- St. Mary & Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Cathedral has been built recently just off the bypass;
- Solihull Gospel Hall (a Brethren Church) is also just off the bypass;
- East Wind Tabernacle Church (Bethel) meet in the Parish Centre.

The churches of Solihull Parish are members of, and strongly support, Solihull Churches Together, which comprises most of the above denominations and supports among other things:

- Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness (SCAH)
- Solihull Welcome – a drop-in centre for asylum seekers run by Solihull Churches Asylum Seekers Support Group (SCASSG)
- Solihull Town Centre Chaplains who affirm people in their work, encourage and support when necessary and share in the joys and difficulties of life
- Helping Hands Foodbank
- Christian Aid collections
- Week of prayer for Christian Unity service
- Good Friday Walk of Witness along Solihull High Street

Solihull Faiths Forum exists to bring together faith groups who are interested in fostering greater mutual understanding and friendship. The group seeks to promote appreciation amongst local people of the rich diversity of belief and practice within our own community and beyond. Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council works closely with the Solihull Faiths Forum. Other faiths with buildings in central Solihull include Christadelphians, Mormons, Muslims and the Solihull Hebrew Community.



## Willing people

“I love the way in which people are friendly and warm, each having their own part to play in the parish.”

Solihull Parish is blessed with a large, talented staff team and many volunteers who help to run the range of church activities. Some of the leading roles are highlighted here. Those in receipt of a stipend or salary, full-time or part-time, are asterisked (\*). We place a high priority on safeguarding in all our activities, ensuring the appropriate checks, training and incident reporting are completed.

### Team Rector

The Revd Canon Jane Kenchington retired as Team Rector on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021. Jane had been Team Rector of Solihull since September 2015.



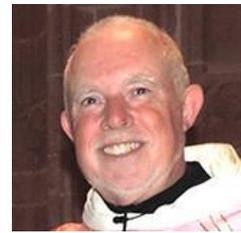
**The Revd  
Simon Marshall\***  
Team Vicar St Michael  
(since 2005)



**The Revd  
Helen Greenham\***  
Team Vicar St Helen  
(since 2011)  
Not in active ministry



**The Revd  
Sue Chandler\***  
Associate Priest  
(self-supporting);  
Children's and  
Families' Worker



**The Venerable  
Paul Taylor**  
Retired Priest



**The Revd  
Roger Chamberlain**  
Retired Priest



**Suzette Maguire\***  
Church Army  
Pioneer Minister



**Linda Hicks\***  
Director of  
Children's and  
Families' Ministry;  
Reader



**Vacancy\***  
Parish  
Youth Worker



**Debbie Woodward\***  
Youth Assistant



**Lynn Smart\***  
Youth Assistant



**Ann Colloby\***  
Senior Administrator  
Parish Office



**Prem Patel\***  
Parish Secretary



**Veronica Spokes\***  
Parish Office  
Administrator



**Beryl Moppett MBE**  
Reader



**Chris Carrington**  
Reader



**Stephen Linstead**  
Reader & Electoral  
Roll Officer



**Ruth Marshall**  
Reader



**Viv Dobson**  
Parish Safeguarding  
Co-ordinator



**Paul Evans\***  
Verger  
St Alphege



**Chris Thomas\***  
Director of Music



**Isabel Baumber\***  
Music Dept  
Administrator



**Pam Price**  
Parish Warden,  
Chair of Governors  
St Alphege Schools



**Andrew Williams**  
Parish Warden



**Vacancy**  
PCC Secretary



**Ron Crowdy**  
PCC Treasurer



**Susan Gomm**  
St Alphege  
Deputy Warden



**Sheila Sayers**  
St Alphege  
Deputy Warden



**Keith Wilson**  
St Michael's  
Deputy Warden  
& PCC Lay Chair



**Merrill Flood**  
St Michael's  
Deputy Warden



**Vacancy**  
St Helen's  
Deputy Warden



**Phil Godfrey**  
St Helen's  
Deputy Warden

Many more people volunteer across our churches to help with aspects of church worship: welcomers/sidesmen/sideswomen, servers, lay ministers of communion, lesson readers, intercessors, audio-visual operators, flower arrangers and refreshment helpers. Others volunteer for the church councils and committees, as members, secretaries, treasurers and planned giving recorders. Different groups of volunteers share their time and skills in other ways, such as organising the hiring and maintenance of churches, churchyards and church halls, holding social events, running the church bookstall and producing the monthly parish magazine.

“We are fortunate to have people with many gifts within the congregation”

“So many lovely people who do so much to care for everyone.”

The Parish Office team operate from the Parish Centre which has good internet access. The parish use the church management system from ChurchBuilder which helps us manage people, contacts, calendars, rotas, services and events. The Parish has a comprehensive website [www.solihullparish.org.uk](http://www.solihullparish.org.uk) and is active on social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram.

## Well-maintained buildings

### Parish Centre

The Parish Centre, which includes the Oliver Bird Hall or OBH, was built on the St Alphege church site in 1962 as the church hall, offices and meeting rooms with ancillary facilities for the church. It has been maintained and enhanced over the years with modernised washroom facilities, an extension for early years provision and a recent conversion of the stage to form an additional meeting room.

However, the layout of the main entrance and offices does not lend itself to support the mission of the church as a welcoming Parish Centre. The main entrance has eight wide steps up to the entrance doors which lead to an open corridor with no obvious welcome point. The parish office is up a further seven narrow steps to the left, where visitors have to ring for attention and speak through a security hatch. Meeting rooms are up another six narrow steps at the end of the corridor. The facilities are neither accessible nor welcoming. Furthermore, there is no obvious link between the building and the church as the main entrance is as far away from the church as it could be.

The PCC first recognized in 2008 that the Parish Centre no longer meets the needs of 21st century mission. The building is lacking in a number of areas critical to providing a welcoming, comfortable and hospitable environment:

- No obvious place of welcome or link to the church's mission
- Lack of access for disabled people: three different sets of steps to negotiate
- No Christian hospitality on offer, unless you pay to hire the kitchen and do-it-yourself
- No spaces where people can drop in, meet, talk and explore together to enrich community life in this individualistic age
- Shortage of different sized rooms to meet local community demand

As a result, the PCC has commissioned a feasibility study:

- to reassess the required ten-year refurbishment and maintenance works, including roof, windows, doors, ceiling, heating, lighting, electrical systems and decoration;
- to revisit previous requirements and plans for a building annexe to provide a new entrance hall and parish office, additional accessible WCs and multi-purpose offices/meeting rooms.



## St Alphege Church

St Alphege Church is a fine Grade I listed medieval building with many significant stained-glass windows and five chapels. Construction of the present church began around 1277 but was not completed for over 250 years in 1535. It is the only medieval cruciform church in the diocese of Birmingham and one of only four in the historic county of Warwickshire. In 2020, Solihull celebrated the 800th anniversary of the foundation of the first known church building on this site, and therefore the coming of the Good News of Jesus Christ to Solihull.

The church is in a good state of repair and has gained the Eco Church Bronze award. The costs of maintenance and preservation are supported to a large extent by The Guardians of St Alphege Parish Church, Solihull, an independent registered charity dedicated to raising funds to assist with the church's maintenance and preservation.

St Alphege Church is used primarily for formal worship, including civic and major life events, and as an historic sacred space for occasional visitors. On average around 60 visitors are welcomed to St Alphege Church every week by volunteer church guides, but, other than formal worship and a weekly music recital, the church space is largely unused, even when the building is open. The PCC are exploring the possibility of a re-ordering scheme to provide a more welcoming, comfortable and hospitable environment. In particular, a feasibility study has been commissioned to assess options for creating more flexible spaces for worship and for community use, especially to improve the welcome spaces, and for improving the church lighting and facilities.

"I am always amazed that in the middle of such a busy town, St Alphege is such a centre of calm and quietness. A lot of that stems from the sense of continuity brought by the age of the building and the beauty of the interior."



## St Catherine's Church

St Catherine's Church was built as a village school in 1879 and later became a mission chapel within the Parish until 2014. Although the building is still licensed for public worship, any services there are occasional and there is no regular congregation. The building is owned by the Birmingham Diocesan Trust and is now managed by trustees from the local community. The PCC retains certain rights should the building be sold.



## St Helen's Church

St Helen's current church building was constructed in the mid-1970s, a replacement chapel was added in 1994 and an integrated youth hall added in 2001. The building is in good repair and is managed and maintained by the local congregation under the auspices of the PCC. St Helen's Church has gained the Eco Church Silver award.



## St Michael's Chapel and Rooms

The clergy house at Oak Cottage has an adjoining chapel, which can seat up to 30 people, and adjacent rooms.



## Clergy houses

Solihull PCC own and maintain a house for the Pioneer Minister. A house for previous Curates-in-Training was sold in February 2022.

The Birmingham Diocesan Board of Finance (BDBF) maintains six houses in the parish:

- three are currently let privately (including the Old Rectory adjacent to St Alphege Church) with all income retained by the BDBF;
- three houses are available for use by the parish clergy:
  - Oak Cottage, Bryanston Road, B91 1BS, with St Michael's chapel and rooms;
  - St Helen's House, 6 St Helen's Road, B91 2DA, adjacent to St Helen's Church;
  - 45 Park Avenue, B91 3EJ, is the Rectory and part of the benefice property.

The Rectory is a detached house built around 1980, with four bedrooms and two bathrooms (one en-suite), three reception rooms, kitchen, laundry room and downstairs WC. Park Avenue is a smart, quiet residential cul-de-sac in the heart of Solihull in a Conservation Area with beautiful views from the rear of the house over the park. St Alphege Church is less than half a mile away, a very pleasant 8-minute walk through Malvern Park.

The property was bought in 2005 for the Team Vicar of St Alphege. The BDBF made substantial improvements in 2015 (including a new kitchen, creating a utility room in part of the garage and widening the front driveway) since when 45 Park Avenue has been used as the parsonage. The over-large Old Rectory, used prior to 2015 and adjacent to St Alphege Church, has been sold subject to planning for later life housing development, with half of any proceeds coming to Solihull PCC.

The last Quinquennial inspection of the parsonage took place on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017 with no issues apart from some re-pointing to exterior walls and minor roof remedies. Longer term it was noted that the rear patio may need re-laying.





## Money in the bank

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Giving	£358,510	£425,100
One-off legacies	£5,750	£141,964
Statutory Fees	£9,703	£24,592
Pre-school	£141,764	£187,280
Lettings and Trading	£46,476	£102,695
Investments and Rent	£81,486	£95,420
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£643,689</b>	<b>£977,051</b>

<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Common Fund	£224,781	£255,276
Church Staff	£227,125	£189,715
Pre-school Staff	£141,476	£131,063
Church/Clergy costs	£52,688	£78,588
Hall costs	£64,195	£57,219
Running costs	£91,067	£121,436
Mission Giving	£14,366	£24,136
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£815,698</b>	<b>£857,433</b>

<b>SURPLUS/DEFICIT</b>	<b>-£172,009</b>	<b>£119,618</b>
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The headline financial figures for 2020 compared to 2019 show a drop in income of £333,362. Meanwhile expenditure only reduced by £41,735, reflecting a desire to retain staffing levels despite the pandemic. Note that Pre-school income and expenditure is consolidated in the headline totals. 2019 income is distorted by a large one-off legacy. Income from giving, fees, pre-school and lettings all suffered significant falls in 2020 because of closures during the pandemic.

The PCC has set up a Finance committee to conduct a review of parish finances with the aim of balancing annual income and expenditure. Some difficult decisions on the affordable level of expenditure will need to be made unless income recovers significantly.

There were 320 regular tax efficient givers in 2020. All givers are encouraged to use the national Parish Giving Scheme and to allow the parish to claim Gift Aid.

For wealthier parishes such as Solihull the Common Fund – or Parish Share - in Birmingham diocese is based on full clergy costs, including the cost of any curate-in-training, plus a contribution of the cost of one stipendiary clergy post for less well-off parishes in the diocese and a contribution towards deanery context ministry.

As a result of the sale of a former church in the parish, the parish benefits from a large unrestricted fund, the St Francis Fund. This fund has been invested prudently and has increased significantly in capital value as well as providing annual investment income for parish mission purposes, including work with families, youth and children. The PCC is considering whether the capital growth of this fund should be used towards church reordering and Parish Centre development.



## Team ministry

Within the parish, new churches of St Helen (1948), St Francis (1950) and St Michael (1965) were planted in post-war residential developments. In 1979 a team ministry was established within the single parish. A Pastoral Scheme established a Team Rector with three Team Vicars, allowing the Bishop to assign particular churches or cure of souls or pastoral functions to the Team Vicars.

Under the Church Representation Rules, three schemes were adopted in 1979 by the annual parochial church meeting to create district church councils (DCCs) and deputy wardens for St Helen, St Francis and St Michael. St Alphege as the parish church was governed by the PCC with an elected committee.

These schemes were amended from time to time. The scheme for St Francis was revoked in 2004 when the church was closed and its district was largely amalgamated with St Alphege. Three new schemes were adopted by a special parochial church meeting to replace the existing schemes, one of which created for the first time a district church council and deputy wardens for St Alphege. The PCC then delegated formally to each of the three DCCs most of the general functions of a PCC as they apply to the district and its church, apart from the allocation of financial resources. Among other things, the DCCs are responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and upkeep of the fabric and contents of their respective church and ancillary buildings. In addition, the St Alphege DCC is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the fabric of the Parish Centre including the Oliver Bird Hall, through the OBH Committee.

The role of Team Vicar of St Francis was replaced by a new role of Team Vicar of St Alphege. A Team Vicar of St Alphege was in post from March 2005 until December 2013. There were two attempts in 2014 to re-appoint a Team Vicar of St Alphege, but there were no applicants. After a change of Team Rector and much discussion, the PCC decided in 2019 to employ a Pioneer Minister. To date no further attempt has been made to recruit another Team Vicar of St Alphege. Since 2014 the Team Rector and two Team Vicars have been the three stipendiary clergy caring for the parish. The most recent curate completed the training post in mid-2020.



## Solihull Parish restructuring

The right of presentation has been suspended in order for the present team structure to be reviewed, and the new Priest in Charge will be able to play a full part in these discussions



## Plenty of stuff to fix

2020 was a very unhappy time for Solihull Parish. The Team Rector was unable to return to work after major surgery in June. A lot of time was spent resolving staffing issues. Both Parish Wardens resigned. The Team Vicar of St Helen's withdrew from active ministry in October. All of these issues were compounded by the pandemic which forced the closure of our churches from March.

After the retirement of the Team Rector in early 2021, the parish has welcomed leadership support from the Venerable Paul Taylor, a recently retired Archdeacon. Under his guidance, we have been grasping nettles, clearing the decks and putting our house in order with the hope that a new Rector will not have to deal with some lingering historic issues. Eight committees of the PCC have been set up to examine how various aspects of our strategies and plans could better support our vision:

- Children, Youth and Safeguarding;
- Mission & Outreach;
- Social Justice & the Environment;
- Buildings & Land;
- Finance;
- Employment;
- Communications;
- Pre-School.

Until recently the different churches, and even different congregations, have tended to exist independently of each other. There is now a genuine desire to work more cohesively with a common vision for mission across our congregations. Concerns were raised in the recent consultation about the structures to support the Team Rector, and, as referred to above, there are now proposals to restructure. The PCC has approved a new Code of Conduct for Employees and a Code of Behaviour for volunteers and church group members. We look forward to welcoming a new Rector to reinforce our unity across the parish.

We recognize that change is needed to keep our church relevant. There is a temptation to stick with what we love and manage decline, reluctant to make the changes that may help our church to grow, attract younger people and proclaim the Gospel afresh in this generation.

There is concern, as there is across the church, that congregations are declining and ageing. This leads to worries about both financial viability and recruiting volunteers with an increasing reliance on a few retired individuals.

Only eight years ago we had the luxury of four stipendiary priests, a curate-in-training and three self-supporting ministers. We have to recognize that we cannot continue to expect fewer clergy to maintain the previous levels of activity unless we can equip lay volunteers to fill the gaps.

With a large parish and multiple congregations, we have not always been great at communicating what is going on and getting everyone working towards the same purpose. To some extent this has been understandable with difficult and sensitive issues to address and in the absence of leadership. Clear, consistent and regular communication from church leaders will help to allay gossip and false rumours.



## The Right Person

**“Love one another:  
just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”  
John 13:34**

We really hope that you have been inspired by what you have read and that you will apply to be the next Priest-in-Charge (Rector designate) of Solihull. In many ways we hope this profile gives you a prospectus to encourage God's call to serve us here.

We want to assure you that we pay all legitimate working clergy expenses in full. We expect you to take proper holidays and days off and we support you taking time for retreat, training and personal development.

It would be churlish for us to lay out a detailed job description for your vocation. Of course we want an outstanding preacher and service leader, who has a real concern for young people, old people, single people and the family, has a real heart for ministering to people at the margins of our community, who is a visionary leader but is also extremely collaborative, gets on marvellously with every age group, listens beautifully, loves every form of service going and will visit us all at least once a week unless we are in hospital in which case more regularly. Oh, be brilliant at getting in money too. The old joke is that the Angel Gabriel is not available.

With so much going on and so much to do:

- we hope you like inspiring and organising others to take responsibility;
- we want you to enjoy teaching and nurturing disciples in the faith;
- we expect you to lead us with a clear vision of how to better serve our communities.

### *Leadership*

We seek someone who:

- has experience of organising an effective staff team, including work with schools, young people and their families, to focus on a mission action plan.
- is an inspiring teacher, communicator, motivator and encourager to nurture more confident disciples in our contemporary culture.
- can demonstrate wise judgements as a leader with the strength of character to handle tricky people and the ability to make difficult decisions and implement them.
- is comfortable as a civic leader, with a track record of serving and engaging with local communities.
- appreciates liturgy based on the Eucharist supported by a strong choral tradition.
- promotes female and male Christian leadership, both lay and ordained, regardless of disability, race or sexual orientation.

### *Experience*

Previous experience should include:

- Ministry as a priest in the Church of England with at least three years ministry post-curacy with experience of primary responsibility in a parish.
- Experience of encouraging and developing disciples to be more confident, which may have taken a variety of forms such as coaching, mentoring, spiritual direction or being a Training Incumbent.
- Delivery of mission outreach and community engagement projects through to completion, working together with other Christian traditions.



- Strong knowledge of safeguarding practices for children and vulnerable adults, exercising confidentiality in the handling of sensitive information.

### *Personal*

Personal qualities should include:

- a depth of spirituality that exudes an obvious passion for the Gospel.
- the capacity to be flexible and resilient under pressure, with good levels of personal organisation, including use of technology, and an ability to work to deadlines with a healthy life balance.
- a preference for working collaboratively, listening, and delegating where appropriate, to make use of the talents of all God's people and developing mutual respect.
- confident, coherent and succinct, socially comfortable with an easy wit, full of love.

We hope you will come amongst us, bringing your own gifts, personality and ideas and grow to love Solihull and its people, love our congregations, despite all our faults, as we will love you.



**Growing Disciples, Building Community, Transforming Lives**

[www.solihullparish.org.uk](http://www.solihullparish.org.uk)

[linktr.ee/solihullparish](https://linktr.ee/solihullparish)