

# The Parish of St Wulfran, Ovingdean, Brighton



## Section 1 - Could you be our new Priest?

### Where we are and what we need

The people of St Wulfran's church are looking forward to the appointment of a priest, on a house for duty basis. This is an opportunity to live and work in a growing, joyful and outward-looking Christian community, to lead and support us in the sharing of God's mission.

St Wulfran's is a village church in the small parish of Ovingdean near Brighton, located by the sea and on the edge of the South Downs. The parish is part of the Deanery of Brighton. St Wulfran's is one of the oldest buildings in the city of Brighton and Hove, and has been a place of prayer and peace, serving the community of Ovingdean, for over a thousand years. We are a lively inclusive congregation with a sense of outreach to our local community and beyond, and a commitment to continuing the loving work of Jesus Christ.

We are looking for someone who has a collaborative leadership style, who is a team player and a good shepherd, able to encourage, support and inspire. With assistant priests, authorised lay ministers, a director of music, active PCC and churchwardens, plus many other volunteers you will have much help at St Wulfran's. We do things together; we support each other and actively cultivate the skills and talents in the church community.

Working together in this way, guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit, we have been thriving. We have built on a strong foundation of faith and overcome significant challenges, including those posed by the pandemic. Some of the main areas of worship and ministry we would like to highlight are provided below:

- **Congregational Growth:** Our church numbers are growing, and we are often searching for spare seats on Sunday mornings and at other services. We are delighted to have this problem.
- **Tradition and Worship:** St Wulfran's historically has roots in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, and whilst we still draw on this rich heritage, we are very much a village church encompassing a spectrum of different Anglican styles of worship. The thriving Sunday Eucharist is the centre of our sacramental and spiritual life of many but we worship in a variety of other ways, for example we have Sunday evening services, ranging from formal Choral Evensong to healing services and contemporary worship formats. We have services throughout the week including Holy Communion, Morning Prayer and on Fridays we have a popular online meditation group.

- **Sacramental Ministry:** In addition to the Sunday Eucharist, we have a busy sacramental ministry including many confirmations, numerous child baptisms, a joyful ministry of marriages, and an active end-of-life care and funeral ministry.
- **Pastoral Care:** The church maintains an active pastoral ministry, including visiting the sick, celebrating Holy Communion with the housebound and hospitalised, administering the Last Rites, and fundraising for local and international charities, as well as supporting the Whitehawk Food Bank with food donations and volunteers. We have recently gained accreditation as an Anna Chaplaincy partner.
- **Ministry to Families:** We have a small Sunday school and have developed a ministry for families and young people, including a strong partnership with the nursery and serving as the Independent Listener for our village independent school, Oxford International College.
- **Faith Formation:** The church is committed to sharing the good news and sustaining people in their faith. We have run successful Alpha Courses, including leading a Deans Parishes Alpha Course.
- **Lay Ministry:** We have a strong lay ministry team including five Authorised Lay Ministers (Liturgy and Worship and Pastoral Care).
- **Churchyard care:** We have a beautiful and historic churchyard that includes a wildlife meadow and woodland. We have won three consecutive South East Britain in Bloom Silver Gilt Awards.
- **Community Engagement:** We have led and supported a lively programme of arts and activities, including Artists Open House, flower festival, choral and classical music performances, outdoor worship, community sports days, theatrical performances, and the annual harvest festival supper for the village.
- **Inclusivity:** We have proudly become a member of the Inclusive Church Network, ensuring St Wulfran's is a parish church home for everyone.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** We have established a Forest School in partnership with qualified volunteers in the community and achieved the Silver Eco Church Standard. As part of this work, we have supported the creation of the 'Ovingdean Energy' Group, helping to run "green weeks" and securing funding for an alternative energy plan for the village.
- **Financial Health:** We pay the full parish share, reflecting our financial stability and faithful commitment - we are one of the few churches in the Brighton Deanery covering our costs.
- **Mission Planning:** We have completed a significant parish-wide engagement and planning process called the Next Generation Project, confirming our missional priorities through consultation, including a village assembly. This process established a shared vision for the church and secured agreement to invest in church and churchyard infrastructure to ensure St Wulfran's long-term growth and vitality.

## **We are seeking a new Priest**

- Who is prayerful and tries to follow Jesus, leading by example, with honesty and integrity
- Has a passion to share the Good News and has a successful track record in church growth
- Values the Eucharist as the central act of Sunday worship and who is also able to embrace different traditions in liturgy and worship
- Who is inclusive in their theological thinking, and is committed to diversity, inclusion and to women's ministry
- Who is able to provide leadership in a collaborative approach, who works well with others and supports the active participation and development of members of the congregation.
- Who reaches out beyond the church and fully involves themselves in the life of the local community and the wider world - and who will invite and challenge us to do the same.
- Who cares for those most in need and is skilled and committed to pastoral care
- Who is committed to care for the environment and creation

## God's call to us

We support the Chichester Diocesan strategy based on being more open, more converted to Jesus Christ, more generous and more engaged. We are aware of God's call to us to build up the Kingdom, and our key priorities are:

- To grow our church to reflect all sections of our community, and find new ways to develop our ministry, particularly for children and young people and their families
- To support the personal development and growth of lay members of the church community and develop their role in the church's ministry
- To build on our involvement with local people, local issues and village life, developing the church's central role in the community
- To ensure our church buildings are fit for purpose over the coming decades, using our resources to further our mission and strategy
- To further our respect for creation and our understanding of how this is integral to our faith, moving forward as an 'Eco-church'
- To implement our commitment to inclusivity, so that we can minister to all in our local community whatever their background, age, disability, ethnicity, gender or sexuality.

We hope that this gives you a flavour of our priorities and the key qualities we are looking for. Section 2 of this Parish Profile sets out in detail the following:

1. The Parish of Ovingdean
2. Worship at St Wulfran's
3. The Church and churchyard; the Vicarage
4. Finance
5. Safeguarding

You can find out more from our website: [www.stwulfran's.org.uk](http://www.stwulfran's.org.uk)

## Section 2

### The Parish of Ovingdean



Ovingdean is situated under a mile from the coast and within the City of Brighton and Hove, approximately four miles east of the city centre. With a population of approximately 1200 people, the parish mostly comprises the expanded village of Ovingdean, although it also includes some roads outside the area of the village. There are recent and planned new residential developments, mainly high cost housing. To the north lie the South Downs, and to the north and east, the communities of Rottingdean, Woodingdean and Saltdean. The local Anglican churches in these communities work together as part of the Deans Group of Parishes.

There is generally easy access to the city centre with its many amenities, with an hourly bus service through the village itself.



There is a good demographic mix of ages amongst the population, although this is not well reflected in our church congregation, which is predominantly people over 50. However, there is a small group of mainly young children and their parents who attend on first Sundays. Ovingdean is thought to have a significant population of people who would identify as LGBT+. We also know there are many older people living alone and many challenged carers. The population of Ovingdean is predominantly white and middle class.

The village is very much a thriving community, with a lively Village Hall and Club, and a number of groups catering for special interests, plus some well-used allotments. Members of the church are very active in all these groups and activities. The Ovingdean News is produced monthly by St Wulfrans, incorporating items of community and general interest as well as church news. There is an active residents and preservation society, and currently a local community planning process is under way. St Wulfran's has also taken an active role in the Ovingdean Community Energy Project and the development of a community decarbonisation plan.

St Wulfran's has supported the Ovingdean Arts Club over the past 20 years, and its affiliated Choral Society. There has been a long tradition of drama productions and in recent years a community theatre group has put on pantomimes involving children and all ages, with encouragement from St Wulfran's. There is also a Nursery School (operating in the Church Room) and a Parent and Toddler Group. The Nursery School has strong links with St Wulfran's and holds regular activities in the church. St Wulfran's has also supported "Wulf in the Woods" – a programme of Forest School activities for children in the copse above the churchyard, working in partnership with experienced leaders in the local community. Ovingdean Hall and its grounds (formerly a residential school for deaf children) is now the base of Oxford International College (Brighton) – an independent boarding school for high achieving (mainly overseas) students. The principal and staff are keen to collaborate with St Wulfran's.



*The Copse - a base for children's activities*



*Ovingdean Nursery School*

There is a local nature reserve on Beacon Hill, which many village residents volunteer to support. Access to the South Downs is easy and ensures a steady stream of walkers and visitors all year round. The church attracts many visitors who appreciate its historic beauty and spiritual atmosphere, with the provision of refreshments.

There are primary and secondary schools within easy reach of the village, including a Church of England primary school in the neighbouring parish of Rottingdean, where members of the church act as school governors and where the post-holder would be an ex-officio governor.

Local industry includes a village shop, a working farm (cattle and arable), a riding stables and other small businesses, including a take-away pizza facility.

## Worship at St Wulfran's

St Wulfran's historically has roots in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, and whilst we still draw on this rich heritage, we are very much a village church encompassing the full spectrum of different Anglican styles of worship. The Eucharist is the central act of worship. In recent years, the church has attracted people from a wide variety of faith backgrounds and this is reflected in the variety of worship we offer. We regard it as essential that this variety and diversity of worship 'language' is enthusiastically retained, encouraged and further developed.



Regular services during normal times are as follows:

- Sung Eucharist at 10am on Sunday, with an active choir and lively socialising over coffee afterwards. Attendance varies between 50 and 70. We have an 'all age' Eucharist once a month involving children in the service
- Said Holy Communion at 8am on the second Sunday of each month. 'Little Fishes' - a Sunday School group usually twice a month for younger children and parents, who join the worship in church at the end of the service.
- Eucharist on Wednesdays at 10.15am, usually attracting about 8 people.
- Morning Prayer at 9.00am on Thursdays
- Meditation on Zoom at 9.00am on Fridays
- "Spirit" Evening services one Sunday a month, exploring and celebrating the Christian Faith and spirituality using different traditions and styles of worship and music. Traditional BCP choral evensong with an augmented choir takes place on special occasions in the year. The programme of informal services is developed and led by the Authorised Lay Ministers with clergy support. It includes Celtic and Taize music, an outdoor bonfire celebrating Pentecost, and themed services focusing on topics including Ageing, Peace, the environment, and the LGBT community, as well as services offering the Ministry of Healing..
- Monthly informal 'Songs of Praise' in the Village Hall, led by lay members, with favourite hymns and a short time for reflection, followed by tea and fellowship. This attracts about 40 people from our own and other churches.

Our celebration of major festivals includes a packed church at Christmas Midnight Mass and the Eucharist on Easter Day, a Carol Service and two full Crib services on Christmas Eve catering for families of all ages, as well as a full church on Christmas Day and Easter Sunday Eucharist. We mark Lent with daily Morning Prayer or Compline, Stations of the Cross in Holy Week, and Eucharistic services on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday as well as the Good Friday vigil.



*Confirmation at St Wulfran's with Bishop Will*



*Young people at All Age Worship*





*Pentecost Bonfire Service in Daphne's Field*



*Pet Service on the green*

The church also has an almost unseen ministry as a spiritual haven for the many people who visit outside services, to pray, light a candle, leave a prayer request or just to sit in silence in the church or the churchyard. We know from the Visitors' Book just how much this ministry is valued. It is facilitated by the church remaining open every day and by our provision of free refreshments.

We have held Parish Retreats in 2023 and 2025. We regularly hold Lent study courses and a morning Bible Study group.

We are pleased that our church is strongly supportive of women's ministry, both lay and clerical, and the Revd Mary Samuel has supported the incumbent significantly as an Assistant Priest, particularly in the monthly 8am Sunday Holy Communion, and monthly midweek Celtic Communion service on Wednesday mornings.

In addition the 5 Authorised Lay Ministers help with pastoral care and the planning and leading of worship, including the Spirit Services.

## **The Church and Churchyard**

The Parish Church of St Wulfran, founded in the 11th century, is believed to be the oldest building in the City of Brighton and Hove and currently has over 106 people on the new Electoral Roll.

There is an active band of helpers who maintain the church and churchyard.

There is a recent extension to the churchyard, known as 'Daphne's Field'. Besides new burials, this is used for a variety of activities, including open air services and a summer picnic.

## **Next Generation Project**

Despite its great age, the church building is well maintained and in good condition. The gas boiler has been replaced by electric pew heaters and thicker and more comfortable seating cushions have been acquired for all pews. The Next Generation Plan, referred to on page 1, aims to equip the church for the future through the following projects:

1. Improving access to the church by removing steps and reducing the steepness and unevenness of the path.
2. Opening up the relationship between the Chancel and Nave, and installing a performance space between Chancel and Nave
3. Creating a hospitality area at the Tower end of the church, including integrated washing up facilities
4. Establishing projection, enhanced lighting and sound arrangements in the church.
5. Introducing solar panels for heating and lighting the church, and possibly also in the Church Room where the Nursery School and Sunday School meet.
6. Installing WiFi for improved Zoom broadcasting of services

## What our visitors say...

We are open seven days a week every week during daylight hours throughout the year, and offer refreshments. As a consequence of that, and due to the fact that we are on a regular walking route from Brighton, we have a high number of visitors, who leave wonderful comments in our Visitors Book. Here is a selection:

*A true joy and so welcoming with free drinks*

*A silent space for reflection – thank you.*

*A special place on the edge of the Downs. The painted ceiling is magical.*

*A resting place as always. Such a pleasure.*

*What a beautiful church. We came to visit Magnus Volk's grave.*

*So pleased to find it open. Lovely, especially the snowdrops.*

*We did some drawing because the church is so nice. (Children's big writing)*

*Stunning historic church. So well maintained.*

*(From Australia) Amazing pretty church.*

## Finance

Historically, the church has been in a good financial position. We are one of the few churches in the area that pays its full Parish share. We hold sufficient funds to more than cover all day to day running costs, and we are well placed with our substantial reserves to cover foreseen capital and major repair works and the Next generation project. The accounts are available for inspection.

## Safeguarding

As a parish we are committed to demonstrating God's love by placing the highest priority on the safety of those to whom we minister. We have a newly appointed Safeguarding Officer and are reviewing the updating of DBS certificates and safeguarding training to ensure that we protect vulnerable children and adults from exploitation and abuse. There is rightly a big emphasis in the diocese on improving our ability to recognise and safeguard vulnerable people in our churches and in our other work as Christian communities. We fully support this and also recognise it is extremely important that we all understand the role we must play in ensuring our church provides a safe environment for vulnerable children and adults.

## The Vicarage 21 Ainsworth Avenue

The Vicarage is a bright, modern and welcoming house, located in the heart of the village and enjoys views to the sea. It is about a five minute walk from the church. The flexible accommodation comprises:

- Three bedrooms with built-in cupboards
- Family bathroom
- Large modern refitted kitchen / diner
- Large lounge with patio door windows
- Additional reception room/fourth bedroom
- Parish office / study
- Large ground floor WC
- Large, beautifully landscaped rear garden
- Substantial Parking area





*Rectory Garden*

*Summer Garden Party at the Rectory*



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