

# **Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2025**

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May, 11am

at St Alban's Church



Celebrating God's Love  
in the Heart of our  
Community



## **AGENDA**

### **2025 Annual Parish Meeting – Election of Churchwardens**

Sue Richardson and Keith Ford have been nominated as Churchwardens

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### **APCM (Annual Parochial Church Meeting) Agenda**

#### **1. Opening prayer and welcome**

#### **2. Apologies for absence**

#### **3. Approval of 2024 APCM Minutes**

#### **4. Matters arising**

#### **5. The reports**

- (i) The new Electoral Roll
- (ii) Annual Trustees report and Accounts
- (iii) Financial report
- (iv) Annual fabric report – presented by churchwardens
- (v) Deanery Synod report
- (vi) PCC Proceedings

#### **6. The elections and appointments**

- (i) Election of representative to Deanery Synod – one vacancy
- (ii) Election of PCC members – 3 vacancies
- (iii) Appointment of independent examiner:  
Richard Place Dobson, 1-7 Station Road, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 1HT

#### **7. Date of next APCM (Sunday 10th May 2026)**

#### **8. Closing prayers**

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### **Meeting of the new PCC to elect officers**



## **PARISH OF GOSSOPS GREEN AND BEWBUSH, ST. ALBAN'S**

### **MINUTES FOR PARISH MEETING and APCM**

**Sunday 12 May 2024 at St Alban's Church**

**11.15 A.M**

#### **PRESENT**

Revd. Ann Alexander, Betty Atkinson, Cissy Atwine Deborah Cowie, Brian Eastman, Mary Eastman, Helen Ford, Keith Ford, Ruth Glasse, Rose Harrison, Andy Hoare, Bev Killick, Mary Louise, Alan Magrath, Sarah Magrath, Meg Miller, John Richardson, Sue Richardson, Jemma Robinson, Ann Routledge, Jane Sharpe, Geoff Snell, Madeleine Taylor, Patricia Uppham-Hill, (24)

	<b>Action</b>
<b>PARISH MEETING ELECTION OF CHURCH WARDENS</b>	
Sue Richardson and Debbie Cowie were proposed and duly elected as Church Wardens for the coming year.	
<b>1. APCM OPENING PRAYER AND WELCOME</b>	
<b>2. APOLOGIES</b>	
Rob Higson, Cathy Bryant, John Bryant	

<b>3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS APCM</b>	
The minutes of the previous APCM held Sunday 21 May 2023 were approved and duly signed	
<b>4. MATTERS ARISING</b>	
None	
<b>5. REPORTS</b>	
<p><b>The Annual Report and the Trustees Report and Annual Accounts were circulated by email and in paper copy prior to the meeting. Additional comments were made as follows:</b></p> <p><b>I. Vicars Report</b></p> <p><b>Rev Ann commented</b> that she usually never thanks people by name since inevitably someone will be missed and may take offence. However, as she is retiring, and this will be her last formal opportunity to give her thanks.</p> <p>She thanked the church and community for their love and participation in living the gospel. This is a very active church. Sarah Magrath has commented that St Alban's Mother's Union is one of the most active Mother's Union Branches in the Diocese.</p> <p>The Rural Dean told us at our Visioning Day that 60% of churches have no children and 30% have less than 5 children in the congregation. Rev Ann is proud of our children's work with up to 20 children attending our Junior church each week and is proud of their confidence as they lead our Crib Service and take part in leading our services each week: reading and serving.</p> <p>Rev Ann grew up in Notting Hill in London and was used to the great diversity in the community and it makes her heart sing to see the diversity in our church and she thanks God for that.</p>	

Rev Ann thanked Keith Ford for the contribution to our worship with his organ playing. Music is such an important part of our worship at St Alban's and she has enjoyed working in partnership with Keith.

Our choir at Easter and at Christmas, especially for the Carol Service, is renowned for its wonderful singing. The congregations singing was commented on by two visiting organists who were so impressed that each of them gave concerts to raise money for our heating project. Our Choir and Music bring us joy,

Tiny Toes and Junior church are superb. This group have such an outreach that people not just outside the Parish but outside the Crawley come to it.

Madeleine Taylor and Sarah Magrath have shaped our Heart of Welcome Café which is attracting more and more people and is being used as a referral point from our community services and carers.

Thanks to our Wardens Sue Richardson and Debs Cowie without whom the church would not function but also to Sue in particular who is additionally our finance officer. The church is in good hands going forwards, but Debs and Sue need your support.

Thanks to Alan Magrath our secretary who has been a blessing to work with and going forwards we have Meg Miller taking over as secretary who will be a future blessing.

Besides this we have Sarah Magrath as our Authorised lay Minister and Debs Cowie and Bev Killick as Lay Ministers in training.

Andy Hoare is leading our safeguarding and DBS's

Our Health and Safety is good.

The Building Development Group are doing splendid work.

Saturday Prayer it is wonderful to spend an hour in prayer once a month and is a lovely morning.

Fundraising we have a marvellous team and don't just raise money but have marvellous events.

Helen Ford does great work with Caring through Crafting, Link to Hope and YMCA.

We are working with Open Doors supporting the persecuted church

Merle continues working with the Childrens Society and Family Support Work

Helen Ford and Madeleine Taylor are doing craft work with Crawley Free Shop which the church supports with food collection.

This is all remarkable work.

Our Schools and Community work is such a blessing especially since Holy Trinity is our only church school in the Parish. Many Schools come to visit the church. Harvest visits to the Preschools are a joy with gifts of food from the parents for our Harvest Collection.

We are building strong links with Holy Trinity who both visit and help with our Christmas Tree Festival.

This is the most welcoming church, our welcome is revered through the Deanery and Synod.

Thank you all. Keep up the good work.

2. **Electoral Roll.** The revised Roll (closed 7 April 2024) shows 83 people registered on the Electoral Roll this year. This is a increase of 4 since 2023 and an increase of 11 from the roll initiated in 2019. A new electoral roll will be initiated in 2025.

**I. Annual Report and Accounts** The annual report and accounts were published and circulated prior to the meeting.

Brian Eastman asked why our diocesan contribution had been reduced when we were actually showing a healthy surplus with the year's performance. Sue Richardson said that the budget was affected by high energy costs and Post Pandemic income. At the time we were paying £ 300 per night for one night's heating and the energy bill for the Barn in January was £3000.

Brian Eastman commented that we have been subsidised by the Diocese by £ 65 000 and we need to be working towards paying for a new incumbent.

Sue Richardson said that we had to use a lot of our surplus money for maintenance work. The PCC have agreed to increase 2024's parish share to £20,000 (an increase of £5,000).

Madeleine Taylor said that the Deanery appreciate what is being paid. Sue Richardson said that Jeremy Kay the Deanery Treasurer is very supportive.

Debs Cowie commented that our full quota requested is greater than our total income.

Historically St Alban's have never been able to pay the full quota. When we were part of Ifield Diocese St Margaret's made up the deficit.

Bev Killick commented that it was the electricity costs that were the main problem. Thankfully this is now under control.

Brian Eastman recommended that we all review our current giving.

**II. Finances:** The accounts have been duly signed by the auditors.

Sue Richardson clarified the fact that our Treasurer identified that the Restricted Building Fund did not specifically mention



the new heating system and required for this to be paid for from our general fund. A transfer of £10000 has had to be made from the general fund to the building fund. This was why our building fund is higher than expected and we do not have as much money in our general fund.

Fortunately, we are now able to carry on the investigations for the next phase of the building project the Refreshment Centre which when installed will help us to hire out the church more easily.

The new heating system and the new power deal has saved the church many thousands of pounds per year and has set the church in good stead. We are looking to increase parish share to £20 000.

Sue thanked Jane for the Banking and Debs and Meg for signing off payments required. Sue feels well supported and doesn't worry when things have to be signed off.

**III. Annual Fabric Report** The inventory for St Albans and St Mary Magdalene's has been checked and is correct. All necessary repairs have now been completed including all those requested by the Quinquennial report

**IV. Deanery Synod Report** The report is in the APCM annual report.

It was noted that the Diocese has a deficit of £1 million pounds this year and this will effect future decisions such as placement of clergy.

**VII PCC Proceedings** The report is in the APCM report published prior to the meeting. The PCC met 6 times, 3 times on Zoom and 3 times face to face in 2023 plus the post APCM meeting to elect officers. Six emergency email resolutions were used and subsequently minuted at the following PCC meeting. The Standing Committee met 4 times face to face in 2023 ooo

<p><b>6 THE ELECTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS</b></p> <p><b>Deanery Synod:</b> Madeleine Taylor was elected at the 2023 APCM. Two vacancies remain open.</p> <p>Helen Ford was proposed by Sue Richardson seconded by Ruth Glasse and was duly elected. Helen will stand for 2 years and will be an ex-officio member of the PCC.</p> <p><b>PCC Members</b></p> <p>Nine members of the PCC are required under Church Representation Rules</p> <p>5 members continue their term of office: Geoff Bull, Keith Ford, Rob Higson, Emma Humphrey, Bev Killick .</p> <p>2 new members were proposed: Cissy Atwine was duly elected.</p> <p>Jemma Robinson will be elected by the PCC in September when she has been on the electoral roll for six months.</p> <p>Following the APCM resolution in October 2020 retiring members of the PCC are able to stand again immediately.</p> <p>3 The following retiring members were proposed to stand again: Andy Hoare and Jane Sharpe and were duly re-elected.</p>	
<p><b>Independent Examiner</b></p> <p>Richard Place Dobson of 1-7 Station Road, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 1HT was proposed and appointed.</p>	
<p><b>7. Additional Comments</b></p>	

Sue Richardson thanked the Rev Ann for all her hard work in the past eleven years both spiritually with the running of the church through the PCC and wished her well in her coming retirement.  Sue also thanked Ann Routledge who has retired as Standing Committee Secretary after 7 years	
<b>8.DATE OF THE NEXT APCM</b>	
The next APCM will be held on Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> May 2025. Following the Eucharist at 11.15 am	
The meeting closed with prayer at 11.50 am	

**(Vicar's Report)** *No report given in vacancy*

## **THE ELECTORAL ROLL (New Roll 2025)**

As required by the diocese a new Electoral Roll was initiated in 2025.

The new Electoral Roll shows 79 people listed.

The summary total shows an increase of 7 compared to the Electoral Roll initiated in 2019 and a decrease of four compared to previous electoral roll revised in 2024.

The Electoral roll will be revised annually prior to the APCM, A new Electoral Roll will be initiated in 2031.

***Alan Magrath (Electoral Roll Officer)***

# **PARISH ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS**

## **FINANCIAL REPORT**

APCM FINANCE year ending 31.12.2024.

The full approved and audited accounts have been circulated separately.

### **Key points from 2024**

#### **From the monthly accounts to end of Dec 2024**

- Income £83,513 against Budget £62,07
- Expenditure £61,072. against Budget £70,562

Resulting in the Church having a surplus.

Although this looks good on paper the reality is that we have to ensure that we always have 3 months' expenditure in the accounts to protect against any sudden loss of income, also some serious maintenance work is outstanding.

Tiny Toes were awarded a grant from the Co-op of over £2000.

As we are in interregnum, there have been some extra costs involved but these have been largely offset by various refunds against St. Alban's House.

As we are in interregnum the parish share remained at £20,000. We should bear in mind this in no way reflects the amount requested and we need to plan to increase this in the coming years.

I would encourage anybody who doesn't use the Parish Giving scheme (PGS) to sign up. It really helps when budgeting for the following years. Another advantage is that we receive Gift Aid each month.

We all need to look prayerfully at our expenditure as we move into 2025 with all the new demands that our Parish has.

We still have challenges ahead with our buildings.

My thanks to all who help with any aspects of the finance.

***Sue Richardson (Finance Officer)***

## **WARDEN'S FABRIC REPORT AND INVENTORY**

The inventory has been completed in both churches. The gutters at St. Alban's Church and the hall have been cleaned and those at St. Mary Magdelene in the autumn.

The fire extinguishers in St. Alban's Church and the hall have had their annual maintenance as have those at St. Mary Magdelene.

High dusting has been done at St. Mary Magdelene. Pigeon problems have been addressed there.

A broken drain cover in St. Alban's car park was replaced.

We continue to have the grass cut monthly through the summer at St. Alban's and St. Mary Magdelene.

Various other maintenance needs doing urgently in 2025. Quotes have been received for St. Alban's: Tower roof repair; Lady Chapel ceiling; Gutter downpipes; New ramp; Lighting conductor (awaiting date). Bewbush Barn: Painting the outside of the barn. There is still some other small work that needs to be carried out on both churches and we would appreciate some volunteers.

***Sue Richardson & Keith Ford (Churchwardens)***

## **HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT**

The state of the ramp for the hall has caused several problems with its viability for use. There have been several repairs. This is a health and safety issue and so we need to urgently to replace it.

There were no other significant H&S concerns during the year.

***Sue Richardson (Churchwarden)***

## **DEANERY SYNOD REPORT**

Deanery Synod continues to meet three times a year. Members are encouraged to arrive for half an hour of refreshments and fellowship before the varied, interesting topics for discussion. The October meeting invited treasurers and wardens to be informed of finances before making their commitment to Parish giving for the next year.

***Madeleine Taylor (Deanery Synod Representative)***

## **PCC PROCEEDINGS**

The PCC met 6 times in 2024. Meetings were held in: January, March, May, July, September and November, with an extraordinary meeting in October to approve the Parish Profile. Zoom access was made available for people who could not attend in person but all meetings were held face-face. Minutes for all meetings have been published and approved. Two representatives of the PCC were selected to be involved in the process of selection of a new vicar in July. 5 resolutions were made in 2024, 4 by email and later minuted.

The Standing Committee met 4 times in 2024 in February, July, October and December; these were held face-to-face. At the start of the vacancy the members were: two churchwardens, one of whom was the Finance Officer and three additional PCC members: Jane Sharpe, Bev Killick and Cissy Atwine. Any significant decisions were referred to the following PCC meeting for approval. All meetings were formally minuted and have been approved.

The PCC used the rolling agenda to ensure all necessary reviews of policies were addressed throughout the year.

The last AGM was held in May 2024. Church Wardens were appointed at the Parish Meeting preceding the APCM. PCC Officers were appointed at a PCC meeting following the meeting.

***Meg Miller (PCC Secretary)***

## **SAFEGUARDING REPORT**

There have been a few concerns raised as safeguarding, however, I am pleased to say that after investigation and advice received from Church House, none were of a safeguarding nature.

Two DBS checks are in the process of being cleared, otherwise all others are current.

I have regular updates from the Chichester Diocese, Thirty One – Eight (our DBS processor), and the Clewer Initiative, who are a safeguarding organisation, working mainly with modern slavery and county lines.

As always, I would like to promote the C0 safeguarding course, this C0 course can be completed by anyone who is interested in what the church is doing about safeguarding and I can send anyone a link if they contact me via email:

[safeguarding@stalbangossopsgreen.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@stalbangossopsgreen.co.uk)

Training is a bit of a problem, in so much as there has not been much interest in the C0 course, this simple on-line course, gives a good basic understanding of safeguarding. The C2 course is required for safeguarding leads and the diocese acknowledges that they do not offer enough options for this to be completed by volunteers in full time employment.

***Andy Hoare (Safeguarding Officer)***

## **BUILDING & MAINTENANCE REPORT**

In March, a meeting was held with Sophie Allen who is the Diocesan Church Buildings Support Officer. One of the main topics discussed was the ongoing difficulties with the church tower. The options being considered included rendering the brickwork and demolishing the tower to the first level (where the electrics are housed) and re-building it at a later date. Sophie thought that as the church is in a local Conservation Area the possibility of demolishing the tower and re-building it at a later date might be opposed by the local planning authority and there would unlikely be any funding support for this type of work.

Sophie suggested that we should make St. Alban's church a grade 2 listed building as it would provide more opportunities for obtaining grants and that VAT could be claimed back for projects over £100k. However, it was decided to keep our options open and to defer the decision about making the church a listed building to a later date.

Maintenance work completed during the year included:

St. Alban's: Repaired sunken drain in St. Alban's car park; Repair to the East Aisle roof around tower by putting sealant between lead and brickwork (this initially solved the problem of water ingress into the tower but leaks were observed during the December storms); The wooden ramp into the church hall is becoming unsafe and this urgently needs to be addressed in 2025.

Bewbush: High cleaning; Removal of pigeon faeces.

A quote was obtained for installing a kitchenette in St. Alban's Lady Chapel that will be used for future grant applications.

***Keith Ford***



## **MISSION, OUTREACH AND WORSHIP**

### **CHOIR AND MUSIC REPORT**

Music at St. Alban's continues to be acclaimed by people who are new to the church or visit occasionally.

The choir sang at the Maundy Thursday, Easter Vigil and Easter Day services and also our Patronal service in June which marked the occasion of Rev'd Ann's last service. The choir for the Carol Service this year was made up of people new to St. Alban's and old friends and it was much enjoyed.

In April Hannah Ford treated us to a concert of favourite old songs and numbers from more recent musicals.

Our thanks go to Keith Ford as always for his organ playing throughout the year and to Sarah Magrath for her planning and direction of the Carol Service.

A social gathering for the choir was held by the Fords in December and was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

We look forward to a year with more input from the choir and hopefully more use of the church for music of all sorts.

***Meg Miller***

### **MISSION**

As a church the charities and organisations which we continue to support, regularly or as an emergency response, are Open Doors (see separate report), Family Support Work (FSW), Children's Society, Crawley Free Shop, Open House, Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), and Link to Hope Shoe boxes. This support is

done through prayer, collections, lent lunches and food donations, and continues throughout the year. People are already collecting items ready for the shoeboxes at Christmas, and food is put in the box at the back of church for the Free Shop on a weekly basis.

FSW are the recipients of our annual Toy Service toys, and the Children's Society receive the offerings from our collecting boxes, and the annual Christingle Service collection. We pray for the work of all these charities and organisations at our monthly Saturday Prayer Breakfast, and other services. Our support is not only vital to the groups we support, but it is important for us as a congregation, that even as we raise money for ourselves, we look beyond ourselves and our own congregation to support others.

***Sarah Magrath (Authorised Lay Minister for Community, Outreach and Mission)***

## **ECO CHURCH**

The Eco team, when first formed before the pandemic, had 6 active or interested supportive members. Since then, through illness or family circumstances, or moving away from our church, the numbers in the team have dwindled to just one, so work has been rather slow! However, during 2024, 6 large plant pots were planted with wild flowerplugs, which gave a wonderful bee attracting display throughout the summer, placed by the entrance to the hall. They were left during the winter to allow the dying vegetation to be used by mini beast as food and habitat. There are few if any wild birds around the church, but to encourage some, a bird feeder was donated and tried in various locations, but not with much success, but the work on this will continue. Some small bug hotels were made using milk cartons, but a more permanent log pile construction as a bug hotel has been promised by Outreach 3way/Dimensions, and some

lavender was planted. The new heating system in church, being more economical and efficient, has improved our eco credentials.

***Sarah Magrath***

## **HEART OF WELCOME**

The Café has been very popular this year, and we managed to be open every Thursday this year except Boxing Day. We still see new people most weeks. We are getting lots of new walkers for the 10am Health Walk led by Ron MacRae, with a noticeable increase in men walkers who now far outnumber the women. All come back for a drink and cake after the walk, and stay on at the end to help clear away the tables and chairs, which is very helpful. On a low week we may have 20 people and we have had busy weeks where numbers have exceeded 40. The majority of customers are in their 70s to 90s, but we do have younger regulars, including some babies and toddlers who attend regularly with parents or grandparents, plus older children in the school holidays. We also have two well-behaved dogs who attend with their owners! The most popular activity is having a space in which to socialise and chat, as many customers live alone. But we have also had a couple of sessions making lavender bags for Link to Hope Shoe Boxes, a session packing socks together with the Mothers' Union and a couple of quizzes. We were also selected this year as a Co-op good cause which will mean some money coming to us in April, earmarked for new tablecloths and possibly an outing depending on the final sum.

The aim of the café, as part of the Place of Welcome Network is to be free at the point of delivery. We have a number of people who make voluntary donations but we make it clear this is not obligatory. We mostly provide home-made refreshments but are grateful for the not infrequent donations of biscuits, sweets and

other items from attendees. Thanks to Elsie Lyons who is our regular washer up, to Ron MacRea who sets up the hall, and to Madeleine Taylor and Sarah Magrath who come each week and help keep the Heart of Welcome running.

### ***Madeleine Taylor and Sarah Magrath - Co-organisers***

## **JUNIOR CHURCH**

We continue to run weekly Junior Church sessions. These sessions are always very well received and the younger congregation have enjoyed their time together. We have around 10 - 18 attendees and the sessions are both informative and fun.

All regular attendees who attend with their parents have "Photo Permission Forms" in place, that allow photos to be taken and published. A few children who attend without their parents/guardians have yet to be successfully contacted, however they are taken as not having given permission, so photos will not be taken or used.

The Junior Church have continued to undertake all the roles during some services, including Sunday Eucharists. These have been very well liked by the group and the general congregation.

As noted, last year, several of the older members of Junior Church have taken up reading and server roles on the main rota, this trend has continued. This is very encouraging.

The trial of "junior helper" roles, with Junior Church, continues and has seen some very positive responses from the younger children in the sessions.

There are three leaders and two helpers on the rota and all DBS certificates are up-to-date. The three leaders have a WhatsApp group and are in regular communication, and cover each other with no fuss or panic, at times when we can not make it to our rota'd session.

The Good Friday Workshop continues to be run as a Messy Church. This was a success and resulted in a fun-filled morning, full of crafts and music.

***Andy Hoare (Junior Church co-ordinator)***

## **BIBLE STUDY**

Bible study has now been running for a year with a steady 8-10 people attending. We meet every 2 weeks on a Friday most of the time due to college commitment on Friday in term time.

Our first Study we looked at The Lord's Prayer by breaking down each verse. We then followed Women of the Old Testament – a 12 week Lifebuilder Series which everyone enjoyed. We paused during the summer and returned in September this year studying The Lifebuilder Series on The Parables which has evoked some interesting discussions bringing them into a contemporary context.

The sessions begin with morning prayer in the Lady Chapel then we break for coffee and biscuits, commencing the study around 10 30ish, which lasts about 1 hour.

Our next dates are May 16th, May 30th, June 13th, 27th, July 4th, and last one until Summer break will be July 18th where we may decide on celebrating with a trip out. TBC.

It has been rather challenging with my college commitments and bank holidays where I then have to work on a Friday so I would like to thank everyone for being very understanding when I have been unable to lead a session. My last college date is June 6th so hopefully the 'every 2 weeks' will become less problematic to keep to schedule.

Yours in Christ.

***Bev Killick Lay Minister (in training)***

## **MOTHERS' UNION**

We had 22 members in 2024. It has once more been a very busy and interesting time.

Looking back, it was a year where we prayed a lot together, and meditated (Advent meditation); enjoyed crafts and outings, tea and cake; rubbed shoulders with a celebrity who had rubbed shoulders with celebrities (Downton Abbey Event with Anne Oldham); contributed to Mothering Sunday and Remembrance Sunday preparation; had pub evenings (Wild Wednesdays); raised lots of money; took part in Diocesan events, supporting Domestic Abuse victims (winning a Bronze Rise Up Award for the parish), Gatwick detainees (delivering 500 pairs of socks at the annual detention centre carol service at Gatwick), Away From It All Holidays and Diocesan members meetings; and welcomed many non-members to our meetings.

And apart from the Mothers' Union programme items, of course our members are involved in, or organise, all aspects of our parish life, as they live out their Christian support for families, in all forms and aspects.

And so, another year in the life of the Branch came to an end. A very busy year. The last year of "Transformation Now", when we were asked to make a difference in branch and in parish, which I hope we have managed to do.

Thank you for the support of all the branch members and of the parish. The theme going forward for the next three years is "Join In - Join Us", with the emphasis on each one of us working to increase membership so that we can go on making a difference. We are a lovely diverse bunch of people in need of more members, so why don't you join us?

***Sarah Magrath (Branch Leader St. Alban s Gossops Green & Bewbush Branch)***

## **SATURDAY PRAYER**

We continue to pray (as part of the wider daily prayer of the church) for our Mission, Growth, Renewal and Outreach of our Parish and local communities. We started praying 12 years ago during an Interregnum and continue praying, in a changing world during the present Interregnum; we of course miss Rev'd Ann who was able to join us most months. Our faithful Fellowship continues strong. We still have 8-10 of us who regularly gather for prayer (on each second Saturday of the month at 9.30am) and some join us in prayer from home. We enjoy breakfast and fellowship after our prayer time (much enhanced since our children's corner has been improved with armchairs, enabling us to breakfast in style).

Please join us when you can. Thanks to everyone who has joined us in prayer this year, to Cathy Bryant who has led the prayer on alternate months and to all those who have provided the breakfast. New prayer leaders are always welcome.

***Alan Magrath***

## **OPEN DOORS**

As a church we continue to pray regularly for the persecuted church as part of a continuing wave of worldwide prayer. We are a Connected Church with Open Doors which means that we will: Hold at least one church service for persecuted Christians each year (planned to be on the 3rd Sunday in October); Pray regularly as a whole church for persecuted Christians; Engage with emergency appeals as and when they are launched (this would be on an individual basis); Share petitions that call on our political leaders to support persecuted Christians.

On 20 October we welcomed John Barringer from Open Doors to speak for the second year running at our morning Eucharist dedicated to the persecuted church. His address was very well received by the congregation. Many of the congregation continue to make regular contributions to Open Doors Worldwide Mission (thank you). Open Doors World Watch report was again launched in Parliament in January. This was again attended by some 100 MPs. Our new MP Peter Lamb was unable to attend but he has told us that “I assure you I will continue to support action to defend the freedom of religion and belief and stand against persecution and oppression in any form” .

We have also supported the Open Doors petition in support of the Church in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is asking local African governments, the EU and the UN to provide: Protection, Justice, Healing and Restoration to 16.2 million Christians and their communities in Sub Saharan Africa whose challenges have gone largely unnoticed by the wider world.

Sarah and I also attended the Open Doors annual Standing Strong conference; this year a local conference was held in Royal Tunbridge Wells and we were very moved to have been there to worship and hear testimony from the Persecuted Church in Yemen and news from the persecuted church in other countries.

Please continue to pray for and support our Christian Brothers and Sisters and their families who continue to be persecuted. For further information please visit:[www.opendoorsuk.org](http://www.opendoorsuk.org)

***Alan and Sarah Magrath***

## **TINY TOES BABY & TODDLER GROUP**

Our baby & toddler group continues to go from strength to strength. We meet on Mondays in termtime, from 9.30 -11.00. It is



a great mission outreach and provides much needed opportunity for the young babies and children and their carers to mix and socialise with others. We regularly have 20 families in attendance, although the number does vary week to week as we do not require families to book in advance, they just drop in. We have had plenty of new families who have come along having read about the group on Facebook, Instagram or by recommendation. The format of craft, toys and refreshments seems to be popular, and we regularly get lovely feedback from parents and carers on our Facebook page. We are not overtly religious but do celebrate Christian and other festivals and promote St. Alban's family and children's activities.

The families have been very keen to join in charitable activities such as the Shoebox appeal. We were fortunate to be accepted as a local cause by the Co-op from Oct 2023 - Oct 2024. As a result, we received over £2000 in donation from them, and some great publicity. We rely on volunteers to keep the group going, we currently have 4 'leaders' who take it in turns to organise crafts, or welcome and greet families; and 5 other helpers who prepare and serve the refreshments, all on a rota basis so we can get a week off now and then. Grateful thanks to Peter Sheehan (most weeks) and Keith Ford (when Peter is 'off') for their help with setting up the hall.

If you would like to join our happy crew do let us know, your help in any way would be most welcome.

***Helen Ford, Jane Sharpe, Sandra Sheehan, Wendy Saunders***

## **WEBSITE, SOCIAL MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS**

St. Alban's Website, Facebook Page/Group and e-bulletins are a key source of information for our Church and wider community.

They help keep people connected in a variety of ways, from weekly worship information, mission updates and other community outreach projects and events that occur during a year.

### **Website, Social Media & e-Bulletin**

After falling in the last couple of years, website visits and page views increased in 2024. There were 2049 website visits (4554 page views) in 2024. We do a very good job of keeping everyone informed of news and events on our Facebook Page and Group, and via the weekly newsletter, but I would continue to encourage input of appropriate content from others for the website too (whilst adhering to policies). This helps keep the site fresh, interesting and informative, which helps encourage return visitors to our website.

Facebook Page and Group Likes/followers/members, continue to increase, which shows how valuable these platforms are in addition to the website, giving members the ability to easily share Church news and events and other relevant information. Our Facebook Group currently has 255 members.

The weekly e-bulletin has been with us for approx. 5 years now and continues to be another useful channel for information, especially for those who do not have access to our website and/or social media. Newsletter subscriptions have levelled out in the last few years, and we currently have 60 subscribers.

***Rob Higson (Web Administrator)***

### **FUN, FELLOWSHIP & FUNDRAISING**

The small fundraising committee has struggled to continue with regular events as it is hard to encourage others to commit to help. The main event was the Christmas Tree Festival and Fair which

was hard work but very successful, both in raising much needed funds, and in reaching out to the local community. Various groups joined in by decorating their Christmas Trees, and the event itself welcomed many from the local community, who stayed to enjoy the refreshments and to keep out of the awful weather.

We have managed a few monthly pop-up stalls in addition to offering coffee and refreshments after some Sunday services.

### **Events:**

April 2024 – Afternoon tea and music from Hannah

All year - Easyfundraising – this is the easiest way to raise funds for St. Alban's and will not cost you anything! Please do sign up and every time you shop online the church benefits.

June - We had a Bring & Share lunch to celebrate the Patronal Festival

August - Cream Tea

October – Harvest Festival lunch

December – Christmas Tree Festival & Fair plus Grand Draw

We need to start planning events for the next few months – any new ideas and offers of help would be most welcome.

***Helen Ford, Meg Miller, Jane Sharpe, Kerry Lavington, Bev Killick.***

### **CARING THROUGH CRAFTING**

Madeleine Taylor and Helen Ford have continued to support this group by knitting, sewing or crocheting a variety of items for charities. The group will celebrate its 5-year anniversary in March 2025 – having started during the 2020 lockdown by making scrubs and bags for NHS staff and care homes. We all enjoyed making the items so much we wanted to continue after the Pandemic, and now make a really wide variety of items from drain bags for

hospital patients, to items for dementia care homes, domestic abuse refuges, shopping bags and hats for the homeless and many more. Total number of items donated to date is 76,153, which equates to approximately £219,070 worth of goods! A fantastic way to support both local and further afield charities by doing craft activities we love! Most of the yarn and fabric is donated so doesn't cost us anything. Do check out our Facebook page and if you love making things, do consider joining us. We all make the items at home and then get together each month for coffee, chat and to distribute them.

***Helen Ford, Madeleine Taylor***

## **LINK TO HOPE SHOE BOXES**

Despite the tricky economic times, our congregation continues to support this appeal with great enthusiasm. It is quite an expense to fill a complete shoebox so this year many people donated individual items or money for us to buy the relevant items. After an appeal several others donated the amounts we needed to cover the transport costs (£3 per box). Therefore, this year we collected lots of items and empty shoeboxes and a group of us packed and checked the boxes and wrapped them, so that we could deliver 39 boxes to the warehouse in Ferring. Well done to everyone! Look out for regular updates from the charity that are posted onto the St. Alban's Facebook page. They are very interesting and give us a good insight into the journey the boxes make, and the joy they give to the recipients.

We are signed up again so start saving the items and the shoeboxes...we can never have too many!

***Helen Ford***

## **YMCA CHAPLAINCY**

Helen Ford has continued to volunteer with the Chaplaincy at YMCA Crawley Foyer, cooking a meal on Tuesday evenings, on a rota. She was most surprised last summer to receive a 5-year certificate and flowers as she could hardly believe she had been volunteering for that long!

She says: “We try to provide healthy ‘home-cooked’ meals that perhaps the young people cannot manage to make for themselves yet. We do offer to show them how, and have had some keen to learn, though others just enjoy the meals we serve to them. I find it a very rewarding activity.”

Sue Mearns has volunteered to join the group. If anyone else is interested in joining in cooking a meal for the young people (aged 16 – 26) and chatting with them, please let Helen know.

***Helen Ford***

## **CHILDREN’S SOCIETY**

The Children’s Society is run by trustees but there is also now a young people’s trustee group which is really flourishing. The two trustee boards meet both separately and together and this is really assuring the future of the Children's Society.

Locally there are few collection boxes circulating as cash donations have dropped off enormously since the Pandemic. The Children's Society still want them to be used as they say they collect £1.3 million a year through boxes. Some people donated by cheque over the year, and other people donated directly online to the Children’s Society website.

The Christingle service was popularised by the Children’s Society in the 1960s. The Society provides all the materials for churches running a Christingle free of charge, and have raised millions of pounds through Christingles for their work with young people. St

Alban's Church gets all the resources from the Children's Society for the annual Messy Christingle.

The mental health of young people has been a particular concern for the Children's Society over the year. Merle would really appreciate another volunteer from St. Alban's to be the rep for the Children's Society, so that the excellent work we have been doing to support this organisation for years at St. Alban's, carries on.

***Merle Martin, Sarah Magrath***

### **FAMILY SUPPORT WORK**

FSW supports families new to the area who have needs and welcomes support from us, in the form of donations of food but also furniture sometimes. Becky Long is still the Family Support Worker for the whole of Crawley. Merle would be very grateful if someone from St. Alban's would take over the role of supporting Becky. This entails attending a meeting for one hour each quarter at St. Peter's West Green and managing any collections from the church. Jill Bell from St Margaret's also attends these meetings.

***Merle Martin***

### **SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

It has been difficult to maintain the engagement with schools during the interregnum that Rev'd Ann enjoyed. However, along with Canon Doris, Helen Ford hosted a visit to the church by Gossops Green Primary School and spoke to the Year 3 classes about Advent traditions and meaning.

Students from Holy Trinity helped set up Christmas trees for the Christmas Tree Festival and Fair in December as well as providing a tree themselves, and Helen liaised with their teacher over their use of the church for their school Christmas service.

***Helen Ford***

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of  
Gossops Green and Bewbush, St. Alban's

## **Officers and professional advisers**

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### **Trustees:**

#### *Ex Officio:*

Incumbent: Vacancy

Wardens: Mrs Sue Richardson  
Mrs Deborah Cowie (from May 2024 until her  
resignation December 2024)

Secretary: Mrs Meg Miller (from May 2024)

Safeguarding Officer: Mr Andy Hoare

*Elected members:* Mr Keith Ford  
Mr Robert Higson  
Mr Andy Hoare  
Mrs Emma Humphrey  
Ms Beverly Killick  
Mrs Jane Sharpe  
Mrs Madeleine Taylor  
Mrs Helen Ford (from May 2024)  
Mrs Cissy Atwine (from May 2024)  
Mrs Jemma Robinson (from September 2024  
on account of her only being on the Electoral Roll for six months  
by this time)  
Mr Geoff Bull (resigned June 2024)

*Deanery Synod:* Mrs Helen Ford  
Mrs Madeleine Taylor

Treasurer: Mr James May

Finance Officer: Mrs Sue Richardson

Charity Number: 1196796

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