

Parish Profile

Saint Francis of Assisi Church - Friar Park



Freeman Road

Wednesbury

WS10 0HJ

www.saintfranciscfriarpark.com

www.facebook.com/people/saintfranciscfriarparkcom

www.achurchnearyou.com/church/4609/



Contents

- Index
- A welcome from the Parish's Patron
The Bishop of Lichfield - The Right Revd.
Dr. Michael Ipgrave - OBE 04 - 05
- A welcome from the Bishop of Oswestry
The Right Revd. Paul Thomas SSC 06
- A welcome from the Acting Rural Dean 07
- Welcome to Saint Francis of Assisi 08
- About us
- Our Vision 09 - 11
- The Parish Setting 12 - 14
- The Parish Church 15 - 20
- A Church in, with, and for, the Community 21 - 25

Contents

- The Future of Saint Francis of Assisi
- Our Hope for the future 26
- Our Hope for a new priest 27 - 28
- General Information
- Staffing 29 - 30
- Housing 31 - 33
- Administration and Finance 34
- The Walter Stanley Trust 35
- Fundraising and Social Life 36 - 38

Welcome From The Bishop of Lichfield

Cradled at the intersection of the Midlands and the North, and the interface between England and Wales, the Diocese of Lichfield is the ancient centre of Christianity in what was the Kingdom of Mercia.

St Chad, Lichfield's first Bishop, journeyed around Mercia with heavenly hope and the good news of Christ's resurrection. He believed that there was 'a new opening for the gospel' in Mercia. Many people became followers of Jesus.

Accounts of the apostles' journeys, as they travelled in the power of the Spirit, with little other than the stories of Christ's life, crucifixion and resurrection, were Chad's only companions. His plan to walk Mercia was as daring in its simplicity and boldness as God trusting the gospel first to the shepherds and then to just twelve apostles.

Chad set out believing that he would bear fruit, and that the kingdom of God would grow. Bede describes Chad as 'humble, devout, zealous and apostolic'.

Today, in our much more complex world, I recognise a similar opening for the Gospel in these parts and I invite you to join with me in seizing this opportunity to follow Christ in the humble, devout, zealous and apostolic footsteps of St Chad.

Over the centuries, we have become immersed in Chad's legacy - as we are immersed in Christ at baptism. Chad's church of ordinary Mercian people became a growing community of Christian faith through the example of Chad's pilgrim life and ministry pointing to Jesus. This must have encouraged him in his arduous and sacrificial journey for the sake of the gospel. To truly follow Christ in Chad's footsteps today, we must be committed to this life and ministry. **This is zealous.**

Chad's legacy of a vibrant community of faith leads us today to charge our clergy with nurturing, outside weekly worship, confident knowledge of the faith handed down to us. Such faith is characterised by a readiness in each member of our worshipping communities to speak about what Jesus Christ means in their lives and how they are being shaped by him. Doing this, we will recognise and rejoice in the gifts of all those, lay and ordained, who contribute to the life and ministry of our churches. **This is apostolic.**

Welcome From The Bishop of Lichfield

Our clergy should take responsibility for their own flourishing and effectiveness, supported by the wellbeing and learning programmes in development and through prioritising participation in peer support and review. Chad would have been spurred on seeing God's unfolding plan in Mercia, just as the flourishing of the gifts of all God's people can contribute to our clergy's human flourishing and effectiveness as ministers. **This is humble.**

Together, as the Body of Christ in this place, reflecting Chad's legacy in giving priority to purposeful evangelism, creative engagement with local communities, and to becoming more diverse and growing younger, our trajectory is given full expression in our diocesan strategy, 'Seeking the Kingdom'. It is a manifesto for what I invite us by God's grace to achieve as a diocese.

If we are to truly follow in Chad's footsteps together, we will go forward with his devotion to prayer. So doing, we will go believing that God will be faithful and will build his kingdom. **This is devout.**

Our journey together begins with our vision prayer:

As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad, we pray that the two million people in our diocese encounter a church that is confident in the gospel, knows and loves its communities, and is excited to find you, O God already at work in your world. We pray for a church that reflects the richness and variety of those communities. We pray for a church that partners with others in seeking the common good, working for justice as a people of hope.

✠ Michael

Welcome from The Bishop of Oswestry

Dear Father,

I am delighted you are reading this profile. As you will gauge at once from its quality in style and content, S. Francis of Assisi Friar Park is a vibrantly alive and deeply attractive parish. The Catholic Faith as the Church of England has received it is lived and proclaimed here with great care and flare. The People of God in this parish show their love for God in a) love for his Sanctuary (the church is kept in immaculate order), b) for each other in fellowship and togetherness, and c) for the stranger and those who are yet to know the Lord Jesus Christ. This makes S. Francis a very special place. The Parish Church is a beacon in the midst of its community; Friar Park is a neighbourhood where doors and hearts are open to the Gospel and the Church's ministry. People of all backgrounds and generations find a home at S. Francis, and this all-embracing, all-welcoming spirit is palpable when visiting for Mass.

In intimate co-operation with the parish, I am looking to appoint a Priest who will cherish this character and inheritance and will look to extend and develop it into the future. He must be an evangelizer whose communication of the Catholic Faith is clear, bold, and accessible. He must also be someone with a disciplined heart of prayer who trusts wholly in the sacramental life of the Church. He must be a devoted pastor, available and open to all people - a priest who desires nothing more than to live out his priesthood in a spirit of closeness to Christ's flock. And he must be a priest who is collegial, working happily and creatively with neighbouring clergy in the Deanery and Diocese - separatists and sectarians need not apply! - and especially closely with his brother priests in the See of Oswestry. He will be a priest whose whole self-understanding is found in fidelity to catholic discipline, practice, and devotion.

I pray that might be you. If so, I greatly look forward to meeting you.

In the joy of the Lord

✠Paul Oswestriensis

The Rt Revd Paul Thomas - Bishop of Oswestry

Welcome from The Acting Rural Dean

West Bromwich Deanery is in the south-western part of the Diocese of Lichfield and shares a border with the Diocese of Birmingham. Just so you know, it's not actually Birmingham—it's the Black Country! This area has a rich history in industry, and it still plays a significant role in its economy today. Many West Bromwich parishes face high levels of deprivation, with several ranking among the most deprived in the UK. West Bromwich Deanery is where the M6 and M5 motorways intersect, making it easy to access the entire country.

The Deanery comprises seven parishes. Two of these parishes are multi-church parishes, which means we currently have ten churches in the deanery, though one is undergoing a formal closure process.

The Clergy Chapter

The Chapter convenes about ten times a year. These meetings are informal, supportive and filled with good humour. Despite the wide range of church traditions and opinions, the clergy generally get along well.

Additional Posts

The Walter Stanley Trust (WST) provides funding for lay ministers across the deanery for various parishes. Two parishes also have a Children's and youth minister, along with a Lay Pastoral Minister and another parish has a lay assistant minister. We are fortunate to have the WST, which allows us to think beyond the limitations that many parishes face.

West Bromwich Deanery presents a challenging environment to work in, perhaps an understatement! The Deanery is experiencing a period of change. However, it is also a deeply rewarding place to serve. We would love for you to join us!

Welcome to Saint Francis of Assisi – Friar Park



A warm welcome to this profile of the Parish of Saint Francis of Assisi, Friar Park.

The Church of Saint Francis of Assisi is a beautiful building standing proud at the heart of the Friar Park estate.

The Parish is a classic outer-city housing estate which historically has housed a working-class population.

Saint Francis of Assisi is very much a family church and we would warmly welcome a priest to come and join us, engaging in the variety of activities and opportunities that this parish offers.

Our welcome is a real one with many visitors frequently commenting on not only the warmth of the church building itself, but the warmth and welcome they receive from the people within the church community.

Our Vision – Catholic Tradition



From its earliest days, Saint Francis of Assisi, Friar Park, has stood firmly in the Catholic Tradition of the Church of England, and we remain solidly so at a time when the Church and the wider society is undergoing major changes.

While in many ways our Church family is thriving, we are aware of the need to avoid complacency. The Sunday Family Mass is central to our life of faith. We have reached a time when we need to be more outward-looking, going beyond our church buildings to engage with the daily life of Friar Park and beyond. We understand our need to grow and develop, and for that we must have confident pastoral and sacramental leadership.

There is a desire amongst the congregation to be taught the catholic faith as the Church of England has received it so we can give good account to others of what we believe. We would like to see a regular programme of activities to create discipleship pathways, particularly for new Christians, children, youth, and families to grow in their faith.

Recently, our mid-week Masses have proved to be a fruitful first step for new members of our worshipping community, and we would like to explore this opportunity further. We desire to be more prayerful, individually and collectively, as a key to spiritual growth, and would like to develop prayer groups for this purpose.

Our Vision – Vocations and Leadership Development



Saint Francis of Assisi has a good track record for fostering vocations to the priesthood, (over a ten year period) and we feel that it is vital that this continues even though it does take its toll on our leadership, which means we need to work harder to also encourage lay leadership. Saint Francis of Assisi is positioned at the heart of the community it serves and is seen as a place where all people feel able to come in the good times, the not so good times and the sad times. We would like to make the Church building more open and available outside of times of worship as a much-needed sacred space. We want to use social media more broadly and effectively to connect with some of those who we are not currently reaching, enabling people to discover more about the life of our church and how we live our faith. There is a need to develop what we offer to children and young people across the parish, building on what is already working well.

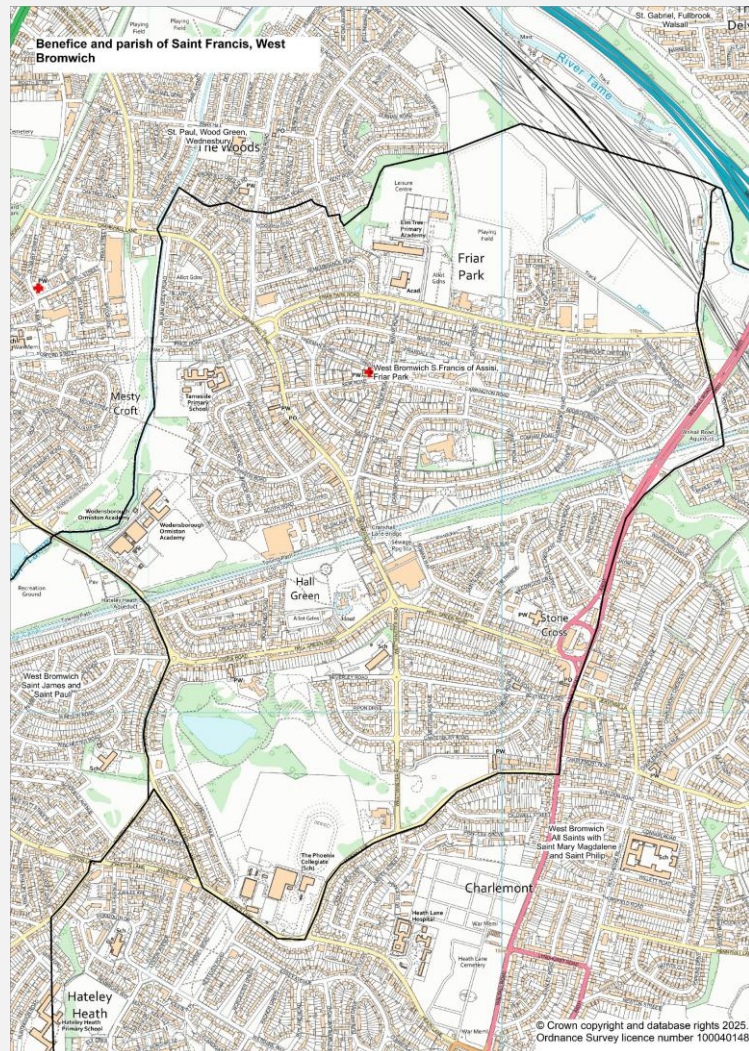
-

Our Vision – Local Connections and Occasional Offices



Our Sunday School does well with committed volunteer helpers. We have good relationships with some local primary schools and nurseries, but work needs to be done to forge links with Secondary Schools in the area. Funeral, Baptism, and wedding Ministry have proven fruitful over the last decades, and we wish to continue to build effectively on such relationships. We have good connections with two local care homes in the Parish (one is a residential home, the other a home for people living with dementia) which we would like to see continue, together with building new contacts with community groups. Above all we want to be led and renewed by the Holy Spirit, moving boldly forward as our Church enters a new period in its life of worship and witness.

The Parish Setting



Location

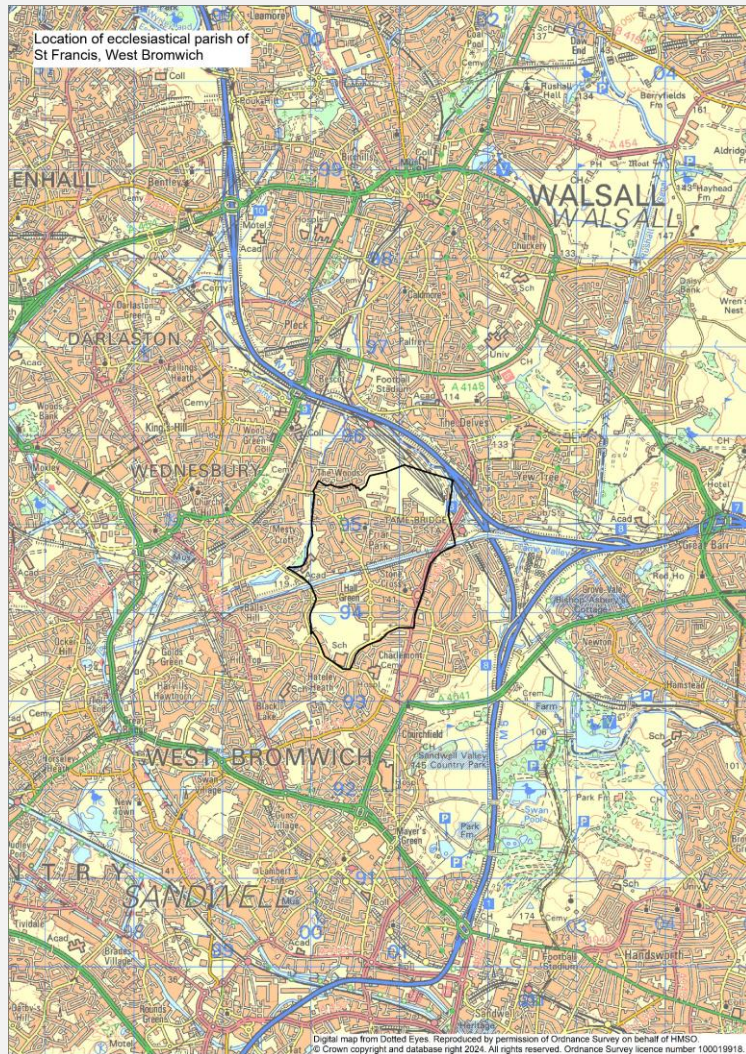
Friar Park is located approx. 2 miles north of West Bromwich and 1 mile east of Wednesbury. It was developed by West Bromwich council in the late 1920's and early 1930's to rehouse families from the slum clearance. It was originally part of West Bromwich but became part of Wednesbury in 1966 when the borough boundaries were expanded. Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, which consists of the town's of West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Tipton, Oldbury, Smethwick and Rowley Regis was formed in 1974.

Population

The Parish of Saint Francis of Assisi has a population of 11082, this will increase once construction of the 'Friar Park Urban Village' development gets underway; it is proposed to build 630 new homes on land off Friar Park Road which will add at least 1000 to the total population figure.

There are a number of schools within the parish and the church has a good relationship, with Priory Primary School, Tameside Primary Academy, Elm Tree Primary School and High Point Academy all having visited the church and some holding their Carol services here.

The Parish Setting



Schools

Park Hill School just over the boundary also hold their Carol Service here, Elm Tree Primary School caterers for children, aged 5 - 11, with autism within Sandwell, and High Point Academy caterers for children, aged 11 - 16, with Special Education Needs within Sandwell.

There are two senior schools on the very edge of the parish's boundaries, Wodensborough Ormiston Academy and Phoenix Collegiate

The church has a good relationship with two care homes within the parish, Hall Green Care Home and Allerton Court Residential Home, which we visit frequently for communion services throughout the year.

Just a short walk from the church are local shops and a medical centre. The Millennium Centre, (the site of the original S Francis of Assisi Church) a large purpose built community centre that is open daily is also a short walk from the church; as is the West Bromwich Manor House, (Bromwich Hall) which is a grade 1 listed medieval building owned by Sandwell council, which operates as a small museum and event venue.

The Parish Setting



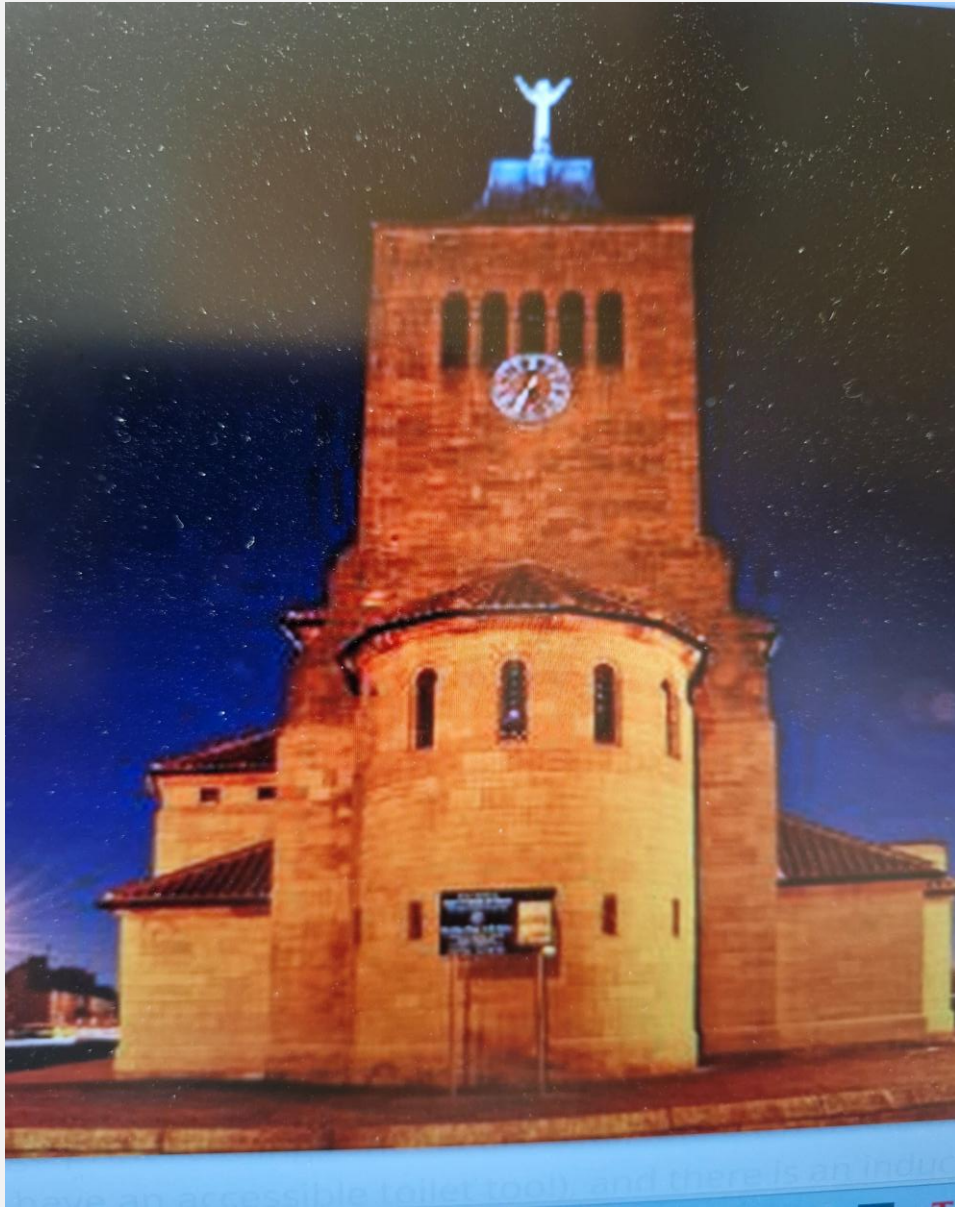
Green Spaces, Transport and Leisure

Green open spaces are limited within the parish but the Victorian Brunswick park is just a short walk away and the 1,700 acre Sandwell Valley Country Park, with walking and cycling trails along with a visitor centre, farm shop and RSPB nature reserve is just a 5 - 10 minute drive away.

A regular daily bus service operates between West Bromwich and Wednesbury, with bus stops adjacent to the church. The nearest railway station, Tame Bridge Parkway, is situated just beyond the parish boundary, and is just a five minute drive, or an energetic walk away; with trains operating daily between Walsall and Birmingham. A tram service operates daily between Wolverhampton and Birmingham, with a number of stops in West Bromwich and Wednesbury for this. Junctions for both the M5 and M6 motorways are just a 5 - 10 minute drive away.

In the wider area of Sandwell there are many leisure centres, sporting venues, cinema's and restaurants. Theatre's and concert venues offering excellent productions and shows can be found in both Wolverhampton and Birmingham.

The Parish Church



Saint Francis of Assisi, Friar Park, is one of the Black Country's hidden gems. It was built between 1938 and 1941 when it was consecrated, it is a grade II listed building. Built in an Italian Romanesque style, it features some interior decoration by Italian prisoners of war who worked on the building from 1940. The side chapel on the left (as you face the high altar) is dedicated to Mary, Mother of God - hence "The Lady Chapel". The Weekday Chapel on the right sometimes called The George Chapel was glassed in to allow weekday services to take place in an independent heated area and was furnished originally by Friar Park British Legion as a memorial to those who perished in the great War 1914 - 1918. A balcony was built at the rear of the Church in the early 1990's to allow people to be seated when the main body of the nave is full, and to create a space for social activities. The church has been sensitively updated to a high standard with a new heating system, new LED lighting, interior decoration, replacement of roof tiles and regilding of the statue of St Francis of Assisi on the top of the tower.

The quinquennial requirements were all completed in 2024 when a car park (blessed by Bishop Michael at the Patronal Festival) was also created on the Keir Road side of church, since worshippers' cars on Sundays, and at weddings and funerals, were causing problems for our neighbours. A new sound system has been fitted in 2025.

The Parish Church



Saint Francis of Assisi stands firmly within the Modern Catholic Tradition, with modern liturgy, and altars where Mass is celebrated facing the people. We wish this to remain. Having passed the House of Bishops' Resolution, the Bishop of Lichfield has given Extended Episcopal Oversight to the Bishop of Oswestry. The parish is recognised for its welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, embracing individuals from various backgrounds and nurturing a strong sense of fellowship among its congregation. One of our strengths has been our ability to welcome new members into our congregation from other traditions in the Church of England and from other Christian denominations.

The Parish Church



The liturgical year is faithfully observed, with Lent marked by traditional devotions such as the Way of the Cross or Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered and used. Special care is given to holy days and feast days, and parishioners are encouraged to take part in charitable activities throughout the year.

Sunday Parish Family Mass is the centre and high point of our church's life using the modern Western Rite, Eucharistic Vestments are worn, the Blessed Sacrament reserved and incense and bells used. All our worship is live-streamed.

The Parish Church

Worship and Tradition

- Quarterly memorial services are held, and local funeral directors also conduct their annual Christmas memorial services in the church. These gatherings are exceptionally well attended, with the church reaching capacity each time. Through these services, Saint Francis of Assisi Church fulfils its role as a place of remembrance and comfort, offering solace and support to many local families during moments of loss.
- The Saint Francis of Assisi has an excellent track record of fostering vocation, with 4 ordinands sent for training in recent years

Attendance Statistics

	2023	2024	2025
• Under 16 years	9	11	8
• Over 16 Years	85	84	82
• Communicants	71	71	72
• During 2025 there have been 10 weddings, 25 funerals and 15 baptisms in church			

Times of Worship

- We currently hold services on a Sunday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Until recently Mass was offered daily, except on the incumbent's day off.
- The Solemn Mass at 10.00am on Sundays in the centre of our church life. We receive the Bread of Heaven at a Celebration where we are used to lively music, vestments are worn, choir and servers are robed, incense and bells are used, and the people of God read the Lessons, lead the Prayer of the Faithful, administer the Blessed Sacrament alongside the Priest, and help present the Children's work to the Congregation.
- The weekday Masses average between 15-25 communicants and are said on Wednesdays and Fridays at 7.30pm, and on Thursday morning at 9.30am where it is followed by a Place of Welcome until 12.00 noon. Times of services
- Sunday 10.00a.m
- Wednesday 7.30p.m
- Thursday 9.30a.m
- Friday 7.30p.m

The Parish Church



Music

Music plays a major part in our Worship, we are very lucky at Saint Francis of Assisi to have a wonderful Church Organ and two Organist's, one is also Choir Master. We have two other Organist's in the congregation who are willing to stand in if required.

We have a dedicated Choir of 8 people and Choir rehearsals on the second Thursday each Month. We invite members of the congregation to attend to learn the forthcoming music.

Our Music is important to us, we have five settings of the Mass to choose from and perform small pieces as required. While we have a number of hymn books, including Celebration Hymnal for Everyone, we have copyright licenses which allow us to print all the hymns and music on a single sheet and can therefore have a much wider repertoire. We use music from plainsong to music written this year.

The Parish Church

Sunday School

Here at Saint Francis of Assisi, we are proud to boast we have a well-attended Sunday School. Our lessons are mostly based on the Gospel and occasionally on one of the readings but always in relation to what is happening in the main church. Our main aim is that children learn about the Bible and church in a fun and friendly setting. We encourage children to join in discussions and always remind them there is never a wrong answer because everyone has different feelings and understanding. Half of our Sunday school children have been confirmed. The children like going to the altar at the end of Mass to show the congregation what they have done and tell them what they have learnt each week and to say a prayer, the congregation also like this and look forward to seeing and hearing what the children have been doing. We have a Sunday school leader and two assistants.

We welcome new people and always speak to new families and encourage youngsters to join us. We are aware that some children are shy and we allow a parent to sit with their child. We have found that this also encourages people to return. We are proud of our Sunday school, and hope the children and the assistants and parents who encourage our shyer children to join in, all of them make it possible to boast a wonderful Sunday school which we hope will continue to grow in strength and numbers

A Church in, with, and for, the Community



Our church exists not only as a place of worship but as home for whole community.

We believe that faith is best lived out through love, service, and connection.

Every person- no matter their background, story or season of life is welcome here.

We open our doors and hearts to serve the needs of our neighbours, to celebrate together in times of joy, and to offer support in times of struggle.

The church is more than a building; it is a gathering of people who care for one another and for the world around them.

Here, faith becomes action, hope grows through kindness, and everyone has a place to belong.

A Church in, with, and for, the Community

- A message from the head teacher at The Priory Primary School
- The Priory Primary School continues to serve a community experiencing significant deprivation, within the 19th most deprived Local Authority (out of 296) in England. In this context, we are especially proud of our inclusive, nurturing approach: it enables pupils to thrive and ensures they benefit from rich experiences that broaden horizons and raise aspirations.
- The school has enjoyed a warm and enduring relationship with St Francis of Assisi Church. From the outset we were welcomed with open arms, and we have always regarded the Church as part of our extended family. The Church is deeply respected locally, and our families—who rightly value authenticity, consistency and genuine care—respond particularly well to clergy who share those values and show a real commitment to the community. Under Father Ron’s ministry, that relationship flourished.
- A highlight of our school year is the annual Carol Concert at St Francis of Assisi, which draws a wonderful crowd and has become a cherished community occasion. In addition, the Priests regular presence in school—leading assemblies on a fortnightly basis—has been instrumental in strengthening relationships with pupils and families and in making faith visible through service, encouragement and connection. We would hope the new incumbent will feel able to build on this strong foundation and continue that legacy of partnership.
- I cannot commend the parish highly enough. The Priest who comes to St Francis of Assisi will find not only a beautiful church building, but a remarkable parish: welcoming, faithful, and ready to support and work alongside their priest for the good of the whole community.

A Church in, with, and for, the Community



We started in September 2020 to provide a place where people could meet safely and talk over a cuppa and a cake, post the pandemic. It was planned to follow our weekday Mass running 10-12noon on a Thursday.

We have now been running for 5 years, closing only at Christmas and for elections, also very occasionally for funerals.

We hold frequent exercise classes, and craft sessions, still allowing plenty of time to chat! We have good relations with Sandwell Council workers. Pollution Control, Social Prescribing, Public Health and Housing teams have visited. The last taught us how to put our mobile phones to more use! At present, Age UK are leading a course to help us prevent falls. We were assisted to make an application to Awards for All, who gave us a grant for just under £4,000 to help with setting up costs, and enabled us to book suitable coaches to take trips to Lichfield and other places as a group, which included people with varying physical disabilities and age-related problems.

Over the 5 years we have lost some members due to reduced mobility and sadly death. However, the core has been strong, and we gain a few members each year. We are mainly church members, but we have a few from the community and hope to advertise our presence more widely.

Place of Welcome – Saint Francis of Assisi Church



Roy
Showing his
sketches

Rev Liz
Contemplating her design



Sue and Janice
Discussing
technique



Roy
Creating
His
arrangement

Crafts – still life sketching
Pottery painting
Flower arranging



Class
members
Hard at work
On their
designs

A Church in, with, and for, the Community



When the Metropolitan Borough of Sandwell was formed it brought together parts of three CofE Dioceses, many Methodist and Baptist groups and varying other churches of disparate denominations. Sandwell Churches Link was formed at this point to help all churches talk to one another and work together when applicable. It wasn't until the late 2010s, when a CIO was formed, and grants were obtained to pay a worker that SCL began to be recognised in many communities. And indeed, it was the pandemic that kick-started the great work which has taken place over the last 5 years.

SCL exists to aid church communities to work together to relieve poverty in all kinds in this borough: ie financial, food, health, isolation.

SCL now has a relationship with Christians Against Poverty, and supports workers throughout the borough, who provide advice and constructive help to people in dept. We help churches survey their local community to see where their help is needed most. In many areas SCL has assisted churches to work together across denominations to assist a wider area. For example, the Brandhall Hub is a group of St Hubert's RC Church, Quinton Parish Church and Kings Community Church (Baptist). The Hub provides a Food Pantry, a School Uniform Bank, a Baby Bank, and a place for people to sit over a hot drink and talk. One day a week they hold a Dementia café. Often specialist workers are available to give support and advice. People from all the churches run these projects together. They have found friendship across the boundaries.

SCL supported St Francis of Assisi Church when we decided to start a Place of Welcome. They have come to this church for Trustees' meetings, and St Francis is represented on the Board of Trustees.

Our Hope for the Future

Our Hope for the Future

We look to the future with hearts full of faith and gratitude for the past, and we pray that God will continue to bless our parish with dedicated leaders, generous hearts, and a renewed spirit of service as we look forward to being joined by a new Parish Priest. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the example of Saint Francis of Assisi we want to continue to be a beacon of hope, a church in, with, and for the community, sharing the unbounded love of Christ.

We want to go forward with the growth and joy that has been the hallmark of Saint Francis of Assisi over the years. While many have been dispirited over the last decade or more, Saint Francis of Assisi has successfully fostered the hope for 'centre of excellence' within the 'traditionalist' constituency from which others might draw inspiration and hope.

Our Hope for a New Priest

Our Hope for a New Priest

We look forward to sharing parish life with a priest, married or single,

who is rooted in God's love, has a deep personal discipline, and will pray with us and for us, especially at the Daily Mass

who already has experience of parish ministry

is committed to the life of a church where Scripture, Tradition and the Sacraments matter, and who can creatively develop our worship and discipleship

is a member of the Society of Saint Wilfrid and Saint Hilda, and a member of the Society of the Holy Cross

who can work collaboratively in the Parish, Deanery, and Diocese

who is approachable and can laugh and cry with us

who will offer ministry generously and openly to the community of Friar Park, especially through the Pastoral Offices

who will help develop leaders for the present and the future

who will gladly work in our neighbourhood schools and care homes

Our Hope for a New Priest



Our Hope for a New Priest

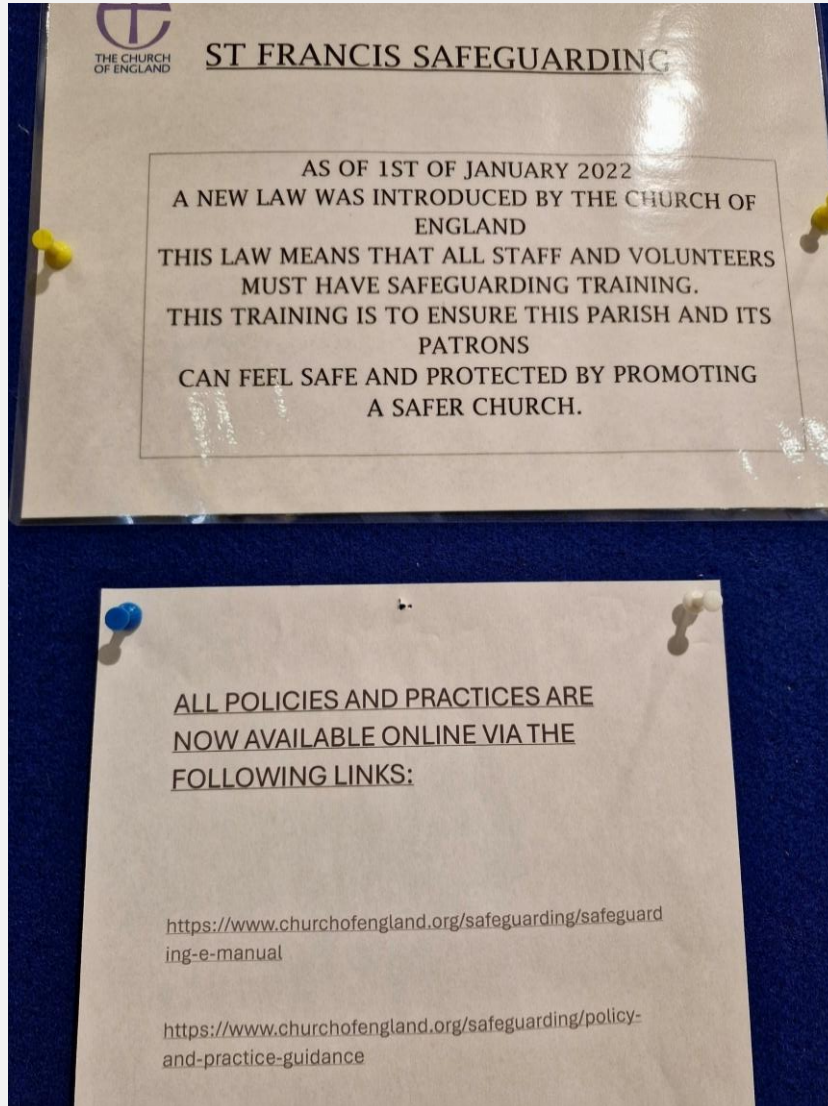
We are also looking to appoint a priest who can show that he:

Has experience or knowledge of leading churches in change and in growth (numerical and spiritual)

Has experience of work in community outreach and development.

Is a good communicator and listener with a sense of humour, who can relate easily to each and all. Someone to support and help develop new initiatives, as we strive to find new ways to fulfil the religious needs of the young people of the community.

Staffing



Safeguarding

Safeguarding is an important part of the ethos for all our parishioners at St Francis of Assisi and is taken very seriously, to ensure inclusivity, well-being and safety for all.

With this in mind we currently have 30 plus, staff and volunteers, who have undertaken safeguarding training, through the church of England portal or by face to face training, delivered by our current safeguarding officer (for those who are not computer literate).

All Sunday school leaders, PCC members and persons who have social interaction with children or vulnerable adults have undergone DBS checks and are listed on the safeguarding board, which is now a legal requirement for all churches.

The church has a defibrillator and 16 people are waiting to complete up to date first aid and CPR training through the local council, which will be funded by the Walter Stanley Trust.

Overall our safeguarding is up to date, current and functions very well.

Staffing

P.C.C.

The PCC consists of eleven members , including two Churchwardens, The Treasurer (who is currently acting as secretary for the PCC), Safeguarding Officer and representatives on the Deanery Synod.

Serving Team

The serving team consists of people who carry the cross, the acolyte candles and the thurible, this allows for rotation of duties and cover when some are unable to attend church.

There is also a team of members who share the duties for reading the prayers and Bible readings, Teams also include those who distribute the Blessed Sacrament. Holy Communion is taken to some of the sick by a lay person

Church Cleaning Team

The church cleaning team consists of volunteer's that meet every Friday morning to carry out duties such as dusting, sweeping , mopping, vacuuming and polishing.

Each individual has a designated duty. It is all hands-on deck if one or more of the team cannot attend the cleaning session.

It is a privilege to clean such a beautiful church, and pride is taken in our duties. It is felt that the efforts and hard work go towards welcoming and inviting worshipers into St Francis of Assisi Church

Welcoming Team

The welcoming team consists of members who work in pairs on a rotational basis, one on the doors and the other on giving out the service sheets and weekly news letter.

Housing



Vicarage

The Vicarage is a large and gracious detached property adjacent to the church, dating from 1937, the outer door of which opens into a small porch and an inner double-glazed door which in turn opens onto a parquet-floored hall, with cloakroom and downstairs toilet off to the left.

The house is furnished with a burglar alarm on a maintenance contract paid by the Parish, and the main key pad is in the hall, operated either by a key fob or alarm code (there is a second key pad upstairs in the airing cupboard operated by code alone).

There is a large study with 12m of book shelving. There is a gas fire in addition to central heating. The land-line is now digital and the Wi-Fi router is in the study (with a broadband extended in the kitchen at the far end of the house).

There are two large reception rooms immediately opposite the main door, with a connecting door in between, and bays in each with French doors leading into the enclosed rear garden, mainly to lawn. Both rooms have central heating plus gas fires.

Housing



Vicarage

There is a small utility area with plumbing for a washing machine and space for a tumble drier between hallway and kitchen. The kitchen itself is large and was recently refurbished, and there is plumbing for a dishwasher and spaces for a cooker and a freestanding fridge-freezer. There are no built in appliances.

Off the kitchen there is a small breakfast room (which can take a table for six), and also a large pantry which remains very cool even in the summer.

Beyond the kitchen, there is a covered walkway between house and garage with two stores off, and an enclosed back yard, with a new replaced lockable garden gate. The boiler house holds a recently replaced boiler which feeds the gas-fired central heating system to every part of the house.

Broad stairs lead to the upper landing, where there is one bathroom (with shower over bath), a separate toilet, and five bedrooms (three double, two single) and a box room with window. There is ladder access to the boarded loft.

Housing



Vicarage

Interior front and back doors and all windows are double-glazed, the loft has been insulated, the house has cavity wall insulation, and the roof and rainwater goods recently replaced, and the chimneys repointed.

There is a single garage attached to the house with an automatic fob-operated roller door.

The house is maintained in good condition, and there are modest plans for modernisation. Decoration throughout will be undertaken by the Parish for the new priest (thanks to the Walter Stanley Trust)

Administration and Finance

Finance

The finances of Saint Francis of Assisi are in good stead. Members of the congregation and the surrounding community are extremely generous. This was shown during Covid where the community surrounding the church, who were not members of the congregation, set up a Facebook Just Giving page to ensure the church did not suffer any financial loss. We are extremely fortunate to also be supported by the Walter Stanley Trust, and further details of the Trust can be found following this section.

Our largest ongoing expenditure in any year is the Parish Share, which for 2025 stood at £29,385 with a forecast for future years as follows:

2026	£29,973
2027	£30,572
2028	£31,183

Saint Francis of Assisi has always prioritised paying the Parish Share and through previous planning strategies we are in the enviable position of anticipating being in credit at the end of 2025.

Finance

Following a Quinquennial in 2023 all major work has been completed, and we do not foresee any major building expense in the foreseeable future. There is no parish debt on the building.

Carried forward 2023	£ 76,409.61
Total Income 2024	£245,721.00
Total Expenditure 2024	£253,630.47
Carried Forward to 2025	£ 68,500.14

Bank Accounts	Total 2024	Unrestricted	Restricted
Barclays Current	£ 68,500.14	£ 68,500.14	
CCLA Restricted held by S Francis of Assisi	£ 123,090.40		£ 123,090.40
CCLA Deposit Fund Lichfield DBF	£ 62,078.33		£ 62,078.33
			£ -
			£ -
	£ 253,668.87	£ 68,500.14	£ 185,168.73

There is also a CAP Investment Fund which stands at £54,199.61 but is restricted for use for the church fabric, goods and ornaments.

The Walter Stanley Trust

Along with the rest of the West Bromwich Deanery, the Parish benefits from monies from the Walter Stanley Trust. A charity established in 1613 by a gift of land from local man Walter Stanley to provide a preacher for the parish of West Bromwich. Since that time the scope and value of the charity has grown. Its formal objective is now the advancement of the Church of England within the West Bromwich Deanery for the benefit of the public and it is valued in excess of 14 million pounds. The Trust is therefore able to provide funds to assist the deanery churches in a very wide variety of ways.

For deanery clergy, it contributes to the Diocese towards their stipends. It pays a settling in allowance of £5000 towards removal and other costs to clergy joining the deanery. It funds decorating, maintenance and CCTV costs for vicarages

The Trust also funds some parish workers in the Deanery, particularly to assist with outreach and growing the church with families and children. To remove some of the calls on clergy and church time, an annual grant of £14,000 is made towards church administration and music costs.

Courses for clergy and lay workers and attendance at conferences are also covered.

In addition, the Trust helps with costs of repair and maintenance of church buildings, church halls and parsonage houses usually making grants of 100% for work required by legislation, health and safety and for security and 90% for quinquennial work, also funding the full costs of inspection reports. 90% of the cost of the Saint Francis of Assisi car park and non Health and Safety quinquennial work were funded by the Trust. This is reflected in the excellent condition of the church

The Trustees also look to help and encourage the missionary work of the churches and have awarded Saint Francis of Assisi church a jubilee bursary of £40,000 for this, of which only £10,000 has been utilised at present. In these difficult financial times the existence of the Trust is the most wonderful blessing for our church and our priest enabling us all to concentrate on growing the word, rather than just fund raising.

Fundraising & Social Life

Fundraising

Seasonal highlights such as the Christmas Fayre and the lively Summer Fayre are especially notable, drawing not only parishioners but also neighbours, filling the church grounds with music, laughter and the delights of homemade crafts and refreshments. These occasions embody the spirit of fellowship and community that is the hallmark of Saint Francis of Assisi. Tabletop sales are a popular and very welcomed part of community, as Friar Park is a low social economic area. These are held 3 to 4 times a year, with all contributions for these sales, coming from parishioners and local community, who also attend and support on the day. Sales are always in the region of £500 plus, which allows for a healthy contribution to the churches upkeep. Raffles are also very popular and take place about every 6 to 8 weeks. These raffles consist of contributed and gifted goods by the parishioners and form the substance of these raffles, which again bring a healthy contribution to the church.

Our parishioners are very gracious and charitable, which allows for the regularity of raffles and for this we are truly thankful. Saint Francis of Assisi also does a lot of fundraising for external charities such as 'Let the Children Live' and 'The Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd'. We have recently donated to Let the Children Live using funds collected during our Lenten observance plus we regularly donate food / sundries to the Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd, usually sending off boxes filled with supplies. We also collect Chocolate selection boxes at Christmas and Easter Eggs at Easter to donate to the Little Brothers, so that children that would normally go without, can have a little bit of joy during these holidays.

Fundraising & Social Life

Social life

Over the years, Saint Francis of Assisi Church has hosted a wide array of events, many of which have been very well attended. The most popular include the annual Burns Night, Family Bingo evenings and unique Quiz nights. The church has celebrated occasions such as the coronation of King Charles III with an afternoon tea, and has hosted Harvest Suppers, Talent evenings and its ever-popular cream teas. At the conclusion of each event, attendees are assured of leaving after an evening filled with fun and laughter - a priority in the Parish community.

The church community has also enjoyed day trips to places such as Liverpool, Emmerdale and Last of the Summer Wine countryside, Cheshire Oaks, local theatres, Blackpool, and the Black Country Museum. The walking club offers members the chance to explore local beauty spots and savour local cuisine. These outings provide enormous health benefits, and just as importantly, connect participants with the splendour of nature, through which God's beauty and creativity are revealed.

Fundraising & Social Life



Social life

The church community have also enjoyed their fair share of Pilgrimages. A few of our members join the annual pilgrimage to Our Lady's Shrine at Walsingham and up until recently we joined the annual Pilgrimage to Glastonbury Abbey which was always a special event. The church community have just recently experienced a Pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi where we followed in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi whilst also visiting the beautiful Basilicas and various destinations / attractions of Rome and the Vatican. We also had a recent Pilgrimage, in 2019, to the Holy Land where Pilgrims travelled to Holy Sites in and around Nazareth, Sea of Galilee, River Jordan, Jerusalem and even Bethlehem.

Looking ahead, 2026 promises to be a year brimming with enjoyment, spirit and laughter, complementing the worshipping life of the church wherever these events may lead.'