

PARISH OF ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS, SANDHURST – A PROFILE (April 2021)

1. *The Church – who we are*

St Michael's is an Anglican Church, in the Diocese of Oxford, which seeks to offer a welcome to people of all ages and varied church background. In the past year we have run services in the church, open to all, as far as Government restrictions have allowed, and ensured that people who are not able to attend in person can access worship through live-streaming to the church's public Facebook page, or, for the Family Service, via Zoom.

Lay ministry is integral to the life of the church: many of the congregation are actively involved in some aspect of the church's life and activities, including pastoral care and preaching. Regular Sunday services include Holy Communion at 8.00, Parish Communion at 9.30 am, a twice-monthly Family Service at 11.15 am, a monthly service of Contemplative Evening Prayer and a monthly Choral Evensong. The Church is led by the Rector, Rev. John Castle, assisted by two retired clergy, Rev. John White and Rev Jane Kraft.



The church has a strong musical tradition with an active choir and an active PCC. Since December 2016 we have employed a Family Worker, initially part-time, but more recently full-time, thanks to a grant from the Diocese. The church also benefits from the services of a Youthworker provided by a recently created charity, Sandhurst Youth, which is equally funded by St Michael's and the Council. The Youthworker spends 2/3 of his time working in the community. The Rector regularly takes assemblies in our local Church of England

Voluntary-aided Primary School, as well as in two Local Authority Primary Schools. There is an open churchyard, maintained by a team of volunteers. The church's Pastoral Centre is hired by a number of local organisations, including a nursery, as well as for private parties and church events.

The Electoral Roll at the April 2021 APCM stood at 157. In 2019, before the Covid Pandemic, attendance at worship on an average Sunday was 23 children under 16 and 96 adults. Like many Anglican churches, the age group 18-30 is poorly represented. The Family Service attracts mainly people in their 30's and 40's with their children, while the majority of the regular worshippers at the 8.00 and Parish Communion Services are aged over 60.

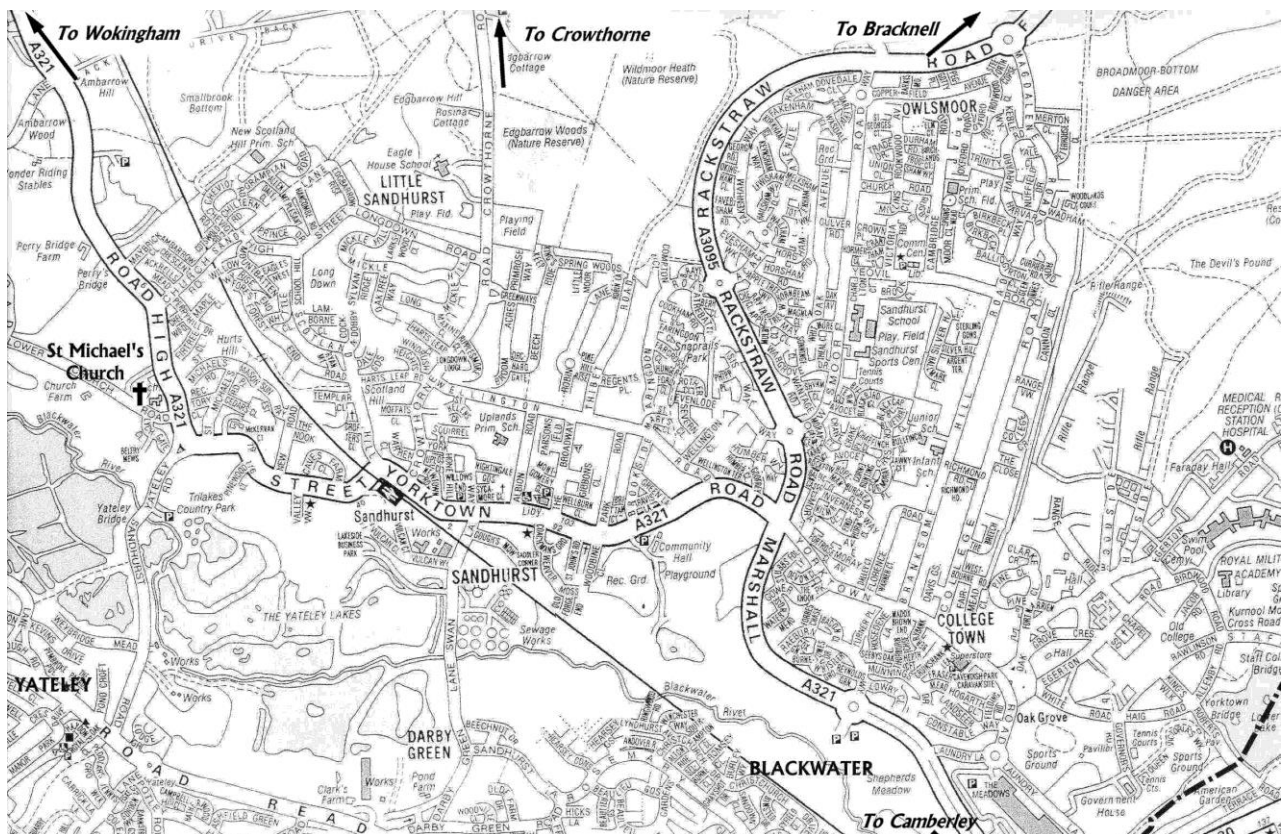
The church building is Grade 2* listed, but has a modern audio-visual system and equipment for live-streaming services. Nearby is our Pastoral Centre, which contains a large hall with a fully-equipped kitchen and meeting rooms.

2. The town

The population of the parish is estimated as being around 12,000, with approximately 7,000 living within the adjacent parish of St George's Owlsmoor in the north-east section of the town. From a socio-economic point of view, the population is mainly white lower middle and upper middle class (ABC1&C2). In addition to our church primary school, there are two other local authority primary schools in our parish, to which the Rector makes regular visits. The church has had some involvement, through the Youthworker, in two local secondary schools which are outside the parish, but are attended by children from within the parish (Sandhurst School in St George's parish and Edgebarrow School in Crowthorne parish). Many of the children from St Michael's attend Ranelagh School, a Church of England secondary school in Bracknell.

In the east of the town is the famous Royal Military Academy. There are no formal links between this and the churches, except through the annual town service on Remembrance Sunday.

St Michael's is an active member of Sandhurst Churches Together, which holds monthly ecumenical services, and has held other events in the past including a Community Carol Service and open-air Songs of Praise services, as well as a programme of welcome to residents in a new housing estate.



3. A vision for the Parish

The Church Council adopted in 2014 a Parish Purpose of:

- Knowing God for ourselves
- Growing as individuals and as a church
- Showing God's love in the world

Some of the ways we seek to fulfil these aims include preaching and teaching, nurturing and developing individuals and our sense of Christian community, outreach to the community and supporting charities at a local, national and international level.

Nurturing children and young people has been an important part of the outworking of this vision. The Church has run a well-attended a Baby and Toddler group fortnightly for a number of years, which for many parents provides a first contact with the church. During the 9.30 am Parish Communion Service there is a Sunday School (“Kidz Church”), and a youth meeting (“Reach”) is currently run on Sunday afternoons on Zoom, as well as Sunday evening Youth Club. Inevitably these activities have been affected by the recent pandemic.



Confirmation of adults and children, with First Communion, July 2019

On alternate weeks at 11.15 am there is an informal Family Service which is intended to be easily accessible to families with small children and those not familiar with more formal services. There are also small groups for teenagers that meet during the week. The Church has a policy of preparing children to receive communion prior to confirmation, as well as confirmation preparation for teenagers, using the *Youth Emmaus* course. In addition, the current Family Worker has run a meeting (“Bible Bites”) for children in years 5 and 6 on a Monday, initially in St

Michael’s School and latterly in the church or on Zoom.

Adult nurture is provided through house groups and the *Start* and *Moving On* courses. We have also run the CPAS *Growing Leaders* course, to enable people to grow into leadership within the church, and have had a small number of people involved in a mentoring scheme.

Particular opportunities for outreach in our context are through the “occasional offices” of Baptism (about 30 per year), Weddings (about 7 per year) and Funerals (about 40 per year); through work in schools; and through the involvement of individuals in voluntary and social groups in the town. Other possibilities could open up through collaboration with other churches and statutory agencies, e.g. the Family Worker has links with the Children's Centre in College Town (within the neighbouring parish of Owlsmoor), who have attended Baby and Toddler Time fortnightly to run a craft activity.

There is also a team of visitors who take communion to housebound elderly people and several local care homes, and bereavement visitors to follow up relatives after a funeral. Two memorial services per year are held to which relatives of those whose funerals we have conducted are invited. Many members of the church are active in a personal capacity in local community voluntary organisations and the Town Council.



In good weather we sometimes hold the Family Service outdoors.