

# St Alkmund's and Music: Review 2021



## **Our Church Mission Statement is:**

**Our church is a place where all are welcome and God can be found.**

We seek to:

build up our spiritual life through prayer and teaching,  
actively encourage lay involvement in mission and outreach,  
and share the good news of the Gospel with the whole community.

## **We believe that music has a key role to play in each aspect of that Mission Statement:**

### **All are welcome:**

This means we recognise that

- There needs to be a wide range of music – styles and accompaniment – “a coat of many colours” and that this needs to unite rather than divide us
- There need to be wide opportunities for involvement in music – an attitude of inclusiveness, remembering that the social demographic of our parishes is very wide
- We should not be limited to this country's Christian music culture

### **God can be found:**

This means we recognise that

- Music in worship can draw people into the presence of God and send them out for service in God's world, in a unique way
- Music in and from the church can celebrate the creativity that God gives us and can open a way to relationship with God
- Relationships between those involved in music need to be loving and point towards God as the source of all love

### **We seek to build up our spiritual life through prayer and teaching**

This means we recognise that

- Music has an important part to play in prayer and in Christian nurture
- The choice of music within our services will be part of the Christian formation of those present: both the words and the melodies
- Hymns, songs and psalms enhance worship, deepen prayer, provide a way to respond in discipleship, remind us of a call to serve and strengthen Christian fellowship
- Participation in Christian music is a core part of the spirituality of some church members

### **We seek to actively encourage lay involvement in mission and outreach**

This means we recognise that

- All ages and all levels of musical ability can be called to involvement
- Music within our Mission and Outreach includes:
  - Our schools

- Our town events
- Messy Church
- Time Together
- Our Community Hospital and Care Homes
- Our baptisms and baptism follow up
- Our funerals and weddings
- Our special services and events – remembering that music can be so helpful in celebration, in grief and in challenging injustice
- Our regular services

### **We seek to share the good news of the Gospel with the whole community**

This means that

- We take seriously (and joyfully!) the mission and outreach mentioned above
- We hope that a joy and vibrancy in music will be ‘infectious’ and attractive
- We work in musical partnership with our benefice parishes of Fauls and Tilstock, with other Churches in Whitchurch, with the Schools and with other Community groups
- We recognise that music can be a ‘way in’ to Christian commitment: with the inclusivity mentioned above, the Body of Christ faces outwards and grows
- We are hospitable with our resources – and welcome concerts

### **Where have we come from?**

#### **FTW Benefice**

- We have been working together for a number of years, supporting each other’s services and having joint services on the 4 occasions each year when there is a fifth Sunday in the month
- Hymns Old and New (One Church, One Faith, One Lord) is the hymn book used in all three churches. Projection has not been used greatly in any of the churches and is difficult at St Alkmund’s because of the daylight which can stream into the church and the internal pillars. There are, however, good photocopying facilities at St Alkmund’s, and we hold the CCLI licence for Copyright.

#### **Fauls:**

- Fauls has 2 organists: Lynda Jackson and Dian Holland, but no church choir
- Fauls Singers have strong links to the congregation
- Occasional concerts are put on – sometimes in the Hall and sometimes in Church
- There are strong links with Lower Heath Primary School
- One service each Sunday: Morning Worship, Evensong or Holy Communion (used to sing this to Marbeck)

#### **Tilstock**

- Tilstock has one organist: Ted Chegwin
- There are strong links with Tilstock Primary School
- There are strong links with a Folk group “Nobody’s Jig” who have played on regularly on Christmas Eve and once at a Rogation Service
- One service each Sunday: Morning Worship or Holy Communion

## Whitchurch

- St Alkmund's has 3 services each Sunday
  - 8.00am BCP Communion (said)
  - 10.00am CW Communion (some liturgical parts sung)
  - 6.30pm BCP Choral Evensong (with a choir anthem)
- St Alkmund's has attracted skilled organists and choir leaders because of its organ and its acoustic; this in turn has led to a predominantly traditional church choral music style and repertoire with some congregational singing and some choir pieces – especially at Evensong
- Its most recent heyday for Choral Music was around 15 to 20 years ago
- The 10.00am has embraced some more modern settings, hymns and songs but they are not what would be termed contemporary worship songs
- There have been attempts to introduce more 'currently unknown' songs, which have had varying success; the keyboard has sometimes been used to accompany these, and also the hymns / songs sung during the administration of communion
- The organ is serviced / tuned regularly and the manuals have recently been re-felted; the piano is tuned as needed
- There has been a division between 10.00am and 6.30pm organists / choir leaders and practices. Whilst the earlier practice was termed being for Junior Choir – this has continued when there have been very low numbers or no members under 18 and yet has been the only choir practice for the 10.00am. Not all the adults in the 10.00am choir have attended this earlier practice on a sustained and regular basis.
- Numbers in both choirs have been going down for some years
- David Clarke – Director of Music for the 6.30pm – had one leg amputated towards the end of 2019; we hoped that he would return in some capacity but Covid intervened
- There is a stock of choir copies of anthems that have been used at Evensong
- Bob Fowler – organist & choir master at the 10.00am – died in December 2020
- Ted Chegwin has been asked and is keen to start up some kind of instrumental music group (possibly singing too) which none of the 3 churches has experienced for regular Sunday worship
- Boyne Clarke and Angela Davies play the organ for Evensong, both say that they are struggling with deafness
- Each of the three churches have weddings and funerals – but the bulk of these are at St Alkmund's – the same is true of concerts; St Alkmund's also hosts larger Memorial services for quite a few of the village parishes around, and Civic Services too
- The current organist fee for funerals is £68 and for weddings is £114; the average annual number of funerals requiring an organist at St Alkmund's from 2015 to 2019 is 41 (range 29 to 52); that for weddings is 7.4 (range 5 to 9)
- Not much has been done by the 3 parishes together
- St Alkmund's has hosted many concerts and some Festivals; in recent times some of these have been organised by the Friends of St Alkmund's
- During the Blackberry Fair, the pupils of two local music teachers have performed to family and friends – very low key and informal

- St Alkmund's has good links with the Church Schools (Whitchurch Infant and Junior Academies) and also with the White House School (private primary) and Sir John Talbot's (Secondary)
- St Alkmund's has some links with the Whitchurch Community Choir

### **Where are we now?**

#### **Coronavirus**

- Has greatly affected us in 2020
- Has led to people realising how important music is in the life of our churches: worship, nurture and outreach

#### **Questionnaire responses:**

In January 2020, we sent out a Questionnaire to current church members and to a wide fringe of people. Replies were from St Alkmund's, plus one from Fauls.

#### **Review Summary of Music Questionnaire Replies January 2021**

We had replies from 24 persons of middle-age and upwards and (by or on behalf of) 7 persons under 30 including children.

Of the older group, 20 attend the 10am service; 12 attend the 6.30 pm service (11 of whom also attend the 10 am); one is a recent evening choir retiree and one is not yet a member of our congregation. There were no responses from '8 o'clock-ers'. Ten sing (or did until recently) in the choir.

This represents the majority of choir members and approximately 25% of other usual attendees for St Alkmund's.

All responses were positive and appreciative of the musical offering to date including concerts citing variously: quality of organ and choir, live music, and range of music.

Going forward most wanted more of the same with a hope that more of all ages but especially youngsters could be drawn into choir membership. The great majority also made some reference to the inclusion in worship going forward of more modern music and of using other instrumentals in addition to the organ. There is an approximately 50:50 split between those who mention this as their own preference for variety and those who mention it primarily in the belief that it would attract new and younger worshippers.

The younger group comprises 2 children, 3 teenagers and 2 20-somethings. They also speak of the 'amazing' organ, their enjoyment of learning new hymns and songs and sharing them with the congregation, the choir members mention the pride and goose-bumps of being in procession during a hymn such as 'Thine be the Glory' and the younger ones mention their enjoyment of rounds and action songs.

Going forward they also speak of more of the same with the inclusion of more new hymns, 'changing up' with opportunities for the choir to show-off and the inclusion of instrumentals. Some also reminisced about the days of a bigger choir.

**In general, therefore, we find ourselves at a potentially exciting point of being able to think 'from scratch' – trying to discern God's direction for us in music as a parish and as a benefice. This document crystallises our journey so far and our hopes for the future.**

**Blue Sky Thinking** (what came up when we dreamed dreams): to be read in conjunction with the links to our Mission Statement on pages 1 and 2

### **Leadership:**

- One or two practising Christians: may be good to have different skills and be able to have a conductor as well as an accompanist
- Team player(s)
- Work by encouragement about what is good more than by criticism of what is not
- Ability to build on what we have now but also to bring in new styles and accompaniments:
  - Organ (and offering organ tuition)
  - Instruments of a wide range
  - Choral tradition, Modern Worship songs Iona, Taize, Gospel Music, Folk Music
  - Choir, music group, band
- Ability in and enthusiastic about:
  - creating musical 'groups' which are a core part of the life and mission of the church – in their internal culture, their welcoming of others and their willingness to be involved in events beyond Sunday services as well as within them
  - involving children, young people and adults
  - working with others inside and outside the churches
  - working with all levels of musical ability
  - upskilling our singing: community, congregation, choir
  - encouraging volunteers to take on musical leadership
- Willing to try things out: to build on what works and to leave behind what does not

### **What might be in place:**

- A stronger choir or singing group
- An Instrumental group – with or without singers
- A skilled organist
- More musical links with our schools
- A Children's Community Choir / Church & Schools Choir (possibly leading onto participation in a Church Music Award scheme: Voices for Life or RSCM awards)
- A Youth Band
- Times when Choir / Singers split up and 'dot' around the congregation

- A change in pattern of services: unsure about a further split in musical and liturgical styles between services or within the main service
- Musical workshops for people to 'have a go'
- An effective method of introducing music new to the particular congregation likely to be gathered
- A range of styles of Christian music
  - On any occasion – enough current repertoire that those likely to attend to be familiar with but also learning things that are new to them
  - Drawing on the Christian music of other countries – perhaps especially those of our Link Missionaries (Kenya and Pakistan)
- More musical input and participation for Baptisms, Messy Church, Time Together, the Community Hospital and our Care Homes
- More joint 'music occasions' for the whole FTW benefice and with other churches in Whitchurch; a joint FTW choir &/or band might be formed for one-off rehearsals for special services
- A rich and varied programme of concerts

**How do we move from where we are now  
to where we discern we are called by God to be**

- An evolutionary approach – people need to feel secure enough to try new things
- We want current congregations and choir to move forward with us whilst not being backward looking to 'we've always done it this way', nor fettered by 'we've tried that before and it didn't work'
- We want to see who applies for this post / these posts and to appoint the person / the combination of people who share our vision and have the Christian attitudes, musical expertise and inter-personal skills to take us forward

**Job Description & Person Specification: see separate documents**

**Appendix: pages 7-13**

- The setting of the three churches
- The Interior of St Alkmund's Church
- Photographs of School Services and Concerts
- Information about
  - The organ
  - The piano
  - The keyboard
  - The sound system
- Statistics from recent years for St Alkmund's  
(Average usual Sunday attendance in 2019 for Fauls = 15; for Tilstock = 11)

More general information about St Alkmund's can be found on:  
[www.stalkmunds.com](http://www.stalkmunds.com)

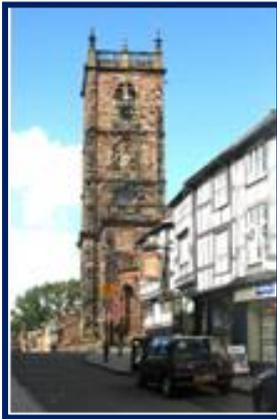
## Appendix

### The setting of the FTW benefice which has a Rectory, a Curate-in-training, a retired (active) priest and a Reader

#### Summary:

A combination of rural, semi-rural and Market Town – with the latter having some marked deprivation. Each parish has one CoE church.

#### THE PARISH SETTING OF WHITCHURCH:



St Alkmund's is the parish church of the town of Whitchurch. The current building was consecrated in 1713. The population of Whitchurch is approximately 10,000 (and growing) and is sociologically mixed. The town has many visitors, some of whom walk up from the nearby canal.

St Alkmund's church building is the main landmark in the town and thus a key tourist attraction.

Whitchurch is in North Shropshire, less than 2 miles from both Cheshire & Wales.



Whitchurch is best described as a **Market Town** with strong rural links and a little light industry. It has good transport links for road (being at the junction of the A41 and A49) and rail (regular services to Crewe and Shrewsbury).

There are areas of deprivation as well as of relative wealth. Housing is mixed, with much new building on a small scale taking place. More people commute to work outside Whitchurch than *vice versa*. Work in Whitchurch is mainly in the retail / service sectors with a few professionals also. The biggest employer is GroContinental.

Many in the community relate strongly to St Alkmund's as 'their church'. The depth of this fringe around the core worshipping community is demonstrated by the attendance at Christmas Crib Services (approx. 1,000) and the fact that most funerals, baptisms and marriages from the town take place here. The building has a good sound system, including a hearing loop, and has recently transformed access for disabled people with a permanent ramp to the main entrance.

Both the Infant/Nursery and Junior Schools are Church of England Schools with strong links to St Alkmund's, including services held in church and special events for each year group of the Junior School. There is a secondary school (Sir John Talbot's) with which we have growing links; we also have good links with a private primary school: The White House School.

In addition to a community hospital (in which we started a Chaplaincy Team during 2015), there are a number of residential and nursing homes. Communion services are held in five of these once a month.

## THE PARISH SETTING OF FAULS

Fauls is a rural parish, scattered geographically but with a strong sense of community. It lies approximately 6 miles south of Whitchurch, down the A41. Its population is approximately 350.



The Church of **Holy Immanuel** was consecrated on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1856 and seats 130. It is in good condition with hearing loop and disabled facilities. About 100 yards from the Church there is an excellent church hall, which is adjacent to the

caretaker's house, and is well used by groups in Fauls as well as for events involving the 3 parishes.

The people of Holy Immanuel, Fauls maintain an excellent and vibrant community spirit, including regular Sunday lunches and other social events in the Hall.

The school linked to this parish is Lower Heath CE (C) Primary School.

Scarecrow Trail in Fauls



## THE PARISH SETTING OF TILSTOCK

**Christ Church Tilstock** was consecrated in the 1830's. The Vicarage and Cemetery are situated across the road from the church and the CoE (C) Primary School.

The village of Tilstock continues to grow, with a recent housing development, and a modern Village Hall, and there are plans for further housing developments. Its current population is approximately 920. It lies between the towns of Whitchurch and Wem – approximately 3 miles south of the former (*i.e.* between Fauls and Whitchurch).

As with the other parishes, the number of people working in agriculture has declined over the years but Tilstock remains a rural community. Many commute to towns or cities within a 30 to 40 mile radius but there are some local businesses too.

Within Tilstock there is a thriving Bowls and Tennis Club, a pub and a strong wi.



Preparing to decorate for Easter in Tilstock

## The Interior of St Alkmund's Church



## School Services



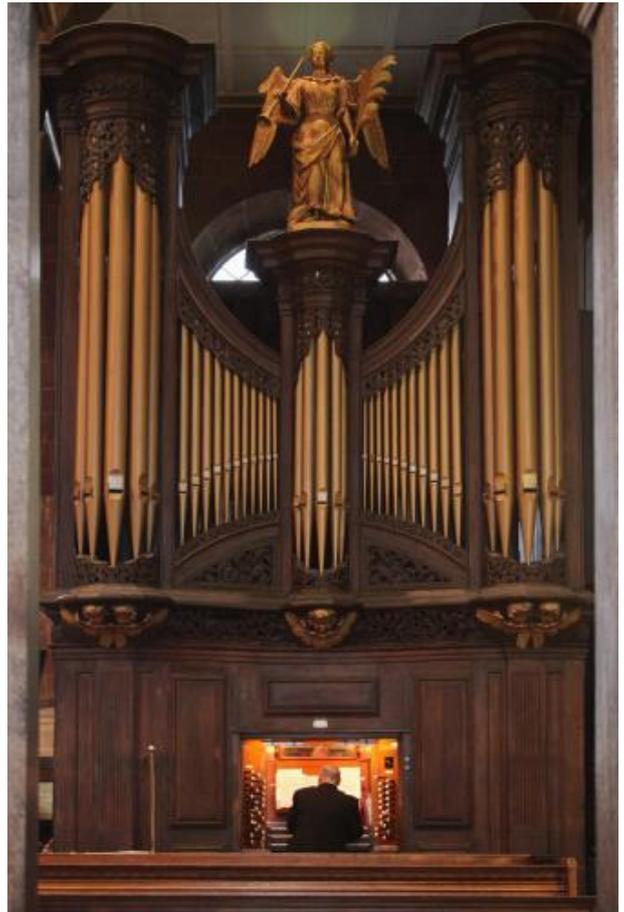
## Concerts



## The organ: a brief history of the Organ in St. Alkmund's Church

The organ case dates from 1714 and is by Marc-Antoine Dallam of York (1673—1730), one of the distinguished Dallam family of organ builders. The organ was commissioned and paid for by the Earl of Bridgewater, Scroop Egerton, 4th Earl of Bridgewater (1681—1745) patron of the church at the time. Dallam's instrument was replaced by a Manchester organ builder, Richard Parker in 1755 with a three manual organ in the West Gallery. Three hundred pounds for a completely new organ seems unlikely so Parker probably rebuilt the old instrument, or at any rate used some of it, retaining the old case. Much of the 1755 organ is still in use, the majority of the choruses on the Great and the Choir are by Parker and the flute trebles on the Swell are also thought to be by him.

In 1805 John Kelly of The Strand, London repaired and enlarged the organ with the addition of two Trumpets. The organ was further repaired in 1810 and in 1830 Bewsher of Liverpool further enlarged the instrument. In 1853 Jackson of Liverpool rebuilt the organ with 39 stops and 2058 pipes and in 1894 Peter Conacher removed the organ from the West Gallery and rebuilt the instrument in its current location. It was fitted with "the maker's patent pneumatic pallets to make the touch light and even".



*Musical Standard June 1894/BBE*

In 1966 Hill, Norman and Beard restored, cleaned and repaired the organ with the addition of a Balanced Swell pedal, concave radiating pedal board, and a Swell Contra Fagotto 16. A Tierce was added to the Great sometime after this work. The organ was again restored in 1998 by the organ builder Jim Molineux with the change of action to electro-pneumatic for the pedal action, while retaining the mechanical action for the manuals.

The composer Sir Edward German (1862-1936) learned to play the organ on this instrument. It is still in regular use for Sunday and weekdays services and attracts the attention of organists from near and far.

**Dr R A Fowler**  
**Mus.Doc, MA, FWTC, LLSM**

**Baby Grand Piano**



Kindly donated  
by Dr R A Fowler



**Keyboard:**  
Yamaha Portable Grand DGX620





### **Official description**

Lite voices resulting in remarkable sonic quality, far beyond anything in its price point. A large LCD screen capable of displaying Score and Lyrics, USB and Smart Media storage. The quality is enhanced by the inclusion of two-way speakers and bass ports for high fidelity sound

It's the key action that makes the DGX620 so good. It plays and feels like a real piano, and at this price is just unbelievable. You have all the benefits of the traditional keyboard, superb rhythms and sounds making the music we create sound great and this motivates us. We can play piano when the mood grabs us and have all the expression and feel of a traditional acoustic instrument.

Packed with professional performance features such as a 6-track sequencer, the DGX620 remains easy to carry and can be battery operated. With over 480 voices and touch response, your playing can be as expressive as on an acoustic instrument. The DGX620 offers a versatile selection of over 400 voices, including incredibly realistic Piano voices, XG voices and new Sweet, Live, Cool and Natural voices. Sweet voices capture the delicate nuances of wind and brass instruments. Live voices accurately reproduce the unique characteristics of acoustic instruments and cool voices the subtlest tones of electronic instruments. .

The Piano Sound on the Yamaha DGX620 is exceptional for a keyboard of this price. Piano and strings balance perfectly with each other, creating a wonderful orchestral sound, whilst keeping to the discipline of playing Piano

### **Yamaha DGX620 Specifications**

- 88 full size, Piano weighted, touch sensitive keys
- full size keys allow piano-style performance.
- Touch sensitivity gives added expression.
- 88 keys represent the full 7 1/4 octave range of a grand piano
- 32-note polyphony - allows you to play up to 32 notes simultaneously
- Compatibility allows playback of GM and XG Lite files when connected to a MIDI sequencer.
- Live, Sweet & Cool
- 494 AWM voices (GM and XG Lite compatible) inc.
- digitally recorded instruments, using Yamaha's AWM technology for superior sound.
- Live, Sweet & Portable Grand - specially selected Yamaha grand piano, recorded in stereo
- Reverb, chorus and DSP effects - adds an extra dimension to any performance

- Dual/Split - play two instruments simultaneously or a different instrument to two areas of the keyboard
  - 150 preset accompaniments, with 2 variations
  - adds exciting instrumental backings to accompany any melody, with intros, fills, endings and 2 variations for verse and chorus
  - 135 One Touch Settings - will select a suitable voice for every accompaniment style
  - Auto Harmony - adds chordal harmony based on a single note
  - Pitch bend wheel - lets you modify the pitch of notes in real time
  - 320 x 240 dot LCD display - allows graphic displays of keyboard features, scores and lyrics
  - 8 registration memory banks with 2 pads - you are able to save your own voice and style combinations
  - Yamaha Education Suite 4 - includes new 'Your Tempo' and Repeat and Learn' facilities
  - 100 Preset Songs (30 Onboard, 70 on CD-Rom) inc.
  - Easy Song Arranger and
  - Performance Assistant -advanced facilities make a beginner sound like a professional
  - 6-track sequencer with Flash RQM 8,
  - SMF save facility - save your performances and export them to a PC
  - USB MIDI Connection - allows you to connect your keyboard via USB to other MIDI compatible hardware
  - PC button inc.
  - Local On/Off - configures the keyboard for use with a PC
  - Foot Switch socket - allows connection of an FC4/5 foot switch for sustain.
  - FC5 footswitch included.
  - Headphone socket for private practice
  - Luxury, matching stand included
  - Speakers 2x 12cm 2x 3cm
  - Amplification 6w x 2
  - Dimensions 1380mm x 430mm x 173 mm
- Weight 18kg Keyboard Stand 8kg

### **Basic Sound System: we are looking to upgrade this**

- Installed for speaking voices primarily
- Has ability to play CDs and to plug in other devices
- Good hearing loop
- 5 channels
- 2 speakers for main body of church; 1 speaker for Chancel; all speakers recently upgraded

## Statistics for St Alkmund's, Whitchurch

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 <small>Covid 19</small>
Electoral Roll	156	175	179	181	176	169	144	155
ASA(*) adult	111	113	114	114	109	108	100	58**
ASA(*) u16	12	10	9	7	9	6	4	4**
8.00am			15.4	15.3	13.2	12.3	11.0	7.0**
10.00am			90	87	87	78	76.4	44.0**
6.30pm (new)			17.3	18.6	15.5	17	16.5	10.0**
6.30pm (total)			25.6	23.2	25	26	25	17.0**
Easter Communicants (**)	174	150	184	167	193	148	136	----
Easter Attendees (**)	453	203	442	205	478	189	172	-----
Advent Special 1	436	?	?	173	333	250	255	158
Advent Special 2	1240	1850	1675	1250	1340	1260	1455	0
Christmas Communicants	155	162	152	190	153	116	125	82
Christmas Attendees	1040	1196	1248	1254	1218	1092	1092	102
Baptisms (u16)	52	33	35	39	38	20	29	11
Baptisms (adult)	1	2	1	7	2	0	0	1
Funerals (w church service)	48	42	40	41	65	55	46	21
Funerals (at Crem only)	9	12	21	20	21	14	19	55
Interments of Ashes in GoR						12	10	15
Weddings	4	9	10	9	9	9	10	0
Prayer & Dedication of Marriages	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Prayer & Dedication of Marriages	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0

(\*) ASA = Average Sunday Attendance, Includes Harvest and Mothering Sundays but excludes Baptisms, Easter, Remembrance, Christingle, Memorial & Thanksgiving and Carol Services  
**Advent Special** (Advent Sunday to 23rd Dec): **1** for congregation & local community; **2** for civic organisations and schools, **(\*\*) Boosted in 2013, 2015 & 2017 by Easter Eve Confirmations, 2020: Covid-19 effects noticeable - including that ASA figures are from October only**