

Statement of Need

Liturgical space now

All Saints' is rooted in the catholic tradition, and Mass is celebrated every Sundays and several times a week. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle placed on the High Altar. In pre-pandemic times a team of four to six servers and twelve to sixteen choir members joined facilitated worship at the main Sunday service along with the Parish Priest; with the Liturgy of the Word being led from the nave and the Liturgy of the Sacrament from the sanctuary.

As part of the renewal of All Saints' and in order to improve the quality of our worship, the PCC wishes to partly refurbish the sanctuary and chancel, highlight the position of the High Altar, and increase devotion to the Eucharist.

We already have taken steps in this direction. The outer fabric of the chancel has been extensively repaired as part of the NLHF funded restoration completed in 2019; carpeting in the sanctuary and chancel has been removed to expose and highlight historical features (this was damaging both the ledger stones and funerary brasses); redundant furniture accumulated there over the decades (e.g., spare chairs) has been relocated; the altar has been relocated against the east wall; and floors and choir stalls have been sympathetically cleaned and polished.



Sanctuary and High Altar Aug 2015



Sanctuary and High Altar Aug 2021

The new triptych

The triptych has been gifted to All Saints' Parish Church by a member of the congregation with the view of having installed above the High Altar in place of the current reredos, in memory of Fr Colin Gay, Honorary Assistant Priest from 2002 to 2015. Houghton Regis PCC unanimously support this plan.

The triptych's central panel measures 210cm by 131cm, and the side panels 105cm by 131cm. It can be closed during Lent and Passiontide remaining at 210cm in width. It depicts Christ in glory with the BVM and St John the Evangelist in the central panel, St George and St John the Baptist in the right section, St Wilfrid and St Theodore of Amasea in the left panel.

The piece was painted by Nechita Laurentiu, a talented Romanian icon writer, using authentic gold leaf. The artist has worked for the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and he has a number of pieces displayed in UK church (e.g. the "Frank Weston altar" at St Matthew's Willesden). The triptych was commissioned in 2007 for Preston Minster by the vicar, Fr Timothy Lipscomb, and the PCC at the price of £6,000. It was placed above the High Altar, encased between the back riddel posts. However, it was sold off in 2020 to a church furniture dealer, where it was purchased by a parishioner.

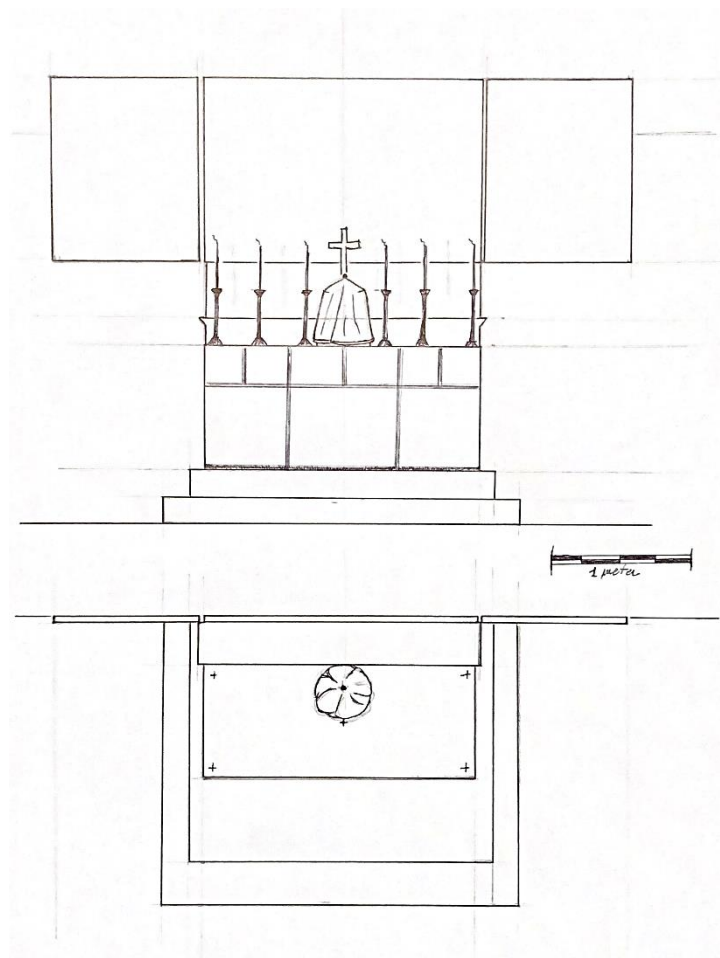


Reordering of the Sanctuary

The PCC is proposing to raise the High Altar on a couple of steps. This new layout would focus worshippers' and visitors' attention towards the Sanctuary and the Blessed Sacrament. Similar plans were discussed on a DAC site visit in 2016, at a time when the Altar was still positioned away from the east wall on a large carpet covering most of the sanctuary. At the time the DAC Visit Report stated as follows,

'the parish suggested that the altar might be raised on a timber plinth. The timber plinth would need to be ventilated and a soft surface added to reduce noise in use. Its installation should be placed in such a way that would not intrude on the ledger stones.' (AC/16/34 point 17)

The PCC therefore proposes that the new wooden dais, installed against the east wall, would be ventilated, and carpeted with suitable material, in accordance with the advice given above. The dais would intrude on a couple of ledger stones in order to provide sufficient space for a priest and two other ministers; however, it would not cover any inscription on the stones.



Sketch of the reordered High Altar with the triptych