

The Parish of St Laurence Northfield



Reports for the Year of 2019

**Parish Office, St Laurence Church and Pastoral Centre
173 Church Road, Northfield, Birmingham B31 2LX
Phone: 0121 475 1518 email: stlaurence@btconnect.com
Registered Charity 1132975**



A Fairtrade Church

Church Wardens' Report

Roy has completed his second year as church warden and has continued to work on most of the fabric and building responsibilities, working closely with Elaine and other members of the Fabric Committee. Debbie has just completed her sixth year as church warden and will be stepping down this year to let someone else take on the role. We would both like to thank the deputy wardens Roger Bannister, Rowena Nicholls, Elaine Clements, Linda Orchard, Martin Corns and everyone else who has assisted us throughout the year.

We have said goodbye and good luck to Father Paul Cho and his family as he took up a new role at St Anne's, West Heath. Father David Pycock (Associate Priest), Father John Richards (ministering in retirement), Claire Whitmore (Ordinand) and Janice Wones (Lay Reader) have continued to support Canon Janet Chapman (Rector) and the congregation for which we are truly grateful. We have enjoyed working alongside Canon Janet and have been thankful for her hard work and always being at the centre of everything going on, ensuring that things go smoothly!

Church attendance on a Sunday has increased slightly from last year, with around 138 adults and children attending across both services each week. Rise and Shine is still a huge success and continues to be held once a month in the Pastoral Centre. Thank you to everyone who helps at these busy services! The quieter service on a Wednesday is still attended by a regular number of 10-15 people each week.

We have welcomed over thirty families who have attended church to secure a place at St Laurence Infant School, and are happy to see that many have continued to worship with us after the number of services required has been reached. Good connections with the local YMCA have been made, with evening prayer and bible study being held there weekly, and at Christmas Gifts were donated by the congregation for YMCA residents and their families. We have held several services at the community gardens in Masefield Gardens, and the Beer and Hymns continues to be popular at the local pub.

We continue to try out new ideas within the church to enhance worship, and look forward to plans for the internal porch being put into action. It has taken a while to happen but needed a lot of careful consideration and funding to ensure we get it exactly right.

Thanks from both of us to:

- the organists
- servers, lesson readers, Sunday school leaders, lay administrators and those who do home communion for the housebound
- sidespeople, welcomers and coffee makers on a Sunday
- those who collect and count gift aid, Children's Society and other donations
- those who sort out church supplies, wash linen, change the colours, clean the church and the Flower Guild for their lovely displays
- the people who open the church for visitors on a Saturday morning and at other times
- all those who give lifts to people and who keep in touch with people who are not at church
- everyone who organises the Tuesday coffee mornings
- those who help to maintain the church, Pastoral Centre and churchyard
- everyone involved with fundraising and social events including Gridiron
- those who have donated to and arranged for the distribution of the food bank
- and anyone else we have missed!

Many thanks to our Parish Administrator, Lorraine, who works behind the scenes to ensure that the Church and Pastoral Centre are well organised, and for dealing with pastoral matters, which are often unplanned and unexpected. Thanks also to Barry, who works tirelessly to make sure the buildings and grounds are well kept.

We pray for God's presence and guidance in the year ahead as a new warden is appointed, and look forward to all the future holds for St Laurence Church, Northfield.

Roy Pouncett & Debbie Keeves (Churchwardens)

Thank you to everyone for the support I have received from the church family during my time as church warden, and for the patience shown when it has often been challenging to fit in the role around work and family life. Thanks especially to Canon Janet, Elaine, Roy and Hilda for their support, friendship, love and laughter! I pray that the next Church Warden will bring new ideas and talents to the role, and enjoy their time as much as I have.

Debbie

Bell ringers

2019 was overshadowed by the illness and tragic death of our tower captain, Andy Carr. We are still mourning his loss. Twenty six Quarters and Four Peals were rung in his memory across the following towers: Northfield, Wednesbury, Harborne, Kings Norton, Beeston, Bledington, Selly Oak, Handsworth, Shirley and St Martins. Our ringers have been involved in more quarters than in previous years.

Andy's legacy includes a renewed focus on recruitment and teaching of learners – something we discussed at length at the last AGM. Following the ringers taking part in church service on 6th January we recruited two new members, Denise and Jeff Carr, who have achieved level 1 and are now ringing on Sundays. Initially only Carl was able to teach and support them so to improve our teaching capacity 3 members attended the ART teaching bell handling course in April 2019 and 2 went on to attend the ART teaching foundation skills course on 14th August 2019.

Linda and John Copple returned to ringing after 20 years. Having learnt to ring at Kings Norton they quickly got back into the swing of things. The ringers of Kings Norton, Selly Oak and Northfield help out at each other's Sunday ringing and practices to really boost numbers and help each band to progress. Friday night practices are well-attended and good progress is being made. This means that we have 8-10 ringers most Sundays and never fewer than 6.

The Henry Johnson Annual Dinner was held at the Council House on 23rd Feb 19. Thank you to Canon Janet for attending and giving a moving speech and prayer for Andy at the start. Graeme organised our summer outing when we visited four towers: Ipsley, Coughton Court, Harvington and Feckenham. They were mainly six-bell towers; 12-14 ringers came and we had good feedback from everyone. Members of the band ran the cake stall at the Church Christmas Fayre.

The band was well-represented at services over the Christmas period, ringing on Christmas Eve, Christmas day and New Year's Eve. Thank you to Canon Janet for her support throughout the year and for hosting the AGM, for helping with recruitment and encouraging us as we start to teach learners. In summary, despite Andy's tragic death, or maybe because of it, the Northfield ringers are a dedicated team, we encourage and support each other, we want to grow the band, to progress our ringing skills and to provide good ringing for services and other church events.

Sarah Vernon (Tower Captain) & Graeme Lanfear (Secretary) edited from fuller report given at Bell Ringers AGM

Children's Society

I am delighted to report that we raised £409 through collection boxes and £498.21 through the Christingle service making a grand total of £907.21. This is an outstanding amount raised for a charity which has its roots in the Church of England and supports some of the most vulnerable children, young people and families in the country.

Thank you for all your support (and I have some spare collecting boxes if you would like one.)

Anne Stock (Co-ordinator)

Choir

Do you enjoy singing? If so, why not consider giving the choir a try? There is a commitment to a pre-service rehearsal starting at 9.40am and an hour's choir practice once a month. We feel that we need more members.

It has been good to have regular choir practices, though with a group of people who have many commitments, it can be tricky to find dates on which everyone can come. We are very fortunate to have a varied group of excellent organists. We are getting used to their ways and they are getting to know our foibles; we very much appreciate their different skills.

Last January, some of us enjoyed taking part in the RSCM Choral Evensong in Birmingham Cathedral. It was really good to sing in a larger group with some very experienced singers who knew the music well and to have both organ and orchestral accompaniment. We learned of other RSCM events during the year and I circulated the information, but unfortunately, no one was available. Two of us did go to a West Gallery Music Workshop at Kings Norton Church. It is a biennial event which some have attended before, finding it a real change in church repertoire with a set of helpful and enthusiastic singers.

In December we had weekly practices and were joined by some additional singers so that we were able to lead the carols at our very well-attended Annual Carol Service. Thank you to David Langton for leading us in this.

We feel that we would benefit from having some meetings, perhaps over coffee after the service, where issues could be discussed and ideas shared. There is no time in choir practice and it would not necessarily be appropriate to talk then.

Clare Blackshaw (Choir member)

Christian Aid

Our financial contribution to the work of Christian Aid for 2019 was the result of two collections during the year. These took place during Christian Aid Week (12-18th May) 2019 and at Harvest Festival. The fund-raising and door-to-door collection raised £1040.71 (of which £557 was Gift Aided) and the Harvest Festival collection raised £285.45 (of which £240 was Gift Aided). We rounded off Christian Aid week with successful cake and plant sales. So our total for 2019 was £1326.16 plus Gift Aid of almost £200 which is wonderful! We hope to undertake another successful door-to-door collection in 2020 to support the new campaign helping communities in Kenya adapt to climate change.

Huge thanks to all the collectors, counters, bakers and gardeners who made it all possible.

Gerardine Merrick and Miles Ambrose (Co-ordinators)

Church Cleaning (The Holy Dusters)

The church cleaning has gone very well this year, with a regular number of 'Dusters' turning up for about one hour each month. Due to personal circumstances I've had to take a back seat for part of 2019 so special thanks must go to Hilda & Roy Pouncett for keeping the cleaning going to such a high standard.

Come and join us and help keep our lovely church gleaming.

Roy Dutton (Co-ordinator)

CTiN (Churches Together in Northfield)

Churches Together in Northfield is the grouping together of several of the churches in the Northfield village area. During 2019 the churches involved were Northfield Baptist Church, Northfield Methodist Church, St Bartholomew's, CofE St Brigid's Roman Catholic Church, St David's CofE, St Laurence CofE, the Quakers, Harvestways International Christian Fellowship and the Hollymoor Church. Sadly the latter two churches chose not to renew their membership.

- Four committee meetings were held as well as a combined service for Ash Wednesday at St Laurence. There was no combined Advent service, but the churches co-operated to produce an 'Advent Calendar Trail.'
- There was an invitation for people to go to different churches from their usual one on the Sunday in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and, instead of a combined service, members of the congregations were invited to meet for fellowship over a drink at the Black Horse. Annette Sampson, Canon Janet and Theresa Burton worked together to produce CTiN's contribution to Pray24Brum.
- The members of the congregations of these churches celebrated Shrove Tuesday at the Methodist Church. They joined together for Lent courses – one on Prayer, produced by Canon Janet, and one on 'Saints who translated the Bible' by Colin Capel. They also got together to do a Walk of Witness through Northfield on Good Friday, organised by the Methodist Church.
- Volunteers from CTiN churches helped with the tea tent for the Northfield Carnival. The money raised was divided between carnival funds and St Mary's Hospice.
- At Christmas time they combined to provide the 'Community Christmas' meal, organised by St Brigid's, and carol singing in Northfield Shopping Centre in aid of St Mary's Hospice, organised by St Laurence.
- The possibility of CTiN combining to supply, or support, Street Pastors on Northfield High Street was discussed. At one committee meeting Marcia Greenwood (Northfield Business Improvement District) and Gary Wicker (Network Four) described their plans to set up an organisation to pastor those who

are vulnerable on the streets of Northfield. At another meeting Pat and Graham Wigley described how they run a volunteer street chaplaincy for the businesses in Kings Heath.

- During the year the Baptist Church has been looking for a new minister. The ministry at the Methodist Church has been re-organised; the Revd Caz Graham has now left Northfield and the church is overseen by the Revd Ping Ting assisted by the Revd Barbara Calvert who is ministering in retirement.

Janice Wones (Reader & Member of Committee)

Community Choir

The Community Choir at St Laurence is a fun sing-along for all ages; we meet at the Pastoral Centre at 6pm for an hour each Monday. We've been going for over a year and have gone from strength to strength with numbers increasing to around 18 members. We perform with our sister choir from West Heath Community Centre and at Christmas time sang Christmas songs at 4 different events: Kings Norton Christmas farmers' market, Quinborne Women's Institute, the Christmas Carol service at St Laurence church and the CTiN carol singing in Northfield. Evidence suggests that singing is very good for our health and from the laughs and smiles at our group, we definitely demonstrate this. Our first performance of 2020 will be at the Austin Rose Retirement Home in April so there's plenty of time to practice if you fancy joining our happy group.

Marie Henry & Jacquie Dando (Choir Leaders)

Deanery Synod

The Kings Norton Deanery Synod has met three times this year

February at St Nicolas, Kings Norton at which there was a talk on 'Encouraging Ministry to Children and Families' and reports from Kings Norton Parish and Barnt Green Church School.

The appointment of Jenny Tomlin as Archdeacon was announced. New priests for The Lickey and for West Heath would be announced at the next Deanery Synod meeting. There was an update on the 'People and Places' including the amalgamation of the Deaneries of Sutton Coldfield and Aston. A motion regarding to knife crime was discussed and will be referred to the Diocesan Synod.

July at St Andrew's, Barnt Green at which the Revd Mark Bennett and the Revd Eliakin Ikechukwu spoke about their visit to our link diocese in Bolivia. There were reports from the church at Cofton Hackett and Barnt Green and from the St Laurence Church Schools. The motion on knife crime had gone to Diocesan Synod and had been adopted with some amendments. It was reported that the Revd Paul Cho had been appointed to St Anne's, West Heath, and the Revd Sheri Gidney had been appointed at Lickey and Blackwell. The Revd Catherine Matlock (Kings Norton) and the Revd Sean Clancy (Rubery) had been ordained priest. It was suggested that the deaneries of Edgbaston and Warley should merge and that the deaneries of Kings Norton, Shirley and Moseley should merge.

November at All Saint, Kings Heath. The evening was given over to discussion of the progress, effects and future of the People and Places process and how it will affect the deaneries of Kings Norton, Shirley and Moseley. Aston and Sutton Coldfield have merged; Central Birmingham and Handsworth will merge; Coleshill and Polesworth will merge. Yardley and Solihull are in the process of discussions. Edgbaston and Warley are in the process of discussions.

The proposed combination of the deaneries of Kings Norton, Shirley and Moseley will make it extremely large. It will consist of more than 35 stipendiary ministers and 43 parishes with 50 places of worship. It was noted that the logistics of finding a place and a date where so many representatives could meet could be difficult so meetings at the more local level may continue within the new structure.

At the end of the evening a formal vote was taken on the proposal to merge the three deaneries of Moseley, Kings Norton, and Shirley into one new deanery with a full-time Area Dean. The vote was: 55 in favour, 4 against with 11 abstentions so the motion was decisively carried. Each PCC would now be invited to comment on the proposal and send their comments to the Bishop of Birmingham who would decide when and how to proceed.

Janice Wones (Elected Representative)

Fabric Committee

The Fabric Committee met four times in 2019 to discuss the progress of on-going projects, health and safety, routine maintenance and other issues concerning the church, the churchyard and the Pastoral Centre site.

Church A faculty for the internal porch has been granted by the Diocesan Advisory Committee and the tendering process has now begun. A structural engineer was called in to examine the roof timbers. His report stated that they were sound and that there was no evidence of live infestation as had been feared. An updated Quinquennial Inspection Report was received in the spring of 2019. In response, the Committee felt that external repointing was a priority. A quote has been received for this work. The repointing will be carried out over a three year period and will comply with the architect's specification. Advice has also been sought as to the best way to clean and preserve the external wooden doors and metalwork.

Churchyard In 2019 several old tree stumps were removed to create space for a few new graves. The uneven slabs on the path near the main door have been flattened, the garden area to the right of the porch has been weeded and shrubs have been planted. This was a project undertaken by two members of the congregation. Vegetation has been cut back from the east and south chancel walls and a trench has been dug at the base of the walls and filled with gravel to create a soakaway.

Pastoral Centre The rendering on the columns at the front of the Pastoral Centre has been repaired. A slabbed path has been laid across the grass from the Fire Exit on the bottom corridor to the back gate. This path makes a much safer route for young children and their parents to come over to the church on a Sunday morning. Our grateful thanks go to a group of volunteers who spent a summer's day in the Pastoral Centre garden trimming back the large shrubs to enable some old unwanted plastic chairs to be removed. A defibrillator given for community use in memory of Andy Carr by Fast Aid has been installed on the front of the Pastoral Centre. Our thanks also go to a team from Ofwat who did a splendid job in repainting the walls of the gents toilet and the corridor to the Concert hall. This was carried out as part of their commitment to the community programme.

Roy Pouncett (Chair) & Chris Andrew (Minute Secretary)



Faith Discussion Groups

Evening Group

We had hoped to have a series of discussions on ethical issues led by the rector but this has been put on hold due to the number of congregational bereavements we experienced in the early part of the year. Many in the group joined the CTiN Lent course on Prayer and Marianna Melville and Janice Wones each led a group. During the summer the ministry team ran a "Pilgrim" course as an 'open confirmation group' attended by 8 people, 5 of whom went on to be confirmed.

Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)

'Focus' - discussion Group at Ann Morrell's

This group is still meeting on the third Thursday of each month. Attendance varies from 3 to 8 people. The conversation ranges from family situations to the state of the world. It provides an occasion when we can get to know each other better and talk about our concerns and ideas among a supportive group of friends.

Janice Wones (Group Member)

Flower Guild

Barry and I would like to thank all of our Flower Guild volunteers for all their time, effort and dedication in keeping the church looking so lovely and colourful all the year round, particularly at Christmas and Easter. Thanks also to Lorraine Freeman for presenting the Flower Guild financial report again in 2019; it is

very much appreciated. Thank you to anyone who has donated money towards the flowers in the church this year; it is a big drain on our budget keeping fresh flowers in the church for 40 weeks of the year. A new development in 2019 was the creation of the 'Emily Rose' silk wedding collection which has proved to be very popular.

In 2019 we did struggle to cover every month as we are short of members. It would be lovely to boost our membership; no experience is necessary as training would be given to people who are interested – ladies and gentlemen welcome! Many thanks again to you all for the support you have given to Barry and myself in 2019.

Linda Joyce Wallace (Team Leader) & Barry Gardner (Deputy Team Leader)



Gridiron

The Gridiron continues to follow the principle of having no committee. It relies on people stepping up to offer activities that they are happy to organise and share with others. Our core activity is the Tuesday coffee morning from 10-11.30, organised on a rota basis. This is supplemented by one-off events and activities. Among these were walks around the Lickey Hills, Alvechurch and to Mad O'Rourke's Pie Factory in Tipton. We visited the Galton Bridge Pumping Station and Birmingham's Coffin Works, and a small band of travellers took a coach trip to Peterborough. The curry night at the Black Horse and ten pin bowling have become something of a tradition. Again, the key issue is sharing the workload. All are welcome, church and non-church members alike.

Stuart Andrew (Member)

Mothers' Union

2019 brought us both highs and lows; sadly we lost Gerry Morgan who had been our Treasurer for 12 years and Sue Dutton, a very faithful and hardworking Mothers' Union member. In 2019 we had 46 members including members from the St Bartholomew's branch; following their merger with us they have become very much part of the branch.



The branch had its usual busy year with a varied programme of meals out, speakers, a garden party, services in church and craft work. Following a discussion led by the Mothers' Union Community Development Worker we set up SPOTS (Society for the Preservation of Traditional Skills), in partnership with the church. We started in June and have welcomed church and Mothers' Union members as well as people from the local community. The range of skills is expanding with sewing, knitting, crocheting, embroidery and model making regularly appearing. We meet on the third Monday of the month from 10am – 3pm with soup lunch available. We also hosted the Diocesan Cream Tea in May when over £500 was raised in just over 2 hours!

We are very fortunate to have such a supportive rector and congregation – it would be great if more people joined us so please just ask me if you're interested or pick up a leaflet from the back of church.

Rowena Nicholls (Branch Leader)

Money Counting

The same team of six has continued counting this year. Each week we count monies collected at weekly and seasonal services, baptisms, weddings, school services, refreshments and candles. The introduction of mobile phone payments, text giving and the "smart collection plate" haven't yet made us obsolete so it's business as usual in 2020 for our dedicated team of counters.

Gerardine Merrick (Counting Team Leader)

Northfield Revealed

As 2019 came to a close we awaited the result of our application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a grant to run a series of events under the title of Northfield Revealed. We are delighted to report that we have been successful and the following are extracts from the press release of January 2020

- The grant will fund a number of interpretation panels; a Northfield heritage trail brochure, a local history film, a schools' history project, a tapestry project, and a range of other public activities including open days, talks, tours, family events and a special service with the Bishop of Birmingham.
- The project will also see the construction of a new internal glass porch to encourage more people to come and see inside and discover the Grade I listed St Laurence Church, which is one of the oldest churches in Birmingham.
- The church will work with a host of community organisations to deliver the project, including Northfield Carnival, Northfield Library, Birmingham Civic Society and several local primary schools.
- Anne Jenkins, Director (England, Midlands & East) at the National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "We are delighted to support this project which, thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, will mean that more people will be able to get involved with the exciting heritage right on their doorstep."



Parochial Church Council

The PCC met on seven occasions during 2019 with a good attendance at each meeting.

Appointments agreed at the first meeting of the new PCC in May:

Joint Vice-Chairs – Debbie Keeves and Roy Pouncett

Treasurer – Elaine Clements *Electoral Roll Officer* – Ruth Clarke

Secretary – Emily Corns *Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator* – Rowena Nichols.

We have welcomed the following guest speakers:

- Canon Fred Rattley, Director of Community Regeneration on the 'Know Your Church, Know Your Neighbourhood' Programme together with Ian Simpson, Historic Places of Worship Support Officer.
- Christine Cushing, Birmingham Civic Society to speak about the possibilities of 'Northfield Revealed.'

Issues discussed and agreed during the year included:

- The re-ordering of the church building, especially the design of the proposed interior porch.
- Finances: there has been a full catch-up in the backlog of Gift Aid claims and the issue of outstanding wedding and funeral fees for 2014-16 which came to light has been resolved. Pastoral Centre bookings have increased.
- Church-yard maintenance.
- Parochial fees.
- School Admissions Policies (though these are set by the School Governing Bodies).
- Policies: Safeguarding, Domestic abuse (reviewed) and a new Privacy Policy (agreed).
- The establishment of Look-Out groups in improve our pastoral care of one-another.

Each year we are required to set up and monitor 'Transforming Church' targets. 2019's were

- To register as an Eco-church and achieve bronze accreditation: we have registered and are well on the way to bronze accreditation.
- To build an interior porch: design, permissions and finance are in place (expecting to draw down around £15k of reserves) and we are progressing through the tendering process.
- To undertake the "Know Your Church, Know Your Neighbourhood" programme and increase community use of the church: KYCKYN completed July 2019 and community use continues to increase e.g. pottery workshops, community choir, organ recitals and increased church open on Saturday mornings including January and February.

In addition we completed the 2018 target to become a Fairtrade church.

Regular reports have been received from : (and each has a section in this report)

- Fundraising and Social Sub-Committee.

- Fabric (including Health and Safety) Sub-Committee.
- Worship Sub-Committee.
- Deanery Synod.
- Churches Together in Northfield.
- Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

Safeguarding and Health and Safety are discussed at every meeting. This year has seen the introduction of short Bible Studies into each meeting.

Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)

Place of Welcome

For more than a year now we have been providing a “Place of Welcome” in Church on Saturday mornings, between 10.00 and 12.00. We are one of a network of places where people can come for conversation and a cup of tea, when they need company. Our regular band of between two and six volunteers keep the hot water ready and a listening ear available. At the same time we take the opportunity to fold the notice sheets and put them in the service books ready for Sunday, we replenish the candles and lamps and we sometimes do a bit of cleaning, polishing and tidying up.

Janice Wones (Places of Welcome Leader)

Planned Giving and Gift Aid

We are very grateful for the continued financial support from our Parishioners. In addition, gift aiding our donations can bring in an extra income of 25p for every pound donated, therefore, if you are a UK taxpayer please consider completing a Gift Aid Declaration Form. Gift Aid can be collected from standing orders, direct debits and planned giving envelopes as long as we have your completed form. **To qualify for Gift Aid, what you pay in income tax and/or capital gains tax must at least equal the amount we will claim in the tax year.**

Over the last few years, Gift Aided donations have brought in approximately an extra £9,000 per year. If you are unable to Gift Aid, you are still able to pay a regular amount using our Planned Gift envelopes and there is a scheme called the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS) which allows us to claim gift aid on ‘open plate’ cash collections for each tax year (including the Planned Gift Envelopes) of up to a maximum of £8,000, which can give us a further £2,000 per year of extra income.

If you are interested in any of the regular payment schemes please ask and I can explain anything else that you wish to know.

I would like to finish by thanking Valerie Arthurs for efficiently producing all the data in respect of the Planned Giving Envelopes required to enable us to claim the gift aid on behalf of St Laurence’s and also for the years that Jenny King also produced the data in respect of the planned giving by other means from which duty she has now retired. Thank you all for your continuing support.

Elaine Clements (Treasurer)

Publicity

The discovery of a company which can produce attractive publicity postcards at very reasonable rates has been something of a game-changer for us. A growing team of people is proud to deliver these to advertise services and events around the parish. We managed to get 5,000 out in the run-up to Easter.

Thanks to a Local Innovation Fund grant from Birmingham City Council we now have a dedicated Pastoral Centre website which includes a calendar of bookings so you can check availability should you wish to book a room. I spend a few hours each week keeping our websites and www.achurchnearyou up to date and we have started to make some sermons available through it. We are grateful to Mark Reynolds keeps our Twitter site alive and we thank Jean Brownsword for her service as our Facebook page administrator. The LIF grant will also enable some new notice boards to be purchased for the Pastoral Centre.

Publicity is key to so much of what we do: attracting people to worship God, attend social events, support fundraising ventures and discover our historic church.

Peter Chapman (Webmaster)

Safeguarding

Work on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults is high on the Church of England's agenda and the work required is continually evolving to ensure that all vulnerable people are protected and can feel safe when attending church and its activities. I can report that St Laurence continues to work within all the recommended guidelines, and especially section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016.

We have reviewed our policies, which are displayed in Church, the Pastoral Centre and on our website. Everyone who is required to be DBS checked has a valid check in place. All essential training has been completed by PCC members as well as by those working with vulnerable adults and children. The national training has been completely redesigned in recent months and is accessible online for all those who are responsible for or working with vulnerable children and/or adults. Role descriptions for all church roles have been updated to include the Community Choir and the new SPOTS group. Our current focus is on ensuring that all those who hire rooms at the Pastoral Centre or use the church have the requisite Safeguarding Policy in place. Recent changes in how parishes deal with reports of abuse involving church officers will be incorporated into PCC procedure in the next few weeks.

I have registered with the new Diocesan Safeguarding Dashboard providing an online resource to manage our Safeguarding work. A number of leaflets have been produced and distributed as appropriate and these are useful resources for everyone:

- A Brief Guide to the Categories of Abuse for Leaders and Helpers
- A Guide to Safeguarding Children and Young People for Leaders and Helpers
- A Guide to Safeguarding Ourselves in Pastoral Relationships
- A Guide to Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults for Leaders and Helpers
- A Guide to Domestic Abuse for Leaders and Helpers
- A guide to Using Social Media for Leaders and Helpers.

If you would like a copy of any of these, please ask me.

Rowena Nicholls (Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator)

St Laurence Church Infant School

At St Laurence Church Infant School the Governors and Staff work closely together to maintain and improve on our high standards. Our children are happy, secure, confident learners who make good progress in all areas of school life. The school is full and we were oversubscribed again this year. The children's learning experiences are carefully planned to meet the needs of all our children. Activities are designed to offer challenges to the more able children and offer support to those who benefit from individual or small group learning. There is so much going on in the School - please look at our web site at www.stirnci.bham.sch.uk.

This year we have focused particularly on curriculum and writing. With a new national curriculum, we have been working hard to ensure our children are accessing all aspects of the new curriculum. This includes providing differing opportunities for our children to demonstrate their skills in writing from shopping lists to essays. In line with all schools, finance and the school budget continue to be a challenge. As we look at all aspects of our spending, we are very conscious that we need to maintain and to ensure a high level of education for our children.

We continue to work closely with St Laurence Church, with Canon Janet and occasionally Fr David and other local church leaders coming in to lead Collective Worship most Wednesdays. The whole school comes over to church for worship in most terms and in December every class visited "Christmas Through the Keyhole" in church. Mrs Wallach (RE and Worship lead teacher) reports "Christmas through the Keyhole was an exciting, fresh way to engage with the Christmas story. The children were interested and enthusiastic on their journey to Bethlehem asking and answering questions all the way!"

During the Autumn Term 2019 Mrs Proctor gave the Governors advance notice of her intention to resign in 2020. The Governors have been exploring the various options for the future of the Infant School and after some deliberation have decided to advertise for a new Headteacher for September 2020.

Sarah Brown (Chair of Governors)

St Laurence Church Junior School

St Laurence Church Junior School has had another successful year despite the challenging financial restraints from central government. Our pupils continue to be a credit to our school both in terms of what they achieve academically and how they grow into caring, self-confident young people ready to move on to the next stage in their education. Teaching and Learning is strong and staff are reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of our pupils within the context of the school. I am pleased to say that staffing remains very stable with the leadership of the school ensuring that quality staff are recruited when necessary. Our school is still supporting another local school sharing staff expertise.

Unfortunately, Mrs Lindsay has had to undergo two major operations during the year but is now on the way to recovery and re-joining us. Under the leadership of deputy headteacher, Mrs Mulrain, and the rest of the staff, the school has continued to move forward.

During the year the pupils, staff and governors have worked hard to maintain the traditions, values and ethos that are so important to us and which are firmly embedded in how we hope to treat and respect each other. This year our RE and Worship co-ordinator has worked closely with Canon Janet maintaining strong links with church. Year groups regularly participate in the services throughout the year, celebrating festivals in the church calendar. Staff attend a monthly Eucharist at 8.00am on a Wednesday morning. Assemblies in school are vibrant with visitors regularly taking part. In school we have a quiet prayer area, overseen by a member of staff, and in each classroom there is a reflection area with 'prayer bags' which include a 'we are praying for' sheet so that pupils and staff can ask for a prayer for someone special to them.

Throughout the year our pupils take part in a wide range of additional activities including sports, residential, trips, music and the arts. Pupils lead our charity events during the year including the annual Lenten Project which this year raised £5408 for Acorns Children's Hospice. We are really grateful for all the support, especially from parents and carers.

We have a strong and committed governing board who have a range of skills, expertise and experience, grounded in Christian faith, that provides both strategic direction and hands-on support whilst being prepared to challenge the school leadership. Governors attend Diocesan Governor conferences and events and the Chair has led training for diocesan governors and Chairs of Governor briefings. Governors are often in school working with and supporting staff.

We are excited that our new building, which we have been planning for over five years to extend our wrap-around care, has finally started! This will provide much needed extra space and facilities to support our working families. It will also enable us to offer further emergency support for families in times of need.

Looking further into the future, we are excited that building work has started on the new Church of England secondary school – Christ Church Secondary Academy in Yardley Wood. It is due to open to year 7 pupils in September 2021. Our Chair of Governors, as a member of the Diocesan Board of Education, has been involved in this development from its inception, realising the desire of the Church of England to provide more secondary school spaces for pupils in Birmingham. More information about this will be available soon in school.

Jill Saunders (Chair of Governors)

Canon Janet adds: in the autumn term Canon Janet, Fr David and Rita Gardner ran an after-school confirmation club using Alpha Youth material. Ten children were involved of which four were confirmed in November and three will be confirmed in the coming year. We are very grateful for Mrs Durose's support for the club.

Scout Group (206th St Laurence)

St Laurence Scout Group presently has 6 sections (2 Beavers, 2 Cubs and 2 Scouts), with 113 young members, 20 Leaders and 6 Young Leaders. We also have 2 young adults undertaking their Duke of Edinburgh's award volunteering section. The leadership team continues to provide a varied and exciting programme within all the sections. Some of the activities the young people have enjoyed this year are camping, archery, skating, swimming, climbing, go karting, trampolining, communication, First Aid, recycling,

with trips to the BBC in Birmingham and a trip to London including a visit to No 10 Downing Street.

During the year, we awarded 7 Queen's Scout Awards to our young people. Congratulations to the young adults and the leaders; it's not easy to complete all the criteria.

We had 3 leaders complete 10 years' service: Karl Price, Jayne Perry and Caroline Perry.

I have only named a few of the leaders, many others help on a weekly basis and in the background, both in leader and administrative roles to help provide the many varied experiences that scouting offers.

I would like to thank all leaders, the group executive committee, and parents for all their time, effort and enthusiasm which they give to St Laurence Scout Group. We are always looking for new leaders and for adults to join our group executive team; if you or anyone you know would like to volunteer please contact me.

Carl Jenkins (Group Scout Leader, 206th St Laurence Scout Group)



Scouts (Gridiron Explorers)

St Laurence Scout group has been running beavers, cubs and scouts for many years for young people, but when they were reaching the age of 15 years we were losing them, as there was no older group for them to progress to. Two of the existing leaders, Rachel and Craig, came up with the idea of starting an Explorers group for 14-18-year-olds and the group was set up in September 2019.

We currently have 28 young people with 9 leaders registered to help. The group is open to all young people in the area not just scouts from the St Laurence Group. When consulted about what the group could be called, the Explorers came up with the name Gridiron, so we are now the Gridiron Explorer Group, Northfield. It is unusual for Explorers to meet every week but this appears to be working well for us as we have a regular attendance of around 24. There are always at least 4 leaders on a Thursday night to oversee the evening.

So far activities have included scuba diving, a chip shop challenge, Can't Cook, Won't Cook, several walks in the local area and a wet/muddy weekend away at the scout headquarters in Gilwell, London for Scarefest. We look forward to the year ahead and all of the activities that we have planned, and would like to thank the Church for their support in setting up the group and letting us use the Pastoral Centre for meetings.

Debbie Keeves (Leader)

Servers

Once again I am proud to report that our small but dedicated band of servers have worked tirelessly all year to ensure all services (not just Sundays) are covered. This hasn't always been easy so a massive thank you from me to Chris, Stuart, Anne, Martin and Lucy.

We would welcome anyone who would like to consider becoming a server. Please speak to me or anyone of the team if you are interested.

Hilda Pouncett (Head Server)

Social and Fundraising Committee

The Social and Fundraising Committee has continued to arrange events to raise money for church funds and for charity during the year. 5 car boot sales were held raising just over £1900. Our biggest event was the Christmas Fayre which raised £1475 – a great amount! During the year we ran a number of other events including a very successful Jazz Evening, a Bingo Night and an Organ Recital. We also held 2 Craft Fayres, the first for many years. These were very popular with local 'crafters' and more will be held in 2020. During the year nearly £2,500 was raised for charities including £1,000 for Christian Aid, £770 for Macmillan Cancer Support and £498 for the Children's Society (Christingle). In addition over 70 bags of food have been donated in church for the foodbank at Northfield Community Partnership as well as several wire-bin loads for the B30 foodbank. At Christmas, with



generous support from the congregation and the Co-op on West Heath Road, we put together over 80 gift bags for residents and staff at the YMCA hostel. These were greatly appreciated.

The committee has organised some social events as well to support the church community, including the St Laurence's Day reception. Our group of volunteers have worked really hard during the year and I'm very grateful to everyone for their hard work and support but sadly the number of volunteers has reduced in recent years and we are looking for extra support to help with events. If you could help with just one event, we would love to hear from you.

Rowena Nicholls (Chair)

Stay & Play

We are into our third year of running the playgroup and we are welcoming new families each week. Leaflets were handed out in the Infant School children's book bags and this has helped us bring new families to the group. The playgroup is still continuing to grow though some weeks are quieter than others especially in the summer months. At our busiest session we had around 45 children and we average around 25-30 per week now.

We are still receiving wonderful feedback from the parents and we are encouraging them to leave feedback on our Facebook page so this will encourage even more families to attend. Our Facebook page has 158 likes and 163 people are following the page. We update this regularly with our monthly newsletters so that our families are kept up to date and know what to expect each week! We also update following each session showing what theme we have based the session on.

We do like to keep the Church connection within our playgroup so we will celebrate Easter and Christmas (and in particular the Nativity and Advent). Each of our weeks have a theme and the children do love this and so do we! We are introducing new themes this year such as The Circus, Native American Indians, My Body and the Jungle, just as a few examples.

In September 2019, Emma gained employment at Birmingham Cathedral which meant her involvement with the group had to be reduced. Emma is still involved, especially with the paperwork and organising of the sessions. Donna is at the forefront; she is at every session and does a lot of planning and the main running of the group. Julie Meadows and Barbara Flight help with setting up, providing refreshments and tidying up at the end of each session.

Donna Clulee (Leader) and Emma Kupsa

Sunday School

8.30am including 'Rise and Shine'

Sunday School continues to be held in the Parish Room of the Pastoral Centre at 8.30am and is still working well, giving everybody more room to enjoy the worship and the crafts. The morning starts with a simple service which parents can use to help their children follow using the symbols shown. We even sing the 'Peace' together. We still try to follow the theme that is used in Church with the material we have available but sometimes this does need to be simplified. We include a Bible Story or similar to explain the day, and then we do activities or crafts to match, finishing off by singing the Sunday School prayer. Attendance varies but ranges from as few as 5 to as many as 18 children at times plus their carers. At the end of the session we go over to Church using our recently-laid path across the garden and join in with the service, with Communion or a Blessing finishing off our morning.

Our Rise and Shine service in the Pastoral Centre on the 4th Sunday continues to be well attended and is still attracting between 20 and 25 families. This service accommodates our new attendees but also appeals to some of our previous attendees who wish to attend an occasional service. It is supported by a dedicated band of volunteers who help to run things smoothly

Our thanks go to the volunteers for the 8.30 Sunday School – Rowena Nicholls and Anna Youngs – and to our band of volunteers at 'Rise and Shine' for all their help, hard work, commitment and support in keeping the Sunday Schools 'manned'. If you are interested in assisting at any of the Sunday Schools or Rise and Shine please do speak to me.

Elaine Clements (Sunday School Leader)

10am (under 6's group)

There is never a dull moment for Sunday School – the average attendance on Sunday School Sundays has been 7, but it has been a roller coaster. One Sunday there could be just 2, but the next we could find ourselves with 12 children with an age range from 2 weeks to 11+. Timing can be tricky too. On some Sundays it has been a scramble to finish things whilst on others, when the sermon and intercessions were longer, it was as well to have come prepared with plenty of extra related activities.

At the beginning of the year we try to settle the children, make everyone feel welcome and build up a pattern so that children can know what to expect and can take part. It is amazing how quickly they learn the Sunday School Prayer, respond to invitations to light the candles, take the collection and remind us what should happen next.

We aim to offer varied activities which relate to the theme of the day, usually but not always based on the gospel. Parents rise to the challenge and seem really to enjoy their craft work.

Clare Blackshaw (and Anita Killingworth) (Leaders)

10am (6-10yrs group)

This group continues but, although Marianna Melville and I prepare alternately for eight children each week, unfortunately most weeks of late we have had few or no children attending our class. Visiting children are always welcome to join us but rarely do. We obviously have a lack of 6-10 year-old children in church at the moment but we know of at least one from the younger age group, who will be 6 in June and therefore will be joining us soon. On the first Sunday of each month, the children remain in church for the duration of the service which is usually a Parade service.

For teaching and activities we use the 'Living Stones' resource materials "Rocks" by Susan Sayers. This accompanies the theme of the service in church. Each week there is a practical starter activity, which may be a game, song or some drama, sometimes with music, followed by some teaching and discussion to explain the aim of the lesson. There is a prayer to follow and then often a making and doing activity and/or worksheet based activities such as a wordsearch, or thought-provoking maze or puzzles to complete in keeping with the theme and aims of the lesson.

Rita Gardner (Leader)

The team of leaders now meets together about once a term which has led to better co-ordination and awareness of safeguarding issues as well as the introduction of presenting a book to those who have attended regularly throughout the year. Many of the team, together with Canon Janet, attended the 'Growing with God' day which CofE Birmingham led in March. It was here that the team was enthused by 'Christmas Through the Keyhole' which led to us running this in December.

Canon Janet

The 100 Club

For 2019 the 100 Club attracted 89 subs @ £12 and 2 part-year subs @ £10 totalling £1,088. Half of that amount (£544) was paid out as prize money, with the other half being divided equally and paid out to St Laurence Pastoral Centre (£272) and the Children's Society (£272.) A full schedule of the cash prize winners during 2019 has been posted on the notice board in the Pastoral Centre. A copy of the financial statement for 2019 along with a copy of the prize winners list is available from me.

For 2020 (as for 2019) I intend to post a list of the members who have subscribed to the 100 Club on the notice board in the Pastoral Centre. At the time of writing this report I have managed to collect 84 subscriptions for 2020. I hope and expect that the subscription level will be maintained at 91 or thereabouts as for the previous year. Good luck to all members in the forthcoming prize draws for 2020.

Jeffrey Carr (Club Secretary)

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee met in January, May and October. The committee routinely reviews worship and plans the rota for the next period. Issues considered include:

1. Advertising of services for those with dementia and their carers.

2. Advertising Christmas services.
3. Taking of worship to care homes and homes for the elderly in the parish.
4. Safeguarding related to the transport of people to services.
5. Sidespersons training.
6. Beer and Hymns.
7. Location for worship at 10.00am on Wednesdays.
8. Repair and replacement of a chasuble and some altar frontals.
9. Evening Prayer at the YMCA.
10. Advent Calendar Trail.
11. Change of Sunday for Family Service.
12. Updating of service booklet.

The key points of note are that Beer and Hymns was welcome in the Great Stone, that there appeared to be no need for worship to be taken to retirement homes within the parish. Attendance at Afternoon Prayer for those with dementia and carers of those with dementia, in church on selected Saturdays, has a modest attendance and is appreciated by those who do attend. We introduced a churchyard service this year which attracted 15 people (about half were not regular worshippers) and 2 dogs! The need to repair or renew vestments and altar frontals is to be reviewed with a view to seeking grant support. The Advent Calendar Trail (with CTiN) involved a large number of people, from schools and the community, and as a result it made a good impact. It was noted that attendance at the Carol services was growing whilst that at the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services was reduced. It was agreed to revise advertising for the Christmas Services.

Fr David Pycock (Associate Priest)

Worship in the Community

Chatham Place

During the year, a short service has been held once a month for the residents of Chatham Place, led by Janice Wones, usually supported by Jean Whittle-Wills, and now joined by Miles Ambridge. Attendance by residents has varied from none to four, but each month the Bible has been read, hymns have been sung and prayers have been said in that community.



Masefield Community Garden

This year we held both a Harvest Service and a Carol Service in the Garden. We have been warmly welcomed – we put together the service and the garden volunteers provide the food!

The Great Stone

We continue to hold Beer and Hymns/Carols in the local pub on an occasional basis in the months when it is dark by 8pm. Beer and Carols is particularly popular and we have a growing number of people from the community who come specially for this.

The Limes

During the year Janice Wones continued to take Home Communion to the Limes Care Home, in Ivyhouse Road. I am now doing this on about three Sundays each month. The “congregation” varies from about 10 to 16. This year I and a few people from St Laurence and from Church of the Ascension, Stirchley sang carols for them just before Christmas.

YMCA

Since September we have moved Evening Prayer to the YMCA hostel. Whilst attendance is limited the service is welcomed by YMCA staff and a change of venue brings a new dimension to the service.

Janice Wones (Lay Reader) and Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)

Last but not least, a huge thank you to all contributors and to Richard Mycroft for his support in editing this report.

The Parish of St Laurence, Northfield

Parish Office, St Laurence Church and Pastoral Centre
173 Church Road, Northfield, Birmingham B31 2LX
Phone: 0121 475 1518 email: stlaurence@btconnect.com
[Registered Charity 1132975](#)

Annual Vestry and Parochial Church Meetings Date pending due to Coronavirus pandemic

Agenda

The ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING

1. A clerk is appointed to take the minutes of the meeting
2. Notice convening the meeting is read.
3. Apologies
4. Minutes of the Annual Vestry Meeting held on Sunday 11th April 2019.
5. Election of Churchwardens.
6. Adjournment

The ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

1. Notice convening the meeting is read
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the Annual meeting held on Sunday 11th April 2019.
4. Consideration of the new Electoral Roll
5. Appointment of Scrutineers
6. Elections of Members to the Kings Norton Deanery Synod (4 vacancies of 3 year term)
7. Election of Members of the Parochial Church Council (4 vacancies of 3 year term plus 3 for 1 year only)
8. Annual Report of the Proceedings of the Council
9. Annual report of the financial affairs of the Parish
 - a) Examined accounts of the council for year ending 31 December 2019
 - b) Examined statement of the funds and Property of the Council
 - c) Appointment for Independent Examiners for 2020
10. Presentation of the Terrier and report of the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church
11. Report of the proceedings of the Deanery Synod (see page 5 above)
12. Annual reports for Parish Organisations (see above)
13. Date of the first Parochial Church Council meeting commencing with a Eucharist in church
14. Rector's statement to the meeting
15. Any other business

(Note that this meeting is being conducted under the Church Representation Rules 2020. This means that it is now the responsibility of the PCC to appoint sidespeople not the APCM.)