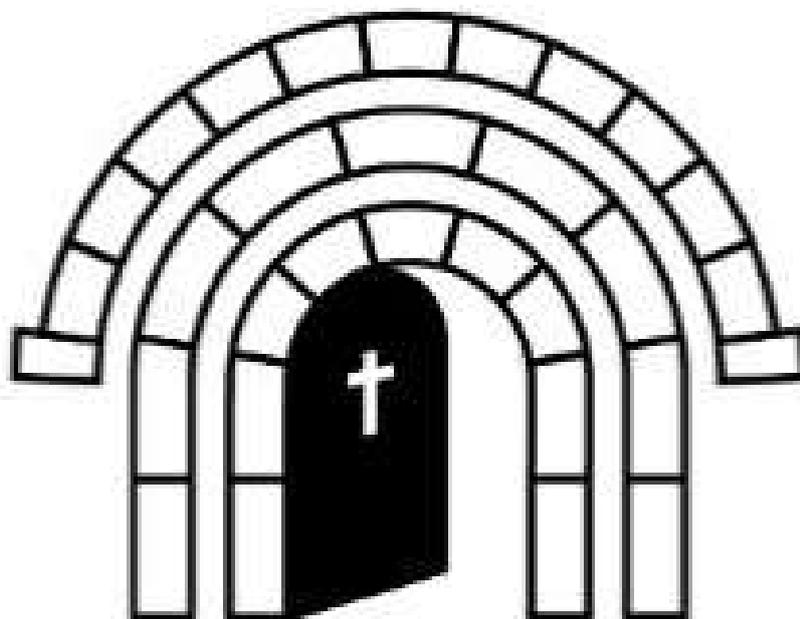


# The Parish of St Laurence Northfield



**St Laurence**  
*Northfield*

## Reports for the Year of 2020

Parish Office, St Laurence Church and Pastoral Centre

173 Church Road, Northfield, Birmingham B31 2LX

Phone: 0121 475 1518 email: [stlaurence@btconnect.com](mailto:stlaurence@btconnect.com)

Registered Charity 1132975



A Fairtrade Church



## **Church Wardens' Report**

We have received great support from the PCC, Elaine our treasurer, Lorraine our parish administrator and of course our great ministers led by Canon Janet. This has been a difficult year for everyone because of Covid-19. We did have some great news at last: our long-awaited porch was to be erected (hooray!), but obviously this was held up because of Covid-19.

We were able to worship in church for a short time only, mainly due to Canon Janet's perseverance to ensure our safety, enabling us to receive the bread whilst observing all the Covid-19 rules. Although our church building is out of action, behind the scenes we have had lots of problems to sort out; grateful thanks to Fr David for all his help and assistance. I (Roy) go into church regularly to check all is well and it is a privilege to do so. It was great to welcome Sandra to be our second warden. I'm looking forward to working with her; two heads are better than one! We would like to extend special thanks to Rowena and Elaine for continuing to operate the Sunday School for our young families, which entails a lot of hard work and organisation. A huge thank you to all those who do so much behind the scenes here in our church; without them and their loyalty we'd be in a poorer place. On a sad note, this year we lost a longstanding member of our church, Clare Blackshaw, a very accomplished and hard-working lady: choir member, Sunday School leader, prolific knitter for teddies to go to poorer countries and much more.

It would seem that with the rollout of the vaccine for everyone, God willing, we may all look forward to the future, when as a congregation we once again worship together fully and safely in this our ancient church of St Laurence (also hopefully admiring our new porch).

*Roy Pouncett and Sandra Reynolds*

## **Bell Ringers**

In a very strange and challenging year for all, the bell ringers have adapted to Covid-19 restrictions and lockdown. Since 23 March 2020 both face-to-face services and ringing have been curtailed and intermittent. Restricted face-to-face services resumed on Saturday afternoons at the end of July 2020. The ringers were able to return to limited ringing for 15 minutes before the 09:30 service from 6 September 2020. Sadly the limited ringing we could do did not include any teaching so Carl, Graeme and Sarah have not progressed any further with the ART teaching qualification and the recruitment of new ringers has stalled.

Although we can't ring physical bells together, we have been able to keep in touch and keep some of our ringing knowledge going by continuing our weekly Friday practices remotely using Zoom for talking and a website called [ringingroom.com](http://ringingroom.com) for ringing (using the mouse or keyboard).

Some of the events or anniversaries the church has marked during the restrictions have included the tolling of a single bell. On 15 August 2020 a short service was held in the belfry to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VJ day. The seventh bell was tolled 100 times and a video of the service and tolling of the bell was put on YouTube. On Remembrance Day Graeme tolled a bell 75 times and on 31 January 2021 Sarah tolled the sixth bell 100 times to mark 100,000 lives lost to Covid-19.

The bell ringers are looking forward to the day when we can start to ring together again. We will have to take things gently to relearn the physical skills of ringing a bell and the mental skills needed to ring methods together as a team. Hopefully this will be from the end of June if all goes well.

If anyone in the church would like to have a go at bell ringing when we go back to ringing, please contact Sarah, Graeme, Carl or any of the ringers. We are always keen for new recruits.

Finally, I would like to thank Carl, Graeme and Jeff for their time and efforts as steeple keeper, secretary and treasurer. Thank you to all the ringers for your time and enthusiasm for ringing and learning to ring. Thank you to Canon Janet for all your support and encouragement.

## **Handbell Ringers**

2020 began well with the ringers enjoying regular weekly practices and looking forward to playing in church on Easter Sunday. Lockdown began and our practices had to be suspended. In July, we all met up for tea in

the Rector's garden and began to plan how we could restart handbell ringing safely. Unfortunately, this has not been possible, so we keep in touch with each other and hope to come back with renewed enthusiasm in 2021. Fingers crossed!

*Chris Andrew*

### **Children's Society**

At the last box opening in February 2020, the amount donated was £400.01; this was noted and banked. Because of the lockdown that followed no further action was taken regarding a cheque being forwarded to the Society, and empty boxes were returned to holders. In late 2020, the Children's Society suggested that box-holders may like to open their own boxes to count the money and donate it via the Christingle donation page. This wasn't obligatory and was left to personal choice.

The Christingle appeal raised £264.46, and more recently an additional donation of £22.85 has been received. This makes a total of £687.32 for 2020. All monies have now been transferred to the Children's Society via Bank Transfer, and acknowledgements of receipts have been received.

For 2021, as soon as restrictions are lifted, all boxes will be recalled whether empty or full for another count, and re-labelled and replaced if necessary. In addition Joe Ling, St Laurence CofE Junior School raised £605 plus Gift Aid to be split between the Children's Society and St Laurence Church. Well done Joe!

*Anne Stock (Children's Society Box Co-ordinator)*

### **Choir**

We began the year in good heart following on from the success of the 2019 Carol Service but managed only a couple of our monthly hymn rehearsals led by David Langton before lockdown struck. The choir is yet another part of St Laurence devastated by the untimely death of Clare Blackshaw, who kept us up to date with RSCM events, maintained the register and was our only regular alto. At Christmas we were pleased to hear Karen Smith and Hilda Pouncett sing the 'Once in Royal David's City' solos at the services on Christmas Eve and Christmas morning.

It has been good to hear some of our organists providing music for our Zoom services. Gavin Bateman did this from his organ at home in the early months and Mike Sullivan occasionally too. Once we were allowed back in church Lawrence Bacon provided the music both pre-recorded and live from the church organ. As we have moved into 2021 his wife has braved the cold to pre-record some hymn singing.

*Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)*

### **Christian Aid**

Christian Aid continued its work amongst some of the world's poorest countries throughout 2020, despite so many challenges. Our special fundraising week in May under the banner 'Love Never Fails' went largely online. Bunting went up around the Lych Gate to draw attention to the fundraising campaign, and flyers were added to packs with the information necessary for making online donations. If you made a donation, thank you!

For harvest time we set up a unique St Laurence Church eDonation page via Christian Aid, and made a short video about Christian Aid and the fundraising appeal. Thanks to your generosity £400 was donated online directly to Christian Aid. Thank you everyone!

*Gerardine Merrick*

### **Church Cleaning (The Holy Dusters)**

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted all our lives this year gone, including our church life. Needless to say, our church building hasn't been used for most of the year. Roy Pouncett and I went in to clean in early summer to prepare for the start of restricted services, but soon after that, there was little need for regular

cleaning. We are hoping that, given the go-ahead in the near future, the Dusters will all return to make our lovely church sparkle once again.

*Roy Dutton*

### **CTiN (Churches Together in Northfield)**

Churches Together in Northfield is the grouping together of several of the churches in the Northfield village area. During 2020 the churches involved were Northfield Baptist Church, Northfield Methodist Church, St Bartholomew's C. of E., St Brigid's Roman Catholic Church, St David's C. of E., St Laurence C. of E., the Quakers and Harvestways International Christian Fellowship.

One committee meeting was held at the Quaker Meeting House, two committee meetings and the AGM were held via Zoom. Several combined prayer meetings have also been held via Zoom.

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 a combined service was held at St. Brigid's. CTiN produced an hour's contribution to Pray24Brum.

The members of the congregations of these churches celebrated Shrove Tuesday at St. Laurence Church. Lent Courses started, but had to be discontinued because of Covid-19. On Good Friday the minsters each recorded a line of the Lord's Prayer and this was released on various media channels.

At Christmas time, instead of providing a Christmas meal for those who would otherwise be on their own, the Baptist Church organised the making and distribution of gift parcels. Volunteers from many of the churches delivered the parcels to those who were lonely and had a door-step chat with them.

Representatives of CTiN attended the Northfield Stakeholders' meetings to show the churches' commitment to the community during these difficult times and to offer what help we can.

During the year the new minister arrived at the Baptist Church and at the end of the year Mark Bennett left St David's.

*Janice Wones*

### **Community Choir**

The Community Choir, which has around 15 members, has been unable to meet since mid-March 2020. It has been a challenging year for everyone and our hope is that, if we have the interest, we may be able to restart the choir in June.

*Marie Henry*

### **Deanery Synod**

There were no meetings of the Kings Norton Deanery Synod during 2020.

Kings Norton Deanery is in the process of merging with Moseley and Shirley Deaneries. The arrangements to appoint a full-time Area Dean will take some time.

*Janice Wones*

### **Fabric Committee**

The Fabric Committee met once in early 2020 when the main agenda item was the interior porch for the church. Since then, much work has been done to complete projects and continue routine maintenance. Work on the interior porch has now begun. Church lighting became an urgent issue and in response a lighting brief was put together and church lighting specialists have now been approached – exciting times! Contractors kept the churchyard in good order during the year and many positive comments have been received. Work on the electrics in the pastoral centre were completed and new notice boards have been installed. The church notice boards have also been updated.

As always, our thanks go to all those who have worked during this difficult year to maintain and improve the fabric of both the pastoral centre and the church.

*Roy Pouncett (Chair) and Chris Andrew (Minute Secretary)*

### **Faith Discussion Groups**

*Discussion group at Ann Morrell's:* this group met in January and February, but then had to stop because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Ann has now left Northfield to be closer to her daughter, but we hope the group will resume in another form when possible. *(Janice Wones)*

*Tuesday evening group:* this group, which meets in 'runs of Tuesdays' embarked on the CTiN Lent course but sadly had to stop due to the pandemic. However, after Easter we were able to run a course of 7 sessions based on Mark's Gospel, using material by Revd Mike Claridge, minister at The Cotteridge Church, via Zoom. *(Janice Wones)*

*Exploring Faith:* this group normally forms our confirmation preparation course, but not this year! However, Revd Theresa Morton and Rowena Nicholls rose to the challenge of preparing and leading a 6-session course via Zoom aimed at the adults in our Sunday School families. It worked really well and circumvented the need for baby-sitters. We'll be doing it again this way and explore using this method for baptism preparation too. *(Canon Janet Chapman)*

### **Flower Guild**

It has been a very quiet 12 months in the world of the Flower Guild and flowers in St. Laurence Church through the lockdown. Barry and I have maintained some flowers in church throughout the year, using only silks, and they have worked very well indeed. We will continue to use them until the Flower Guild returns to normal working, hopefully very soon. However, when the Flower Guild does return to normal working it will be without me as Team Leader as I wish to stand down from that position. I have been in the St. Laurence Flower Guild for 19 years and Team Leader for a few years since Shirley Evans passed the position onto me. It has been a lot of fun and I have really enjoyed myself, but I feel it is time that I hang up my secateurs. I must say thank you to all the wonderful ladies and gentlemen of the Flower Guild for all their help, friendship and support they have given to me over the years. Barry will stay on as Deputy Team Leader.

The post of Team Leader is now vacant and open to anyone who fancies a challenge and an opportunity to show off their flair, skills and drive to take the Flower Guild forward. Most of the Flower Guild ladies and gentlemen will be staying in the Guild and be very supportive. Please speak to Barry, the Church Wardens, myself or Lorraine in the office if you wish to apply. So, with lots of love and God bless to you all in St Laurence Church,

*Linda Joyes Wallace*

### **Gridiron**

The Gridiron met in January 2020 and planned a number of offsite events for the coming year. Due to Covid-19 these had to be put on hold as did our weekly coffee mornings, usually attended by 20-30 people, both church and non-church members.

We began Zoom meetings which have been regularly attended by up to 15 people. When the rules were relaxed we held our meetings at the coffee shops on Bournville Village Green or Rowheath Pavilion. We also kept in touch with other regulars by telephone and email.

We all look forward to the day when we can once again meet outdoors in small groups and hopefully later this summer to return to the Pastoral Centre for our weekly meetings.

*Stuart Andrew*

As for all groups and charities, 2020 was challenging to say the least! We started 2020 in our annual tradition of enjoying a meal at the Black Horse, and last January our Wave of Prayer was incorporated into evening prayer. In February we were joined by Rose Ackroyd from the diocese who gave a very enlightening and uplifting talk about dementia and its impact on sufferers and their families. Our speaker didn't arrive for our March meeting, so I did an impromptu talk about asylum seekers and refugees, with a little quiz! SPOTS (crafting group) did meet twice and then lockdown came. We did manage to have a short carol service in church in December – for many it was the first time in church for many months – and whilst we couldn't sing, it was lovely to hear carols being sung so beautifully by King's College, Cambridge!

Sadly we lost Clare Blackshaw in September and, although she hadn't been a member for a long time, she had an impact. Clare worked tirelessly in arranging the pastoral boxes of books to be presented to the local primary schools, paying for many of the books herself.

We have continued to provide knitted items to local hospitals and to donate toiletries to Women's Aid.

Mothers' Union nationally, internationally and in the diocese continued to do what could be done within all appropriate guidelines. Nationally members donated over £800,000 to help cover the financial shortfall due to Covid-19 and, with other savings, the charity remains on a strong footing.

2021 has started on that strong footing with monthly Zoom meetings (thanks to Fr David for hosting) as well as meeting via Zoom for the Wave of Prayer. We are also very excited at the prospect of a new project to help local mums who are in desperate need of baby items, so watch this space!

*Rowena Nicholls*

### **Northfield Revealed**

In January 2020 we received a grant of £65,700 for the following purposes by 31 August 2021:



- High visibility acknowledgement of the National Lottery Heritage Fund on site, online and in all activities as well as using your project to acknowledge and thank National Lottery players.
- Take proactive measures to be inclusive, remove barriers to access and reach new and diverse audiences through the delivery of this project.
- Install an accessible glass porch allowing views into the church.
- Create a heritage trail and guided walks.
- Produce a three to five minutes long film, focussing on local history and ecology.
- Undertake a talks programme.
- Deliver a heritage tapestry project "Stitch in time".
- Produce interpretation to explore different aspects of Northfield's history and natural history.
- Deliver a school history project with three schools run by "Mrs History".
- Provide training for volunteers in using archives and running trails.

Clearly Covid-19 had a significant impact on the delivery of the above, and we expect the end date of the project to be extended, but by the end of 2020 we had achieved the following:

- Production of a Heritage Trail guide including two guided walks and a separate Family Trail.
- Near-completion of the tapestry project which became 'Home is where the Arch is', whereby 162 mainly local people stitched 190 bricks to form an arch. This was unveiled via social media on 19 December. The project had to be adapted because of Covid-19 but it proved to be a really good lockdown project engaging a wide variety of people. An online 'book' of all the bricks and

information about them has been produced and all that remains to be done is to distribute this at an event to the participants.

- The 'Mrs History' project is well underway, with a suite of online resources having been produced for schools, and in 2020 direct contact had been made with 'The Edge' and Bellfield Juniors, with St Laurence Infants lined up for 2021.
- The talks programme is evolving into a suite of pop-up drama scripts to be performed within St Laurence Church and outdoors close to significant features.

*Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)*

### **Occasional Offices (Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals)**

As 2020 saw the church closed for all services for several months and restricted congregations for much of the year, we have seen a significant change in our occasional offices. It seems useful to put them in context.

Year	Baptisms	Weddings	Wedding Blessings	Funerals in church	Funerals in cremes & other places	Burials in churchyard	Burial of ashes in churchyard
2017	31	9	0	17	25	9	16
2018	33	4	1	13	20	8	13
2019	44	9	5	16	9	5	9
2020	7	1	0	12	15	9	14

### **Parochial Church Council**

The PCC met significantly more often in 2020, migrating to Zoom and telephone very early on in the pandemic. Overall we had 20 meetings with a good attendance at each meeting. The appointments agreed at the first meeting of the new PCC after the deferred APCM in October were:

*Joint Vice-Chairs:* Roy Pouncett and Sandra Reynolds

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

*Secretary:* Emily Corns      *Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator:* Rowena Nichols

Each year we are required to set up and monitor 'Transforming Church' goals. For 2019/20 these were:

- To register as an Eco-Church and achieve bronze accreditation: completed April 2020.
- To build an interior porch: design, permissions and revised finances due to uplift in costings are in place, and start date of January 2021 expected with completion on 2 July 2021.
- To complete the "Know Your Church, Know Your Neighbourhood" programme and increase community use of the church: KYCKYN was completed in July 2019 and there was great hope for increased community use of the church and an enhanced local profile thanks to an award of £65,700 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund in January 2020 for a community history project 'Northfield Revealed.' This included £10,000 for the interior porch.

The 2020/21 goals (set late 2020) are:

- To work towards an Eco-Church Silver Award, including continuing with the porch and improving heating and lighting.
- To get St Laurence Safe Spaces underway: an after-school club and safe space for children of secondary school age vulnerable to knife crime.
- To improve our ability to broadcast worship to enable more people in the community to connect with church.

Safeguarding and Health and Safety are discussed at every meeting. Other significant issues discussed and agreed during the year included:

- Interior porch: the faculty and preliminaries; the appointment of Jan Bakewell from CofE Birmingham as Project Manager at no cost to us; the start date which was deferred from July 2020 to January 2021 mainly due to Covid-19.
- Monitoring of finances, furloughing and hours of paid staff due to Covid-19.

- Monitoring outside contractors doing churchyard maintenance to excellent effect.
- Parochial fees.
- New Policies: Safeguarding Complaints Procedure; adopting guidance on 'Identifying and Reporting Safeguarding Serious Incidents to the Charity Commission'.
- Response to Covid-19: keeping on top of constantly changing guidance from Government and the CofE; moving to online and telephone worship; risk assessments; making the church and pastoral centre ready to re-open.
- Pastoral matters: the provision of regular packs of spiritual and pastoral support, church news and essential information to all on the ER plus a few more people.
- The establishment of St Laurence Safe Spaces, an after-school drop-in for secondary school pupils.
- Water tanks in the pastoral centre and water safety in general.
- 'Northfield Revealed' progress.

Reports were received from the following groups; each has a section in this report, though with the inability to meet in person much of the work was handled by the PCC as the year progressed.

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

No report was received from the Deanery Synod as it did not meet in 2020, however a small group joined the 'boundaries review group' which started to review parish boundaries within 8 parishes of the deanery.

*Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)*

### **Place of Welcome**

"Place of Welcome" was held in Church on Saturday mornings, between 10:00 and 12:00 in January, February and half of March. We then had to stop because the Covid-19 regulations meant that the building had to be closed and refreshments could not be shared. However, since July the church has been open at that time and it has been used for people to come in and engage in private prayer.

*Janice Wones*

### **Planned Giving, Gift Aid & Collection Counting**

We are very grateful for the continued financial support by our parishioners, especially in the circumstances we have found ourselves in over the last year. Many people have changed their giving to giving by BACS transfer; others have ensured that their giving has been made available to myself which has enabled me to transfer funds directly into St Laurence's PCC account. In addition, we have received monthly giving directly into the bank from new people which again we are truly grateful for.

Due to the limited services we have been able to hold in Church, we are short of the open plate collections that we would normally receive for weddings, baptisms, school services etc, but have received some very kind donations in respect of these together with donations in memory of loved ones where relatives have donated after funerals have taken place.

As far as Gift Aid is concerned for the year 2020, this has not been reconciled as yet as the format this year will be very different as we will need to track down monies from all the various different sources that they have been received from. We have received many extra Gift Aid forms for one-off donations so hopefully this exercise will be completed very soon.

As a reminder, 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.**

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 her continued support during this time and to everybody else who has helped to try to keep St Laurence Church afloat in these very difficult circumstances. Also I would like to thank Gerardine and her team of counters, who had a short year this year, but don't worry, as soon as we are back in Church, we shall be requesting your services again please.

*Elaine Clements (Treasurer)*

### **Publicity**

Publicity is key to keeping the Church in the public view during this period of change due to the pandemic. Each week I update our website, our calendar on A Church Near You (ACNY, at [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com)), our Facebook page, and our YouTube channel. This enables our virtual services and Sunday School to be accessible to all at whatever time of day suits the viewer! Our 'reach' through these sites may surprise you: around 70 visitors a week to our own Church web site; over 25,000 visitors a year to ACNY; over 200 people seeing our Facebook posts each month; and over 150 subscribers to our YouTube channel.

We are grateful to Mark Reynolds who keeps our Twitter account alive. Thanks in part to a Local Innovation Fund grant from Birmingham City Council we now have some new notice boards.

*Peter Chapman (Webmaster)*

### **The Rectory**

Work done by Church of England Birmingham in 2020:

- Landlord's gas safety checks;
- Front exterior light replaced (again!);
- Wiring tested and remedial work done;
- Damaged front wall rebuilt.

By Rector:

- Kitchen redecorated.

By PCC:

- Annual security alarm maintenance visit.

The Rectory has proved more than adequate in recent months for the Rector and her husband, both working from home, but the lack of soundproofing between rooms, especially the dining room/lounge and study/bedroom above, would have made it very difficult with children living at home. There is no one room where it is possible to have a confidential conversation.

*Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)*

### **Safeguarding**

Overall, the PCC adopts and follows all the Church of England safeguarding policies and guidelines, and where I refer to 'church' it includes the whole site: church, pastoral centre and churchyard.

I was again appointed as Parish Safeguarding Lead for 2020 and can report the PCC has all the required policies in place:

- Safeguarding Policy;
- Policy Statement on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders;
- Responding to Domestic Abuse;
- Promoting a Safer Church: Parish Policy Statement.

In addition:

- The policies are displayed on the front page of the church website.
- The PCC has adopted a procedure to deal promptly with safeguarding allegations or suspicions of abuse.
- The safeguarding posters are displayed in the pastoral centre and church – signposting any queries to me, Elaine Clements (children) or Janice Wones (domestic violence).
- I have reviewed all the job descriptions for all posts, both paid and voluntary.
- DBS checks have been completed for everyone undertaking a role that requires a check to be completed, including the new PCC members appointed in October.
- Safeguarding training was also completed by the new PCC members and again, everyone in a role that requires them to undertake suitable training has done so.
- Safeguarding statements/policies are obtained for all hirers of the pastoral centre.
- Risk assessments are completed for all church activities, which includes safeguarding.

2021 will require a number of people to renew their DBS checks and to undertake refresher training, and this is all underway.

If you have any concerns or queries on any safeguarding issue, please do not hesitate to contact me.

*Rowena Nicholls*

### **St Laurence Church Infant School**

As the world went into lockdown, around this time last year, we started with between 10 and 20 children of key workers coming into school each day. With 3 bubbles running this sometimes meant the staff found themselves at quite a loose end as doing an activity with 30 children takes a lot longer than doing it with 3! By the end of the summer term, however, school felt like it was bursting at the seams with 9 bubbles of 15 children. Although we couldn't have all our children back "properly", we were able to invite every child who wanted to come back to an hour-long session to say "goodbye". This was especially important for our retiring headteacher Caroline Proctor.

Over the course of the lockdown, our wonderful extension to our "Rainbow Room" was completed, which has made a fabulous space for small group work and increased the capacity of our wraparound clubs. Since September, I have been finding my feet as headteacher. I have been so grateful for the support and prayers I have received from the church, the governors and the families we serve.

Covid-19 has turned even the simplest event into a logistical operation, but with the help of the wonderful staff team we have found a way! We have all become a lot more "tech savvy", recording and editing our own nativity videos and carol concerts at Christmas, using a new video-calling app for parents' evening and providing live online worship (assemblies) three times a week, including weekly services led by Canon Janet and the team from St Laurence Church.

The latest lockdown came just as our new deputy headteacher, Joe Staines, joined us. This time around we had nearly half of the children in school each day and all staff worked their full hours. We improved on our "remote learning" offer, and were able to provide 3 hours of content to children each day, including at least 2 live lessons and work which we uploaded for children and then fed back on. Religious Education was included every week as we consider it a core subject. We felt much more connected to our families learning at home this time around.

When we welcomed all the children back into school again a few weeks ago, we had a lovely surprise waiting for them in the form of an exciting new climbing frame in the lower playground. We are now working on re-establishing our relationships and routines as these are at the very heart of making the school work. Without any SATs, phonics screening checks or Foundation Stage Profiles to submit this summer, we have got time to make sure we get things right, and while we know the children have missed out on such a lot, we are very thankful that we can begin to catch-up again together.

*Catherine Smith (Headteacher)*

## **St Laurence Church Junior School**

This has been a particularly challenging year not only for the pupils, staff, governors and parents/carers at St Laurence Church Junior School, but for all of us in the country during the Covid-19 pandemic. An additional challenge during the year was the long-term absence due to ongoing health issues of our headteacher Mrs Jane Lindsay.

Mrs Lindsay on advice from her medical consultants made the very difficult decision to retire at the end of the summer term. We were able though to say farewell and mark the fantastic contribution that she made to children and families of St Laurence over 11 years. We held a 'socially distanced' afternoon tea for her in July where past colleagues, friends of the school and current staff and governors were able to thank her and say goodbye. She was also able to see the pupils before the end of that term.

Mrs Mulrain was appointed by the governors as Acting Headteacher; what a time to become a headteacher! I can only commend and highly praise Mrs Mulrain for the way she has led the school in these uncharted and unprecedented times. She has shown resilience, determination, and a real 'can do' attitude to ensure that pupils and staff have been kept safe, that learning has continued in a safe and welcoming environment and that we have continued to move forward. Daily briefings are received in schools from the Department for Education and also from Birmingham City Council, giving updated information (not always helpful!) along with numerous risk assessments which have to be completed and complied with. We are now working on the safe re-opening of school from Monday 8 March 2021 in line with government and city guidelines.

In order to meet the restrictions placed on schools the staff at St Laurence Church Junior school have had to adapt, learn and develop a range of new skills including online lessons, teaching in a socially-distanced way and ensuring that, as well as covering the curriculum, the mental health and well-being of pupils and staff is given priority. The promoting of spirituality in the school is being developed in order to support pupils and staff with personal reflection and thinking about how we all impact the world in which we live. It is planned to develop a portfolio of spirituality which involves the whole school community.

Staff have tried through the various lockdowns to provide the children with a range of opportunities enabling them to still feel connected to each other. The use of technology has enabled virtual assemblies to continue with Canon Janet and other guest speakers including Birmingham City Mission. Lunchtime prayers have been introduced, led by the prayer councillors in each class, and end-of-day prayers are said which are taken from the prayer book which children created at the start of the year. Staff have been keeping in touch with their pupils and families on a regular basis.

Last year we had begun our new extension; we are delighted that, although it took longer than we were originally told, it is finally complete and the pupils are able to enjoy more space and facilities. I am sure that those of you who use the before- and after-school clubs notice a difference.

Governors have continued to meet throughout this year, either 'socially distanced' or remotely. Online training events have taken place along with briefings for governors from the city council and diocese.

The new Church of England secondary school, Christ Church Secondary Academy situated in Yardley Wood, is nearing completion and will open to year 7 pupils in September this year. There has been a lot of interest from the local community for places in September. This is an exciting development as it will provide additional secondary school places to the area and is the first new Church of England secondary school in Birmingham for many years.

Finally, some very exciting news. Governors, with support from the Birmingham diocese, began the process for recruiting a new headteacher for St Laurence Church Junior School in the autumn term. This involved advertising the position nationally. I am delighted that after a very thorough and rigorous interview process we have appointed Mr Andrew Murphy who will become our headteacher after Easter. Mrs Mulrain will continue in her role as deputy headteacher. Governors feel that we have a new strong team in place ready for a new chapter at St Laurence Church Junior School.

*Jill Saunders (Chair of Governors)*

### **Scout Group (206<sup>th</sup> St Laurence)**

Well, what a year, we started with great plans and a group of 6 sections (2 Beavers, 2 Cubs and 2 Scouts), with 113 young members, 20 leaders and 6 young leaders, then Covid-19 hit: no face-to-face meetings, no camps, no activities.

In true scouting style the majority of leaders wouldn't be deterred. We found, a platform called Zoom (little known at the time), and with some trepidation the leaders started holding meetings online. The first few probably weren't what any of us expected, but confidence grew, and the leaders began to devise some innovative and fantastic evenings comprising of fun activities, challenges and quizzes to meet the various badge criteria we need to achieve. There are far too many to list completely, but some of the highlights have been creating some funny videos, playing escape rooms, meeting with overseas scouts, cooking, holding treasure hunts, learning some magic tricks, making sock puppets and much more. We have even held online weekend camps and had virtual campfires.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing this report we have fewer than 80 active young people for various reasons. However, we anticipate that once we can return to face-to-face scouting and are back to some form of normality our numbers will increase quickly.

As always, I would like to thank the leaders and group executive committee for all their commitment and enthusiasm, and parents for helping the youngsters to get onto Zoom. I would also like to thank a couple of very charitable parents for their sizable donations that have helped to maintain the group financially over this exceedingly difficult year for everyone.

*Carl Jenkins (Group Scout Leader, 206<sup>th</sup> St Laurence Scout Group)*

### **Scouts (Gridiron Explorers)**

After opening the group in September 2019, we met for the last time as a group on 17 March 2020 in line with Covid-19 restrictions.

As restrictions were partly lifted during the summer and small groups could meet outside, we arranged for an activity to take place at the Lickey Hills with small groups meeting at staggered times throughout a Saturday afternoon in September. It was a very late Easter egg hunt which should have happened several months earlier. Thankfully the sun shone for us but then the government announced new restrictions so all further planned activities were cancelled.

Rachel has been running activities on Zoom for scouts and explorers, and although the scouts are still taking part the explorers haven't participated in many of the meetings.

We have kept in touch with the young people and their parents on social media, and we still have 25 explorers who want to return to the group when it's allowed. We have continued to ask for subs to be paid so that the annual capitation could be paid; without this annual payment to the Scout Association the group would have to close.

We are looking forward to being able to meet in person again, whenever that may be.

*Debbie Keeves*

### **Servers**

What a difficult last 12 months for everyone with the pandemic! I think Canon Janet and our great team of clergy have done a wonderful job of keeping us all still involved with services as much as possible, although no servers have been required for some time now, even when we managed to hold our Christmas Eve and Christmas day services in our lovely church. It was so strange not being allowed to prepare the altar or assist in any way.

As always, thank you team for all your support.

*Hilda Pouncett*

## **Social and Fundraising Committee**

We had so much planned for 2020! But looking back, we were very busy before lockdown. Right at the start of the year we had a Crumble Party at the Rectory to review the Christmas Fayre in 2019 ready for 2020 (thanks to Canon Janet for the crumble!), and we had a very successful Piphy Pudding Party (thanks again to Canon Janet for organising all the games). Two car boot sales raised nearly £700 and we also held a Spring Craft Fayre on the Saturday before lockdown started. It was an excellent Craft Fayre with some wonderful crafts made by local people; sadly the Covid-19 threat reduced the footfall, but the stallholders were still pleased with the sales achieved.

Then lockdown came and everything was cancelled, but we did manage to have an outdoor Bric@Brac sale in October, at the front of the pastoral centre. It was really successful, and very grateful thanks to those who helped in difficult times. We did have our annual Christingle Services and launched an online money raiser for the Children's Society, and we were successful in exceeding our £200 target by raising £287.31, so thank you to everyone who contributed.

We will be looking to see what we can do in 2021 within the Covid-19 guidelines, so watch this space for dates!

*Rowena Nicholls*

### **Stay & Play**

We had lots of lovely activities/sessions planned and the group was welcoming new families, however after the session on 16 March 2020 the stay and play group closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have unfortunately been unable to open since.

Our Facebook page has been updated on occasion and we try to stay in touch with the families through this. We do hope in the not-so-distant future we will be able to re-open, however we are unable give a specific date for when this might be.

*Donna Clulee and Emma Kupsa (Co-ordinators)*

### **Sunday School**

The year started for us all the same as any other year with the 08:30 Sunday School and Rise & Shine taking place in the pastoral centre and the 10:00 Sunday Schools taking place in church, which was all working very well, then 15 March saw our last Sunday Schools as we knew them.

On 29 March Rise & Shine was started by Canon Janet. It was pre-recorded and broadcast via YouTube with a lot of help from Alan Green and Peter Chapman, and this format continued all the way through until September with the help of other members of the congregation, the Sunday School team and Sunday School families, so our thanks go out to all concerned.

On 31 August we received the sad news of Clare Blackshaw passing away. She had been a Sunday School leader for over 50 years at St Laurence and we are all very thankful to the many years that she devoted to the children of St Laurence.

From September to 1 November one Sunday School group was restarted back in the Pastoral Centre at 08:30, led mainly by Rowena. All this was done under strict Covid-19 Regulations with families all being seated at social distances and places being booked by Eventbrite. Our thanks go out to all involved in this too, as again other members of the Sunday School team and Ministry team were involved.

Sadly, after 1 November we were back into lockdown and Sunday School stopped again. This only lasted for a couple of weeks because Rise & Shine started up again on 22 November. Then for the last three weeks in December we were back in the Pastoral Centre. All in all we had a very successful year of keeping Sunday School available to our children, albeit by alternative means. Thank you for all the support received and we look forward to being able to meet in person in 2021.

*Elaine Clements*

## The 100 Club

This report should be read along with the financial statement for 2020 which turned out to be a challenging year. Covid-19 lockdowns hampered prize money payouts. Some generous winners donated their prize money back to the club to be included for the benefit of the good causes which the 100 Club supports. This raised an additional £75 for good causes, of which £20 was paid out directly to St Laurence from winnings, leaving £55 to be included in the next round of distributions to good causes in early 2021. Covid-19 has also hampered the collection of subscriptions for the 2021 year.

For 2020 the club achieved 96 subscriptions (95 @ £12, and 1 @ £10). This equated to income of £1150.

£1155 was paid out to:

St Laurence Pastoral Centre	£285
The Children's Society	£285
Prize money	£585 (of which £75 was donated back)

Inevitably during the Covid-19 pandemic it has been difficult pursuing subscriptions, but 101 subscriptions were eventually collected. Now that all expected subscription money has been paid in, prize draws for 2021 got underway a bit late on 23 February 2021.

*Jeffrey Carr (100 Club administrator)*

St Laurence Church – 100 Club	2020 Financial Statement	
Income and Expenditure 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020	2020	2019
	£	£
<b>Income</b>		
Subscriptions collected for 2020 during 2020	298	1,088
24 subscriptions @ £12	288	
1 subscription @ £10	10	
Advance subscriptions for the 2021 year	504	852
42 Subscriptions @ £12	504	
Prize money donated back / ring-fenced for good causes		
Prize Draw 4 – 26 April 2020	45	
Prize Draw 6 – 23 June 2020	10	
<b>Total income</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>1,940</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Distributions to good causes in 2020	570	544
The Children's Society	285	
St Laurence Pastoral Centre	285	
Distributions to good causes relating to a previous year		512
Prize money paid out	585	544
11 draws @ £45	495	
Christmas draw	90	
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>1,155</b>	<b>1,600</b>
<b>Surplus / Deficit</b>	<b>-298</b>	<b>340</b>
<b>Fund balance</b>		
Fund balance as at 31 Dec 2019 (= 71 advance subs x 12)	852	512
add surplus / less deficit	-298	340
Fund balance as at 31 December 2020	<b>554</b>	<b>852</b>
Cash on hand as at 31 December 2020	0	12
Bank account as at 31 December 2020	554	840
Total funds as at 31 December 2020	<b>554</b>	<b>852</b>

## **Worship**

The committee met in January to review Christmas and start planning for Holy Week and Easter and other services, and then Covid-19 struck and we discovered Zoom! Our last Sunday in church was 15 March and thankfully we had the foresight to encourage the congregation to take home both the Lent and Easter Booklets. The following week we pre-recorded the service from church thanks to Alan Green and his cameras but the next day churches had to close completely. We opted for Zoom and live-streaming from our various homes so we could continue to worship together as much as possible. We had been blessed with the arrival of Claire Whitmore, an ordinand at Queens, in November and she ably took on the role of 'Zoom control' for several months while the rest of the ministry team set up altars and suitable backdrops at home. We are very grateful to Liz Whitworth for suggesting the use of conference calls and her company for giving us the use of one of their lines outside office hours. This meant that people could 'attend' the Sunday morning service by Zoom or a simple phone number. It did mean that we had to 'dual-stream' the service with preachers and presidents hearing it slightly out of phase through the phone and through the computer whilst not letting the one interfere with the other! We also had separate readers and intercessors on the different methods resulting in some pauses as they prayed at different speeds, but overall it worked very well and the evidence can be seen on our YouTube channel which was set up in the first week of lockdown. We transferred much of our planned Holy Week onto Zoom etc and even invented the 'Hot Cross Sandwich' to make at home. We look back and wonder how we did it but such is the enabling of God. Wednesday morning HC went to Zoom and, as in office hours, with the president resorting to landline/mobile phones as well, juggling up to 3 at once on occasion. Compline for Lent went to conference call and has continued weekly ever since (normally only in Advent and Lent) with over 20 people phoning in on occasion but numbers have now settled down to 8-12. We soon learnt how we could strip out sermons as audio recordings which could be put on a 24/7 phone line and we have discovered that some have been known to listen live at the service then dial in to hear it again and even again.

Our Sunday School moved to YouTube with a pre-recorded Rise and Shine service. For some weeks I lived 'the dream' of being a Blue Peter presenter doing a similarly styled programme based around a Bible story. It was a phenomenal piece of work including involving families in recording the reading of the Bible story, others videoing playing a game to fit the theme, members of the Ministry and Sunday School teams doing crafts, leading prayers and songs as well as quite a lot of work from the Rectory and the garden with my husband becoming the regular cameraman, and painstakingly all put together each week by Alan Green. By episode 22 we were exhausted and glad of the pause for a couple of months when we were able to run Sunday School services in person though we managed a few more pre-recorded Rise and Shines when we had to close again.

We marked the Queen's Jubilee in May with a short service on Zoom. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Grenfell Tower tragedy I tolled the bell 72 times and on VJ Day and Remembrance Day a bell ringer and I were able to Zoom a very short service including bell-tolling from the tower. The bell tolling received a considerable amount of interest on our Facebook pages.

25 July saw us return to church on Saturdays at 16:30 for Holy Communion whilst continuing Zooming from homes on Sunday mornings. The decision to opt to restart on Saturdays was to signal that things would be very different and also to avoid the problem of people turning up 'as before' and not understanding the restrictions of no singing, social distancing, one-way systems and bread-only communion. By 13<sup>th</sup> September we felt able to move to Sunday mornings at 09:30 and Zoom the service to people at home from church. Initially we did this using mobile phone to film but before long Fr David had built a stand for a mounted camera and made adjustments to the sound system to enable much better quality of production, especially the sound. However, as Covid-19 rates began to rise in the mid-autumn we 'retreated' to Zoom only, though managing some services in church over Christmas including two Christingle services. At this point we dropped using conference call as well as Zoom as most people knew how to phone-in by Zoom though a minister with a phone in her hand to keep one person involved through the old-fashioned way is still an occasional sight

At the end of June our curate, Theresa Morton, was authorised for ministry in the parish via Zoom and was eventually ordained deacon on 19 September in a socially-distanced service in the Cathedral which we were able to watch together a little later from home and raise our glasses to our new Revd.

We were very fortunate to be approached by some music students from Birmingham University who offered to come into church and pre-record music for a carol service for us. It was a long, cold afternoon for them, the camera man and church wardens even with the heat on but they were thrilled to be singing together having practised individually at home. Various members of the congregation recorded readings from home or church and even Zimbabwe and Alan Green put it all together for our YouTube channel. We had collective viewing with some in the pastoral centre watching it on a big screen and everyone else tuning in at the same time to watch.

We did similarly with the stop-motion animated nativity which Fr David spent hours and hours and hours creating, first making all the characters from plasticine, painting them, painstakingly taking photo after photo of them and putting together to create a film, AND gathering a team of children to pre-record sections of the amazing soundtrack he had written.

Who would have thought that we would have done all this? Thanks be to God for giving us the technology to hand, and an amazing ministry team who had the courage to embrace it.

*Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)*

### **Worship in the Community**

*The Limes:* during the year I led a service at the Limes Care Home in Ivyhouse Road on about three Sundays in January and February. In March I was asked not to go again, because of the Covid-19 epidemic. The “congregation” varied from about 10 to 16.

*(Janice Wones)*

*Chatham Place:* during the year, a short service was held for the residents of Chatham Place in January and February. I was usually supported by Jean Whittle-Wills. In March we had to stop because of the Covid-19 epidemic, but Jean has continued to keep in contact with one of the residents there by telephone.

*(Janice Wones)*

*Beer and Hymns:* We enjoyed our January and March Beer and Hymns at the Great Stone pub with Lawrence and David respectively playing for us. A few non-church people come along specially for the sing-a-long, others are glad to join in and more patiently put up with us, though we are gladly welcomed by the pub. We look forward to being able to return and seeing what the response will be.

*Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)*

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