

The Parish of St Laurence Northfield



St Laurence
Northfield

Reports for the Year of 2022

Parish Office, St Laurence Church and Pastoral Centre

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Church Wardens' Report

How time flies! It seems no time at all since writing the last report on our progress here at St Laurence. It's been a year of highs and lows. We are now worshipping in church after the pandemic, virtually back to normal – thank you Lord! The new lighting and heating systems are now completed, and at long last the new porch is finally finished. Revd Theresa has finally completed her training and has been signed off by Bishop David.

After a major fall of plaster in church we had to use the pastoral centre for worship until emergency repairs were completed to make the ceiling safe; we are waiting for a report from our architect for advice on the best way to replace the ceiling.

We mourned the loss of Joan Fisher – a longstanding congregant – in June, and Shirley Evans – former church warden and choir member – in October, both sadly missed by all.

Our grateful thanks go to Canon Janet and her worship team for all the hard work and dedication shown to us all this last year. Thanks also to Stuart Andrew for his great book "St Laurence parish church: a brief history and guide", which is so informative. Finally a big thank you to everyone who helps to run St Laurence whom we have not named; if we did this report would be as big as Stuart's book!

Roy Pouncett and Sandra Reynolds (Church Wardens)

Bell Ringers

Bellringing at St Laurence has been getting back to normal over 2022. It's great that we still have all our ringers and between eight and ten ringers ring on a Sunday when everyone is around. Everyone's ringing is progressing as a result.

Ringling highlights. My ringling highlights over the past year are:

- Regularly ringling at least eight bells on Fridays and Sundays.
- The progress of our ringers from rounds and call changes to starting to ring a method (plain hunt, or progressing from plain hunt to plain bob doubles).
- Our more experienced ringers getting back up to speed with methods we used to ring such as Stedman doubles.
- Ringling methods on eight bells (a bit of cheat here – plain bob doubles with extra bells).
- Return to ringling for weddings – around six weddings this year.
- Welcoming our friends from Kings Norton and Selly Oak to our practices again.
- Our learner, who started to learn bell handling nearly one year ago, can now ring a bell independently.

Ringling outing. Graeme organised an excellent outing on Saturday 23 July 2022. There was a good turnout and we rang at five towers: Belbroughton, Cookley, Wolverley, Kidderminster and Chaddesley Corbett. At Kidderminster, a Harborne ringer, Tamsin Lane, rang up the 25 cwt tenor. Her two daughters aged 11 and 8 both had a go at ringling the heavy bells. The day was rounded off with drinks in the garden at the Swan Inn, Chaddesley Corbett. Many thanks to Graeme for organising the outing.

Heritage Open Day. We gave a ringling demonstration to an audience of six people who had booked through the Birmingham Heritage website on the morning of Saturday 17 September 2022. There was a short talk, a chance to chime a bell, a demonstration of rounds and call changes and plain hunt on the bells and then a chance to go up the tower to see the bells and watch a bell being rung. I think our audience enjoyed the event. Thanks to the ringers who helped out with the demonstration and to Clare McArdle who helped with everything.

The Death of Queen Elizabeth II. We marked the death of the Queen by tolling a bell continuously for one hour on Friday 8 September 2022 and ringling fully muffled on Sunday 18 September 2022. We recorded our ringling on the Sunday and it was shared via WhatsApp to other ringers. It felt good to be able to mark the

death of our Queen in a distinctive way which was appreciated by people in the community whether members of the church or not.

Thoughts for future practices. These are the areas I wanted to develop at the start of the year. They remain the same for the coming year:

- Develop our rounds and call changes skills and encourage more people to call the changes.
- Get more of our ringers to ring plain bob doubles and grandsire doubles on the treble, tenor and inside through teaching, practice and quarter peals. This is starting to happen but we haven't rung any quarter peals yet.
- Increase the number of doubles methods we can ring such as St Simons, St Martins and Winchendon Place. We are now ringing Reverse Canterbury Doubles. Focus on good quality 6, 8 and 10 bell ringing. This means ringing the methods we can ring really well in terms of striking.

Acknowledgements.

Thank you to Carl, Graeme and Jeff for their time and efforts as steeple keeper, secretary and treasurer. Many thanks to everyone for your time and enthusiasm for ringing. Thank you to Canon Janet for all your support and encouragement.

The St Laurence bell ringers:

Sarah Vernon (Tower Captain)	Rob Pinnock	Denise Carr
Carl Jenkins (Steeple keeper)	Bethan Pinnock	John Copple
Graeme Lanfear (Secretary)	Catherine Taylor	Linda Copple
Jeff Carr (Treasurer)	Bob Mayne	Gillian Cottam
Catherine Pinnock	Anne Pyke	Kay Fuller

Sarah Vernon (Tower Captain)

Children's Society

Although there have been no obvious restrictions, the cost of living has increased and will continue to do so for the immediate future. With this in mind it is gratifying to note that donations to the Children's Society have been forthcoming and generous and, I am sure, will be appreciated by the Society who do such good work for vulnerable young people.

I am pleased to announce the figures for the amount collected which are as follows.

Box Collections	£206.44
Donations	£20.00
Cheque	£10.00
Christingle	£211.00
100 club donation	£325.50
TOTAL	£772.94

This is higher than last year by £154.85. The totals have been checked, verified and forwarded to the Children's Society, who have acknowledged receipt of the amount forwarded. Well done to all donors who once again have excelled in the task and also thanks to the people who spent time and effort in the time-consuming job of counting and checking, all of whom are appreciated.

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

Christian Aid

It is heartening to know that even in the toughest times our wonderful congregants can look beyond our own needs to those in impoverished countries far away.

Our special fundraising week in May raised £945.44 through online donations and bucket collections in church. Bunting went up around the Lych Gate to draw attention to Christian Aid and our fundraising campaign.

For the third year running we held a very successful plant sale after a Sunday morning service in June. So many people donated their excess plants of all kinds that the sale was bigger and better than ever and raised a magnificent £120. Thank you all!

Our next fundraising effort was timed to coincide with Harvest Festival, where once again our thoughts turned to those people and communities whose needs are so great, and what a response! We were able to send another £185.04. Finally we were asked to respond rapidly to Christian Aid's East Africa Hunger Crisis Appeal and raised £305. Our grand total for 2022 was £1,555.48.

You are all so generous, thank you everyone!

Gerardine Merrick

Church Cleaning (The Holy Dusters)

As there has been less work being done in church for most of the year, we have been able to keep to monthly cleaning. The month of December allowed us to go in twice in readiness for Christmas.

There has been a good number of helpers for most of the year, usually 8-10 people, but we are always needing more people to cover for holidays, sickness *etc.* Contact Roy Dutton in church if you can join us (only 45 mins each month).

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 2022 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. and the Quakers.

A council meeting was held in May to report on activities during the previous year. There were reports on the finances, the Community Christmas parcel delivery and the election of officers for the coming year. It was decided that the activities normally arranged through CTiN, apart from Community Christmas, would not be attempted this year. If any church was organising an event and would like to invite other churches to join them, this would be welcomed. Representatives from the churches each reported how their church had dealt with the restrictions from Covid-19. It was also decided that something would be organised for Community Christmas.

In September a meeting was held to discuss the arranging of a festive afternoon tea as a Community Christmas activity. A very small group of people volunteered to invite people who had been on the Community Christmas list, to request and allocate volunteers. The Chinese Church and the Korean Church were considering joining CTiN, and Hollymoor Church might also apply to join. The CTiN account will be moved to be a restricted fund in the Northfield Baptist Church account.

Two further meetings were held to discuss and make final arrangements for the Community Christmas Afternoon Tea. This was held on 10 December at the Baptist Church, supported by a few volunteers from the churches. Entertainment was provided by the St Laurence Handbell Ringers and the Baptist Church Band.

Janice Wones

Deanery Synod

The first meeting of the year was held in person and online at St Philip's Church in Dorridge on 12 February. There were speakers from the National Sport and Wellbeing project and KICK London. There was an update on People and Places in the deanery. There was also information about the Living in Love and Faith courses, reports from General and Diocesan Synods and a motion that a motion be put forward to the Diocesan Synod that the Diocese should divest from fossil fuels

The next meeting was held on 8 June at St David's Church in Shenley Green. The speaker was Guy Donegan-Cross introducing the Way of Discipleship course. There was a request for volunteers to become Parish Environmental Contacts. There was also mention of the reports from General and Diocesan Synod. The Deanery Project Team were currently concentrating on the formation of Oversight Areas.

On October 20 the meeting was held at the United Church of St Paul, Balsall Heath. There were speakers describing recent examples of Oversight Conversations. The synod then broke into groups to discuss oversight areas and the discussions were reviewed.

Janice Wones

Fabric Committee

The new porch was finally completed, along with the new lighting and heating systems. However, due to a major fall of plaster in church we had to use the pastoral centre for worship until emergency repairs were carried out to make the ceiling safe. As our church is an ancient and listed building, we are waiting for a report from our architect for advice on the best way to replace the ceiling. We have completed the repairs to the roof which is now watertight.

This coming year I do feel we must concentrate on giving the pastoral centre some additional attention, as some areas are looking very tired. So we will need to find some extra funding.

On a very personal note I must give Stuart Andrew my thanks for all his hard work as secretary of the Fabric Committee and for running the lighting and heating project which is proving a great success; I do wish him all the best with his treatment and trust he will be back with us soon.

Roy Pouncett

Faith Discussion Groups

Fellowship Group at Julie Meadows': This group now meets on the third Thursday of most months at Julie Meadows' house, usually starting at 10.30. The group has met regularly during the last twelve months and has discussed various subjects ranging from precious memories to precious artefacts, many with a religious concept. The group has shared information regarding amenities available in our area, what books make an interesting read and many other interesting talking points. The group recently welcomed new members and we all look forward to the next twelve months. *(Janice Wones)*

Lent discussion group: We held Lent group discussions in 2022 as part of the CTiN initiative. Discussions took place in the Pastoral Centre in person and via Zoom as a weekly gathering for the duration of 5 weeks. Discussions were based around 5 chapters of the book "Eavesdropping" by Henry Martin. We had 4 to 5 people present in person with a further 2 to 3 participants via Zoom. *(Marianna Ponikarovskaya)*

Bible Study: Bible Study has continued to be held via Zoom every Wednesday. The group discusses the passages of scripture for the upcoming Sunday's service, facilitated by the minister who will be preaching that week. A mix of exegesis, reflection and the sharing of individual stories result in a lively and insightful sharing of the Word. These sessions are very informal, and all are welcome to join in. *(Revd Theresa Morton)*

Flower Guild

The Flower Guild has had a quiet year because of building issues which limited the use of church and caused some of the weddings to be moved. We hope that we will be doing a lot more in 2023, continuing to use fresh and silk arrangements as and when needed.

Christmas was low key, but we managed to do it justice with thanks to Linda and her sister-in-law Jan. We purchased some pillar wreaths from the Country Basket which can be used yearly with some slight alterations to make them a little different, whilst the screen and Christmas bows were made by Linda. At

this point we'd like to thank Al Wallace for his assistance, and Rowena Nicholls for decorating the Lych gate and for her input into the Christmas decorations in Church and Pastoral Centre along with the volunteers she recruited.

We were extremely grateful to the Junior School for their gift of the lovely Christmas tree and lights after school closed for the end of year.

We do hope to get more volunteers this year but we thank you for your continued support, sending love and best wishes from the Flower Guild.

Barry Gardner

Gridiron

Tuesday Coffee mornings continued in the Black Horse public house for most of 2022 but several people felt uncomfortable meeting in a pub. Returning to the Pastoral Centre wasn't really an option as there were insufficient volunteers to run the coffee mornings, whilst some members who organised days out and walks before Covid-19 are no longer in a position to do so. So it was that in November we took the decision to 'put the Gridiron to bed' giving thanks for the many years it has operated as a valuable part of the social fabric of St Laurence Church. We are particularly grateful to Stuart and Chris Andrew who have headed up the Gridiron for most of its existence.

We took this decision in the light of the possibility of a 'Warm Welcome Space' operating out of the Pastoral Centre in partnership with Vineyard Church. Towards the end of 2022 a couple of trial sessions were held and 'Tuck-in Tuesdays' has now been launched.

Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)

Handbell Ringers

The Handbell group has continued to thrive and we were delighted to welcome a new, enthusiastic member in the summer of 2022. We practise each week and played during the church service on Mothering Sunday and the service to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee. As part of the church's Heritage Week events in September, we gave a handbell ringing demonstration which included a "have a go" opportunity. The session was well attended and great fun.

In December, the group were invited to play for the residents of Chatham Place and Briony House and to entertain the guests at the Community Christmas Tea. An enjoyable time was had by all. As always, new ringers are more than welcome to join our small but friendly band.

Chris Andrew (Handbell organiser)

Larry's

Larry's opened in April 2021 as a safe place for young people of secondary school age to relax and meet friends after school on Thursdays.

We have retained our core group of members, with up to 23 attending each session. This number works well in the space we have available in the Pastoral Centre, with room to play active games inside when the weather isn't suitable for outside ball games. As expected, we've seen less of some of our older members in the Summer and Autumn terms, however the younger members continue to be keen to invite their friends along, maintaining our overall numbers. Most of the young people are drawn from Kings Norton Boys' and Kings Norton Girls' Schools, although there is increasing representation from other schools, including Bournville and Colmers Schools.

We have been delighted to welcome three new volunteers this year, bringing fresh ideas to the group, although having parted ways with the team from Youth Work Europe towards the end of the year we continue to have little resilience within the team.

Costs this year have been lower than budgeted due to less availability of paid youth workers than anticipated, and expenditure on the purchase of more games and activities being offset by generous donations. These have included chess sets, and an Xbox 360 along with games that we have ensured are age-appropriate and fit with the ethos of Larry's (e.g. no weapons or violence). At the request of the young people, we have purchased new board games, and we have bought new soft footballs to replace the harder ones which were causing damage to the outside of the building.

The tuck shop remains popular; cans of pop and crisps are sold at a fair price and water, hot chocolate and fresh fruit are offered free of charge.

The young people have very much embraced ownership of 'their' group, and take responsibility for maintaining the standards of behaviour expected. For many this continues to be their favourite time of the week, when they have the opportunity to play, participate in creative activities, do homework, chat, and simply have time away from other pressures. We are all very grateful to our volunteers for enabling this to happen.

Revd Theresa Morton

Mothers' Union

Our branch continues to thrive and is one of the biggest branches in the Diocese. It's lovely that we get an average of 20 members to each branch meeting.



In 2022 we welcomed Linda Powell as a new member, but we sadly said goodbye to Anne Pycock. Our membership includes members who worship at St Bartholomew and St Michael churches, and it's great that they continue to join us.

We had our usual round of monthly meetings and we hosted the Diocesan Members' Meeting in October. The year ended with our Christmas Buffet lunch in December which was attended by over 30 members and partners and was a very enjoyable occasion to get us all focussed on Advent and Christmas.

We have continued to support the local community with our Baby Box project and several other branches are interested in starting this work in their areas.

I have a great team of helpers around me to support the work of Mothers' Union here in Northfield, with particular thanks to Julie Meadows who is our Treasurer, and also to all those who help each month with refreshments.

2023 has started on a very positive note as we welcome Kathy Mayne as a new member. Mothers' Union is planning a Cream Tea on Monday 8th May to celebrate the King's Coronation and to raise money for church and for the Mothers' Union; please do look out for details nearer the time.

Mothers' Union continues to provide support and fellowship to so many people in so many communities throughout the world. All its work is underpinned by prayer and we continue to pray for the Mothers' Union as it looks to reimagine itself to ensure it continues to be here for another 150 years.

Rowena Nicholls

Nativity Festival

This was a new initiative for St Laurence Church. The idea was to invite community groups and individuals to make or loan Nativity sets. We would display them in church as an opportunity to invite the local community into church to see not just the sets but also our new porch, heating and lighting. The festival would also serve as a backdrop for telling the Christmas story to local nurseries and school groups, and we

also wanted to raise money for our church ceiling/roof repairs and for our Diocesan link with churches in Malawi.

All together we had 58 Nativity scenes on display with around 400 visitors to the public openings plus around 700 people to the ones for schools/nurseries. We raised £1,260 through donations and there was a real 'buzz' to the festival as the word got out on social media and people invited their friends. It became the local "you must see this" event! People commented that it was lovely to have the opportunity to engage in something 'spiritual' connected to Christmas and we were also able to offer some informal pastoral care to visitors.

We were greatly helped by the donation of the large and beautiful "Hosking Crib Set" by the daughter of Dick Hosking who made it, by the loan of the "Santons from Provence" set by Germaine Jones and by the presence of Graham Short with his "Nativity in the Eye of a Needle" and microscopes to see it. The latter brought us much publicity nationally and internationally. As much of the publicity came as we were planning to close the festival we kept going for a second weekend and added an open evening too.

We further extended the festival by making it into a Nativity Advent calendar on Facebook. A photo of a Nativity scene with a comment from one of the ministry team was posted each day from 1–25 December. This also enabled the revealing of the most popular scenes in each category: .

- The "one I would most like at home" was jointly the large light-up stable made by Linda Joyce Wallace and her grandson James, and "Knitivity" made by the Andrew Family.
- The "most original" was "The Nativity in the Eye of a Needle" by Graham Short.
- The "one which makes you think about Jesus in a new way" was "From Salvage to Salvation" by Gerardine Merrick and friends.

The overall winner was Revd Theresa's set from Kenya made from banana and maize leaves.

Of course this "mad idea of the Rector's" could not possibly have come to fruition without a lot of volunteer help from the congregation and participation from community groups.

Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)

Northfield Revealed

In January 2020 we received a grant of £65,700 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to be spent on promoting our rich local heritage, with £10,000 to go towards the building of an interior porch in the church. Originally it was to be an 18-month project but Covid-19 extended this. We did a lot of work in 2021, enabling the final 10% of the grant to be released in 2022.



2022 saw the publication of two excellent and colourful guide books: "Northfield Old Village" by Chris Rice and "Saint Laurence Parish Church" by Stuart Andrew.

The full set of pop-up dramatic sketches were filmed and are now available on the church website. The one about the windows and doors was successfully used to enable a guided walk about the outside of the church in Heritage Week.

A Northfield Revealed Heritage Day was held in the Northfield Arts Forum shop in the Northfield Shopping Centre, and more signage for around the area has been produced.

All that is outstanding is the mounting of some of the signage and the conversion of the Tapestry Arch into a 2D picture so it can be displayed in the Pastoral Centre. A group working in the NAF shop is willing to do this under the supervision of Tina Francis who helped organise the original Tapestry Project.

Because of Covid-19 there has been an underspend on some of the community projects but this has enabled £16k of the Heritage Lottery Fund money be used to help finance the porch alongside £2k from the Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust.

Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)

Occasional Offices (Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals)

The 2022 figures follow on from 2 years of Covid-19 restrictions. Quite a few weddings from 2020 were postponed until 2022. Celebrants are increasingly taking funerals at crematoria.

Year	Baptisms	Weddings	Wedding Blessings	Funerals in church	Funerals in crems & 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
2021	11	6	0	15	13	10	19
2022	11	12	0	13	10	7	18

100 Club

The year 2022 was a bit more normal for the 100 Club, with more normal church services and congregations in church, particularly during the second half of 2022, whilst the gathering-in of subscriptions during December 2021 and January 2022 went ahead in a more normal fashion. In total 102 subscriptions were collected for 2022. Payments by direct bank transfer remain my preferred method of payment, as they provide excellent and automatic records on the bank statements. Prize draws and prize payouts went ahead pretty much unhindered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The prize winners themselves continue to be picked using a random number generator provided by www.random.org. During 2022 prize money paid out amounted to £612. Distributions to charities amounted to £633, and took place on 28 Jan 2022, with £312.50 going to the Church of England Children's Society and £312.50 to St Laurence PCC for the Pastoral Centre.

Everything augurs well for a further good year for the 100 Club during 2023.

Jeffrey Carr (100 Club administrator)

Parochial Church Council

The PCC met 10 times in 2022. There was a good attendance at all meetings. The appointments agreed at the first meeting of the new PCC after the APCM in October were:

<i>Lay Chair:</i>	Roy Pouncett	<i>Deputy Lay Chair:</i>	Sandra Reynolds
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Elaine Clements	<i>Electoral Roll Officer:</i>	Ruth Clarke
<i>Secretary:</i>	Emily Corns	<i>Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator:</i>	Rowena Nicholls

Transforming Church Goals (now called a Transforming Church Action Plan - TCAP) were carried forward from 2021. Alongside these explicit goals essential building work in the church has been a major priority. The new lighting and heating is helping to transform our worship and the new porch, which enables people to see into the church during daylight hours, is part of "Transforming Presence."

1. Transforming Discipleship (*Enabling us to grow as confident followers of Jesus including 'Living faithfully in a consuming world'*): To work towards Eco-Church Silver Award, including continuing with the porch and improving heating and lighting.

We have replaced the heating and lighting and the porch is virtually complete. These have considerably reduced our carbon footprint. In April 2023 we were awarded Eco-church SILVER.

2. Transforming Presence (*Living out God's love in our communities and the wider world*): To continue Larry's - an after school club and safe space for children of secondary school age vulnerable to knife crime.

Larry's has continued under the leadership of the Revd Theresa Morton – see more under the Larry's section. In addition our response to the death of the Queen, the Northfield Revealed Project and the Nativity Festival have enabled the church to engage with the community in new ways and have attracted more people to visit and learn more about the church which is a huge local community heritage asset as well as a place of Christian Worship.

3. Transforming Worship (*Drawing us into the presence of the living God*): Improving our ability to broadcast worship to enable more people in the community to connect with church.

We have managed to maintain broadcasting worship via Zoom, Zoom Phone, YouTube and Conference Call. We have also introduced "Wild Church". In addition, the work we have done on the church building has enabled it to continue to be open for worship.

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

- Response to Covid-19: keeping on top of changing guidance and rebuilding the congregation. Also the continuation of the provision of regular packs of spiritual and pastoral support, church news and essential information to all on the ER until May 2022.
- Monitoring of building work and Health and Safety issues
- Applying for faculties for the updating of the heating system and the repairs to the ceiling.
- Monitoring of finances.
- Monitoring churchyard maintenance including work by contractors.
- Setting of parochial fees.
- Revision of Safeguarding Policies and receiving regular updates on Safeguarding.
- The appointment of school governors
- '*Northfield Revealed*' progress.

Regular reports were received from the following sub-committees/organisations within the church:

- Fundraising and Social Sub-Committee.
- Fabric (including Health and Safety) Sub-Committee.
- Churches Together in Northfield.
- Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator.
- Deanery Synod.
- Work with children and young people.

Since the onset of the pandemic the planning of worship has been undertaken by the ministry team in consultation with the PCC. We hope to restore the worship sub-committee in 2023.

Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)

Place of Welcome

The church has been open between 10:00 and 11:30 on Saturdays. People visit to look around the church, to pray quietly, to do little jobs around the church and for the bellringing school to practice. Hot drinks and biscuits are available. It now no longer counts as a Place of Welcome. The Vineyard Church have started to use our Pastoral Centre as a Warm Space and Place of Welcome on Tuesday afternoons.

Janice Wones

Planned Giving, Gift Aid & Collection Counting

We are continually grateful for the financial support from our parishioners especially in the light of increasing utility bills and the rising cost of living.

Planned giving is still happening but in many different forms now. In December 2022 we completed our first full year of the Parish Giving Scheme which amounted to nearly £14,000, of which just over £2,500 was in Gift Aid. This scheme deducts your monthly or quarterly offering and pays this directly into our bank which is then followed a few days later with the calculated Gift Aid, so Gift Aid is paid as we go along and prevents the task of me having to claim it back from HMRC. We currently have 21 people using the scheme and I would like to encourage more people to use this process as opposed to the normal standing order as we have the benefit of the Gift Aid almost instantaneously.

We do still have many people using standing orders/BACS transfers/envelopes/cheques *etc.* and are very pleased to be receiving these too. Many of these attract Gift Aid but this has to be calculated at the end of the year and reclaimed by me from HMRC. 2022 Gift Aid is still to be reclaimed but during last year we did receive £15,814.22 from 2020 & 2021 (the pandemic years), so you can see it is well worth Gift Aiding your offerings if you are able.

Open plate collections have gone down dramatically because people chose to use different options during the pandemic and so there is far less cash going through the church plate. The introduction of contactless devices also added to this but has been an option welcomed by many. We still receive cash as well as contactless donations for our baptisms, weddings and school services *etc.* For this reason, we have not yet returned to having our team of collection counters and we will see what transpires in the future.

We have received some very kind donations in memory of loved ones whereby relatives have donated after funerals have taken place. Many of these have also been Gift Aided. In addition we have received many one-off donations to assist with the huge amount of work that has been carried out in the Church and again many of these have been Gift Aided.

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 close the report by again thanking everybody for their financial support in helping to keep our church open for future generations.

Elaine Clements (Treasurer)

Publicity

We continue to promote the Church electronically and in print. Each week the following internet sites are updated:

- The Church's own web site, www.stlaurencenorthfield.org (c.1000 page views per month)
- Our presence on A Church Near You, www.achurchnearyou.com (c.3000 page views per month)
- Our Facebook page, [St Laurence Church Northfield - Home | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/St-Laurence-Church-Northfield-Home) (c.1500 visits per month)
- Our YouTube channel, [St Laurence Northfield - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...) (c.250 visits per month)

Mark Reynolds continues to be our Twitter keeper whilst Peter Mitchell has kindly helped out with the loading of videos onto YouTube. Less frequently, we submit material to B31 Voices, Google Business, TripAdvisor, Good Journey and Wikipedia along with press releases to South Birmingham Pages, the Bromsgrove Standard and the BBC.

For the Nativity Festival we experimented with paid adverts on Facebook which generated an average 'reach' for our posts of 900 views (our usual 'reach' is between 50 and 100 views). The cost, which was borne by a member of the congregation, was 1p for every two views. Anecdotal evidence is that some of the visitors to the Festival have been alerted to it through these posts.

Peter Chapman (Webmaster)

Rectory

Work done by Church of England Birmingham in 2022:

- Landlord's gas safety checks;
- Central heating boiler replaced following a burst;
- Back gate replaced and fence repaired;
- Shower replaced following failure;
- Upstairs toilet flush repaired.

By Rector:

- Nothing of significance this year.

By PCC:

- Annual security alarm maintenance visit has been postponed until 2023 so the company services at the same time as the alarm in the Pastoral Centre.

Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)

Safeguarding

The PCC has continued to adopt and follow 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.

As Parish Safeguarding Lead I 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).
- Job descriptions are continually reviewed.
- DBS checks are all in place for all those who require a check, including all PCC members, Sunday School leaders, Stay and Play Leaders, and Larry's helpers.
- Safeguarding training has been 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.

The Church of England requires all volunteers to undertake Safeguarding Training. A volunteer is considered anyone who helps in any aspect of church life on a regular basis and is on a 'rota'. Canon Janet and myself have been trained as facilitators to deliver Basic Awareness training for those who don't want to complete the course online. This work will be our priority in the first 6 months of 2023.

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

Last year, a big focus for St Laurence Church Infant School was our curriculum: we wanted to develop the role of our subject leaders so that for each curriculum area we have an expert within school to ensure we are sequencing learning to build upon prior steps. We also created five curriculum “drivers” that inform the choices we make for topics and experiences planned for the children. These are: to be **creative**, to develop **curiosity**, to **communicate** confidently, to **care** for ourselves, others and our world and to feel part of a **community**.

We were really pleased that our efforts were celebrated by achieving our **Silver Arts Mark** award, our **Silver Rights Respecting Schools** award and our successful **Ofsted Inspection** which recognised that we continue to be a **good** school.

We have recognised the ongoing impact of the pandemic on children and adults’ mental health and now have a qualified mental health first aider and a senior lead for mental health. From this September we have started a new initiative called **Wellbeing Wednesdays**, where the children work in groups across the whole school to promote nurture and get to experience ten exciting co-curricular clubs including forest school, Spanish, mindfulness, iPads and cookery. These clubs were chosen by asking children and staff which things children enjoy but get squeezed out of the day to day curriculum, and thinking about experiences which will promote children’s wellbeing skills. The Ofsted report noted the caring approach we have with children and that we are mindful of staff wellbeing too.

We continue to feel part of the **St Laurence Church** community though the strong links with the church: weekly worship is led in school by Canon Janet or Reverend Theresa, we held a joint worship with the Junior School to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee, and now that the church’s building works are complete, we have been able to once again visit for services including for the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. Our Reception children visited church to find out more about the different parts of the building, and it was fantastic to be able to bring the whole school over for the wonderful Crib Festival this Christmas.

We are especially grateful to **Canon Janet**, who took on the vacant role of **chair of governors** for just one term, which happened to be the one term that coincided with the Ofsted Inspection! She and the other governors impressed the inspector with their thoroughness and support for the school.

Mrs Catherine Smith (Headteacher)

St Laurence Church Junior School

The past year has again been challenging as we emerged from the pandemic. Staff have worked hard to settle our new Year 3 children into school following the two years of disruption to their learning and to support all pupils in reintegrating their return to school, recognising that their learning needs may have changed as a result of the school closures in 2020 and 2021.

Governors have spent time meeting with staff to ensure the continued progress of the pupils in school and to ensure that our curriculum is broad, balanced and meeting all needs. The curriculum has been reshaped over the last year with all subject areas having specific curriculum statements in place about our intent, how it will be implemented and the impact for the pupils. These are on the school web site.

Governors were extremely pleased with the achievements of our Year 6 pupils, providing them with the necessary skills and confidence to move onto their next stage of learning in their secondary schools. As part of continuous school improvement, pupil progress is monitored and analysed throughout the year to ensure that pupil needs are being met and that gaps in learning are supported. Governors are confident that the school is on track to meet its ambitious targets.

This year with the lifting of restrictions, we have been able to re-introduce designated governors who have links with specific areas in the school they attend relevant training, performances, celebrations, assemblies and meetings with staff. The link governors meet pupils to gain greater insight into the practices within the

school. Governors carry out their statutory roles including safeguarding and health and safety. There is a governor presence at Parents' Evenings and Celebrations.

There have been many notable achievements this year that have been made in the school. These include our new school vision and values which pupils, staff and governors were involved with. This we felt was important given the past two years and with our 'new' headteacher in place. Many discussions took place culminating in the impressive art work now in the hall which reflects and celebrates St Laurence Church Junior School. All the pupils in the school had an input into this impressive and relevant wall mural. Our banners are now displayed on the back hall wall.

This year we are pleased to say has seen increasing opportunities for pupils and staff to undertake new experiences, the annual residential trip to York (Canon Janet accompanied the May trip), days at Aztec Adventures, the re-starting of visits to and services in St Laurence Church, assemblies for the whole school and of guest speakers into school. Being able again to welcome parents and carers into school to assemblies, celebrations and spectacular pupil performances has been a joy. Our additional curriculum is we feel a strength of St Laurence Church Junior School, giving our pupils the opportunities to develop as individuals whilst enhancing their life experiences.

The development of our new Behaviour and Relationships policy to support all pupils that links with our revised vision and values is making a difference and is allied to our revised rewards system. Our before and after school provision continues to be a real strength of the school and we are continually grateful for the staff that provide a safe and stimulating environment for the pupils who use this facility. The health and wellbeing of both pupils and staff is a continuing priority for us.

One of our key priorities over the last year has been to further develop each child's 'love of reading'. This has been very successful including the re-design of the library with help from parents, Canon Janet's husband and the purchase of new and exciting books. One parent commented on the difference the new books had made with her son in that he was now excited to read at home! This will continue to be a priority for us into the future.

The pupils and staff at school have this year been able to actively support charities. We were delighted that over £4000 was raised for a Ghanaian charity called Pen to Paper, who are an organisation that closely links with what the school are trying to achieve in our own community, educating children through developing phonics and reading.

Our sports teams, new debating group and additional clubs and activities, having re-started properly this year, are all flourishing. Sports matches both home and away have been taking place with enthusiastic support from parents.

Other priorities this year have involved maintaining and enhancing the school site especially resurfacing part of the playground at the back of the school around the large tree and adding a rubber mulch to the surround to improve safety. Plans to resurface the front playground are in progress for later this term. Staff have continued to work hard this year including participating in specific professional development and training. The links we have with St Laurence Church Infant School have continued during the year and moving forward we see this as a continuing priority. Canon Janet left the Junior School Governing Board in September to take up temporary Chair of Governors at the Infants. We were delighted to welcome Revd Theresa in her place and are already utilising her strengths!

Canon Janet and Revd Theresa lead Collective Worship most Wednesdays and at least one explained Eucharist at year. This year they have worked hard with Mrs Durose to encourage children to take the opportunity to be "Admitted to received Holy Communion prior to Confirmation." A small number of children have done this and we hope that this will grow.

As a school we have continued to take part in opportunities made available by the education team at the diocese. Our Chair of Governors was privileged to be appointed as Vice Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education for the next three years and has been supporting governance across the diocese.

This coming year will I am sure continue to bring its challenges, not least the impact on our budget with the increasing fuel costs. We are looking forward to another productive year for all involved at St Laurence Church Junior School.

Jill Saunders (Chair of Governors)

Scout Group (206th St Laurence)

This has been a great year, back to a full scouting program with everything back to normal. We currently have 6 sections (2 Beavers, 2 Cubs and 2 Scouts), with 117 young members, 23 Leaders, 8 Young Leaders and 4 members of the group executive. We said goodbye to James Langdell – a young scout leader – and welcomed 2 new leaders into the group, namely Lucy Keeves and Elizabeth Hadley; I'd like to welcome them both to scouting.

The leadership team continues to provide a fantastic programme within all the sections. All our young members are working towards the various challenge badges. Some of the activities the young people have enjoyed this year are camping, skating, kayaking and waterpark, night hike, first aid, sumo wrestling, visit to the local fire station, sledging and raising money for Acorns Hospice.

During the year, we awarded 9 Bronze, 4 Silver and 8 Gold Chief Scout Awards to our young people. Congratulations to the Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and the Leaders, it's not easy to complete all the criteria required for these top awards. We also had a few notable awards for some of our leaders. Simon Sharpe was awarded the Silver Acorn, Leslie Reay attaining a Good Service Award. Chris Thompson completed all his training and gained his Wood Badge and Caroline Perry received her 10 years' service award.

As with most scout groups in the UK, we are always in need of more adult help to support our existing team and programme. If you would like to get involved or just find out more about scouting, please contact me or any scout leader.

As always, I would like to thank all the leaders and group executive committee, for all their commitment, enthusiasm and time they have given throughout the year.

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

Scouts (Gridiron Explorers)

2022 has been a busy year for us again. We now have 6 leaders and 34 young people aged 15-18 years. The group went on 3 camps in the last 12 months and had a sleepover in the Pastoral Centre following a day paintballing. The leaders and some of the Explorers took part in the Chase Walk at the beginning of the year, which is a 40-mile walk completed in one day. This was a huge achievement for both the young people taking part and the less young leaders!

Activities this year have included a horror maze, a car driving experience, drone flying, laser quest, crystal maze challenge, I'm An Explorer Get Me Out of Here, light aircraft gliding and lots more. (Look out for our Chip Shop Challenge winner on Northfield high street – they have a certificate in their window). Some Explorers took part in expeditions and activities towards their Duke of Edinburgh Award. As a group we have worked together on community impact activities which have benefitted others in our local community, and a small group assisted with the Ukrainian Relief project.

We would once again like to thank the Church for letting us meet at the Pastoral Centre and we look forward to the challenges that 2023 will bring.

Debbie Keeves (Gridiron Explorer Leader)

Social and Fundraising Committee

2022 saw us return to some sort of normality with our activities following two years of curtailment due to the pandemic.

We had three car boot sales, which always raise about £400 per sale. We had a range of other events – some more social and others intended to raise vital funds – including concerts in church, a quiz night and a beetle drive with the St Laurence BBQ. We had a very patriotic cream tea to celebrate the late Queen’s Diamond Jubilee. In the Autumn we had a very successful craft fayre raising £450 and the Christmas fayre which raised over £2500. I am still in shock at the amount of money raised, but a very huge thanks from me to everyone who helped and supported the fayre.

In November/December we had our Nativity Festival – please see the separate report on this wonderful event.

The committee is back in full swing with a range of events planned for 2023, including some new exciting events, so continue to watch this space.

We have realised that Facebook and other social media are becoming increasingly important to advertise events, and I’m so very grateful to Peter Chapman for all his help and support with this. If anyone would be able to take over the part of our work, please do get in touch – it’s vital, and I’m useless with technology!

The events wouldn’t happen without the help of volunteers, and I’m so grateful for everyone who organises and helps with the events, but they won’t succeed unless people come and spend their money, so a big thank you to everyone.

Rowena Nicholls

Stay & Play

After breaking up for the summer in July 2022, we took an extended break so I could focus on my full time job as a childminder. We reopened on 16 January 2023, and it was wonderful to welcome back many families who had previously attended as well as lots of new families. Our first week back saw a very busy session with 37 children in attendance, the following week we had 34. We’ve always maintained a busy popular group so we’re really pleased to see this continuing.

We had to say thank you and good luck to my mom, Pat Turner, who is unable to volunteer in the kitchen now as she has a full time job. However, I’m pleased to say that Julie Meadows is still continuing to do a fabulous job. She works hard making our snacks and hot drinks single-handed in the kitchen.

During our first session back, we concentrated on a winter theme. The children enjoyed playing with animals from the arctic and sticking cotton wool marshmallows on their pictures of hot chocolate. Last week we celebrated Chinese New Year, making cherry blossom trees, finger painted rabbits and exploring various Chinese vegetables.

We’re open on Mondays 9:30-11:00 (term time only), and look forward to lots more themes in the coming weeks.

Donna Clulee (Co-ordinator)

Worship (incorporating Sunday School, Choir and Servers’ Report)

Enabling God’s people to worship is a prime function of a church but, as we’ve learnt over the last three years, it doesn’t always have to happen in the church building. We have become very adept at worshipping in different places yet retaining much togetherness in doing so.

Throughout 2022 our worship has been as follows:

Sunday

8:30 Sunday School Service in the Pastoral Centre. This includes a simple liturgy with plenty of actions, a song, a Bible story (usually a pre-recorded video made by one of the clergy) and a craft activity. The families bring their own pencil cases including crayons, scissors, glue etc. which has made the tidying away much easier. This has been led mainly by Rowena Nicholls with one of the clergy and supported by Elaine Clements and Peter Chapman.

9:30 Holy Communion both in church and via Zoom (where people can also dial in on their phones if they do not have internet access). This service is recorded and put on YouTube. As the risk of Covid-19 has decreased we have held two baptisms at the 9:30 service. At Easter, Harvest, Christingle and Christmas Sunday School has joined the 9:30 service for an all-age Communion Service. At Harvest and Christingle we were delighted to welcome back the uniformed organisations and include 'church parade.' In 2023 we are planning a monthly service of this type.

11:30 Holy Communion (monthly). This is a short, said service aimed at those who find 9:30 too early.

12:00 Holy Baptism (monthly). Holding Baptisms outside the main service isn't really encouraged by the CofE but it works well for us as we are able to offer a service which is tailor-made and more meets the needs of those who are not familiar with regular worship. We invite families to a main service at which we welcome them and present a hand-made dove.

16:00 Wild Church (twice a month) and a "Fresh Expression" of church

This was launched in May involving a core group of families who are increasingly leading the short services. We hope it will be fully lay-led by June 2023. We meet in the churchyard (whatever the weather!) for about 40 mins and enjoy God's creation together. It is suitable for all-ages though was launched with the hope of attracting families who are busy on Sunday mornings. Attendance varies between 6-20 people. It is a 'build-on' from the Forest Church Services we held at Masefield Community Garden in 2021. We have also continued to mark the agricultural year with services at Masefield at Rogationtide, Harvest and Christmas.

Wednesdays

10:00 Holy Communion Service according to the Book of Common Prayer. This is in church and by the Conference Call phonenumber. Being able to phone in is greatly appreciated by several frailer members of the congregation and there have been some generous donations to cover the cost of it to the church.

20:30 Compline by Conference Call. This has a regular attendance of 3-8 people, occasionally swelled when a PCC meeting is on a Wednesday!

Sermons from both Sunday and Wednesday HC services have been uploaded to our 'sermon line' to be listened to on the telephone and are also made into podcasts. We are very grateful to Peter Chapman and Peter Mitchell who do the majority of the work behind Zoom, Sermon-line, podcasts and YouTube.

Weekdays

Morning Prayer has continued to be said in church by the Rector most weekdays, with Revd Theresa joining when she can. On Wednesdays we are joined by someone who 'pops in to pray' whilst the service is going on.

The ministry team has met as a whole for Evening Prayer or a Bible Study on the coming week's Sunday Readings via Zoom on three evenings a week. It is rare for anyone to join us for Evening Prayer but a few people join the Bible Study.

Seasons and Special Services

We have continued to mark the seasons and notable occasions with special services, including:

- Lent and Easter:

- Ash Wednesday service; service in church in the morning and evening with the latter via Zoom too.
- Sermon series of the CofE Pastoral Principles: To address ignorance; To cast out fear; To admit hypocrisy; To acknowledge Prejudice; To pay attention to power; To speak into silence.
- Compline in church via Conference Call on Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday of Holy Week.
- 'Stations of the Cross' churchyard trail, with a booklet so that people could follow the trail independently, as well as join the Good Friday meditative guided trail.
- Maundy Thursday Holy Communion Service and short Vigil in church.
- Family-friendly Good Friday 'Hot Cross Bun Service' in the Pastoral Centre.
- Good Friday – 3 hours in church.
- Holy Saturday evening 'Service of Darkness and Light' in church.
- Easter Day - services at 9:30 and 11:30.
- Racial Justice Sunday.
- Mothering Sunday.
- Mother's Union Sunday.
- Death of the Queen.
- Remembrance Day Service.
- All Saints and All Souls.
- Advent and Christmas:
 - Christingle Service.
 - Beer and Carols at The Great Stone.
 - Two very interactive Crib Services.
 - A Carol Service with lots of congregational singing and making full use of our new lighting system.
 - Midnight Mass (beginning at 23:00 and ending with the lighting of the Christmas Candle on the Advent wreath just after midnight).
 - Christmas Day Family-Friendly Holy Communion Service in church and via Zoom.

Confirmation

Revd Theresa ran a short confirmation course for adults and was able to present Leanne Gregory and Zoe Grainger to be confirmed by Bishop Anne at St Chad's, Rubery on 19th June.

In July we renewed our permission to Admit Children to Holy Communion prior to Confirmation (we originally received Bishop's permission back in 2008.) Since then we have admitted 4 children to receive Holy Communion, all very much supported by their families.

Death of the Queen

In September the plan for what to do following the death of a significant royal was put into action following the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II. We had a commemoration book and display available very quickly. We were able to keep the church open and stewarded for a few hours most days and when it was closed, people could still come into the new glass porch to sign the book and see the display. Sunday morning worship was adapted and we held additional early evening services on both Sundays between her death and the funeral. Civic dignitaries were invited to the latter and the local RC priest helped lead it. Both St Laurence Church Schools held special services in church led by our clergy.

Ecumenical Services

The priest from St Brigid's invited us to a special service in Prisoners' Week. We hosted an evening service on Ash Wednesday with St David's and St Bartholomew's but were pleased to welcome members of the Methodist Church too.

The PCC has continued to monitor how we provide "Covid-secure worship." We have re-introduced wine at Holy Communion but in the form of 'simultaneous intinction' rather than sharing the common cup. We still share 'The Peace' with a smile and a wave rather than shaking hands.

For several weeks in May and June we had to close the church to enable repairs to the ceiling. We transferred the Sunday Services to the Pastoral Centre and reverted to Zoom on Wednesdays. Two weddings were moved to St Nicolas, Kings Norton at very short notice. We are grateful for the resilience of all in enabling this to happen relatively seamlessly.

St Anne's, West Heath is now taking responsibility for services at The Limes Nursing Home as it is within their parish. Janice is hoping to resume services at Chatham Place (residential complex) early in 2023.

Sadly, the majority of the servers from before the pandemic are no longer able to perform this ministry as robed servers, but we are very grateful to Hilda Pouncett (Sundays) and Ruth Clarke (Wednesdays) who do much of the setting up and clearing away as well as to Hilary Maslen who is our sacristan. Also, to Barbara Flight and Chris Andrew who launder the small linen and Linda Joyse-Wallace who does the large linen. Emily Corns and Liz O'Keeffe have started to do the 'liturgical colour changing' again

The choir is slowly rebuilding but has not returned to robing. Their return has helped us to start to sing hymns during communion again and the re-introduction of singing the Gloria etc. Lawrence Bacon has continued as our organist with his wife Jean singing the occasional solo at funerals and the carol service. We are delighted to have a young organ scholar who plays up to 6 times a year when Lawrence is not available.

We also have a team of readers, intercessors and those licenced to administer Holy Communion. Putting together the rota is quite a challenge for churchwarden Sandra Reynolds especially as we are starting to re-introduce sides-people/welcomers!

Overall, our worshipping community and regular attendance in church have grown over the year. It has been a year of 'returning to normal', taking forward worship with the new technological skills we have gained and introducing new ways of worshipping. Some of this may not be sustainable in the long term but we rejoice at what we are doing and trust God for the future.

Ministry Team

Revd Theresa Morton (Asst Curate), Janice Wones (Reader) and Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)

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