

The Parish of St Laurence Northfield



Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Sunday 7th April 2019

Reports

**Parish Office, St Laurence Church and Pastoral Centre
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Registered Charity 1132975**

REPORTS FOR 2018

RECTOR'S REPORT

One of the things I enjoy about climbing (modest) hills is pausing to admire the view and see how far we have travelled. It is very easy to remain focused on the hard work of the ascent and fail to do this. This is true in many walks of life and preparing reports for the APCM is an opportunity to do this and be amazed at how far we have come this past year. Some of it has been challenging, most of it has been very fulfilling and none of it would be possible without the power of the Holy Spirit and much dedication and hard work by a huge team of people.

The goals which the PCC set for 2018 were: -

- a) Installing an interior porch: this is taking much longer than we expected but having submitted several sets of plans to the DAC and received comments back we are about to apply for the faculty and once we have this we will be inviting tenders. The good news is that we have significantly increased our ability to pay for it thanks to £10,000 from the Harlow Trust administered by Keble College (our Patron), £5,000 (plus £1,000 Gift-aid) from an anonymous donor, £1,135 from St Laurence Junior School Lent Project, £155.75 from a Bake Stall and £1,684.30 from Jewellery & Gold Donations
- b) Encouraging more community use of the church; we have made good progress on this with an organ recital, a concert, another Art Exhibition which included two musical interludes, two pottery workshops, the use by the Community Choir, a children's singing workshop and increased school and nursery visits.
- c) Becoming a Fair Trade church. We have achieved this and the certificates are on display. The process is on-going so if you buy or donate any coffee or tea for church use (including activities in the Pastoral Centre) please ensure it has the fair-trade symbol on it. 2018 saw us selling Fair Trade Chocolate Advent Calendars.

WORSHIP AND CHURCH LIFE

Our regular round of Sunday and weekday worship has continued with numbers holding steady overall. By Easter it was clear that the 8.30am Sunday School had outgrown the Choir Vestry so now meets in the Pastoral Centre joining the worship in church at Communion.

2018 has seen more of our service booklets renewed. Thanks to a donation these incorporate 'widget pictures' which are increasingly used in schools and care homes and recommended by 'LivabilityUK.'. They are aimed to assist people facing learning or memory challenges. Occasional 'Afternoon Prayer' Services which are consciously 'dementia-friendly' have been restarted.

New initiatives included joining the CofE-wide Godparents' Sunday and the Blessing of School Bags. The latter is part on our aim to improve retention of our 'school-qualifying' families to which the Rise and Shine Service is contributing. Lay involvement in the latter is being built up.

It was with great rejoicing that Fr David Pycok was licensed as Associate Priest on 13th March 2018 publicly marking the completion of his curacy. Over the summer we had two ordinands, Christine Chalmers and Leanne Carr, from Queen's Theological Foundation on placement with us. They were predominantly visible in our worship though they were involved in a range of church activities. It was been great to see our Reader, Janice Wones, develop confidence in taking funerals and we are very fortunate to have the support of Fr John Richards (in a very active retirement) and occasionally Fr Paul Cho, a self-supporting priest who lives locally and is doing more and more in the Deanery.

More space in church has been created by the sale of the electronic organ - particularly useful at Christmas.

The newly appointed CofE-Birmingham Listed Places of Worship Officer has visited twice to help us in the restoration and re-ordering project and this has led to us borrowing a portable font and experimenting with different places for baptisms. We have also trialled at smaller portable altar. All this is helping towards updating our 'Statement of Needs.'

The Pastoral Care of the congregation is a vital part of 'being church.' The growth of the number of regular worshippers over the last decade means we are now a 'medium-sized' church and this requires a more structured approach to pastoral care. To this end we are launching 'Look Out' groups in January 2019 whereby regular congregants belong to a small group which has at least two co-ordinators who 'look-out' for members and contact them if their normal pattern of worship changes and check they are OK.

Sadly several former members of the congregation died in 2018 including Bert Askins, Barbara Lawson and Sheila Scriven as well as Sandra Brew, wife of Randal and former Rector Fr Robert Warren. May they Rest in Peace and Rise in Glory.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

2018 saw us commence the 'Know Your Church, Know Your Neighbourhood' programme. This has been facilitated by Canon Fred Ratley, Director of Community Regeneration. We have challenged him to lead it in a new way involving the whole congregation at points rather than just working with a small group. One of the activities has involved researching community engagement by the congregation and this has been celebrated by 96 stars (some representing several people's work) being displayed in church.

Fred, like many others, did not know about Northfield Conservation Area and the presence of the ancient church of St Laurence at the heart of it. The Civic Society is also very interested in this locality so we are actively exploring funding for a Heritage Festival to run through 2020 which will raise the profile of both the church and the practice of the Christian Faith.

Canon Janet has been increasingly involved with the Northfield Stakeholders Group, attending Ward Meetings and supporting community activities e.g. the Suffragette Presentation at the Library, the launch of the local 'Move More, Eat Well' campaign.

Our Lent Project involved a range of Eco-challenges which saw us engaging Charity Shops, reducing personal consumption of water, more composting. Overall 731 challenges were completed.

September saw the launch of St Laurence Community Choir led by the team who run the well-regarded choir at Hampstead House, West Heath.

Traffic ignoring the one-way signs on Rectory Road has been an increasing cause of concern. We initiated a community petition to press for changes to the road lay-out and worked with Northfield Arts Forum and St Laurence Schools after-school club to improve signage.

Our Charitable Giving has continued

In Kind

83 bags of food delivered to Northfield Food Bank

67.4kg of food collected by Cotteridge Food Bank

Mothers' Union Toiletries Collection for Women's Refuge

28 Shoe Boxes for Operation Christmas Child (Samaritan's Purse International)

Shoes, Bags etc for St Agnes Orphanage and Hospital, Zimbabwe:

People Power

Northfield Carnival Tea Tent & Carol Singing (with Churches Together in Northfield) raising money for St Mary's Hospice
Community Christmas

Financially

Christian Aid Week £1,025.24 (inc Cake Stall)
Christian Aid Harvest Appeal £217.10
Children's Society £437.20
Macmillan Coffee Morning raised £422.40
Funding towards transport of goods to St Agnes Orphanage and Hospital, Zimbabwe £1,050
Christmas Tree Appeal for Malawi and Bible Society tbc

OUTREACH

The church, the Pastoral Centre and the churchyard witness to our faith. We continue to keep the church open on Saturday mornings (with the kettle on) and have now become part of the national 'Places of Welcome Scheme. Bell-ringing continues to remind the local community of the presence of the church and the team has grown. Beer and Hymns in the local Pub has continued though we learnt that it works better when the nights are dark after 8pm. The website, Facebook and Twitter are an increasingly important part of our outreach but Posters on the church railings have proved effective. Our Christmas Card which is delivered around the parish included 'how to book baptisms, weddings and funerals' and this has resulted in additional enquiries. Thanks to a grant from the Local Authority Local Innovation Fund we have a new Pastoral Centre web-site making it easier to book rooms and some money left to improve Pastoral Centre Notice Boards We continue to work ecumenically in outreach and joined in the Good Friday Walk of Witness, Northfield Carnival and Carol Singing, this year in Costa Coffee in the shopping centre.

DISCIPLESHIP AND FELLOWSHIP

We continue to promote Daily Bible Reading and CofE-Birmingham 'Praying Together' alongside the updated church Prayer Calendar which includes world and community topics as well as church ones. A Quiet Day was held during Lent. We have two Faith Discussion Groups and an 'Exploring Faith' Group which includes confirmation preparation; new for 2018 a 'Confirmation Club' at the Junior School, three Sunday School groups; Ecumenical Lent Groups and the ever growing branch of the Mothers' Union. 2018 has seen a focus Eco-issues as well as Inter-faith awareness. The 'Gridiron' provides a weekly coffee morning and there is a varied calendar of outings, quiz-nights, parties etc. An informal lunch (at the Baptist Church) has become an established regular event. Christian stewardship involves the commitment of time and talents as well as finances. A major review of Financial stewardship was conducted in 2017 so this year things have been more light-touch.

GOVERNANCE

St Laurence PCC is governed by Parochial Church Council Powers Measure 1956 as amended and the Church Representation Rules. Regarding Risk Management: the Trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error.

The governing body is the Parochial Church Council (PCC) which has met regularly, as have the 3 sub-committees covering Fabric, Worship and Social & Fundraising.

Financial Governance has changed over the years and the combination of a new Common Fund assessment process and the change-over of Treasurers revealed to the need to update some of our processes. We are grateful for the support of the financial team CofE-Birmingham and by the end of the year we were well on the way to sorting this out (and by end of March 2019 we are almost up to

date with reclaiming significant amounts of Gift Aid.) We are increasingly using e-banking which has stream-lined many of our processes.

2018 will see a significant deficit on the Pastoral Centre due to the loss of tenants and a flood in March meaning we could not re-let rooms for some months. However, we ended the year with an almost full Pastoral Centre so income for 2019 is predicted to be much stronger. Also, the main front doors have been replaced as have the carpet-tiles in the Foyer and paintwork refreshed; the latter two with volunteer help.

The People and Places CofE-Birmingham Framework is still being debated and refined but the changes to Common Fund have been implemented. This means that the £20,000 annual subsidy we received (which was funded by other churches across the Diocese) ceased at the end of 2018. In 2018 we paid Common Fund in full and on time (and so received a small refund) but this is unlikely to be the case in 2019. As we start to pay in 2019 we are paying 5% more than we did last year but this will leave a significant amount outstanding. Under People and Places we will be working towards having 0.87 oversight ministry (i.e. a nearly full-time Rector) and 0.37 Context Minister (e.g. Children and Families worker) but the latter in particular is dependent upon everyone paying their Common Fund in full. Curates, Self-supporting Ministers and Readers are in addition to this with parishes being responsible for their expenses and on-going professional development costs.

The PCC considers Health and Safety and Safeguarding at each meeting and we continue to improve our practise. 2018 saw the drawing up of a chart to track when things must be checked and whose responsibility it is to do this.

We employ staff in administration, sexton duties and caretaking. All staff have had their job descriptions reviewed and revised and we have become an employer committed to the Living Wage Foundation's minimum rates.

The Church of England operates a Synodical System of Governance and we have played our part with active contributions to the Deanery Synod. The Rector continues as Chapter Clerk and Anne Pycock became Secretary to Deanery Synod. Our Lay Reader serves on the Diocesan Reader Committee, the Rector is a trustee of FCM (Friends' of Cathedral Music) and serves on the Pray24Brum planning group. Our Mothers' Union Branch Leader is also a Vice-president and trustee of Birmingham Diocesan Mothers' Union and a branch member serves on the Faith & Policy Committee. The Rector and Lay Reader (again) helped run a training day for newly ordained deacons on Funeral Ministry.

Let me conclude this report by thanking all members of St Laurence Church for continuing to walk the way of the baptised people of God in Northfield and with the prayer we have been using in the Know Your Church, Know Your Neighbourhood Programme.

Psalm 127.1 Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.

Lord, we thank you for past generations who have built and preserved St Laurence Church. Grant us unity in your vision of how it should be renewed to continue to witness to your saving love. Grant us, too, the patient courage to take forward your vision; we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

*Psalm 90.17 May the gracious favour of the Lord our God be upon us; prosper our handiwork;
O prosper the work of our hands.*

The Revd Canon Janet E. Chapman
Rector
March 2019

BELL RINGERS

This year was overshadowed by the illness and tragic death of our tower captain, Andy Carr on 28 January 2019. The bell ringers are still mourning his loss. The band and the bell ringing community of Birmingham and the UK joined together at his funeral and his memorial service. A quarter peal in his memory was rung immediately after his funeral. A memorial peal was rung on 16th March and the band are planning to ring more memorial quarter peals. The peals and quarter peals have been recorded in the Ringing World. They will be brought together with his obituary in a future edition of the Ringing World.

During 2018 the band continued to progress, encouraged by Andy to ring a wider range of methods. Andy himself rang a quarter peal of Cambridge Royal on August 26th to commemorate 50 years of ringing. The ringers got together and presented Andy with a bell shaped “spider” with a commemorative plaque. The spider now graces the ringing chamber – the bell ropes hang from it raised up high out of the way of the public.

One of our ringers, Carl Jenkins, attended the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) training in teaching bell handling during 2018. He has been using his skills to teach one of the new recruits who is a church member and who expressed an interest in learning to ring. We currently have three more new recruits who are learning to ring. We are getting help and support from some St Martins Guild members to help us teach them. In the future we hope train more of our band to teach bell handling so that we can teach more recruits ourselves and so keep the band growing and thriving. Two of our members will be attending the bell handling teaching course in April.

We had another successful ringing outing in June 2018 organised by Graeme. We rang at four towers in the Evesham area finishing at Bretforton where we enjoyed a relaxing drink outside the wonderful Fleece pub owned by the National Trust. Graeme is organising another outing this summer.

On 11th November 2018 our band, along with numerous bands across the UK, rang to commemorate 100 years since the original Armistice Day at 12.30pm. The bells were half muffled and we rang for the full thirty minutes. We all felt that the sound of half muffled bells across the UK was a fitting commemoration for all those who died over 100 years ago. Northfield ringers also rang a commemorative quarter peal in the afternoon of 11/11/18. One band member, Bob Maine scored his first quarter peal.

In summary, despite Andy’s tragic death, or maybe because of it, the Northfield ringers are a dedicated team, we encourage and support each other, we want to grow the band, to progress our ringing skills and provide good ringing for services, and other church events.

Sarah Vernon (Acting Tower Captain)

CHATHAM PLACE

During the year, a short service has been held once a month for the residents of Chatham Place. Attendance has varied, but each month the Bible has been read, hymns have been sung, and prayers have been said in that community.

Janice Wones

CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

Thank you to all who have contributed to these collections

Collecting boxes	£294.20
Christingle collection	£143.00
Grand Total	£437.20

It was good to have a speaker from the Children's Society at the Christingle Society and learn that over the years St Laurence Church was raised over £50k for this valuable work. If you would like a collecting box please see Anne Stock

CHOIR REPORT

'O sing joyfully to God our strength' (Ps 81)

The choir gained a new soprano this year. Having singers with many musical and other commitments to juggle, it is frequently a 'wait in hope' situation on a Sunday morning!

The choir has a short practice before the service and now our set of regular organists (Mike Sullivan, Gavin Bateman and Lawrence Bacon) are getting to know us and our foibles and to take appropriate action. There have been regular practices usually on the first Monday of the month for us to run through the hymns and to learn new ones. In December we were grateful to be joined by extra singers for the Carol Service and felt much more confident. The extra rehearsals run by David Langton, who also played for the service, also helped.

In the last calendar year, we did not manage to attend any RSCM events as choir members had competing commitments, but this January, two of us took part in the Festival Choral Evensong at the cathedral,

We would love some new choir membersover to you.

Clare Blackshaw

CHRISTIAN AID

Our major contribution to the work of Christian Aid is through two collections during the year. These took place during Christian Aid Week from 13th May, 2018 and at Harvest Festival. The door to door Christian Aid collection raised £1035.24, and the Harvest Festival "Harvest-a-Fiver" collection raised £217.10. The Harvest collection was further enhanced by an EU initiative which promised to add £4 to each £1 raised, so transforming our £217 into £1085!

Thank you and well done to everyone for their generosity of time, money and spirit in raising these magnificent amounts.

For three weeks in April, Miles organised for the Christian Aid "Legacy" display to be circulated around the CTIN churches so that the successful work funded through legacies to Christian Aid could be celebrated and brought to public attention.

We hope to undertake another door to door collection during this year's Christian Aid Week 12-19th May 2019 and the focus of this campaign is mother and baby health. However, the shift towards a cashless society was beginning to be noticeable at the doorstep last year and may make a considerable difference to our success this year. Sincere thanks in advance to the collectors (hopefully a few more this year!) who make it possible.

Gerardine and Miles

CHURCH CLEANING

The "Holy Dusters" have a good band of regular helpers. We meet once a month, usually the 3rd Tuesday at 9.30 for around an hour. There are many ways to help dusting, polishing, sweeping, vacuuming and general tidying. New helpers always welcome.

Thank you to all those who have helped throughout the year.

Roy & Sue Dutton

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN NORTHFIELD

Churches Together in Northfield is the grouping together of several of the churches in the Northfield village area. Currently, the churches involved are 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, Harvestways International Christian Fellowship and the Hollymoor Church.

Four committee meetings and several combined services were held during the year. The combined services were held for Ash Wednesday by St. David's and the Advent service at St. Laurence.

There was an invitation for people to go to different churches from their usual one on the Sunday in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and, instead of a combined service, members of the congregations were invited to meet at the Black Horse.

The members of the congregations of these churches celebrated Shrove Tuesday at the Baptist Church. They also got together to do a Walk of Witness through Northfield on Good Friday, organised by St. David's. They joined together for a Lent Course. They helped with the tea tent for the Northfield Carnival. At Christmas time they combined to provide the Community Christmas meals, organised by St. David's, and carol singing in Costa Coffee in aid of St. Mary's Hospice, organised by Hollymoor church.

Janice Wones

DEANERY SYNOD

The first meeting of 2018, in March, was hosted by Cotteridge Church. The speaker, Andrew Halstead, the Diocesan Secretary, presented "People and Places 2," the latest strategy document for the Birmingham Diocese and its implications, followed by Cotteridge parish news. In addition, reports were given on the Saint Laurence C of E schools and Deanery news, vacancies and appointments.

In July we met at St. Stephen's, Rednal. There was a talk about 'Disability, Access and the Church'. There were reports from Rednal Church and Hawkesley Primary School. It was reported that the Revd. Jane Platt had been appointed to St. Leonard's, Frankley. There were still vacancies at St. Anne's, West Heath, and at Lickey and Blackwell.

In November we met at St. Chad's, Rubery. Bishop Anne gave a presentation entitled 'A new Spring-time of the Church – A Reflection on God's call to the Church of England'. There were reports from Rubery Parish and Holly Hill School. Anne Pycock was appointed Secretary. Chris Gadd let it be known that she wished to retire as Treasurer. It was reported that there was still a vacancy at Lickey and Blackwell and that no stipendiary priest was to be appointed at St. Anne's, West Heath.

Chris Michael and Janice Wones

DISCUSSION GROUP AT ANN MORRELL'S

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

Janice Wones

FABRIC COMMITTEE

The full Fabric Committee met three times during 2018 to discuss a range of issues relating to the church, graveyard, Pastoral Centre and The Barn. Additionally, a working party met twice in July to develop a health and safety and maintenance planning document.

CHURCH

The internal porch project has moved forward. Following discussions, our architect has revised the original drawings to take into account advice from the Diocesan Advisory Committee (D.A.C.). A Faculty for submission to D.A.C. will now be put together and ideas for artwork for the etching of the glass and the names of contractors to approach for tenders will be sought. In 2018 a Quinquennial Inspection was carried out and the Committee agreed that the recommendations in the report would drive future repairs. A grant was received from the National Churches Trust which went towards the replacement of tiles on the Chancel roof.

CHURCHYARD

Discussions regarding the repair of the church wall have been ongoing throughout the year and varying quotes for the work have been received but no firm decision on the repair has been made to date. The Community Payback Team have continued to help maintain our extensive churchyard. Graveyard checks have been ongoing throughout the year and findings recorded. Any unsafe memorials have been identified and marked to alert the public. New pennants have been put on the Commonwealth War Graves and a new, brass memorial plaque has been fixed to the Lister gate. An invasion of Japanese Knotweed has been professionally dealt with.

PASTORAL CENTRE

Unfortunately, a burst pipe last winter caused water damage to one of the upstairs rooms and the room below it making redecoration and new carpeting necessary. Our grateful thanks go to the volunteers who responded at the time and did much initial work to dry the rooms out. Our thanks also go to the volunteers who redecorated the foyer prior to the laying of new carpet tiles. A paved path leading from the Fire Exit on the bottom corridor to the back gate is currently being considered. A grant has been received towards marketing the Pastoral Centre and it has been agreed that new notice boards using part of this grant are to be erected.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Two meetings were held in July to develop a Health and Safety and Maintenance Planner for the three sites (Church, Pastoral Centre and The Barn). The document itemised the frequency of essential work that needs to be done and it is proving to be a useful tool. The Planner will ensure that the excellent progress made so far in health and safety matters will be maintained.

Elaine Clements (Chair) Chris Andrew (Secretary)

FAITH DISCUSSION GROUP

The Faith Discussion Group usually meets on Tuesday evenings in the Pastoral Centre and runs in blocks of 3 to 5 consecutive weeks. The group is usually attended by 5 to 10 people. Faith Discussion Group had 3 instalments of sessions in 2018.

1. We have merged with Lent group in February/ March. It was based on USPG course 'All Things Are Possible.'
2. The Faith discussion group re-commenced in July for 3 sessions. The theme was the Windows of St Laurence's – the Story.

- 3rd July - Guest speaker Stuart Andrew. Historical overview tour followed by refreshments.
 - 10th July - Guest speaker Canon Janet. St. Laurence's' windows – stories they tell. Meditation followed by discussions and refreshments.
 - 17th July 19:30 - Guest speaker Chris Chalmers: our theological student on placement. Meditation followed by discussions and refreshments.
3. We re-commenced in November for a pre-Advent course led by Fr. John based on the book "The Meaning is in the Waiting" by Paula Gooder.

Marianna Melville

FLOWER GUILD

Barry and I would like to thank all of our Flower Guild volunteers for all their time, effort and dedication in keeping the church looking so lovely and colourful all the year round, particularly so at Christmas and Easter. Thanks also to Lorraine Freeman for taking on the Flower Guild Financial Accounts Report. It is very much appreciated by Barry and myself. Thank you to anyone who has donated money towards the flowers in the church this year as it is a very big drain on our budget keeping fresh flowers in the church 40 weeks of the year. Many thanks again to you all.

Linda Joyes-Wallace (Team Leader)
Barry Gardner (Deputy Team Leader)

GRIDIRON REPORT

The Gridiron coffee and games morning continues to flourish. We had a good year, starting with a walk in Alvechurch and afternoon tea at St. David's. This was followed by various outings, which included days out and places of interest, plus a Johnsons coach trip and a ride on Broadway steam railway. More locally we enjoyed a ten-pin bowling night followed by a meal, a curry night, two Beetle drives and a Christmas buffet. Members of the Gridiron organised and served refreshments after the Carol service to finish the year. A big thank you to everyone who helped to organise these events and to all who make tea, coffee and wash up. If you would like to come and join us on Tuesday mornings or on any of our outings we would be pleased to see you.

Pauline Bannister

THE LIMES

During the year I continued to take Home Communion to the Limes Care Home, in Ivyhouse Road. I am now doing this on about three Sundays each month. There is usually a 'congregation' of about ten and I distribute pre-consecrated Holy Communion to about two people.

Janice Wones



Our branch has had another busy year – we have met every month either for a branch meeting or socially to enjoy food!! Early in the year, we asked ourselves 'I am proud to be a member because.....'. The list was very long but two of the main reasons was fellowship - and our faith in action. As a branch we have donated Pastoral Book Boxes this year to Victoria School and to Highters Heath School, where Sue Richards is the Chair of Governors. Clare Blackshaw and I were

privileged to present the box to the children and staff at a very special assembly attended by Clare Balding – it was wonderful to see the children be mesmerised by Clare into the world of literacy. At a branch meeting we had a talk from a member of the Hindu faith – and, in our multi-cultural and multi-faith society, it's essential to learn about and be able to share an understanding of each other's faith. We also had many compliments for our Easter Egg display on the lychgate!

We appreciate the support given to us from the wider congregation – at our annual services in June, helping raise money for our work – and sharing supper with us to celebrate Mary Sumner (Mothers' Union founder) Day.

We said thank you to Gerry Morgan who stepped down as our Treasurer at the AGM in December – and welcomed Julie Meadows as his replacement. A big thank you to both of them. Anne Pycock has been a tremendous support and stepped in to help alongside me and in my absence.

In 2018 we had 32 members and in 2019 we have welcomed the members from St Bartholomew into our branch. We also had two new members enrolled in February this year by Bishop David in the Cathedral – Jessica Fripp and Al Wallace. Fr Paul and Charitas Cho have also joined and I hope to enrol them in June.

2019 is the start of the new Triennium – we have our first ever Worldwide President from outside of the UK – and our new Diocesan President, Deirdre Moll attended St Laurence School! Anne Pycock and myself have been elected Trustees – and we both look forward to the challenges that our roles will bring.

Rowena Nicholls

MONEY COUNTING

We have been fortunate this year to have two new members joining the Counting team, making a total of 6. This has helped ease the counting rota. Each week we regularly count monies collected at weekly and seasonal church services, baptisms, weddings, school services, refreshments and candles. This team of reliable counters ensures that money is counted promptly so that it can be banked securely at the earliest opportunity.

Gerardine Merrick

ONE HUNDRED CLUB

For 2018 the 100-Club banked deposits from 86 subscriptions from members totalling £1,021. Prize money paid out during 2018 totalled £509, leaving £512 to be distributed to good causes. £256 has been donated to 'St Laurence Pastoral Centre' and £256 has been donated to 'The Children's Society' on 19/03/2019.

For 2019 a list of members has been posted on the notice board in the Pastoral Centre. The 100 - Club has already banked £1,059 from 89 members' subscriptions. By the end of the year, the bank deposits should total £1,068 based on those 89 subscriptions. There is also an opportunity for this total to increase if new members are attracted to the club as we progress through the year. It is anticipated that prize money paid out during 2019 will be £534 as a minimum and that donations to good causes will likewise be £534 as a minimum. It is my intention to make the distributions to good causes much sooner during 2019.

Good luck to all members in the forthcoming prize draws for 2019.

Jeffrey Carr - Club Secretary.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The PCC is the church governing body and has met on nine occasions during the past year. The meetings have always been well attended.

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

Joint Vice-Chairs – Debbie Keeves and Roy Pouncett

Treasurer – Elaine Clements with Randal Brew supporting as Assistant Treasurer

Electoral Roll Officer – Ruth Clarke

Secretary – Emily Corns

Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator – Rowena Nichols.

Standing Committee comprises the Rector, the churchwardens, the Treasurer and one other PCC Member (Linda Orchard.) This meets as needed to enable urgent business between meetings.

We have welcomed the following guest speakers:

- Fr John Richards to share wisdom of a Pastoral Care scheme he had implemented in another parish. This helped us to establish the 'Look-Out' groups launched in January 2019
- Canon Fred Ratley, Director of Community Regeneration on the 'Know Your Church, Know Your Neighbourhood' Programme

Issues discussed and agreed during the year included:

- The re-ordering of the church building especially the design of the proposed interior porch, where to place the font and whether a low-altar and what size is what we need.
- The Pastoral Centre both its maintenance and the level of lettings. The latter dropped significantly at the end of 2017 as CASBA left us. Then some of the regular evening bookings fell away but December saw CASBA return and we have welcomed some new users for both occasional and regular bookings.
- Church-yard maintenance
- Parochial fees
- School Admissions Policies (though these are set by the School Governing Bodies)
- GDPR

Five members of the PCC attended a 'Leading Your Church Into Growth' weekend at Swanwick Christian Conference Centre. This was funded by the Church Commissioners. It will help us with our planning for the future.

The Quinquennial Inspection of the church was conducted and the report received in early 2019. Generally, the fabric is in good order and no major repairs are required in the immediate future.

Regular reports have been received from the Sub-Committees

Fundraising and Social

Fabric

Worship

Deanery Synod

Church Together in Northfield

Safeguarding and Health and Safety are discussed at every meeting. The PCC continues to work towards full compliance with its duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 and to have due regard to the House of Bishop' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. We are now virtually fully compliant.

PLANNED GIVING AND GIFT AID

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

Over the last few years, Gift Aided donations have brought in approximately an extra £9,000 per year.

If you are unable to Gift Aid, you are still able to pay a regular amount using our Planned Gift envelopes and there is a scheme called the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS) which allows us to claim gift aid on 'open plate cash collections' for every tax year (including the Planned Gift Envelopes) of up to a maximum of £8,000, which can give us a further £2,000 per year extra income.

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

I would like to finish by thanking Valerie Arthurs and Jennie King for efficiently producing all the data required to enable us to claim the gift aid on behalf of St Laurence's.

Thank you all for your continuing support.

Elaine Clements - Treasurer

SAFEGUARDING

We have completed a DBS check for everyone who is required to have one - and everyone who is required to, has attended or completed the appropriate training. In October we completed the Diocesan checklist – and am pleased to report that we have achieved a lot of what we need to do, although we still have some work to do. Janice Wones and I both attended the Safeguarding Resourcing Day which included Responding Well to Domestic Abuse training. If anyone has any safeguarding concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Rowena Nicholls

ST LAURENCE CHURCH INFANT SCHOOL

'It is a beacon of exemplary Christian distinctiveness in an infant setting'
SIAMS Inspection Report, 2018

There continues to be an active and strong relationship between St Laurence Church and St Laurence Church Infant School; at the centre of this relationship is the clear, shared core value of aiming to promote the spiritual growth of its children in order to lay the foundations for a mature

adult faith in Christ. The school's SIAMS inspection in July 2018, in which the school deservedly was judged to be 'Outstanding', explicitly highlighted how 'the partnership between St Laurence Church and its schools, through the work of the Rector, enriches the worshipping lives of the whole community.'

The Rector is an ex-officio member of the governing board, with the Church further represented by additional governors who play an active part in the life of the school.

The values of the Church and the Christian faith are in immediate evidence throughout the school in its displays, thematic content of lessons and broader curricular activities; these supplement the natural, integrated Christian ethos that the school has successfully developed and embedded through its approach over time. Whilst the school teaches the children to be aware of and respect other religions, Religious Education is mainly Christian and linked to the Church year.

Acts of Collective Worship open each day at the school. Parents and carers are invited to join the 'Star Award' assemblies, held every Monday, when children's special achievements during the previous week are highlighted and celebrated as a school community. These awards capture the positive and inclusive ethos of the school and afford opportunities to further promote the school's values, which are firmly rooted in Christian faith and belief - showing compassion, consideration and respect for others. On Wednesdays, Canon Janet, or occasionally another local Christian minister leads the worship during assembly, with the Church and school closely liaising to consider the themes that such worship will explore. On Fridays, assemblies focus on birthday celebrations and the children's outside achievements. Tuesdays and Thursdays see both other members of staff and, every other week, child-led worship, ensuring the school's acts of collective worship genuinely involve all stakeholders and members of the community.

The children at the school attend key services at St Laurence Church throughout the year, with the Church recognising its audience's particular character and ensuring a collaborative, engaging approach; the Church really comes alive with its pews full of children from the school and it is testament to the strong relationship that exists that the children are so comfortable and familiar with the setting of the parish church. Harvest, Christmas - when all infant school children attended - and Easter sees the school visit the Church for the respective service and this approach ensures that, at least once a term, each pupil at the school comes over to the Church for a service.

There have been many other events of note throughout the year: in January 2018, a group of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils attended the Epiphany service for schools at Birmingham Cathedral. At Ascension, similarly, Year 2 and Year 5 pupils had a joint service in church, performing a very successful Ascension 'sound-scape'. In July 2018, both schools held a joint service for everyone on the playing fields, with the service including readings from both infant and junior school pupils.

Pastoral support is a further benefit of the positive relationship that exists between the school and the Church. The Mothers' Union presented the school with a 'Pastoral Book Box', which contained books of a social and emotional health nature, about family life, moving house, illness, bereavement, disabilities and anxiety. Additionally, the clergy are also available and willing to support staff and families with pastoral issues.

A considerable achievement for the school came on 10th July 2018 with its formal SIAMS inspection, only a year after the school's successful Ofsted inspection. The SIAMS inspection judgement was that the school's provision was 'Outstanding' and full credit and praise must go to leaders, teachers, non-teaching colleagues, the clergy, parents and carers and, of course, the children themselves for securing such an achievement. The report was extremely positive and is perhaps best summarised in one of its headline statements:

'The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners' *SIAMS Inspection Report, 2018*

The report, which is available in full on the school's website, highlighted the 'nurturing and inclusive Christian family community' at the school and commented that 'its young pupils thrive and succeed because of the excellent pastoral care shown to both adults and children'. The Christian vision of Mrs Proctor, together with the commitment of the governors and clergy, and the passion and dedication of the RE subject leader and all staff at the school were found to be instrumental in ensuring the 'distinctive Christian character of the school permeates all school life'. The children's religious knowledge and understanding was found to be excellent and that it supported their spiritual lives very well. The report commented positively on the links with the diocese being 'very supportive', highlighting how the school has benefitted from diocesan training. Finally, community links were considered to be very positive, 'especially with the parish church, with the school held in high regard by parents who take an active part in school life'. It is, arguably, in this context of collaborative partnership that the strength of the school and its successes lie.

Damon Hewson
PCC appointed Foundation Governor

ST LAURENCE CHURCH JUNIOR SCHOOL

Much of what Damon has written about St Laurence Infant School applies equally to the Junior School with its distinctive Christian ethos and modelling the Diocese-wide strap line 'Every child matters to God.'

Finances continue to be very tight and we are very grateful to Jean Brownsword (PCC appointed Foundation Governor) who is Vice Chair of the Governing Body and also Chair of the Finance Committee for the huge amount of time she gives to these roles as well as accompanying many school trips and ensuring everything is done 'by the book' during the SATs week. Whilst good progress in the core subjects is absolutely vital this is done without compromising the wider curriculum. I sit on the Standards Committee and am confident that there is robust monitoring of teaching and the curriculum. In 2018 the combined Sats results showed 76% meeting or exceeding their Age Related Expectations (ARE) which compares well with 64% nationally. Both schools are working hard to improve progress especially with those who have special needs or are in receipt of pupil premium.

Recruitment and retention of teachers is a national issue. This year has seen the employment of two staff who are training in post through the highly respected 'Teach First' programme which is open to top graduates. Both successfully completed their PGCE in their first year and are now working through the NQT (newly qualified teacher) programme.

Monday morning is when I lead school worship and I am very grateful to Fr David Pycock, Jon Fielder (Redeemer Church), Revd Donald Sampson (Retired Methodist Minister) and Hilary Johnson (Quakers) for doing this on occasion across both the schools as well as to Jean Brownsword in co-ordinating the parents' prayer group which meets monthly to pray for both schools.

In the summer we said farewell to Miss Ward who had been worship and RE co-ordinator for some years and given me lots of support in planning worship. Mrs Durose has now taken on this role and is a delight to work with. 2018 saw us introduce 'explained eucharists' for year 5/6 pupils which have worked well.

School Communion services have been held in church (replacing Morning Prayer) on the first Wednesday of the month and are valued by the staff. They are open to everyone and the dates (which are now not always the first Wednesday) are advertised in the church diary.

'School Kit,' which is delivered by St Laurence Church, using material from the Christian Charity TLG continues to offer support to parents through sessions offered at least twice a term. Thanks are due to Heather Hoggarth (leader) and Chris Michael for this.

2018 saw me join the Year 6's on their 4 day residential in York. It is great to get to know the pupils and staff better as well as lead prayers just before bedtime.

We are very grateful to the Education Team at the Diocese who give a lot of support and training and we were sorry to say farewell to Revd Peter French, Assistant Director of Education in summer 2018.

May God continue to bless both our CofE schools and further our working together for the benefit of all.

Canon Janet Chapman ex-officio Governor

ST LAURENCE COMMUNITY CHOIR

The choir started in September thanks to Marie Henry and Jacquie Dando who run West Heath Community Choir offering their services. We meet on Mondays 6-7pm in the church (though in the coldest months have used the Pastoral Centre). 10 and 16 people attend rehearsals each week and we all enjoy them.

We are grateful to Lucy and Kitty, 2 young people who do the harmonies with West Heath Community Choir, joining us to lead the harmonies. The choir has gained in confidence since September and it's wonderful to see a few more people joining in with the harmony section.

We usually perform with West Heath Community Choir and have performed together at

1. The Art Exhibition at St Laurence Church
2. St Laurence Christmas Fayre
3. West Heath Christmas Fayre
4. St Laurence Carol Service.
5. Kings Norton Christmas Farmers Market

We also had a joint Christmas event with the 2 choirs bringing food, having a quiz and a bit of a sing. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed it and it was nice for everyone to chat.

We've a few bookings for 2019 already in the diary including a performance for next Christmas!

We sing a variety of songs; something for everyone and encourage choir members to offer suggestions. We are a friendly welcoming Choir and we have fun, lively rehearsals – and we welcome more members.

ST LAURENCE SCOUT GROUP

St Laurence Scout Group presently has 6 sections (2 Beavers, 2 Cubs and 2 Scouts), with 112 young members, 21 Leaders, 4 Young Leaders. We also have 4 Young adults undertaking their DoE volunteering.

The leadership team continues to provide a varied and exciting programme within all the sections. Some of the activities the young people have enjoyed this year are camping, shooting, archery, skating, swimming, climbing, go karting, grass sledging, healthy eating, First Aid, recycling with trips to the cinema and the local fire station.

We continue to encourage attendance at Church Parade and the occasional sleep-overs the night before really help this.

During the year, we awarded 5 Bronze Queen Scout Awards to our young people. Congratulations to those who have achieved this and the leaders, it's not easy to complete all the criteria.

In January Leslie Reay was awarded her 25 years' service and last week Chris Thompson was awarded his 5 years' service many congratulations to them both.

As most of you know we lost our treasurer, Nicky Westwood, earlier in the year and we pass on our deep condolences to both Tim and Rachel.

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

I would like to thank all leaders, the group executive committee and parents for all their time, effort and enthusiasm, which they give to St Laurence Scout Group.

As always, we are always looking for new leaders and for adults to join our group executive team, particularly a treasurer, if you or anyone you know would like to volunteer please contact me.

Carl Jenkins
Group Scout Leader
206th St Laurence Scout Group

SERVERS

Once again I'm pleased to report that our small but dedicated and great team of servers - Chris and Stuart Andrew, Martin Corns, Lucy Keeves, Dorothea Matsveru, Hilda Pouncett and Ann Pycok - have worked together to support the clergy on Wednesday and Sunday services plus midweek festivals also 12-noon baptisms.

This year we have lost the regular help of Roy Pouncett due to his church warden duties. We were sorry to lose both Mark Reynolds and Mark Ingram who have both stepped down. This is a really rewarding ministry; if any one is interested in becoming a server or would like to know more, please speak to me or one of the team. Lastly a massive THANK YOU TEAM for all your support.

Hilda Pouncett.

SOCIAL AND FUNDRAISING

The small group of volunteers on the committee continued to organise and help with a range of activities in 2018. We had the familiar events – 4 car boot sales raising £1600 (one had to be cancelled due to snow); quiz nights; cake sales for charity; beetle drives and teddy bears picnic; Macmillan Coffee Morning; and the Christmas Tree Appeal amongst others. Christian Aid week raised just over £1000, with an additional £217 donated at Harvest, and the Christmas Fayre just short of £2000, the best for many years. We also had the Art Exhibition organised by Sue Knowles raising £760 and Peter Chapman organised an evening for train enthusiasts called 'All the Stations' raising a brilliant £760. Linda Joyes-Wallace came to the committee with an idea of collecting gold (any gold, broken or complete pieces of jewellery) – a lot of organisation from Linda saw a staggering £2200 being raised. We have looked to introduce some cultural events using the church and had a very successful organ recital; a choir evening and a pottery workshop – all of which were well supported. A very big thank you to the group of organisers and the faithful band of volunteers who help.

Rowena Nicholls

STAY & PLAY

We are into our second year of running the playgroup and we are welcoming new families each week. The playgroup is still continuing to grow, some weeks are quieter than others especially in the summer months. Our busiest session we had around 35 children and we average around 25 a week.

We receive wonderful feedback from the parents and we are encouraging them to leave feedback on our Facebook Page, so this will encourage even more families.

Our Facebook page has over 115 likes, and we update this regularly with our monthly newsletters so that our families are kept up to date and what to expect each week!

We do like to keep the Church connection within our playgroup so we will celebrate Easter and Christmas (and in particular the Nativity and Advent). We also celebrate all of the Saints days too along with many other celebration events!

Each of our weeks has a theme, and the children do love this, and so do we!

We received a grant of £700.00 from the Local Innovation Fund (thank you to Canon Janet for applying), and this has helped buy items like a Sand / Water table, new mats etc and the remainder will be spent on procuring new tables and chairs for the children.

Donna Clulee & Emma Kupsa

SUNDAY SCHOOL – 8.30am (AND RISE AND SHINE)

Each week we still continue to try and follow the worship that is used in Church with the use of Living Stones (Pebbles) for Pre-School age children and Searchlights (Candles) for 3 – 5's, adapting the material where necessary to simplify for the age group that mainly attend the 8.30 a.m. The average number of children attending Sunday School in Church per week is 15 but at times can reach 18-20 and for this reason on the 29th April 2018, we decided to move the 8.30 a.m. Sunday School over to the Pastoral Centre for a trial period – this has continued and has now become the 'place' where the 8.30 a.m. Sunday School starts. Several weeks after moving across to the Pastoral Centre, a small service was introduced which is a simplified service similar to the one in Church but very family friendly. Activities/craft work is still used to reflect the theme where possible with parent participation which we are very grateful for. At the end of the session, we go over to Church and join in with the Communion/Blessing finishing off our morning.

Our Rise & Shine Service in the Pastoral Centre on the 4th Sunday continues to be popular and is still attracting between 20 & 25 families and their carers. It is definitely lively and has been boosted this year by piano accompaniment from Charitas Cho. This service accommodates our new attendees but also still appeals to some of our previous attendees who wish to attend an occasional service. This service is supported by a 'dedicated' band of volunteers which helps to run things smoothly – we are always on the look-out for new volunteers so please come forward if you are interested.

So our thanks go out to all the volunteers for both the 8.30 Sunday School - Rowena Nicholls, Anna Youngs assisted occasionally by Lorraine Wells and Julie Meadows and our volunteers at the Rise and Shine for all their help, hard work, commitment and support in keeping the Sunday Schools 'manned'. If you are interested in assisting at any of the Sunday Schools please do speak to me.

Elaine Clements

SUNDAY SCHOOL – AGES 6 – 10 YEARS - 10 AM SERVICE

The Sunday school class for 6 – 10 year olds which meets in the Vestry during the 10 am Service has continued. Although Marianna Melville and myself prepare alternately for eight children each week, unfortunately, most weeks of late we have had no children, or occasionally one or two attending our class. Visiting children are always welcome to join us but rarely do. We obviously have a lack of 6 to

10-year-old children in church at the moment and unless we have more children of this age, we will have to wait another few years for the younger group children to be old enough to join us. The second Sunday of each month, the children remain in the church for the duration of the service which is usually a Parade service.

For teaching and activities at Sunday school, we use the 'Living Stones' Resource materials for Rocks, aged 6 - 10 years - Susan Sayers. This accompanies the theme of the service in the church. Each week there is a practical Starter activity, which may be a game, song or some drama, sometimes with music, followed by some teaching and discussion to explain the aim of the lesson. There is a prayer to follow and then often a making and doing activity and/or worksheet based activities such as a Wordsearch, or thought-provoking Maze or puzzles to complete in keeping with the theme and aims of the lesson.

Rita Gardner

SUNDAY SCHOOL – INFANT - 10 AM SERVICE

It's that time of the year again! So what is there to say about the 10.00 o'clock Sunday School for the younger group?

Some things change – the balance of children between the 8.30 and 10.00 o'clock services, with the smaller numbers coming to the later service. If all the 10 o'clock children came together on a Sunday, though, there would be at least 16 of them. The other thing that we have noticed is that the age range has increased. Some children who started Reception in September are continuing to come to Sunday School, while the church is certainly 'Growing Younger' in that the group has some who were under 2 when they started. We come prepared for varied combinations of children and adapt the material to meet their needs.

The new switch on candles have been a great attraction. It is lovely to see the little ones gaining in confidence and joining in, being willing to light the candles and to take the collection.

As a group, we couldn't manage the 'Growing with God' Conference in 2018 but 5 of us went for a stimulating day at St Luke's in Gas St on Saturday 9th March 2019 where there was much food for thought. We benefit from having termly meetings with Canon Janet to plan, share ideas and discuss services.

Clare Blackshaw and Anita Killingworth

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

The Worship committee continues to plan worship and provides a forum to discuss the wider aspects of worship. This includes reviewing worship and the re-introduction of worship for those with dementia and their carers, co-ordination with the Sunday School, planning additional services or 'Fresh Expressions of Worship' e.g. Beer and Hymns at the local pub. The committee welcomes constructive comments that will help improve worship.

And the final words go to the

CHURCH WARDENS

It has been a busy year for us as church wardens, Roy has completed his first year and taken on a lot of the fabric and building responsibilities, working closely with Elaine and other members of the Fabric Committee. We would both like to thank the deputy wardens Roger Bannister, Rowena Nicholls, Elaine Clements, Linda Orchard, Martin Corns and everyone else who has assisted us throughout the year.

Father David, Father John, Father Paul and Janice (Reader) have continued to support Canon Janet and the congregation- for which we are truly grateful. We have enjoyed working alongside Canon

Janet and have been thankful for her hard work and support, particularly in the last few difficult months.

Church attendance on a Sunday has stayed about the same as last year, with around 133 adults and children between both services each week. Rise and Shine is still a huge success and continues to be held once a month in the Pastoral Centre. Thank you to everyone who helps at these busy services! The quieter service on a Wednesday is still attended by a regular number of 10-13 people each week.

Five new members to St. Laurence Church have been confirmed this past year in services at St. Nicolas and St Andrew, Barnt Green. It is good to see that we are still attracting new members to the congregation so that as a church we can continue to thrive and grow. We have also welcomed over thirty families who have attended church to secure a place at St. Laurence Infant School, and are happy to see that many have continued to worship with us after the number of services required has been reached.

Ideas and plans are still being looked into regarding the internal church porch. Although it may seem to be taking a long time to make a decision about this project, it is important that we have exactly what we want in the end, as it will be a part of the church for many years to come. We continue to experiment with different ways of using the church, and the altar table and font are still being tried in different places at different services.

Thanks, from both of us to:

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

Thanks also to the leaders of the new *Look-Out* groups who are keeping an eye out for people who we may not have seen for a while. This is a new idea introduced to us by Father John. As we are such a big congregation, it is often difficult to spot when someone has not been for a while, and these new groups will be a big help to the ministers and the Church Wardens.

The smooth running of the church and Pastoral Centre on a day to day basis is thanks to our Parish Administrator, Lorraine, who works tirelessly to ensure everything is well organised and Barry, who looks after the buildings and grounds. We thank both of them for all their hard work!

We pray for God's presence and guidance in the year ahead and look forward to working together for another term as wardens.

Roy Pouncett & Debbie Keeves