

St Laurence's Church

Annual Review 2022



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for the **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** of St Laurence's Foleshill
held on Sunday 30th May 2023

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VICAR'S REPORT

Rev Gareth Irvine

2022 was a year of fresh beginnings and things restarting again after the disruption and trauma of COVID in 2020-2021, but in the midst of continued pressures and struggles in the nation and the world: the cost of living crisis, the war in Ukraine, the death of our longest-reigning monarch, and the political changes and uncertainty over the summer and autumn.

As a church, we are called to be people of hope and people of joy, despite and beyond our external struggles: encountering the joy of the living Lord Jesus in our worship and our fellowship with one another, and being bringers of joy into our communities, our families, and our relationships where healing can happen.

We began our journey as a mission hub in June as we welcomed Rev Abby Rhodes as our Associate Minister. Abby has been brilliant at supporting me and the church family in different areas of ministry, and helping develop a hub network of other church leaders across the deanery and Diocese. Whilst we will miss Abby when she moves in May this year to take up the post of Priest-in-Charge, we know it is where God is calling her, and we look forward to developing a stronger partnership with St Paul's.

In September, we launched Connect as weekly mid-week missional community for familie, and it has been wonderful to see adults and children learn together how to worship, pray, study and live the scriptures. We have also seen a growth in numbers and passion amongst our children and young people to grow as disciples.

Our relationship with St Laurence's Primary School continues to bear fruit, and it was a privilege to accompany some of the children lead the Diocese in Prayer for Ukraine in March in the city centre with Bishop Christopher.

We've also had lots of time of celebration – at the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June, at the Big Quiz Night for Tearfund in October, and Carol-OKE in December – inviting others to experience joy, and discover something of the joy that is at the heart of all we do – life in Jesus Christ.

Thank you to everyone who is part of this wonderful church – it is a privilege to be part of stewarding the joy and delight that God has placed within us.

FAMILY LINK WORKER

Rea Verdon

At last year's APCM I talked about the new Youth Group for young people in school years 9-13. The group meets weekly sharing a meal and doing activities to help them build relationships with the leaders, (Valerie Irvine, Ben Verdon and myself) each other and Jesus. In February 2023, Valerie and I took 11 of the group to Basecamp, a residential weekend run by Thrive Ministries. We had a great few days meeting other youth groups from around Coventry and Warwickshire. The group continues to grow, drawing in young people from outside of the St Laurence's Church community.

I continue to lead the team that provides teaching for our primary school aged children on a Sunday morning. We have been following the same themes as the adults so that families are able to continue their discussions at home. Thank you to Kate and Michelle for your continued dedication and passion.



During the summer holidays, Abby and I had a shared vision for a new worshipping community, building on the long standing Messy Church sessions. Meeting each Tuesday in term time, we spend time learning about Jesus, building relationships and community and sharing a meal. The activities alternate between a monthly Messy Church session, a monthly Muddy Church session and Living Room on the weeks between, they fall under the umbrella name of Connect. Although we expected to have different people at each type of activity, we have found that the same families are coming consistently each week, allowing us to get to know them well and walking alongside them in their day to day lives.

After the success of Connect in the church setting, I hoped to multiply the community into a school setting. This was trialled at the beginning of March 2023 with a selected year group and was well attended. The school are willing to expand this into sessions for the other year groups and I hope it will eventually become a regular gathering open to the whole school, perhaps running with the Messy Church framework.

I have continued to hold sessions during the school holidays where families can come and socialise, share meals and take part in activities. Over the last year this has included a Nativity story telling for the preschool children and families that I know through Little Stars Stay and Play. The families came and were able to dress up to take part in the telling of the story before sharing a lunch together. In February half term 2023, we invited families to celebrate Shrove Tuesday with pancakes and then held an Ashing service with a shared hotdog lunch the following day.



I have introduced Prayer Spaces in school, giving the children (and Staff) the space an opportunity to spend time in prayer in a number of different ways. The first one had a Narnia theme and the current one helps the children think about Lent, what it means and how they can use the time to prepare for Easter.

I have supported Adult Learning sessions in school, working with external providers for ESOL, Primary English and Primary Maths. I have also continued with Slow Cooker classes. This has been a practical way to get to know some parents that I would have otherwise struggled to connect with.

Stay and Play sessions continue to meet twice weekly in term time with a mixture of families from the school and local community. The sessions are less well attended than they have been and I am in discussions with the school about how best to make the most of these sessions.



I have found that there has been an increase of pastoral support in the way of spontaneous conversations in the school staffroom. I think my continued presence in school has helped to build relationships with other staff members allowing a level of trust and openness. This then has a knock on effect that staff are then more willing to support me in some of the additional groups and activities I host in school.

I continue to work with children in both the school and church to build vegetable gardens and have held tree planting sessions in school for the wider community. There will be another tree planting session this spring and the gardening groups will begin again after Easter.

As ever I am thankful for all I get to do in this role and I am looking forward to the next year.

HOPE HUB

Laura Edmunds

St Laurence's Hope Hub has just celebrated its 3rd Birthday. We initially opened the foodbank due to the worldwide pandemic and now we are all living through the cost-of-living crisis.

St Laurence's hope Hub is still reaching out to families and single Adults within the community and beyond, supporting them with Emergency Food, Support, Safe Space, Signposting and creating a Warm Space for people to come and have somewhere warm to stay, eat and drink as well as offering a charging point and Databank. St Laurence's Hope Hub is incredibly lucky to have Ian from CAP who joins us each week to help our service users with Debt Support. St Laurence's is based within the Northeast of Coventry and is reported to be one of the top Wards who suffer with poverty.

We have been working closely with the Food Bank and Bare Necessities to provide food, cleaning, laundry, and hygiene packs as well as safely recruiting volunteers for our existing team. From previous secured grants we purchase have a delivery from Fareshare which consists of assorted items including, cooked and uncooked meats, ready to make meals, fresh fruit and vegetables, bread, biscuits, crisps, cheese, and yogurts to name just a few. As a team we believe that everyone should have healthy additional produce to their parcels. St Laurence's Hope Hub was open every Tuesday from 12.30pm to 2.30pm and on a Thursday from 3.30pm to 5pm.

We have seen a massive increase in service users within the last 6 months, I am now ordering 60 to 70 parcels a week from Foodbank and on 3 separate occasions had to close early as we had run out of supplies.

In December 2022 St Laurence's Hope Hub arranged and funded a Christmas Dinner and Christmas Hampers to Service users, which was extremely popular and a massive success.

St Laurence's Hope Hub have provided support to a number of people ranging from single person households up to larger households, some of which could have up to 7 children and 2 adults occupying I am genuinely proud to say that with our continued

efforts and “can do” attitude we have managed to feed approximately 2,085 people from 1st April 2022 to date.

St Laurence’s Hope Hub has continued to grow from strength to strength, and we are looking forward to the future and expanding our services and currently have a funding bid in with NLF for a substantial amount of money so we can continue to support service users with additional resources. This would have not been possible without our wonderful, dedicated team. Big massive shout out and thank you.

SAFEGUARDING

Chris McKirdy – PSO

Chris McKirdy and Laura Edmunds have continued to work on Safeguarding as part of their roles within St Laurence’s. Chris McKirdy is the Safeguarding Officer and Laura Edmunds manages the Safeguarding Administration.

We use the Safeguarding Dashboard which is updated on a regular basis. We have only a few tasks outstanding, one of which is something that we are awaiting an update on and the additional are for the risk assessments for church activities and still some safeguarding training. Overall, the Dashboard is mainly on the Green for Good and on a 92% Progress.

The Basic & Foundation modules are now online and accessible to anyone, have sent out required links to all persons whom the training applies to. Currently in the process of Safer Recruiting for positions within our Church Worship Team and Youth Leader.

We have had 3 separate Safeguarding incidents throughout 2022, of which were referred to the Diocese for review and no further action was taken on any.

ELECTORAL ROLL

Laura Edmunds - PCC Secretary

There are 45 people in the Church Electoral Roll, of which 26 people reside within the parish and 19 reside outside of the parish. There have been 4 additional members.

FABRIC & BUILDINGS

Ben Verdon - Churchwarden

Gayer Street

The tenancy agreement for the church property on Gayer Street has now been signed and the new tenant is moving in finally, thank you to everyone that has helped in getting the house ready from being there for deliveries to clearing the loft and garden of leftover waste items.

Church & Hall

Electrics

The church has now had the electrical installation condition report carried out with the hall booked in to be done during half term. We are waiting for the report to be issued for the church but not surprisingly there have been a number of observations made that will need to be discussed and rectified to bring the installation up to current standards. The hall should not hold many surprises when the testing is carried out as it is a newer installation and has had more ongoing maintenance works carried out.

Heating

We are currently in discussions with the DAC Heating adviser Peter Bemrose as to what options we have available to us for providing heating in the church. He kindly joined a fabrics meeting on Teams to share his knowledge and answer any questions from Chris, Gareth and myself.

I then met him last week when he was in Coventry to show him around the church where he took further photos and measurements and is producing a report that he will send to the DAC for comment/or objection.

We have been advised to contact a number of companies to begin the process of obtaining quotes so we can put a plan into motion that we can discuss properly when we have projected costs and we can offer a proposal to the Diocese for approval through the faculty process.

The current hope if possible, following some design works is to install an air-to-air heat source system much like a typical air conditioning installation that can also produce

enough heat to warm the church to a comfortable level. This system is much more efficient than a traditional gas boiler system and would also remove the need to carry out the annual safety checks associated with gas installations.

The recent works party was cancelled due to weather and the ever-changing planned visit of Mike and Mel Cleveland but will be reorganized soon hopefully and we would love for as many people to attend and help out as possible.

MISSION HUB

Abby Rhodes – Associate Minister

Launch and Development

- Abby Rhodes joined us as Associate Minister for the St Laurence's Mission Hub in early 2022, with the launch event for the Mission Hub taking place in June 2022 at Abby's licensing, with great feedback from those who attended.
- A Leaders' Lunch took place on 30th June, and was very successful in creating the basis of a Leaders' Formation Group or "Huddle" to build relationships and help each other with the mission in the various local contexts.
- Information about the Mission Hub and its vision is now available on the St Laurence's website. Please see <https://stlaurences.org/missionhub/>
- The Leaders' Formation Group continued to recruit members, both lay and clergy, throughout 2022, including those new to the diocese and/or to incumbencies. There is now a regular membership of 12, with almost all coming from Coventry North and Coventry East deaneries. One other is based in Warwick but believes the St Laurence's Mission Hub is a better fit for his church. The Formation Group meets monthly, with a significant sense of commitment within the group.
- Encounter – a monthly service for the whole Mission Hub – was launched in October 2022, with +Christopher joining us in November. This is well-attended and seen as an important place of rest and refreshment for church leaders in particular.
- During the second half of 2022, the Mission Hub leaders (Vicar and Associate) both worked one-to-one with church leaders, attended Deanery Synod meetings

to publicise the Mission Hub work and joined specific church PCCs to facilitate away days looking at mission etc.

Connect – a New Worshipping Community

- St Laurence’s set up a trial New Worshipping Community in September 2022, called Connect, meeting on Tuesdays after school and welcoming whole families to come and explore what it means to follow Jesus together, using a variety of formats. This group has grown and is now welcoming between 35-40 people every week. Other churches who are interested in similar models are invited to come along and see how the New Worshipping Community is working, as are teams from the diocese.

Seeing God at Work

- Growth has happened quickly – 1 New Worshipping Community is already established and thriving and another is in the pipeline locally.
- God has worked in the rapid establishment of a Leaders’ huddle that is willing to be vulnerable and constructive with each other.
 - Numbers in the huddle are rising and there is a sense of good relationship and trust between a diverse group of people. Leaders involved tell us that they appreciate the group as it does leave them feeling less isolated and weary.

Parish & Hub Workload Dynamics?

This is a little hard to gauge, particularly as Gareth’s responsibilities as Area Dean also impact/influence/contribute to the Mission Hub work.

Both roles are designed to be a 50-50 split between Mission Hub work and Parish work. The current working agreement for the Associate Minister role reflects this and, as far as possible, we stick to this breakdown of time. However, there are always occasions where the demands of parish life can – and do - pull our focus.

Both Gareth and Abby work as intentionally on Mission Hub work, as they do on Parish work – planning regular working patterns (eg huddles/team meetings etc).

DEANERY SYNOD

Ann Weitzel - Deanery Lay Chair

This year the Deanery has met 3 times. It is a real privilege for the clergy and reps to join with the Synod and get to know the other churches - in particular hearing their joys and challenges and praying with and for them, which has been part of every meeting.

Clergy movements over the year were- Arriving Rev Richard Hibbert (Holy Trinity), Rev Charlotte Jackson (St Thomas, Keresley) Rev Abby Rhodes (St Laurence Mission Hub) Rev Mary Gregory (Cathedral) with Rev Andrew Coleman leaving. At the end of the year St Francis, St Paul's, St Nicholas (With Ansty & Shilton) were all in interregnum, although St Francis new minister (Aggy Palairet) was expected early in 2023

A brief summary of the meetings in 2022 is as follows.

February (St Nicholas): The main business was to approve the deanery plan- which is a document that looks at how the deanery will be moving forward within the overarching vision of the Church of England and Coventry Diocese who are in particular looking to have 150 new worshipping communities by 2030. This is being resourced by 6 Mission hub churches- one of which is based at St Laurence's in Coventry North.

July (St Paul's): Here there was a presentation given by Neil Masih, the Intercultural Mission Enabler. He asked members to consider how congregations could reach out to those with different ethnic backgrounds. He said that the church still had some of the prejudices associated with skin colour and ethnic origin and there was a lot of work to be done to make it the loving, caring and welcoming place it should be for all. He recommended that there should be a Race Relations Champion on PCCs and referred us to the Diocesan website to see what is available. Some small group discussion and prayer time followed.

November (Allesley): This had two presentations. The first was from Rev Mary Gregory, Canon for Reconciliation and the Arts at the Cathedral. She spoke briefly about the different ways that Arts can be used to bring about Reconciliation. This included the importance of really listening, illustrated by the background to the painted mural on the police station, which came from them listening to the homeless.

The second was from Rev Rob Harrison, the diocesan Director of Ministry and Leadership. He spoke about the vision for Lay Ministry in the diocese. Currently lay ministry is either by permission of the vicar- or a formal commissioning via the Lay Reader ministry- They are looking at having something that lies between this – which is commissioned by the vicar (or possibly Area Dean) for various aspects of Lay ministry. This would include a Bishop's Certificate. They currently have 7 areas they are resourcing- Including things like community, preaching, Children's work. This is all under the vision to release, recognise and resource lay ministry.

The lay reps on synod are Rea Verdon and Dawn Flavell, together with the clergy.

FINANCE

The church continues to be blessed in financial provision through giving, grants, and income through operating activities, which are mostly hall rental. Our biggest costs are parish share, which contributes towards the cost of our clergy, staff costs, building operating and running costs including energy costs, insurance and the running costs for the Hope Hub (which are mostly covered through restricted funds).

During the year, the staff team worked collaboratively to rebuild our finance systems using an integrated package called Expense Plus, and worked back through all income and expenditure from January 2021. This enabled us to re-present our 2021 accounts to our independent examiner in November 2022, and these were approved and signed on 6th December. They were approved by the PCC by email in December 2022.

The 2022 accounts were presented to the independent examiner in February 2023, and signed off on 19th February 2023. They were received and approved by the PCC on March 28th March 2023. A full copy of 2022 financial reports are available on our website and at the APCM detailing income and expenditure, and end of year cash and investment assets.

As of April 2023, we are on track to appoint a new Treasurer whose role it will be to oversee the ongoing financial management and reporting of the church finances to the PCC.