



St Leonard's Church Birdingbury *The Draycote Benefice* Annual Report and Accounts 2019



OUR PURPOSE

Birdingbury Parochial Church Council [PCC] has responsibility for promoting and delivering the mission of the church: pastoral, evangelistic, ecumenical and social. It is also responsible for the maintenance of St. Leonard's Church. It is a charity exempted from registration with the Charity Commission.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

St. Leonard's exists as a church community dedicated to Christian worship, learning and pastoral care for the whole community. We seek to identify, develop and use our God given skills so that we can fulfil our mission to make a difference to people's lives in our wider village community.



We are committed to the aims of the Diocese of Coventry; ***'Worshipping God, Making New Disciples and Transforming Communities'***. We are also committed to using the diocesan programme of '8 Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches' as a tool to help us to achieve this.

WHERE DO WE FIT IN?

We are a part of Rugby Deanery of Anglican Churches and of the Diocese of Coventry under the leadership of The Right Reverend Christopher Cocksworth, Bishop of Coventry.

Who are our key people?

Rector: Rev Ali Massey (to 30 September 2019)

Warden/s: Karen Armbrister / Vacancy

PCC Members and key responsibilities:

Dick Withington Environment

Liz Ellis Minuting Secretary

Jenny Hawes Pastoral Co-ordinator

Daphne Chippendale Secretary / Treasurer

Brian Lloyd Site and Buildings Officer/ Gift Aid Secretary

Matthew Markham

Other key people:

Bryan Tompkins Organist

Eira Owen Chair, Altar Guild

Rachel Glanville Editor, Church News

Jackie Westcott Church Vestments

Melanie Palmer Rota Secretary

Andrew Armbrister Independent Examiner

Eleanor Sirman Benefice Administrator

We are grateful for all the loving support and care we receive from many volunteers around the village, particularly those who supported our services this year by serving on rotas:

Sue and Peter Law

Melanie and Ian Palmer

Dick and Aileen Withington

Jean Powell

Jenny Hawes

Andrew and Karen Armbrister

Eira Owen

Brenda Ansell and Sharon Mason

Josie Price

Daphne Chippendale

Wendy and Brian Lloyd

Liz Ellis

We also extend our thanks to our friends on the St Leonard's Altar Guild who kindly clean and arrange fresh flowers in St Leonard's

We are also grateful to all those who support St Leonard's with financial gifts during the year, both regularly and as one-off donations

Facts and Stats

Electoral Roll

There are presently 33 registered on the church Electoral Roll. A revised roll was completed in 2018 for the period to April 2022. You may join the church Electoral Roll at any time. Please enquire if you would like to do so.

Parochial Church Council Meetings

The PCC meets 5 times a year for business meetings and an Annual Parochial Church Meeting (to which all are welcome but only Electoral Roll members may vote) usually held in April annually. If you would like to consider joining the PCC then we would be very pleased to talk to you about it. There are vacancies.

Church Attendance

The population of the parish is approximately 350 with plenty of children. We normally have 2 services a month; the 2nd Sunday (Holy Communion) and 4th Sunday (Morning Worship). Our usual Sunday attendance is around 15, which includes visitors from other parishes who do not have their own services those Sundays. We have seen some increase in attendance for special services, particularly Remembrance in recent years. Special Festivals e.g. Easter and Harvest are not as well attended as in years gone by but Christmas attendance for our main services is higher than our normal average. In 2020 we reviewed our service pattern; a revised schedule being introduced from February 2020.

Special Registered Services 2019

Weddings
None
Baptisms
None

Funerals
Sadly, these outnumber weddings and baptisms
The funeral and burial of ANN LAVERICK took place in May
The funeral and interment of ROBERT JOHN REEVE took place in November
The funeral of ENID VAYRO took place at Oakley Wood Crematorium
<i>Our loving thoughts and prayers are with their loved ones</i>

Safeguarding

The PCC is wholly committed to the safeguarding of all parishioners, and has adopted the Diocese of Coventry Safeguarding Policy 'Promoting a Safer Church' approved by Diocesan Synod on 17 March 2018, which is reviewed annually, alongside our processes and practices, and our commitment confirmed. The PCC has complied with the duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults). We are also committed to the Diocesan policies for 'Safer Recruitment', the 'Recruitment of ex-offenders', 'Reporting of serious incidents' and 'The use of Social Media'. Copies of our parish commitment to safeguarding and details of the Parish Safeguarding Officer, presently Karen Armbrister, are displayed in church, on our website (www.draycotegroup.org) and on church notice boards. The PCC is also committed to the use of the Parish Dashboard and the Action Plan generated by that.

The PCC remains committed to ensuring all appropriate roles are filled by those who have been DBS checked. All PCC members completed a basic level of safeguarding training in 2017. This training must be repeated every three years, so is due to take place during 2020. The Rector and Parish Safeguarding Officer attended further obligatory training during 2019.

There were no recorded incidents during 2019.

General Data Protection Register 2018

In the light of the changes to data protection legislation during 2018, we continue to take the opportunity to request e mail addresses for those who wish to receive information regarding church activity. All responses are recorded and we now hold a definitive database of those who have agreed to receive information about church services, activities and events. This is most generally despatched by e-mail, unless a request has been received for other methods. If you wish to receive information then please do let the Church Warden know and we can arrange for you to be added.

SUMMARY of 2019

It was another busy year in the life of St Leonard's. A highlight was the Palm Sunday offering entitled 'From Darkness into Light'; a composition written and produced by our own Bryan Tompkins. Presented at St Leonard's, a benefice choir performed over 20 pieces, all composed and written by Bryan, and conducted by Rev Gail Philip. Bryan is an incredibly talented and dedicated composer and we remain very blessed by his ministry, having served with us for more than 50 years now.

We were delighted to welcome Rev Gail Philip to the benefice. A third year Curate, she joined us for some rural ministry experience prior to her appointment as Vicar of Exhall, St Giles in Nuneaton Deanery where she took over in June. Shortly after that, finding the job too demanding on her time, our Incumbent, Rev Ali Massey, resigned and left at the end of September. She had blessed us with her ministry for three years and left with our best wishes for her future.

Regrettably, we also lost two PCC members in 2019. Peter Law had served for many years and we will miss his wise counsel and dry humour. Mel Palmer also stood down after several years of loyal service, but kindly agreed to continue as Rota Secretary. We thank them both for their ministry and are delighted

that they remain committed members of our St Leonard's community. We would welcome new faces and fresh thinking to our PCC if you think you could help us.

Our Summer Fete was, once again, well supported and took place outside the Club in the centre of the village. For as many as like it there, there are others who prefer we hold it in the Churchyard, when people can take the opportunity to visit St Leonard's to admire our lovely building and take in the views. The Fete is now our major fund raiser for the year; so we are very grateful for your support.

Finances in the church remain stable, but we are having to support general income from our reserves as income fails to grow and building/ mission and running expenses rise. Last year we did not break even. We remain fortunate that the building is presently in a good state and we have built up some reserves. The front portico stonework was repaired during the year, but thankfully did not result in a large bill. We were grateful for donations towards the installation of audio enhancement equipment (microphones, hearing aid loop and amplifier for recorded music) and this should take place during 2020 subject to appropriate permission being granted. We remain grateful to those who support our church and mission financially. Without financial donations we would struggle to survive. Presently, we do not have sufficient income to support a full time stipendiary Minister (a salaried Minister) so we will most likely be looking for someone prepared to self support on a part time basis with a house and expenses (called a 'House for Duty ' Priest). There are fewer clergy available in this category, so this will be a challenge for us and may require some radical and creative thinking both by this benefice and by Rugby Deanery; the group of churches of which we are a part. If you feel you could support your church financially, on a regular basis, or as a one-off donation, then we would be delighted to arrange this with you.

We continued our support for Rugby's Winter Night shelter during 2019, with some 25 or so villagers offering their time to buy, cook and serve at the shelter during December 2019 to March 2020. For the 2nd consecutive year we covered all three shifts; evening, overnight and breakfast, St Matthews telling us 'We'd struggle to cope without you'.

Our focus for the coming year is to shape the future for the Benefice and our village church of St Leonard's. Our considerations revolve around the building as a valued historic community asset and space for worship, and the whole St Leonard's church family as we review our place in the community and the benefice, focussing on our structure, spiritual leadership, community engagement and developing our faith and mission through the sharing of the Gospel.

Karen Armbrister Church Warden February 2020

Worshipping God, Making New Disciples and Transforming Communities – OUR MISSION

What are we good at?

We enjoy our worship:

We have a small, committed congregation, who enjoy the fellowship of our worship. Our normal pattern is two services a month and usual Sunday attendance is around 12- 15, which includes friends from other parishes. If the whole church community committed to regular attendance we could number around 30, which is good for a village of this size.

There is a lot of laughter and love in our church and we are always told how welcoming we are. We are delighted that members of other churches visit us regularly from across the benefice

We have additional services for special occasions and often a full church for Remembrance and Christmas. We host and lead quiet services during Lent and Advent

We try to be creative in our worship; although accepting that whilst this pleases some, it does not please others, particularly when church worship is taken outside the building. We believe this is necessary to encourage full participation, and to cater for all tastes, preferences and traditions.

We care for our community;

We try to 'get out of the building'; we try to be the church IN and AROUND the community of Birdingbury

We visit those who are troubled, lonely, sick or just welcome a cheerful face

We take home made goodies, flowers and cards to those who might welcome our love for sad or happy reasons

We usually deliver goodie bags to younger children at Easter and in Advent and often make anonymous deliveries at other times

We host a monthly coffee and chat session for those who would welcome some company. This is always well attended making it important outreach for us. There are many people in Birdingbury who live alone. Our thanks go to those who host for us every month.

We have been hosting an 'After School Drop-In' for some time but have had to abandon this as it is so hard for families to commit to activity after school. The last one did not have any attendees, and therefore we reluctantly dropped it as a regular activity. It was, however, always well received by those who attended so we are open to ideas about how we might make this work for families with younger children.

We hope to return to hosting regular 'Church Cafe' sessions in church with home- made food and good company. Church people are usually good cooks!

We try to work co-operatively with others:

We support activities around the village by working co-operatively with other organisations, volunteering and seeking help as appropriate

We try to support our neighbouring benefice parishes by encouraging visiting for worship and attending social and church functions and events. It's fair to say though that there is little support from the Birdingbury church community for services/ events and activities in other parishes in the benefice

We have encouraged and grown a team of around 25 people who support St Matthew's in Rugby with their Night Shelter work, in 2019/2020 season again covering 25% of their shifts. We are the only rural church in Rugby Deanery engaged in such a partnership

Where are our weaknesses and challenges?

Our ageing community and declining congregation

The church community is getting older! This means that we are unable to do so much. More work falls on less shoulders as we seek to try and continue what we do; and doing more is becoming a challenge

We are losing church attending members because of mobility issues. People are finding it difficult to get to church; the slope and hill proving challenging, despite help being offered

We are not recruiting new members or growing as we would like to. Despite our efforts at engagement, our worshipping congregation has remained static for some years now at an average of around 12- 15 for services. We need to try and ensure we continue to cater for the needs of the existing worship community as well as focussing on the needs of those who don't attend; or potentially we could lose even more

We need to be clearer about our understanding of what people want from their local 'church'; what might encourage them to engage with it and how we might secure the future of the building both as a place of worship and a community asset. It seems that 'church' has no relevance for many people in Birdingbury.

Our PCC has not had any new members for many years. Those who serve have all served for a very long time! We actively seek new members, but we have not been successful. This is aligned to our lack of growth in church attendance of course

Taking Responsibility

We still have only 1 Church Warden; challenging when there is no clergy either. Karen has agreed to stand again in 2020 for one more year only to April 2021, so we have to make some major decisions this year about the future of our church. It is likely to be challenging to recruit a new Minister, and without lay church leadership the future will be difficult

People are busy and often reluctant or unable to commit to either regular, or irregular, activity, events or services. This makes planning difficult.

Spreading the word

We are good at **being** the GOSPEL in and around the village but we are not so good at **sharing** the gospel and spreading the news. We need help to become more effective at evangelism which may help growth

Growing in Faith

It is hard to engage people in developing their personal faith. We rarely have attendees for courses or development / learning opportunity or bible study. There would be opportunities to develop this subject to interest

Travelling to other churches

By tradition, Birdingbury people do not generally travel to other churches in the benefice. They prefer to be in their own church, and probably don't feel a part of anything bigger; neither Benefice, Deanery or Diocese

What opportunities do we have in 2020?

Recruitment of a new Priest

This will be challenging unless we can work together to create a role which is attractive and manageable. Multi Parish rural ministry is seen as demanding and relatively thankless. This will require change in our thinking, expectations and current processes and practices

Seek feedback on the worshipping and community life of St Leonard's

To create discussion groups from, or survey, existing church congregation and extended community to establish what activities / services / times / days / patterns/ venues might attract those who do wish to engage in worship or activity of some sort. To consider developing a midweek attending church community.

Review 'Life at St Leonard's'

To create discussion groups from, or survey, existing church congregation and extended community to establish what people want from their worship experience at church

Personal Development

To consider our own journeys of faith and how we might take responsibility for our own learning and development

Being involved

To consider how we might begin to feel a part of something bigger; a benefice / deanery and diocese; and do we want to?

Getting out of church

To take worship outside of the church on occasions. We have done it before; lots of people seem to like it but some do not; it's impossible to please everyone!

To continue our focus on God's wider world. Consider our own and the church's eco credentials

Growth

To consider how we might GROW our community

How do we develop leaders, recruit volunteers and create succession for key roles?

Stewardship

How do we sustain St Leonard's as we work towards a growth in income generation by trying to create a culture of 'generous giving'? People are generous in Birdingbury in thought, spirit and deeds. There are many acts of kindness happening all the time. We need to be braver in outlining our financial position and seeking support

How do we continue to care for our community as our members get older and need more care themselves?

LICENCES AND AGREEMENTS - The P.C.C. is a party to the following licences and agreements:

The Recreation Field

A licence made the 28th of April 1980 between the parties –

- The Coventry Diocesan Trustees
- The Parochial Church Council
- The Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance
- The Parish Council

'For the purpose of the Parish Council to use the plot of land as a recreation field, the Parish Council to pay £1 per annum to each of the other three parties'.

The Allotment Field

There is a lease agreement between the Parochial Church Council and the Parish Council for the purpose of the plot of land, to be used as allotments by the Allotment Association. This has been updated and renewed. We are keen to ensure the allotment holders remain as environmentally conscious as possible on this land, and requirements in this respect have been added to the conditions of the lease.

For the period April 2016 to April 2021 the rent for the plot is £100p.a. A further review will take place before the expiry of that period

PCC of St Leonard's

Church Warden's comments on Annual Report and Accounts for 2019

Apologies for the delay in producing and sending these documents. Of course, we are unable to hold our Annual Parochial Church Meeting at the moment. Presently the time frame has been extended to 31 October, but further information will follow if that date becomes impossible too.

Accounts

A big thank you to Daphne for all the work she does as Treasurer – and the quiet, efficient manner in which she does it – to keep our accounts up straight and in order. A second thank you to Andrew for his support both as Independent Examiner at annual accounts time, but also as reference for Daphne throughout the year. Do take some time to have a look at the figures, because we should all have some grasp of our financial position. If you have any queries or thoughts then do raise them for discussion at a future PCC meeting

Some comments on where we are:

You will know that our income isn't growing. I have mentioned this before and you will have seen my e mails encouraging our church community to consider whether they could make adjustments to standing orders or regular giving to cover the present period. But our income hasn't grown over a number of years now, so the current situation is just exacerbating the issue, not bringing us a new issue!

We work hard to keep expenditure under control whilst ensuring the church remains comfortable (and warm in Winter) because if it's not then people will not come

We have suffered from much delayed payments for two funerals held in 2019 (both fees not paid until 2020). I have agreed with Daphne that we shall chase for funeral payments more assertively now, and weekly if needed. Once the FD's have been paid by a family, there is no reason why they should not reimburse us

We have transferred from our reserves to meet general expenditure so we need to be aware that, unless we can grow income, then our reserves will start to dwindle. Undoubtedly, we will see a further parish share increase, and particularly if we recruit a stipendiary Minister – which is a possibility as 'House for Duty' are so difficult to recruit

Our ability to fund raise is affected by the current pandemic so we need to start getting creative about how we can make up the fete proceeds at least. There are some ideas around:

- Matt has an idea which he will be raising with me, and other village reps, later today
- Eira is planning a village cookbook – the last one was several years ago – perhaps with a section of 'lockdown' recipes
- I am thinking that, if we are able to, we could turn the summer fete into a Christmas Fair in church, or at least conduct a Christmas raffle – Dick / Daffy can you have a think about how that might work please?

Please have a think and let's see if we can come up with some ideas. It feels like the report is well out of date now, and I suppose we are five months into 2020 and it's a vastly different world that the one we started with. But it reflects things as they were at that point and is a reasonable summary of or activities during 2019.

Karen Armbrister

Church Warden

May 2020

