

THE PCC OF ST. HILDA, WARLEY WOODS, ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR
1ST JANUARY TO 31ST DECEMBER 2017

[DRAFT COPY: FOR RATIFICATION AT THE PCC MEETING ON 15TH APRIL]

Background

The members of St. Hilda's church, Warley Woods, have the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, Rev. Paul Hinton, in providing within the parish and local community the whole mission of the church, ecumenical, pastoral, spiritual and social. We continue to be obedient to the call of God, expressed by our goals of Encouraging Compassionate Disciples and Growing Young Leaders.

Church Council membership 30.04.17 - 29.04.18

Incumbent: Rev. Paul Hinton.

Curate: Rev. Mark Hopkins [until 17.07.17].

Churchwardens: Sue Round, Gerald Poole.

Deanery Synod representatives: Peter Stokes, Wendy Dyke [plus one vacancy].

Elected Council members: Liz Farrier, Derek Latham, Terry Daniels, Janice Stirrup, Jackie Lawrence, Alan Shingleton, Pat Crofts, Judith Gibbens.

The PCC met on 7 occasions and the average attendance was 87%. Reports were received from the Ministry Team, Standing Committee, Safeguarding Group and the three regular sub-committees, namely Finance, Children & Families and Action for Justice.

Summary of matters of interest from PCC meetings

A brief account of each meeting is given by the Secretary in the monthly Parish News. Significant items discussed included:

The Archdeacon's Visitation

Open Church reports

Priorities for the PCC sub-committees for the year

Church sound system

Growing Leaders course

New contracts for gas and electricity

Stewardship Renewal Campaign

Vicarage use and Vicarage garden

Installation of a wall safe in the porch

Grant from HSBC for changes to the church grounds to create an outdoor children's area

Charity of the Year 2018

New Diocesan role for Rev. Paul Hinton

Refurbishment of the church driveways

The future of ordained ministry in the Diocese

Discussion on 'The Five Words from Whitby'

Christian Aid Christmas collection

Possible changes to the Summer Fayre format

Ten Steps to becoming a Dementia-Friendly church

Repairs to the church drainage system

Electoral Roll and attendance

On 31st December 2017 the Electoral Roll numbers stood at 132, of which 54 were resident in the parish [13 males and 41 females] and 78 were non-resident [27 males and 51 females].

In October [the month used by the Diocese to collect average attendance], the average Sunday morning attendance was 95, which included an average of 17 people under 16. The average attendance at the Wednesday morning service was 7 and at Evensong was 8.

The Messy Meet-Up had a varied attendance, ranging from as low as 4 children to as many as 20 [plus accompanying adults]; attendance was greater at Christmas and Easter. Although the varying numbers make planning difficult it was decided to continue the sessions as there are a number of

regular/semi-regular families who attend and have no other faith input into their family lives.

Finance

Full details of the church finances for 2017 will be given in the Annual Accounts for that year. The church was in deficit by around £5,000 on the year but this includes expenditure of around £11,000 on two capital projects. CCTV was installed at a cost of £7,100 to permit the unattended opening of the church building to the public, for which we received a government grant of £5,600. We wholly financed the resurfacing of the front and side driveway [necessary as a duty of care] from our reserves and some donations, at a net cost of around £9,000.

Allowing for these extraordinary expenses, the day-to-day income and expenditure showed a 'profit' of around £5,000. This arose from several one-off factors, including refunds of overcharges on gas and electricity bills and changes in suppliers to reduce ongoing utility costs. The curate left mid-year and this left us with a surplus on the Diocesan grant for his support which we have been able to retain and apply to general clergy support costs. Overall, therefore, the expected income and expenditure of the church are roughly in balance and enabled us to avoid using our reserves except for extraordinary items or extending the mission of the church.

About half of our income [£47,000] arose from personal giving in stewardship or collections which led to a further £10,300 in reclaimed Gift Aid, emphasising the importance of ensuring that as much as possible of our income is eligible for Gift Aid. A stewardship campaign in November further boosted levels of planned giving and Gift Aid. We are grateful to those who have increased their pledge or make new ones in this way. Our 'trading income', principally the hire of the Hall, provided £20,000, sufficient to cover the running costs of the church and Hall and also to pay the utility bills.

The main cost was the Diocesan Parish Share [Common Fund], £41,000, for which we get the services of the Vicar, a curate for the first half of the year, and the Children and Families' Missioner, together with free handling of our payroll and other important support services. Our own three employees cost £11,000.

Looking ahead, the church has committed to financing the Children and Families Missioner from September 2018 but it was not prudent to put further reserves aside in 2017 to meet this cost. However, the C&F Missioner was adopted as the church's charity for 2017 [the Sunflower Fund] and this had raised £3,600 at year end, with a few fund-raising events still to come. The increase in the Parish Share in 2018 was quite small but discussions within the Birmingham Diocese on restructuring its finances may well lead to a significant increase levied on St. Hilda's from 2019.

Finally, the Treasurer would like to express his thanks to his predecessor, Ann Millross, for her hard work in the role and for her help throughout 2017, ensuring a smooth handover. The money received by the church is collected through many people, including the parish administrator, who organises the hiring of the Hall and collects the fees. It is then counted, recorded and banked by the counting teams; they all make an important contribution to the financial management of the church.

Church Life

1. The interior of the church continued to be enhanced by the weekly display of flowers organised by Wendy Dyke and her team of Liz Farrier, Pauline and Rachel Davies. Jes Poole, Jean Line and Peter Munn continued their work to keep the church tidy, while Carole Southall continued to polish the brasses and Carol Hadlington the silver. Martin Hadlington is also to be thanked for melting down used candles to create new ones, thus saving us some expense. Frederica Brogan and Derek Latham continued to ensure the smooth running of the church's administration. The combined Service Booklet and Pew Sheet remained an essential part of all the major services [with a break in August] and the 'Parish News' continued to be published monthly. Thanks for the latter are due to Wendy Dyke, Peter Stokes, Alan Gibbens and all the contributors and distributors. The provision of a wall safe in the inner porch gave a home to the monies collected from persons who purchase odd copies of 'Parish News' on an *ad hoc* basis. The church's website was updated last year and remains an important advertisement for the church; thanks are due to Peter Stokes for the time and effort he expends on the administration of this invaluable aid. Paul Hinton also continued his blog during Lent, giving daily reflections on topical issues, reflections on the Bible - and inviting comments from his followers.

2. Our curate, Rev. Mark Hopkins, was licensed as Rector of St. Mary and Margaret, Castle Bromwich on 5th September 2017, a service attended by some 65 members of St. Hilda's. Mark had been with

us since 2013 and we had been privileged to watch him grow in faith and confidence over a period of four years. His last service with us was on 4th June, followed by a bring-and-share lunch. We all wish him well as he embarks on a new chapter in his life. Rae Caro also left us in 2017 to be ordained Deacon in Newcastle Cathedral. She preached a moving sermon on 28th May, explaining how she came to realise that she had a calling for ordained ministry. We wish her, Craig and Nyssa every good fortune. In the Autumn of 2017, Paul Hinton took on a temporary role alongside two others as Diocesan Director of Ordinands, a position which meant he worked outside the parish for one day each week.

3. Our Readers, Fran Ellis, Rosemary Akeroyd and Richard Haynes continued to provide invaluable help at services and with church life in general. Richard was licensed in February 2017 at a service in Birmingham cathedral, attended by a good number of St. Hilda's parishioners. Peter Harris, Anne Duggan, Joseph Tekere, Amy Robinson and Aaron Garcia continued to assist with the administration of the chalice at communion. Peter Stokes and Terry Daniels were also part of the team which led the Wednesday morning and Sunday evening services, the former also presiding at Compline during Lent. Susie Pearson, who joined us briefly in Autumn 2017, preached on 1st January 2018. In February we had a presentation from Tracey and Becky from Sandwell Young Carers to thank us for the money we raised for their charity in 2016. In May, Ruth Hassell from the Diocese's 'Growing Younger' mission gave a talk, as also did Fiona Collins as Chaplain Supervisor and Chair of the Association of Chaplaincy in General Medical Practice. In June we held an Animal Blessing Service, at which our own Rebecca Mittoo showed some of her films of African wildlife taken in Botswana. Heather Williams, a Reader at Christ Church, The Quinton, preached on 17th September, while Carmen Morancie, a Reader at St. Matthew with St. Chad also preached on 29th October.

The church is also very grateful to Rev. John Wilkinson and Rev. Barbara Fletcher, both of whom celebrated and preached at a number of services, and Rev. Peter Selleck, who preached on 15th October. Barbara will be scaling down her activities from 2018 but will continue to play a part in the services at St. Hilda's and remains committed to the pastoral care of the more elderly members of the congregation; she also revived her 'Tea, cakes and a Chat' in July and August.

David Hickman and Joseph Tekere maintained their role as servers, while Peter Munn [ably assisted by Jean Line] fulfilled the role of Verger at funerals and Barbara Smart and Sue Eaton at weddings. David Lewis has again to be thanked for his work on the church lighting, which in 2017 included replacing the main light bulbs with LED versions, and also in the visual presentations at some services.

4. The choir continued to maintain its numbers in 2017 and by the end of the year had 24 regular members. David Ellis organised a very varied selection of music and was ably assisted, principally by John Barber and also occasionally by Neil Crawford, Angela Daniels and James Ellis. Betty Williams continued to accompany the Wednesday morning services and is very much appreciated for so doing. Choir highlights of the year included the Holden Evening Prayer at Candlemas, at which Mark Hopkins excelled as the cantor; the Choral Service on Passion Sunday; Easter Day, with a rendition of 'Behold the Man' and 'Tomorrow shall be my Dancing Day [part of which was arranged by Peter Webb]; the Patronal Festival, which included a brand new setting of 'O Jesus I have promised', composed by John Barber; the Advent Carol service by candlelight which last year attracted a record number of people [about 100, of which one was Adrian Chiles]; and the Nine Lessons and Carols which again saw the church completely full. A special Taize service was held on Maundy Thursday and Compline was again sung by the choir on Friday evenings during Lent. Some choristers attended the annual RSCM Evensong service at Birmingham Cathedral in January and the RSCM Awards ceremony in October. During the year Alice Round gained her dark blue ribbon and Imogen, Cerys and Robin Gotz attained white level, surplice and formal admission to the choir.

The choir was grateful for the occasional assistance of some members of the congregation and wider community at the Easter and Christmas services. A small group of musicians continued to lead the congregation at the monthly Family and Parade service and the Worship group of singers performed regularly, especially on the first Sunday of the month when junior choristers were absent at expanded Sunday School.

5. In 2017, the Deanery Confirmation service, taken by Bishop Anne of Aston, was held at St. Hilda's and we had three candidates out of the 50 confirmees, namely Yvonne Young, Rehana and Illana

Adams-Bell. The Traidcraft stall, which was moved to the outer porch last year, continued to be faithfully organised by Wendy Dyke, Renate Wilkinson, Anne Harris and Ann Millross but its turnover was somewhat down in 2017. Carol Hadlington's marmalade still has a dedicated following and with the new wall safe its finances were more secure! We also continued to be a major donor to the Smethwick Food bank. Judith Gibbens again organised special 'Knitting for Seafarers' events and the results of people's efforts were blessed on Sea Sunday in July. It was at this service that Paul Carrington's wonderful lighthouse was revealed to everyone! It is now in Southampton to be displayed at the new Seafarer's Centre when it opens. Our Charity of the Year was The Sunflower Fund, an in-house charity raising money for Mandy Saunders to continue her work as Children and Families Missioner beyond September 2018.

6. During Lent, a number of parishioners and many from the Smethwick CAN churches joined together at St. Hilda's for 'Meals with Jesus', a five-week course under the headings 'Guess who's coming to dinner', 'A wedding feast', 'Fish on the beach', 'Call to action - Feed the 5000' and 'The Theology of left-overs'. The Lent lending library was also reinstated.

At the start of the year, a cycle of conversational opportunities began in The Vicarage called 'Hot Potato Suppers' and these continued on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month. They were followed by 'Monday Meals for Pilgrims', a series of nine sessions following the Church of England's Pilgrim Course.

7. The church remained open every Wednesday and Saturday and on the day of the General Election. As the year progressed, the amount of time that the church was open and unattended increased. A series of quiet Eucharist services were held during Holy Week, with themes 'The Anointed One', 'The Suffering Servant' and 'The One Betrayed'; the annual Walk of Witness to St. Mary's, Bearwood, followed by an open-air service with many other churches, took place on Good Friday, followed in the evening by a joint service with Warley Woods Methodist Church.

Pamela Whyman oversaw the development of a 'Welcome Pack' for ladies seeking refuge in the UK and living near to St. Hilda's. She also organised a men's social activity with 'Restore', the Birmingham Churches Together project supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

Rose and Rob Akeroyd organised the Dementia UK Tea Party in March. At the Harvest Festival and onwards through November, John Wilkinson collated gifts of books, stationery and female clothing for transport to Malawi. Michaela Hinton again supervised the collection of shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child in November, while Dianne Eades continued to organise the Children's Society gift boxes. The annual house-to-house collection for Christian Aid again took place on several roads in the parish during Christian Aid Week in May.

On 20th January, a number of parishioners took part in the 'Bridges Not Walls' demonstration held on Galton Bridge, at which the 'Love Your Neighbour' banner was displayed.

8. Sue Eaton continued to oversee the administrative duties associated with the Baptism services and our thanks are due to her for her devotion to this task. Altogether there were 23 baptisms, including Nellie Hannibal who was baptised during the Festival service on Easter Day. Rupert Hannibal also organised a 'Walk for Sharon' in October to mark what would have been their wedding anniversary. Baptism families, together with some church families, are regular users of the Children's Corner. A number of housebound members of the congregation continued to receive Communion in their homes and

9. Our children and families work, led most ably by Mandy Saunders, saw another successful year of schools coming into the church and Mandy going out into the school environment. Our connection with Causeway Green and Most farm school, both of which are outside of the parish, continued to improve and flourish as they become more aware of what we have to offer them.

Bleakhouse, Lightwoods and Abbey schools all came into church for various events. Our 'Harvest Prayer Spaces' and 'Christmas through the Keyhole' events were much appreciated by adults and children alike.

Year three of Mandy's post ends in September 2018 and we are already planning to 'go-it-alone' and hopefully continue the work which has already begun and is expanding rapidly. There will be an event in May for the congregation to review what has been achieved over the last three years and make some decisions as to where our focus should be going forward.

The 'Facebook' page for community events now has 217 families registered. The 'Messy Monday' events during the school holidays were attended by an average of 40 children plus adults and were much appreciated. 'Pop-up-and-Play', in which we took ourselves into the heart of the community in Warley Woods gained us many more contacts and was well-received.

10. The buildings and grounds continued to be maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers, particularly David Dyke, Peter Stokes, Duncan Boyle, Roger Saunders, Christopher and Alan Gibbens, Alan Shingleton, David Lewis and Robert Eaton. Full details of repairs and improvements will be given in the Supervisor's Report but of the items completed in 2017 the major one as the resurfacing of the drive to the car park and in front of the church building, together with the provision of enhanced speed bumps and a central pillar in the side drive to prevent unauthorised access - and a system of how to organise the latter will be developed shortly. The Vicarage continues to be well-used for both Sunday School and also for a variety of mid-week meetings and activities, including a Morsbag workshop in February.

Mandy Saunders organised a working party to prepare a plot for a Community Garden in February, while David Dyke's hanging basket sale raised money to reslab part of the area to the rear of the church. Fire training for group leaders was also held during the year.

11. The Prayer Group continued to meet regularly to pray for the needs of the parish and wider community, to reflect on God's word and to grow in fellowship with each other. The Prayer Ministry team of Wendy Dyke, Pamela Whyman, Richard Haynes, Anne Harris, Carol Hadlington, Melanie Mittoo, Jingjie Casey, Carole Southall [together with Paul Hinton and Fran Ellis when required] regularly offers Prayer Ministry at Eucharist services and continued to extend learning and reflections on this ministry through times of study and meetings with the Ministry Team. They offered Anointing of Hands at the service on 23rd July. Fran Ellis again organised bi-monthly Prayer Walks around parts of the parish to pray for God's blessing on its people. We also produced a Prayer Calendar in January, a resource enabling us to pray for every street and community gathering within the parish. St. Hilda's also hosted the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January at which Father Roger Peck from St. Hubert's preached, while Shirley Lee and Fran Ellis helped with the organisation of the Women's World Day of Prayer, which last year was held at Warley Baptist Church.

12. The Ministry Team and lay people continued to minister to many families in the parish and beyond in 2017. There were 31 funerals [of which 19 were held at St. Hilda's] and 8 weddings. It is important for us to realise that during the year thousands of people from the parish and beyond come to St. Hilda's both to grieve and to celebrate; the service of Commemoration of the Departed in October was again very well-attended. It is also worth noting that our Ministry Team take many services in churches of differing denominations throughout the local area.

13. Sadly, we lost two long-serving members of the congregation in 2017, namely Pat Ashton and Len York. Pat had been in a nursing home for some time following a stroke and passed away in June. Len was a St. Hilda's institution, a charismatic speaker and long-term choir member whose presence is sorely missed.

Partnerships with other churches

St. Hilda's continued throughout 2017 to work in close partnership with our friends in Smethwick Churches Action Network. Many of the activities of the group are mentioned in other parts of this Report but Rev. Paul Hinton and Wendy Dyke continued to serve as trustees of Smethwick CAN, assisting the Board of Trustees with the good ordering and accountability of the Network's activities, including the operation of the Smethwick Food Bank. Members of St. Hilda's continued to support the Food bank operations as volunteers.

Social Events

1. The Social Committee, under the major guidance of Jon Goodwin and David Hickman organised a series of events in 2017. There were the usual two quizzes, one for Christian Aid Week in May and the other at Christmas; both of these were held on a Friday, the former again having a full house but the latter suffering from a heavy fall of snow which severely limited the attendance.

The Craft Fair, organised by Michaela Hinton and Freddie Brogan, took place in November. The Summer Fayre raised over £1000 for the Sunflower Fund in July, while Jean Downs organised the annual pantomime visit in January, last year to 'Dick Whittington'. 'Bearwood Sings' was a one-off singing workshop with Marianne Ayling at St. Hilda's in March; John Barber's choir 'Enchant' gave a splendid concert in December, entitled 'An Enchanted Christmas'; and the annual Model Railway exhibition was again a major attraction in November. In June, the Christian Music Ministry's choir gave a performance of Roger Jones' 'Jailbreak, conducted by Annie Routley.

2. Derek Latham continued to organise the monthly ramble and David Ellis the table-tennis club. The monthly Sociable Social Evening continued its rounds of the local hostelrys, culminating in the popular Christmas Meal in December, held again last year at 'The Fairfield'. The Ladies Curry Nights were occasional events and the Harvest Supper and Skittles evening in October was, as always, well-attended. A car boot sale was held in the church hall in July.

3. A committed group under the leadership of Sue Eaton continued to provide refreshments after the morning services and catering at a number of special events. Our thanks are due to all the people involved for their hard work and dedication.

Sunday School

This has continued and the children and young people particularly appreciate the full sessions which take place in the Vicarage on the first Sunday of the month. It gives them an opportunity to learn about their faith in an age-appropriate manner and also to share their thoughts and ideas in a safe environment.

The age range has shifted downwards as some of our older young people are choosing to stay in church and this is a sign of their developing faith. Aaron Garcia shaved his head for the Teenage Cancer Trust in Lent and raised a considerable amount of money.

Our thanks for this invaluable work are due to Mandy Saunders, Jackie Lawrence and Frederica Brogan; Frederica offered to step into the breach when Jackie stood down in summer 2017. Sincere thanks go to Jackie for the care and dedication she showed to her work with the children before stepping down.

Other groups

CAMEO, the weekly meeting for the over-60s, continued to thrive and have a most varied programme. Carol Hadlington and her team of dedicated helpers continued to organise this activity throughout the year and sincere thanks are accorded to them for their efforts. Carol and Martin celebrated their Golden Wedding in 2017 and the occasion was marked by a gift of an arrangement of roses.

Other groups using the Hall included KUMON English and Maths tuition, Brownies, Guides, Rainbows, St. Hilda's Baby Group, Happy Days Nursery, Mothers and Toddlers, a Zumba group, Beginner's Yoga, Mindful Mutts and the Mum2Mum Market. The latter organised several nearly-new sales of baby and children's items during the year.

Conclusion

2017 saw St. Hilda's embrace changes, such as the loss of our curate, the use of the Vicarage and the extension of Open Church and to grasp the opportunities that these changes presented to us. We again fulfilled all our financial obligations and worked towards increasing the Sunflower Fund. Change is now in the air within the Diocesan Ministry as a whole and, as a generally thriving church, we should embrace this in 2018 with optimism and not with anxiety.

Derek Latham. PCC Secretary. April 2018.