

THE PCC OF ST. HILDA, WARLEY WOODS, ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR  
1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY TO 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2016

Background

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

Church Council membership 10.04.16 - 30.04.17

Incumbent: Rev. Paul Hinton.

Curate: Rev. Mark Hopkins.

Churchwardens: Sue Round, Gerald Poole.

Deanery Synod representatives: Fran Ellis, Peter Stokes [plus two vacancies].

Elected Council members: Joyce Lewis, Jackie Lawrence, Wendy Dyke, Frederica Brogan, Janice Stirrup, Ann Millross, Terry Daniels, Derek Latham, Judith Gibbens, Joseph Tekere, Alan Shingleton, Pat Crofts, Christopher Turrell [resigned 18-07-16].

The PCC met on 9 occasions and the average attendance was 79%. Reports were received from the Ministry Team, Standing Committee, 'Welcome Pack' group and the four PCC sub-committees, namely Action for Justice, Children and Families, Finance and Strategic Planning and Responding Well and Safeguarding.

Summary of matters of interest from PCC meetings

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

- Rules for the conduct of PCC meetings
- Renewal of the Scout Hut lease and provision of a new electricity cable to the Hut
- Purchase of a replacement photocopier
- Appointment of a new cleaner for the Church Hall
- Roofing repairs to the church building
- Progress towards Open Church, especially the provision of a Welcome Pack and Prayer Guide for visitors and installation of CCTV cameras
- Welcome and Inclusion document
- The visit of Bishop Brighton
- The establishment of an early Years centre in the Church Hall
- Safeguarding training
- The painting of the exterior wall in the children's play area
- The Parish Giving scheme
- Alterations to the choir gallery
- Vision Day on 1<sup>st</sup> October and subsequent reviews
- Provision of additional funding for the Children and Families Missioner
- Alternative uses for St. Hilda's Vicarage on a three-year programme
- The closure of Abbey Churches Together
- Provision of Communion before Confirmation

Electoral Roll and Attendance

On 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2016, the total number on the Electoral Roll stood at 129, of which 52 were resident in the parish and 77 outside it. In terms of gender, the Roll comprised 40 men [13 resident, 27 non-resident] and 89 women [39 resident, 50 non-resident]. During the year several people on the Roll moved house which has altered the resident/non-resident figures.

In October [the month used by the Diocese to collect average attendance] the Sunday services as a whole had an average attendance of 75. If Evensong services are excluded, the average rose to 78.

If Wednesday services are included, the average fell to 57. The attendance at Wednesday morning and Evensong services remained fairly constant.

Messy Church [now renamed Messy Meet-Up] had an average attendance of 40 children/adults during the year; its 'Facebook' page now has 161 families as members and, while most attendees are regulars, new faces are always appearing.

### Finance

A full account of the church's finances in 2016 will be given by the Treasurer in a separate item. During the year we were able to pay our Common Fund allocation in full and also to find the money for two other major items of expenditure, namely a replacement photocopier and necessary repairs to the roof of the church. The church ended the year with a slight surplus in the General Fund which was transferred into the Fabric Fund. Planned giving via the Stewardship scheme has fallen during the year, mainly as a result in changing circumstances for a number of scheme members. This is an issue which will need to be addressed during 2017, probably by a Renewal Campaign; we are also planning to become members of the Parish Giving Scheme, details of which will be available after this APCM.

Thanks are to be accorded to all those who work with the Treasurer in counting and providing the necessary records for the complicated job of claiming Gift Aid in various forms to be achieved. Following the APCM, Ann Millross will be standing down as Treasurer after four years in post. Ann has worked tirelessly at the accounts during her tenure and we are indebted to her for all her hard work, especially during the last few months when she has had to cope with difficult family circumstances.

### 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 Mary Hallman, Mary McGrath, Liz Farrier, Rachel and Pauline Davies. Jez Poole, Jean Line and Peter Munn continued their work to keep the church tidy while Carol Southall regular polished the brasses and Carol Hadlington the silver. 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 the morning services [with a break in August] and the 'Parish News' continued to be published monthly; thanks for the latter are due to Peter Stokes, Wendy Dyke, Alan Gibbens and all the distributors. The church's website remained a major advertisement for the church and our thanks are due to Peter Stokes for the time and expertise he expends on the administration of this invaluable aid. Following his sabbatical, Paul Hinton, inspired by walking in Warley Woods, produced a booklet of poems and prayers which was first offered to the congregation at the Patronal Festival.

2. Our Curate, Rev. Mark Hopkins, together with our Readers Fran Ellis, Rosemary Akeroyd and Richard Haynes [who completed his training in 2016 and was licensed in February 2017] continued to provide invaluable help at services and with church life in general. Peter Harris, Ann Duggan, Aaron Garcia, Amy Robinson and Joseph Tekere assisted 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 Evensong services, the former also presiding at Compline during Lent. Rae Caro continued her placement at St. Hilda's as part of her studies at Queens College and during the year we welcomed her new baby Nyssa into the St. Hilda's family. We also had the pleasure of the company of Susie Pearson who joined us briefly in 2016 and who is considering a possible calling into the Ministry.

Bishop Brighton of the Diocese of Upper Shire, Malawi, graced us with a four-day visit in May and preached on Pentecost Sunday; he had a well-filled itinerary and even joined the Ramblers for the annual pub lunch, held last year in Stratford-on-Avon. Shari Brown from Restore attended a service in September when we focussed on the refugee crisis, while Bishop Anne of Aston preached at our Patronal Festival in November during which there was a performance by the choir of a specially-commissioned anthem 'St. Hilda's Bell' by John Barber and also Fern Cleve and Ashley Ogilo received communion [before confirmation] after special preparation. 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 helped to 'hold the fort' during the Vicar's three-month sabbatical from April to July. In

preparation for these three months, the Ministry Team and church officers held an 'away-day' at Holland House. Barbara continued with her help in the care of the more elderly members of the congregation, while David Hickman, Joseph Tekere and Richard Haynes [until April 2016] maintained their role as servers. Peter Munn and Joyce Lewis fulfilled the duty of Verger at weddings and funerals, although Joyce had to forego this role in the latter half of the year due to a broken hip, her duties being covered by Sue Round and Gerald Poole.

David Lewis has again to be thanked for his work on the church lighting; in the visual presentations at certain services; and putting into place changes to the choir gallery.

Special thanks were also accorded to Pauline Jones and Mandy Saunders, both of whom stood down from their roles as churchwardens at the 2016 APCM. Both of them had, in their own ways, contributed a huge amount of behind-the-scenes work to ensure the smooth running of so much that goes on at St. Hilda's. Their places were taken by Sue Round and Gerald Poole - they have much to live up to! We also lost the services of Wendy Dyke, who stepped down after 25 years of unstinting service [along with husband David] as hall cleaner. After a longer-than-expected appointment process, Barbara Thomas is now the new cleaner; thanks are accorded to Sue Round, Janice Stirrup and Frederica Brogen who stood in for Wendy during the period before Barbara was appointed.

3. In March, Betty Williams stood down from her position as organist and choirmistress after just over 40 years of unstinting service. Her invaluable work of nurturing the choir during the highs and lows of membership over that period saw her leave on a 'high' with choristers rising in number - there are now 23 regular members. Her long-standing deputy, David Ellis, took over as leader; he has been helped by John Barber and also occasionally by Neil Crawford, James Ellis and Angela Daniels. Betty still plays the piano for the Wednesday morning services and she is very much appreciated for doing so. Choir highlights of the year included the choral service on Palm Sunday, the Advent Carol Service by candlelight and another memorable Nine Lessons and Carols service to a packed church on Christmas Eve. On Good Friday, a special service looking at the cross through the eyes of Peter, Mary and Pontius Pilate included new choral pieces written by John Barber, performed by St. Hilda's choir and also by John's choir Enchant. Compline was again sung by the choir on Friday evenings during Lent. Some choristers attended the annual RSCM Evensong service in Birmingham Cathedral in January and the RSCM Festival and Awards ceremony in October, at which Amy Robinson was presented with her Bishop's Award which she gained with a distinction! Other choristers who gained awards were Rachael Mittoo and Eve Casey, both of whom received their red ribbons while five of our younger members, Hattie, Fern, Jenny, Maddison and Marcus completed their white study books. Again, the choir was grateful for the occasional assistance of some members of the congregation and wider community at the Christmas and Easter services. A group of musicians continued to lead the congregation at the monthly Family Service and the Worship Group of singers performed regularly, especially on the first Sunday of the month when junior choristers were absent at extended Sunday School. A Taize service was held in June, while music also featured prominently in the 'St. Hilda's Got talent' concert, organised by John Barber at the end of September. In August, David Ellis organised a 'Come and play the organ' morning to give everyone a chance to see what it was like to play the instrument and perhaps encourage younger members to think about taking it up seriously.

4. The Deanery Confirmation service was held at St. Matthew's with St. Chad's, Smethwick. St. Hilda's had three candidates in 2016, namely Eve Casey, Val Freestone and Theresa Newis. The Traidcraft stall continued to have a wide following and thanks are accorded to Wendy Dyke, Renate Wilkinson and Ann Millross for maintaining it and again organising our participation in FairTrade Fortnight in the Spring. Carol Hadlington's marmalade continued to have a dedicated following! 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, when we celebrated 160 years of Missions to Seafarers. Our Charity of the Year for 2016 was Sandwell Young Carers, an organisation that obviously touched our hearts as, with Barbara Fletcher as the hardworking co-ordinator, a series of events such as car washing, Open Gardens, a car Treasure Hunt, hanging basket sales, Janice Stirrup's zip-wire challenge and the Sponsored Ramble raised approximately £4500. We had a special cake for the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and, on a more sombre note, we had a minute's silence in church to remember the murdered MP Jo Cox and also those murdered in the gay nightclub in Orlando.

5. During Lent, a number of St. Hilda's congregation attended a combined Lent Course at Smethwick Baptist Church with other Smethwick churches, which studied The Beatitudes and their meaning for the people of Smethwick. There was also a Lent Lending Library initiative at St. Hilda's. During the year, Jackie Lawrence and Emily Ellis completed the 3D course. In October, Paul Hinton, Mark Hopkins and Barbara Fletcher organised three evening meetings under the title of 'Faithful Thinking' which discussed Sexuality, Aging and The Stranger, while Rosemary Akeroyd presented a workshop on what it means to be a Dementia Friendly Church in November. St. Hilda's hosted the Warley Deanery Quiet Day on the subject of Prayer in March, while Mandy Saunders organised a series of 'Nooma Pudding Club' meetings in June and July. During Advent, Paul Hinton began his daily blog on the theme of St. Matthew's gospel to which others both read and contributed. This continued into 2017 on The Names of Jesus and was ongoing during Lent.

6. The church remained open every Wednesday [and also for an extended period on European Union Referendum Day] thanks to a team of volunteers who worked a one-hour rota system. We are now at the point where the church remains open on Saturdays for a trial period of three months. A series of quiet Eucharist services were held during Holy Week followed by a Maundy Thursday service and the Walk of Witness to St. Mary's, Bearwood, followed a service of meditation in church on Good Friday. Again, an Easter Vigil was held on the Saturday preceding Easter Day. The Women's World Day of Prayer was held last year at Sandon Road Methodist Church. At the Harvest Festival service [and subsequent Sundays] in October/November, John Wilkinson collated gifts of books, stationery and female clothing for transport to Malawi. In November, Michaela Hinton again supervised the collection of shoeboxes for Samaritan's Purse. Dianne Eades continued to supervise the gift boxes for the Children's Society, and its coffers were enhanced last year by Peter Stokes's abseil down Liverpool Cathedral.

7. Sue Eaton and Barbara Smart continued to oversee the administrative duties associated with the Baptism services and our thanks are due to them for their devotion to this task; Gill Swift, who began the year as part of this team, stepped down during 2016. Baptism families, together with some church families, are regular users of the Children's Corner, an important facility that has continued throughout the year. Occasional Communion services, both for the general residents and for Irene Hughes, were held at Beechcroft Nursing Home and a number of housebound members of the congregation continued to receive Communion in their homes.

8. Our children and family work, led by Mandy Saunders, has an outward-facing focus and everything the team does is geared towards making church buildings, church people and faith conversations accessible to those families in our parish for which formal church is not appropriate. Last year, we ran Easter prayer spaces and Christmas crib services events at which all of our parish schools attended. As well as this, individual lessons were organised in church for those school that requested this service. Mandy was also able to visit two schools from outside of our parish whose local churches were unable to provide the help that they needed. We are also involved with a local parents' prayer group and this keeps our work fresh in the minds of local families. Messy Meet-Up continued to run monthly and at each half-term there were half-day sessions for families to attend. There were weekly sessions during the summer holidays, which enabled us to reach many new families and to keep contact with those using a church group such as Guides or the Baby Group which do not meet in the summer holidays. These sessions proved to be very popular, attracting about 100 attendees.

9. The buildings and grounds continued to be maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers, particularly David Dyke, Peter Stokes, Roger Saunders, Chris and Alan Gibbens, Alan Shingleton, David Lewis, Peter Munn and Robert Eaton. Full details of repairs and improvements will be given in the Supervisor's Report but major items completed in 2016 were some important repairs to the roof of the church building; the provision of an upgraded electricity cable to the Scout Hut [thanks here to Richard Haynes for organising a digger]; and alterations to the choir gallery, the latter made possible by a bequest to the church from the late Vi Goodwin. Paul Carrington again contributed a major item to the church, namely a beautiful wooden chest which now houses most of our small electrical equipment and has done much to improve the appearance of a corner of the building.

Following his sabbatical and with the blessing of Bishop David, Paul Hinton and his family moved out of the Vicarage. Although Paul still uses the building as his office, we now have numerous possibilities for the use of the Vicarage which will be explored over the next three years, after which the temporary arrangement agreed by the Bishop will come to an end. Already, the Vicarage has been used for Hot Potato Suppers [where food and fellowship is mixed with some theology, politics and faith-stretching thinking and praying]; monthly Ministry Team meetings; a Morse Bag-making session [bags for life]; plannign meetings involving young people for Sunday School and other activities; Malawi collection point, storage and distribution; and a space in the front garden where a Prayer Labyrinth can be used by parishioners at any time.

10. The Prayer Group continued to meet regularly to pray for the needs of the parish and wider community, the 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 and Carole Southall [together with Fran Ellis, Paul Hinton and Mark Hopkins 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. In February and August, Fran Ellis organised Prayer Walks around the parish boundary, praying for God's blessing on our parish and its people and, in the case of the latter walk, in preparation for our Vision Day, held on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

11. As usual, St. Hilda's Ministry Team and lay people ministered to many families in the parish and beyond in 2016, through baptisms, weddings and funerals. There were 42 baptisms, 34 funerals [19 of which were held in St. Hilda's], plus 15 weddings and 2 renewal of wedding vows. The wedding service of Florence Marshallsay and Bill Griffiths in January was an occasion that was destined to be a world-wide celebration, thanks to Social Media sites; the Vicar had to fend off all manner of television requests in order to maintain a traditional ambience at a service which produced what was said to be the oldest newly-married couple in the world! 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 November was again very well-attended.

#### Partnerships with other churches

During 2016 our links with churches in the Smethwick Church Action Network continued to deepen and widen. For a third year, we joined together with Holy Trinity, Old Church, Bearwood Baptist, Smethwick Baptist, Oldbury Salvation Army and Warley Woods Methodist for the Lent course. Our shared commitment to combat poverty, especially through the work of the Smethwick Food bank, continued to unite us as churches. Members of St. Hilda's were involved in practical work at the Food Bank on Tuesdays as well as offering chaplaincy support to users and staff. As an ecumenical group of churches in the Warley and Bearwood area we continued to organise shared acts of worship on Good Friday, culminating with the Walk of Witness and service at St. Mary's.

However, during 2016, the Abbey Churches Together [ACT] group was wound up. This grouping included Warley Woods Methodist, Warley Baptist, St. Hubert's and St. Gregory's RC churches, Sandon Road Methodist, Bearwood Baptist, St. Mary's and St. Hilda's. In November, an extraordinary general meeting was held at St. Hilda's where it was agreed that the ACT no longer fulfilled a purpose, though friendships, links and opportunities to worship together will continue. The churches concerned have entered into networks of loving service - either covering Smethwick or Oldbury - which were more purposeful and fulfilling. It is never easy to come to a realisation that an organisation has reached its useful end but, in this case, it was with some relief that the churches felt there was more life in new networks. The meeting ended with a service of thanksgiving for all the good that ACT had achieved over the years in our neighbourhood.

#### Social Events

1. The Social Committee, under the principal guidance of Jon Goodwin and David Hickman organised a series of events in 2016. There were the usual two quizzes, one for Christian Aid Week in May [the attendance at which was the largest for many years, possibly because it was experimentally held on a Friday evening] and the other at Christmas, while the Craft Fair, organised by Michaela Hinton and Frederica Brogan took place in November. The Summer Fayre raised just under £1000 in July, while

Jean Downs organised the annual pantomime visit, this year to Aladdin, in January. The Quinborne Choral Society, together with flautist Alex Hughes, gave a concert in church in November; the Model Railway exhibition was again a major attraction in the same month; a Gospel Choir concert organised by Peter Munn and Jean Line was a rousing event in September; and John Barber's choir Enchant gave a concert in church in December.

2. Derek Latham continued to organise the monthly ramble and David Ellis the regular table-tennis club meetings. The monthly Sociable Social Evening continued its round of the local hostelrys and restaurants with an average attendance of around 15 people. The occasional Men's Breakfasts and Working Parties, together with the Ladies Curry Nights also featured last year, while Barbara Fletcher continued her 'Tea, Cakes and a Chat' at her home. Rosemary Akeroyd held a 'Time for a Cuppa' event in March to raise money for Dementia UK; Mandy Saunders organised shared lunches in March and July; while Pamela Whyman and a small team held a Christmas Eve High Tea in the Vicarage for ladies seeking refuge who currently live near St. Hilda's. The Harvest Supper and skittles evening in October was again very well-attended.

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

#### Sunday School

During 2016, Elaine Carrington stood down from the role of Sunday School co-ordinator which she had fulfilled so competently for the last ten years. Her work with the children and young people has a value beyond price and her presence at 'Front of House' on the occasions when the young people led our worship will be much missed. However, we are fortunate in that Jackie Lawrence, who has worked with Elaine for most of the time and who also runs the St. Hilda's Baby Group, has been working with Mandy Saunders to ensure a seamless takeover. However, they are always looking for new helpers!

Many new, younger children were welcomed into the group sessions in 2016. These largely took place in the choir vestry for 20 minutes during Communion services, with one 'full' session taking place monthly in the church hall to allow more practical, physical and louder activities! From September, however, full sessions of Sunday School were held in the Vicarage which proved ideal in facilitating a range of activities and allowed the children to worship and learn in comfort and in age-appropriate groups. Some of our young people have now reached an age where Sunday School no longer meets their faith needs as it once did. However, we have tried to meet these needs by encouraging them to participate fully in worship planning and delivery, organising a pre-Christmas meet-up and, perhaps of greatest importance, by listening to their ideas and valuing their contribution to church life in general. Their involvement during worship throughout the year, including the Patronal Festival and Nativity services, is a testament to this.

#### 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, especially those who covered for Carol at the end of the year, as she had a spell of absence whilst looking after Martin before and after his operation.

Other groups using the Hall included KUMON English and Maths tuition, Brownies, Guides, Rainbows, Action for Children, Mothers and Toddlers, St. Hilda's Baby Group, Happy Days Nursery and the Over-60s Club. The Scouts and Cubs continued to meet regularly in the Scout Hut.

#### Conclusion

St. Hilda's continued to thrive in 2016, thanks to the combined efforts of both the Ministry Team and lay people, many of whom played major roles during the Vicar's 3-month sabbatical from April to July. We once more fulfilled all of our financial obligations, had a memorable year of events for Sandwell Young Carers and, with God's help and guidance, continued to serve and reach out into our parish and local community. Following our Vision Day we approached the current year on a positive note and are looking forward to the beginning of the implementation of our new three-year Vision.

Derek Latham. PCC Secretary. April 2017.