

CLERGY REPORT

The heart of our parish is our Eucharistic worship, the proclamation of the gospel and the welcoming and flourishing of God's people. In 2024 the usual seasonal round of services occurred, including an Epiphany Carol Service, Lent and Easter, Thy Kingdom Come, our annual August Safari round the churches, Harvest, All Souls' and Remembrance, Advent and Christmas. We have visited Purcell House weekly in 2024 for our Monday morning service and have been grateful for the welcome we've received there.

Each of the church congregations and DCCs have worked hard with the clergy and PCC to worship well, do outreach, social and fundraising events, and support one another.

At St Peter's, the 11am Sunday Service alternates the Eucharist with morning prayer, alongside crafts for children. Regular social and community events have occurred through the year, including the weekly breakfast morning, drumming group, choir and sea shanty group, Coppice Community Music nights, and the monthly community market. St Peter's has operated as a warm space throughout the winter months, with food and activities being offered free of charge each Thursday and now hosts a community fridge and foodshare. The building is regularly hired by other groups and hosted a successful 'Whitsun Fayre' in May and a 'Seaside at Home' summer activity day in August. In September, St Peter's launched a monthly Café Church, headed up by Neville Bishop, which has successfully attracted new people, and in December St Peter's church and wider community were featured in a music video 'The Radcliffe Boys', funded by Worcestershire Public Health to celebrate positive community stories.

At St John's, the congregation has continued to make our Asylum Seeker friends welcome and encourage them in getting involved in the life of the church, serving on the coffee rota and reading the gospel in worship in Persian/Farsi. During 2024, the two hotels housing asylum seekers were closed, and the residents rehoused outside of Kidderminster, so the men were unable to continue attending St John's. We have kept in touch with a number of them. In September, a weekly Coffee, Craft and Chat group was launched, which has many talented and regular attenders. The choir have been active, singing regularly in worship, and alongside others in services for joint choirs, and we held a Pet Service in October, supporting local animal charity Greatfield Small Animal Rescue. Efforts to engage with Kidderminster Hospital have progressed slowly with some success and we were invited to mark Armistice Day with the staff and patients there. There are plans to look at creating a Sensory Garden area to encourage community engagement and to offer an area for prayer and meditation as well as seasonal displays and events.

At Holy Innocents, progress has continued with plans for re-ordering the building to make it healthy and sustainable for the future. Due to problems unearthed during

surveys, a new proposal has been created for the erection of a single storey extension to the church, and a consultation evening was held in September. This year's birthday celebrations included a Sea Shanty Concert and a Pimms and Hymns café style service. Fundraising events have included the monthly Saturday coffee mornings, and monthly Wednesday coffee mornings, where funding has enabled us to offer a number of craft activities including pottery painting, watercolours and candle making. A Creative Arts group now runs each month alongside the coffee morning. 'Holy Innocents' was also featured in a mini documentary sponsored by Worcestershire Public Health to showcase the church, its user groups, and the community.

Teaching and preaching have continued, with three Lent groups: Desert Island Lent (with the Deanery), a course on the sacraments, and a study of Paula Gooder's book 'A Way through the Wilderness'. We held a week-long Advent retreat, using the church buildings for silent prayer and sharing in liturgy and reflection on the theme of 'Calm and Bright'. We continue to find opportunities to offer different types of services, and during 2024 have held Celtic evening services, BCP evensong, Messy Church, Café Church, Family Friendly worship, and healing Eucharists.

We continue to work ecumenically with other churches in Kidderminster, notably welcoming Foley Park Methodist Church congregation to 'Holy Innocents' Patronal service and joining them for their Covenant Service, working with Churches Together in Kidderminster on the Easter Trail, and joining the Rifle Range giveaways in Lent and Advent. We work with our friends in other Deanery Churches, joining them for prayer during Thy Kingdom Come and our annual Deanery Service, which was held this year in Hartlebury Castle. Fr Tim and Laura also attended an overnight retreat with deanery clergy.

In terms of Occasional Offices, team clergy took 37 funerals, 4 weddings and 29 baptisms in our churches in 2024, including 5 adult baptisms. The ministry of pastoral care is shared with Carol Watkins and Liz Littler who take communion to a number of parishioners not able to get to church. Liz also ensures a presence in The Gables care home. In April 2024, Neville Bishop was licenced in St John's as a Licensed Lay Minister, and Suzanne Cousins continues her training for Licensed Lay Ministry. We were pleased to welcome two students on placement in 2024, Mark and Tony, who took part in a variety of services and events alongside their training and discernment.

Ministry to and with children, young people and families has developed this year, continuing with our two regular playgroups, Tiny Tots and Little Fishes, the weekly Praise Maze family service, and the youth group run in partnership with the YMCA. Messy Church in 2024 was held on 13 occasions, across St Peter's and St John's, with a regular congregation developing. The Children's Festival in the last week of the summer holidays 'Off On An Adventure' offered a range of community and faith-based events and reached 95 children and 54 adults. We are grateful to all volunteers from the

congregations who assist with this. Team clergy have provided weekly assemblies in St John's School, monthly assemblies in Birchen Coppice Academy and Foley Park School, and welcomed children regularly into church for tours and visits. We continue to work closely with St John's CE Primary, offering support with worship and the RE Curriculum, and regularly welcoming children, teachers and parents to St John's.

Mission and outreach continue to be a priority, both in person and online. Our mailing lists, Facebook followers and YouTube subscribers have grown in 2024. The Kidderminster West Social Club meets monthly at St John's, and social events are held across all three churches. It is always a delight when new people begin attending worship, and we welcome all those who have joined us in 2024. We continue to work on our buildings, finding ways to become more efficient and eco-friendly in line with our eco-church status. We are aware of our commitment to safeguarding and continue to update our policies and provide access to safeguarding training. In June we held 'Safeguarding Sunday' across all three churches, reminding the whole community of how to respond and who to contact if they have any safeguarding concerns.

Throughout 2024 a small group has continued to meet with a Mission Accompanier, Susan Blagden, in order to formulate some priorities for mission and produce a Health and Sustainability plan for the parish. These meetings have been working on a bid to the Healthier Churches Fund for support for projects including better signage, and a possible new sensory garden. They have also led to two successful outreach events run alongside Kidderminster Hospital. Laura also meets with Susan fortnightly for coaching.

From October 2024, under the leadership of Fr Tim as Area Dean, we began working 'as if' we were a new team with St Mary's Kidderminster, St Barnabas Franche and Holy Trinity Trimbley. The Sunday service patterns were adjusted accordingly, with St Peter's gaining an additional monthly morning prayer, and St John's service time moving to 11am. There has been an encouraging amount of support for these changes, and we have invited congregations to meet and begin to get to know one another at events. Fr Tim and Laura have also been involved weekly in St Catherine's CE Primary School. The leadership of the churches and of worship has been strengthened, and we have welcomed Licensed and Authorised lay ministers from the new churches to lead and preach in worship.

In the Diocese and wider church, Team clergy have continued to offer cover where possible at various churches in the Deanery, including Fairfield, Wolverley, Arley Kings and Astley. In addition to their parish roles, Fr Tim has continued as Area Dean of Kidderminster and Stourport Deanery, Chair of Governors at St John's CE Primary, Director of the Spire Academy and Chair of the Finance Committee, interim chair of the Magdeburg Partnership group and Chaplain to the Police. In November 2024 it was announced that Fr Tim would be leaving in 2025, appointed to the role of Rector in the Worcestershire Severn Parishes. Laura serves on the Diocesan Deliverance Ministry

Team and served as Chaplain to the Mayor of Kidderminster until May 2024. Canon Alex has helped to facilitate the setting up of regular Celtic Worship services with the Teme Valley benefice in 2024. As Honorary Canons, Fr Tim and Canon Alex are both involved with various events at the Cathedral. Chris Betson serves particularly in wedding and funeral ministry, but also takes occasional Sunday and Wednesday services, and offers service cover outside the parish. All the Team clergy are committed to attending teaching and ministerial development events provided by the Diocese.

The clergy team would like to thank all those who serve and volunteer at so many roles, committees and jobs within the parish. Our thanks to the church wardens for their work and support, and to the church organists, choir and musicians for their contribution to our worship. Looking to the future we will continue to work on consolidating the new team of churches, getting to know one another better, and building trust. We plan to hold individual church vision days in January 2025, and a team vision day in February 2025 to begin to understand the unique mission of each church and discover some of the ways we can support and encourage one another. As we look ahead to a forthcoming vacancy when Fr Tim leaves us, we will continue to work towards improving the health and sustainability of all our churches and look forward to doing it together.