

**Title:** St. Leonard's Church Hall Report  
**Author:** Vicki Worden, Parish Administrator  
**Date:** April 2024

## **Use of the hall for Church Activities**

### **Regular church groups**

- Little Fishes. This is a baby and toddler group which uses the hall on Thursday mornings during term time (except for the second Thursday of the month). The group had two additional get-togethers during the summer holidays.
- The Coffee Mornings which are held monthly on the second Thursday of the month.
- Guitar Group practice.
- The Holiday Club held five sessions in the hall including two Easter Egg Hunts.

### **Seasonal Lunches**

Four seasonal lunches ran throughout 2023-2024. An average of 50 people have attended the lunches with people coming from Heath and Reach, Leighton Buzzard and some of the surrounding villages. The lunches are provided free but most people make donations towards their cost as well as bringing prizes for the free raffles.

Entertainment has been provided by:

- Richard Page and Trevor Hooper who ran a sing-along of popular songs at the lunches in April and October 2023.
- Alan Gomersall, Jenny Mellodey and Anne Smart who played piano pieces for six hands at the lunch in July 2023.
- Melanie Chennells who ran an Armchair Zumba session at the lunch in January 2024.

These lunches would not run without the support of the 15 extremely hard working volunteers who set up, serve and clear away the lunches. Several of them also provide lifts to people who wouldn't otherwise be able to attend. Special thanks must also go to the staff at the Axe and Compass pub in Heath and Reach who provide and transport the meals to the hall.

### **Other church events**

- APCM in April 2023
- May Fayre in May 2023
- SLAP Evening of Music and Laughter in February 2024
- Men's Breakfast in July 2023, October 2023 and February 2024
- Jumble Sale in September 2023
- Christmas Bazaar in November 2023
- Winter Cream Tea in January 2024

## **Hiring the hall**

### **Enquiries about hiring the hall**

In the last year there have been 146 enquiries about hiring the hall. These have predominantly been from individual hirers but several have been from regular hirers.

### **Individual hirers**

The hall was hired out to about 120 individual hirers in 2023-2024 which is 50 more than last year. It has been used for: birthday parties; christening parties; anniversary parties; meetings

race nights, first aid courses, wrestling shows, polling station, cookery workshops, drawing and photography sessions, ballroom dancing practice; band practice and Christmas parties.

### Regular Hirers

During term-time the hall is booked out on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays to regular hirers and on some days it is booked out in the morning, afternoon and evening. The number of regular hirers reduces during the holidays as some of them are term-time only.

During 2023-2024, the following regular groups have continued to hire the hall:

- Isla Mandirigma Kali Exercise Class
- Art Class
- Perform Children's Drama Group
- Jazzercise Exercise Class
- Zest Pilates
- Leighton Buzzard Drama Society
- Leighton Buzzard Art Society
- Carers in Bedfordshire
- Key Creatives Music Classes

There is a new fortnightly booking for a local band practice.

Two groups stopped hiring the hall during this period. They were Ragdolly Annas who were not getting enough customers and Little Luvvies Ballet who now have their own venue.

### Heating

- The heating of the hall is an ongoing issue as the costs are spiralling but the hall must be at a temperature that is warm enough for the hirers.
- The heaters' temperatures are set weekly using the App. on the Office Smartphone and these settings depend on the hall's bookings that week.
- In early 2024 a letter was sent out to all regular hirers from David Duckworth. The letter stated that the church had received an electricity bill of £800.00 for January and that the Church Hall now had an accumulated deficient of over £2,500. All hirers were asked to minimise their energy usage.
- Other funding approaches to cover the heating are being investigated such as: grants to improve insulation and heating controls; charging a surcharge during the winter months; or closing the hall and not heating it during the winter months.

### Maintenance

- Richard Page continues to deal with many of the caretaking issues in the hall.
- The Payback Team comes fortnightly and clears the church hall grounds.
- The SLOBS have also cleared the hedges at the back of the hall.
- A new cleaner was appointed at the end of 2023.
- A SMART meter was installed although Ecotricity still require meter readings.
- The Fire alarms and extinguishers are checked regularly by Chubb.
- The windows are cleaned (inside and out) every six months by Wayne Norris.
- The kitchen equipment was given a deep clean in August 2023.
- PAT testing and electrical works were carried out during August 2023.

### Pricing and Marketing

At the beginning of 2024 the hourly rate was increased to £18.00 with regular hirers receiving a 10% discount. The hire charge for one-off hirers will increase again to £20.00 an hour from May 2024. This would also make the hire charges comparable with those charged by other local church halls.

The majority of people find out about the hall either through word of mouth or via the various websites. People enquiring about the hall have been using the booking form on the St. Leonard's Hall website and the HallsHire.com website or they have emailed or called the Parish Office directly.