

Title: St. Leonard's Church Committee Report for 2023

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Membership of the Committee: Revd. Noel McGeeney, Chair; Nicole Waldock, Lay Chair/meeting chair; Richard Page, Church Warden; David Duckworth, Church Warden; Jill Thomas, Treasurer; Linda Page; Tricia Humber (until August 2023); Ann Gomersall, Secretary; Steve Owen (from February 2024)

The Committee met 8 times during 2023 and the Standing Committee 7 times. There were also three meetings of the PCC of the joint parishes of St. Leonard's and St. Michael's. The first three months of 2023 we were without Noel who was on sabbatical, and we enjoyed hearing about his exploits in Malawi when he returned. We were well served with visiting clergy to whom we express our thanks.

The following are issues that have been prominent on the agenda of the Committee.

Finances: as will be explained in the Treasurer's report we have been challenged by our diminishing financial resources.

Health and Safety: David Duckworth will report. He carried out a review and there are clearly areas of the church which are hazardous, e.g. the stairs to the upper vestry; there being no proper fire door in the kitchen. Some things are difficult to rectify in such a building. We need to ensure sufficient people are first-aid trained and fire-trained. We also need to ensure we have taken these issues into account when planning events and special services.

Safeguarding: Esther has resigned from the position of Safeguarding Officer as the job has become too onerous, expanded as it has been by the Diocese. We have not been able to recruit a volunteer to replace her and solutions are being sought within the Ouzel Valley Team. Appropriate volunteers have been checked and some have undertaken on-line training.

Church: The Quinquennial report was at last received and Richard has been working his way through the list of things which need attention. There is always something which needs attention.

Church Hall: Vicki has continued in her vital role. We have a new cleaner. We have now received the new chairs, thanks to SLAP and their donation also ran to new curtains. At last the wall has been repaired. Heating the Hall is proving a challenge and charges have been increased to £18 per hour and further increases to one-off hirers may be needed. The state of the drive does not improve. For the first time, income from the hall has not been sufficient to top up the church account.

Church Events in the hall continue to be a success. Four Seasonal Lunches, monthly Coffee Mornings, termly Men's Breakfasts are all popular and well attended although we need to find additional funding for the Seasonal Lunches. Little Fishes continues.

The Social Committee held a very successful May Fayre, Christmas Bazaar, 50/50 Auction and a Jumble Sale. Fund-raising by them is vital. The Evening of Music and Laughter was very popular as was the Summer Concert in church. It has been decided not to hold the 50/50 auction in 2024. The innovation of the Wine Tasting organised by David Duckworth was another successful sell-out occasion.

Holiday Club continues to thrive, masterminded by Vera Paul and Rosemary Young and has celebrated its 10th birthday.

Neil Forsyth resigned as magazine editor and Steve Waldock took over. Neil continues Rosemary's task of organising the distribution.

We have lost some faithful members during the year but none more missed than Rosemary Forsyth, a leading figure in the life of the church.

A review of Christmas services led us to question how we can improve the Christingle Service, but other special services were deemed to have been successful. We decided to enhance our profile locally by distributing a Christmas Services card within the parish. A general Welcome card has been delivered by the Scouts to the nearest new housing estate. It is difficult to gauge how successful these are in recruiting new members. Jill Thomas again masterminded our contribution to the Christmas Tree Festival.

Many people give their time as volunteers in many capacities, and we are very grateful to them. We are always looking for additional volunteers (currently we need someone to take over the Freewill Offering scheme to assist our very busy treasurer and a Safeguarding Officer). Service and chalice assistants, wardens and vergers, sides-people, readers, sacristans, flower arrangers, choir, musicians and church cleaners all contribute to our worship. Many others are active as PCC and Social committee members, with our finances, in SLOBS, Holiday Club, as helpers at all the fund-raising events, seasonal lunches, men's breakfasts, coffee mornings, in magazine production and delivery. Thank you all for your dedication, hard work, friendliness and faith which ensures St. Leonard's remains a lively, welcoming place. I apologise if I have forgotten some vital volunteers but please be assured the Church Committee are most grateful for all you do. Lastly, gratitude and thanks to Noel who leads us with such devotion and dedication.