

Church Groups report 2022

Bellringing – Mark Pugh, Tower Captain

July month end was holiday time and August saw the retention of high temperature with a note in our book “Thursday 11th August, 34° at 8PM” and I know we abandoned the previous Thursday due to predicted high temperatures for an evening event were hydration and topical discussion was key.

In September our ringing took a turn to an unexpected need for fully muffled bells, when ringing for our Queen. It was a difficult moment given nobody had experienced such ringing before, but we all took the challenge well and I wish to express thanks to all for allowing us to ring 10 bells on each occasion through this period of mourning.

We have managed to ring 16 out of 18 Sundays and 11 of the 17 Thursdays, up to the end of October. 4 of these Sundays have been 10 bell and 8 of the Thursday nights too.

It is a fantastic position to be in with such support, so much so we are moving through a program of Surprise Major and back up of Surprise Minor when number drop.

There is still focus on the early learning stage though much of this is picked up at the Tuesday, Eye practice with further concentration on Thursdays at Leominster.

Through 2022 we have been 25 successful quarter peals, 19 of which have been on Sunday's. First Quarters for some and whilst most are Doubles plus a couple of minor, we have attempted several Triples quarters without success, but this is something we are still working on. Again many thanks to those who have given up time and costs for travel to support such events.

We have been well supported throughout the year with a good turnout over Christmas 2022.

Church Cleaning – Sheila Field

Keeping the church clean is always a challenge! Many thanks to the team who do a wonderful job, but more volunteers are always welcomed.

Church Flowers – Sheila Hodson

The Flower Ladies have had a busy year: our numbers are down to just 12, from about 16 just a few years ago. Apart from special displays for Easter, Harvest, Remembrance, and Christmas, there were three weddings and a blessing. Whilst the flower ladies regularly supply their own flowers, we rely on continued financial support from the Friends, who also provided an excellent metal replacement for our crumbling Advent Candle stand. We are most grateful to them, and to private donations received from members of the congregation.

Our finances, which used to be held independently at a local Building Society, are now held by the PCC on our behalf. At the end of the year we were close to solving the problem of our reliance on oasis (the foam used to support and hydrate arrangements) as it is poor environmentally. But as the cost of fresh flowers rose considerably during '22, we have (somewhat reluctantly) invested in some artificial blooms to supplement fresh ones.

New members to our team are, of course, most welcome.

Church linens group – Ceri Hibbert

Last year a small group have met to plan the repair and renewal of various vestments and linens. A new Leominster Knot frontal was made for the main altar, and repairs to pulpit falls made. A purple cope was also made, ready (just in time!) for Christmas. A black chasuble was made for the remembrance service for Queen Elizabeth II. We are committed to repairing where possible, honouring and preserving the work done by many fine sewers. Many thanks to the Friends for their financial support. If you would like to get involved – sewing, designing or conserving – please contact Ceri.

Deanery Library – Diana and Stan May

We renew the books on the last Friday of the month. We hope people find the titles we choose suitable and interesting as some do seem more interesting than others, a few months ago we put out an Arabic or Jewish title which as yet has not been returned so as it was all in the foreign language we assume there are some clever people out there HA HA. We would appreciate having a note on the weekly pew sheet saying about the books in church as these books do refer and apply to the church time period that we are in.

Dementia Friendly Church – Coral Lemm

Information advice and guidance has been provided to members of the congregation, in support of any concerns members of the congregation have raised.

Eucharist Assistants – Jean R Dickson

How good it is to have our Priory Church fully functioning again after the Covid shut down. Normal service has been resumed!

For many years, members of the Priory Church congregation have been chosen to act as Chalice Assistants at the main Communion Services and this year we have also been entrusted to administer the Communion Bread. We are all very aware of the responsibility we have been given and the privilege of serving at the heart of the Eucharist. Not all who are asked to serve feel able to accept.

Because of our additional duties we have a change of name and are now Eucharist Assistants. We will continue to serve the Priory congregation to the best of our abilities. Thanks be to God.

Friends of the Priory – Shelagh Packwood

Membership of The Friends, currently totals 91, which is open not only to the church congregation but to anyone in Leominster and beyond who have an interest in, and love of our wonderful Church.

Founded in 1945, The Friends assist financially in the adornment, beautification, restoration and repair of The Priory, many projects being progressed in conjunction with the PCC. In recent years the original remit has been slightly modified, where we do contribute to the general life of the Church. Over the last year we have supported items such as Christmas tree, Materials for new Cope (Ceri Hibbert), Shoe Box Appeal, Votive Candles, Flag Stand for Lady Chapel (Alf Jenkins) and the Advent Candle Ring.

Priory Friends' income is derived primarily from subscriptions (see Priory web site link and Friends' screen inside church entrance for application forms), donations, Gift Aid claims and fund raising events. We are already planning further fund raising events in 2023/2024.

My thanks to those of you who are Friends, your on-going support is much appreciated. To those of you who are not yet Friends please do join so that we have the funds to continue supporting future projects in The Priory.

My thanks to Friends' Secretary & Vice-Chairman Bill Quelch, Treasurer Jimmy Lindsay and all other members of The Friends' Council. We are fortunate to have such a committed and supportive Council (New volunteers for Council are always needed).

Fundraising/Social Committee report – Geoff Bricknell

An enthusiastic group met a number of times during 2022 to organise events, not just to raise money, but to encourage social interaction and help develop friendships. It was a quieter year from a fundraising point of view, with the total of £6,955 being below the exceptional levels of the previous 2 years.

As usual the main fundraisers were the summer fete and the Christmas Bazaar, with the Jubilee supper also contributing significantly. We were very lucky with the timing of this, as it took place only 5 days before the Queen's death!

Social events included the Easter Monday walk and a Rogation Sunday BBQ, together with the annual Harvest lunch in October.

We are indebted to Hilary and Ken Roberts who continue to allow us to use their home and barn for social events, and to Bill Quelch for organising the 100 club draw year after year.

Not forgetting of course, all those who help to organise events and those who supported them.

GOATS – Revd Jonathan Roberts

GOATS has continued to meet this year, with the Curate taking over its running. GOATS provides a space for 14-18 year olds in the Priory community to meet in an informal, lightly structured group, starting and finishing with an opportunity to share any joys and apprehensions in the past and coming week. We have discussed issues of faith and philosophy, put on mock parliamentary debates, played word games, taken part in quizzes, baked a range of delicious cakes for each other, planned a family service, reflected through drawing, and started a time capsule for future members of the group. We are grateful for the ongoing support of the members of the Priory community who assist with the running and supervision of the group.

Holiday Club Report – Anna Quelch

After an enforced break of 2 years, due to COVID, Holiday Club returned in July with 95 children attending. The theme this year was Incredible Colours and the daily Bible stories were about The Burning Bush, Plagues, the Lost Sheep and the Wedding at Cana.

During the afternoons the children enjoyed visits from Worcester based Animal Mania who brought various animals for the children to handle ranging from a snake and a tortoise, to giant rabbits and frogs; a visit to the Leominster Museum; den building and bug hotel building in the churchyard, and a magic show as a finale to the week. As ever, the sports afternoon in the churchyard was enjoyed by all the children, especially as most games involved getting wet! Once again we are indebted to the Town Council for a grant to cover the cost of providing Portaloo's and security fencing so that we can provide safe outside play areas for the children. This grant enabled us to keep our prices to a minimum, although for the first time in 8 years we increased the cost per child by £5 to cover increases we have encountered ourselves, and were able to offer 9 free places to children referred to us by local primary schools, and also subsidised 21 places for families who were in receipt of benefits. We also offered an additional 5 free places to Ukrainian children, thanks donations received from members of the Priory congregation.

It was a super week but none of this could happen without all the wonderful volunteers – 39 adults working with children, 20 teenagers who help those adults, 5 wonderful volunteers who worked tirelessly in the kitchen keeping everyone refreshed with drinks and fruit, 11 additional people helping during the sports afternoon, and 12 people acting as door stewards during the week plus Bill and I on admin. We are lucky to have such fantastic support from so many people.

Holiday Club is an amazing week where everyone involved is blessed – the church is filled with music and laughter.

House group reports:

Phillippa and Greg Wright:

Monday night house group continues to be a warm and welcoming place for exploring our Christian faith and prayer. We have looked at how we demonstrate our faith in daily life with the "Life on the Front Line" course and are currently exploring the Lord's Prayer using a group study from the 24/7 prayer movement. The prayer course explains that we can view the answer to prayer like a traffic light; God says yes straight away- green, sometimes we have wait for the answer-yellow, and sometimes the answer isn't what we were expecting-red. We have definitely had a few green lights, thank you Lord.

Helen and Geoff Bricknell:

The house group meeting held at the home of Geoff and Helen Bricknell, is on the 1st Thursday of the month at 7.30pm. At present we have ten members; over the years, we have studied a wide and varied range of topics. Some of these are as follows: ethical issues, Bible study of Old and New Testament books, learning how to pray and Inclusive Church. In fact anything which people feel would enliven and deepen our faith!

Most recently we have been following the Bible Society Small Group Course 'Lyfe Stream'. It is based on 6 themes: Scripture, Prayer, Compassion, Holy Spirit, Authenticity and Everyday Life. The online downloadable studies are varied, easy to follow and allow for plenty of discussion within the group.

We are a friendly group and enjoy the evenings of fellowship and discussion.... people can contribute as much or as little as they want to. We share the reading of material, prayers and decision making as to what we study. Our evenings always conclude with coffee and cake and time to chat together about life in general!

It would be good to see more House Groups being formed; if you would like to be part of a group please get in touch with Fr. Guy or Helen B.

Intergenerational Pioneers – Kathy and David Bland

Kathy & David are each employed to work for the Priory PCC for 5 hours per week, however their ministry in Leominster is much wider and more time consuming than what is contracted. It can be a challenge to notice where the paid for ministry stops and the voluntary starts. Some of that voluntary ministry is owned by the Priory whilst some, particularly that with the marginalised and those living in poverty in our town, is not.

Our approach to this Pioneer ministry is rooted in the theology of Missio Dei; noticing where God is already at work and then seeing how we might join in. Pioneer ministry is naturally reactive and changeable responding to the context, giving things a go and holding things lightly, ready to modify what we are doing if called to do so. Central to what we do is building community, centred around Christ's love for all.

Core areas of work are:

- Messy Church Congregation

- Ministry with Schools
- Presence on Barons Cross
- Priory Family Service
- Serving our community
- Exploring Fresh Expressions of Church in our context

The communities emerging around each of these ministries are interconnected and their members recognise our Christian ministry as a defining feature.

- Messy Church

Messy Church is nearly back to its former self after the pandemic, the team is beginning to grow again having shrunk over lockdown. Families who attend also engage with other aspects of our work. We've enjoyed exploring Messy Church Goes Wild in the early summer and welcoming back families who haven't attended for a while.

Kathy, David & Jonathan are part of the central Messy Church team providing training, advice and support to Messy Churches across the globe.

- Schools

Easter was an opportunity to offer Experience Easter to our local schools – enhanced by opportunities to offer visits to schools to see the Last Supper Sculpture. We offered Experience Easter Outdoors in both Ivington Churchyard and Leominster Priory Churchyard and were visited by Luston, Shobdon and Ivington School. At Christmas we offered a version of Experience Christmas to Leominster Primary School and were part of many school Carol Services.

We've led services in church for EMC and Bargates Nursery and Pre School and facilitated school visits by Ivington, Leominster Primary and EMC. We are members of the Ivington Open the Book Team and regularly take the "Vicar's Assembly" at Ivington School. It was great to once again organise and lead the Town Lights service with a church full of children from local schools and folk from the town.

- Barons Cross

Despite being in the Parish of Ivington, the Barons Cross estate is part of Leominster and the Priory's ministry there is decades old.

We work closely with the Town Council in developing connection and presence at Barons Cross. Summer holidays saw us offering family activity sessions on Barons Cross as part of a Team Leominster summer holiday programme. It has been very positive to be building relationships with children and families in the way again after a covid break (during which we supported people via food deliveries and food shares at Barons Cross) and we look forward to further developing this work.

- Priory Family Service

We continue to lead the team that leads the Priory Family Service – The word Family refers as much to the fact the service is led by the wider Priory Family as the intended congregation.

We continue to encourage and nurture our young service leaders to take more responsibility and find their voices. This was particularly evident at the Christingle Service which was planned and led by them.

We were able to offer reflection time and prayers every day during the holiday club to all volunteers. We hope that by beginning the day with the Bible story being used at Holiday Club, volunteers would be better equipped to share it with children during the day as well as being immersed in it themselves.

- Serving our community

In addition to Kathy's work and connections with our community through the food bank and money advice service we spend time out and about in our community. We continue to be part of a small group of volunteers who deliver food to people in a different part of Leominster every evening and this work particularly enables us to offer a pastoral support to people in difficulty including people who are recovering from addiction, homeless or sofa surfing. David is part of the annual count of rough sleepers that happens every autumn.

The number of people who recognise us as some sort of Christian Minister as we walk around town is significant as a result of our connections at school, food bank, food share etc. It would be good if the Priory could be part of this ministry.

- Fresh Expressions

The new post COVID Church Around the Fire services are beginning to develop a regular congregation. One family who attends Messy Church and took part in online Family Services really appreciates this new service. We are exploring starting a new gathering or service at Barons Cross in 2023.

Little Lambs – Phillipa Wright

Little Lambs started in September 2022 in the Lady Chapel. By Christmas it became apparent that the lack of heating and poor lighting meant this was no longer a suitable venue and so we moved to the Methodist Hall on Green Lane. We have three families who attend regularly and others who drop by now and again. Having to contend with

the weather, illness and nap time makes things very variable. Generally the children play with toys, we always have an activity table. When the children who come are old enough to understand we have a bible story and song time. One of the highlights was a mum asking to take the toddler bible home for a week. The group would benefit from more publicity and help from people with experience of nursery education.

Mothers' Union – Philippa Wright

Initially the MU planned for quarterly meetings in 2022 with monthly coffee after Holy Communion on a Wednesday. The isolation which was necessary during the COVID pandemic had left many people weary about socialising with others, yet at the same time we recognised the real human need to be in companionship with others. Clearly quarterly was not good enough. So the programme grew. We had nine gatherings between March and December, varying from the usual meeting format to hosting lunches and our annual outing. This year promises to be just as interesting. We have welcomed three new members and enjoyed the company of guests at many of our activities.

We have had two successful fund-raising events for the Priory with our preserves and pickles stall. We have also made a small return which has been donated to the Crisis Intervention Fund, distributing appropriate items for those in need.

Music – Hilary Norris

Choir

The choir has continued to grow. We now have 22 children and 20-25 adults (a few only able to take part in evening services because they support their local village churches in the morning). A number of choir chaperones assist in the training and managing of the children, adjusting of robes etc and I would like to thank them here for their time and invaluable help. Tim Hackett has also been a great help in assisting with conducting and rehearsing.

The choir is very pleased that support for Choral Evensong and other special evening services has been so strong throughout the year. Thanks to the refreshments team for all they do to support them. One of our missions is to help to encourage small choirs in village churches, partly by giving them opportunities to sing in the Priory, and sometimes by helping out for special events in their churches. The Priory has hosted a variety of massed choir events. The first was in June, the Deanary Corpus Christi Service, when choirs from Dilwyn, Bodenham, Brimfield and Canon Pyon joined us. For the Celebration of the Queen's Jubilee and the Service of Remembrance for the Queen we were joined by local village choirs, local community choirs (including school children). For our Advent Service we were joined by choirs from across Herefordshire Diocese.

Community/ Mission

Members of the choir have sung at a number of funerals and weddings (at the Priory and elsewhere), and also at other community events, for example for Monkland's 'Ancient and Modern' festival in July, and for Christmas celebrations at Eaton Barn (ECHO) and at West Eaton. One of the highlights of 2022 was the orchestral concert with pupils from the Primary School, supported by the Priory Choir. Preparation for the concert included teaching the children of Yr 5/6 the Edfrith story, and about the meaning of 'For the beauty of the earth'.

Most of the children in the choir come with little experience of music or of the church. As well as teaching the children musical skills to enable them to contribute to services through music, we also teach them about Christianity through discussion of readings, psalms, anthem texts, the church year etc at every rehearsal. It is crucial that the children have an understanding of what they are singing about, so the meaning and context of every piece we sing is explored with them. This includes learning about the meaning of latin words, texts in old English and the interpretation of ancient mystical poems (eg Hildegard von Bingen). A lengthy discussion of Purcell's 'Rejoice in the Lord always' was a memorable example of this. Clergy and others sometimes help with this teaching, so for example for Candlemas the children learnt about the main themes through the introit and anthem, and also had a session with Father Guy discussing our Candlemas window. The children's learning is also supported by links with the youth group, and by other adults in the Priory community in the preparation of special services eg The Nativity.

Organs

For the last two years I have reported that the organ console may need attention soon (the restoration by Nicholson's (2015-2016) did not include work on the console). A quote from Nicholson's to complete this work is under discussion. The organ continues to be used by many people for practice and lessons, and for group

workshops/events, particularly supporting the work of DHOTS (Diocese of Herefordshire Organist Training Scheme) and HOS (Herefordshire Organist Society). The Bevington chamber organ has now been used for several services, talks and concerts. Fundraising for its renovation needs to begin soon.

Concerts

Many concerts have taken place in the Priory. *Presteigne Festival* used the Priory as a venue for the first time in August and *Three Choirs Festival* used it for a viol consort concert and an organ recital.

Open the Book, Ivington School – Christine Hurdidge

Over the Spring and Summer of 2022 Open the Book as a weekly whole School Collective Worship did not happen. This was due to the 'Pandemic' and we were restricted to doing all our activities including Worship in our Class Bubbles.

I was disappointed that Open the Book looked like it was being cancelled. I felt determined to continue delivering Open the Book, despite the pandemic, to the children in my Class, which I did following the Year 1 stories. The children continued to join in as enthusiastically as always.

Restrictions finally were lifted and in the Autumn Term I was asked if we could run Open the Book Collective Worship once again on a Thursday at 1pm with just for KS2 this time. We returned with new volunteers from the Priory and began working our way through the Year 2 Handbook.

In addition to our Open the Book with KS2, I now also share a Bible story with our Reception KS1 Class following the Year 1 Handbook.

Shoebbox report – Anna Quelch

Once again the annual shoebbox appeal in November exceeded all previous years records with an amazing 132 boxes filled with stationery, hygiene items, hats, gloves and scarves as well as toys and sweets which were handed over to the Teams4U charity to start their journey to vulnerable children in Romania, and the Ukraine.

During the year empty shoeboxes are collected and lovingly covered in colourful wrapping paper by a team of volunteers, mostly from the Priory but this year I roped in Leominster Lasses W.I. and Leominster Tangent ladies too. From September onwards donations of items and money are received to allow me to go on a shopping spree and buy all that is needed.

For three months my house is overrun with empty shoeboxes, wrapping paper and sellotape, and bags and bags of shopping, sorted into categories - enough to fill 14 trestle tables! With the help of 20 volunteers the boxes were effortlessly filled within a couple of hours on 19th November, ready to be blessed the next day during the Sunday service, and then start their journey to Eastern Europe.

What a joy it was to see these boxes packed full of goodies, knowing that 132 children living in poverty would be so excited to have a gift sent with so much love.

But this act of love is only possible thanks to the generosity of the Priory family - so I thank you for enabling me to do this each year.

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