

**Ludlow St Laurence Annual Report  
for Annual Parochial Church Meeting  
11.30am Saturday 11 May 2025  
St Laurence's Church**

	<i>Page No</i>
<b>Clergy Report</b>	
Rector's Report	2
<b>Lay Pastoral Worker's Report</b>	3
<b>Church Officers' Reports</b>	
Churchwardens' Report	4
Electoral Roll Officer's Report	5
PCC Secretary's Report	6
Safeguarding Officer's Report	7
<b>Mission</b>	
Anna Chaplaincy	9
Arts@StLaurence's	9
Bell ringing	10
Celtic Prayer	11
Children and Young People	11
Church tours	11
Christian Aid	12
Conservation Trust for St Laurence Ludlow	13
Contemplation	13
Fairtrade	13
Handbells	14
Langwasser Link	15
Liturgy	15
Music	16
Outward Concern	17
Pastoral Care	18
Volunteers	18
Broadmill - Shop at St Laurence & Icon Coffee	19
<b>Fabric</b>	
Fabric Committee	20
Friends of St Leonard's Churchyard	20
<b>Finance</b>	
Finance Summary	22

## CLERGY REPORT FOR 2024

### Rector's report

To all at St Laurence's, St John's and everyone within and around Ludlow:

2024 was a very busy year. I would like to start by taking this opportunity to thank everybody on our PCCs. We are blessed to have such hard-working teams. Huge thanks must be given to our church wardens for the many areas they cover within their role. Much of the work we have completed would not have been possible if Lesley, Liz, Dick and Mike had not been so dedicated. Sincere gratitude also goes to our retired clergy and leading laity who assist us with our services and pastoral care for those within our community. The pastoral care we provide has grown tremendously during this last year. None of this important work would have been possible without their ongoing support, especially as we have reduced our stipendiary staff again with Wayne having complete his curacy. Our office staff have also been a great support throughout the year. We are truly grateful for their work and dedication to our mission.

I would also like to thank those who sit on our PCC subcommittees. They all do very important work for our churches and benefice, which would not have such a visible footprint if we didn't have such commitment from people involved in a wide range of activities such as our bell ringers, our events sub-committee and the Conservation Trust. Included in this we must remember that much of the work that goes on is completed by a vast array of volunteers who do lots of physical work. There are too many to mention by name, but we surely must agree that our churches would not be as clean, welcoming and safe without their efforts. It's also worth mentioning that more often than not the stewards are the first people visitors encounter when visiting, so the impression the welcome gives is extremely important.

Sincere thanks are always due to Director of Music, Michael Oakley, the St Laurence's choir and our organists. They provide outstanding worship services not only on Sunday mornings, but also for the special seasonal periods throughout the church year, which undoubtedly deepen our spiritual experience within the liturgy.

This year we have achieved much for the mission of the church. During June Wayne left us for his new role as Rector of Homer Benefice. However, the welcome arrival of new team members in the form of a Reader, Caroline Culley, and Pastoral Lay Worker, Paul Kemp, has enabled the growth of work in which we were involved as well as the development of new areas of work. The Broadmill team in the Shop and Icon Coffee also deserve sincere thanks. They have helped make St Laurence's feel truly alive through the week, Monday to Saturday. Many people visit for gifts and coffee, but they also take time to pray, light a candle and reflect on their life with God while visiting. This is a fantastic way that we provide space for the Spirit to work in people's lives. We have to be thankful for the amazing effort of the team, helping us meet the ongoing financial demands we face having such a large church.

Through the work which we do in schools, the hardship fund, day-to-day pastoral care and religious services we encounter many wonderful people in the benefice to whom we make known God's love and care

Our Wednesday morning Holy Communion services at St John's are well attended, as are the tea and toast sessions. Stephen House has been in full operation since July, achieving all we wanted in the way it is used by the church and community. I know that the Treasure family, donors to the project and people of the town are very pleased with the progress that has been made so quickly.

It goes without saying that the next 12 months, and beyond, are likely to bring still more opportunities for proclaiming the Gospel and promoting God's Kingdom, especially as I leave your benefice in April and you welcome new clergy with new energy and vision.

I have had an amazing time while serving our churches and community. We have had huge success for mission, finance and fabric during our time together. Please accept my heartfelt thanks for all your support, prayers and friendship throughout the past 8+ years.

Please continue to pray for each other, your clergy, our missional projects, our diocese and me, as I will surely keep you in my prayers. Together you all make a truly visible and active body of Christ noticeable for all to see within Ludlow. Thanks be to God!

With love and blessings in Christ,

**Kelvin**

### **Lay Pastoral Worker's report**

A fairly short report, as my start date was 11 November 2024.

My very first task was to sound the Last Post for Armistice Day. In the weeks following, I focussed on establishing contacts with support agencies locally, such as the Foyer, Hands Together, Ludlow Foodbank, and Shropshire Council's Rough Sleeper and Housing Support Teams. I also connected with local councillors and the Shropshire Homelessness Advice Forum, spending time explaining the vision for Stephen House and the support that can be offered from there via my role.

I also met with the welcome stewards' team at two meetings, to answer any questions over the new role and to explain the support processes available for vulnerable visitors to the church, and to hear about their experiences of visitors who are in need. I also connected with schools and charity shops in the area.

I spent regular time in our community, attending drop ins and the Rockspring Community Lunch, as well as Tea and Toast at St Johns.

Direct support has been given to several people with housing and benefit issues, as well as some referrals to the foodbank. I also played Father Christmas!

Both Stephen House and I have had tremendous support from St Laurence's and the wider community, and with God's good grace I'm looking forward to developing further the mission and ethos of Stephen House in 2025. Plans include a new Living Room service, as well as a regular lunch club, house groups, and strengthening our links with the local schools.

**Paul Kemp**

## **CHURCH OFFICERS' REPORTS**

### **a. Churchwardens**

Your Churchwardens, Lesley Harling and Elizabeth Gardner and Assistant Churchwardens Dick Franks and Michael Davies have had a presence at every PCC meeting and any other meetings which have occurred where they are either the chair or representing the PCC. The Churchwardens have also met with Clergy, Finance Director, Social Media Coordinator, Custodian and the Parish Administrator on a weekly basis to discuss day to day matters. There has been a Churchwarden present at most services including Evensong and funerals.

Your Churchwardens were admitted to the office by the Archdeacon at a Visitation service held in Cleobury Mortimer. They also attended a lunch given by the Bishop and his wife Deborah for wardens in the Diocese at the Palace in Hereford.

### **Fabric**

Also see the Fabric Report. Work continues with the supervision of the Church building both interior and exterior, the artefacts and furniture. Some damp has been discovered in the sacristy in the east wall.

A redundant altar rail has been repurposed to form a handrail into the Lady Chapel.

A sculpture of Christ proffering the Cross has been donated to the Church by the sculptor and now stands in the Lady Chapel. It was blessed by the Bishop in November.

### **Clergy**

We said goodbye to our Curate Wayne Davies in July when he took up his new post as Vicar of the Holmer benefice. In November our Rector announced his departure to become Rector of the Ross parishes at St Mary the Virgin, Ross on Wye. His last service would be on Easter Day 2025.

We are deeply grateful to all the retired clergy who help us with our services and especially, to Revd Andrew Body for his invaluable contribution to the services and for his weekly sermons posted on our website.

### **Staff**

Churchwardens were involved in interviewing for the post of Lay Pastoral Worker at the end of July and in the appointment of Paul Kemp. His work in Stephen House is growing steadily with the nurturing of new Christians, care of the vulnerable and connections with similar local outreach organisations. Churchwardens contributed to the process of appraisal of our staff members

### **Volunteers**

See the Volunteers' Report. Thanks are due to Lesley for organising the Stewards Rota to ensure visitors receive a warm and knowledgeable welcome.

### **Mission Statistics**

We completed the Mission Statistics return to Parish Records.

### **Services**

In 2024 we held our usual Civic Services including the Mayor's Service on 7 July when town and country councillors were sworn in and the churchwardens were presented and admitted. The Remembrance Sunday Service took place on 10 November with a wreath-laying service at the Peace Memorial followed by the Civic Service of Remembrance in the Church.

## Events

We have had a full programme of arts events this year (see Arts@StLaurence report). There have been two exhibitions of artwork from Ludlow Art Society and the Lady Chapel hosted displays by Poyners Events (christening gowns, Beatrix Potter and friends, 100 Years of Disney, Paddington Bear and Remembrance), Ludlow Photographic Club, Marches Scribes and Ludlow Quilters and Stitchers).

We held a hog roast on 28 July to celebrate the opening of Stephen House and to thank volunteers, fund raisers and donors for their hard work and generosity.

For the Winter Festival weekend the Church ran its traditional, beer and pizza evening with open mic poetry and music on Friday and our main fundraiser, the Winter Fair on the Saturday with a plethora of stalls and activities. Sadly the very popular Mistletoe Magic charity concert had to be cancelled due to flooding but the weekend was a success despite the dismal weather.

## Inventory

### Items added to the inventory since the last APCM

Christ proffering the Cross – sculpture by Alan Jones  
Portable handrail for access from south aisle into Lady Chapel

### Items removed from the inventory since the last ACPM

Redundant altar rail

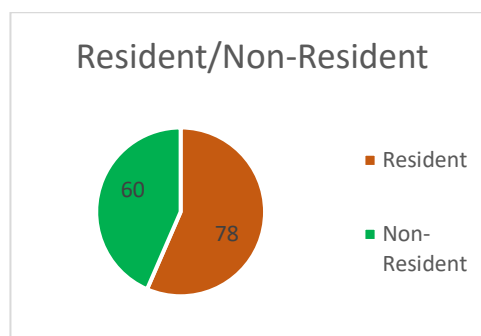
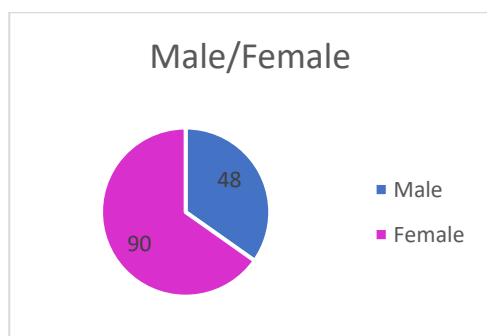
**Elizabeth Gardner and Lesley Harling, Churchwardens April 2025**

## b. Electoral Roll Officer's Report

Every 6 years each Parish of the Church of England has to produce a completely new Electoral Roll and this has been carried out in preparation for this APCM.

The number on the new Electoral Roll for the Parish of Ludlow - St Laurence is 138 which is quite a bit lower than the previous figure of 162. Quite a number of members of the previous Electoral Roll have either moved out of the area, no longer worship with the congregations at St Laurence's or have sadly died and a few did not reapply. We did however have 17 new applications.

Of the members of the new Electoral Roll 90 are Female and 48 are Male.



### Resident/ Non-Resident

The current situation is that 78 members of our Electoral Roll are Resident in the Parish of Ludlow – St Laurence and 60 live outside the Parish.

**R Franks**

**Electoral Roll Officer**

### **c. PCC Secretary**

As of 31 December 2024, there were twelve PCC members (one clergy, two churchwardens, eight elected lay member, one co-opted lay member)

In 2024 the PCC:

- Held 8 regular meetings and two special meetings in person in the church with an average attendance of 78%
- Considered 193 papers and reports
- Passed 59 resolutions after discussion
- Discussed: church budget and finances; staffing; Lay Pastoral Worker role; funeral collection arrangements; EcoChurch accreditation; scope for creation of a permanent prayer space; relationship with Friends of St Leonard's Churchyard; Arts@StLaurence events; use of social media; Stephen House refurbishment project; future stewardship campaign; creation of welcome pack for new worshippers; revision of church guidebook
- Reviewed and adopted or re-adopted policies under a rolling programme: PCC Guidance; Whistleblowing; Health and Safety; CofE Safeguarding policies [Promoting a Safer Church and Protecting all God's children]; CCTV; Pastoral Care; Theology and Liturgy; Digital and recording; Use of incense; Social media
- Took seven urgent votes out of meeting to be ratified at the following formal meeting
- Complied with its duty to have due regard to House of Bishops guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- Ensured that all PCC members complete all relevant Safeguarding training courses and hold a current DBS certificate

PCC members continuing in office, with date of expiry of term of office, are:

- Ewart Carson (term expires May 2026)
- Michael Davies (term expires May 2026)
- Dick Franks (term expires May 2027)
- Jean Ferguson-Davie (term expires May 2026)
- Eric Griffiths (term expires May 2027)
- Hilary Walters (term expires May 2026)
- Richard Wilkins (term expires May 2026)
- Stuart McLaren (term expires May 2027)

Co-opted PCC member standing for election:

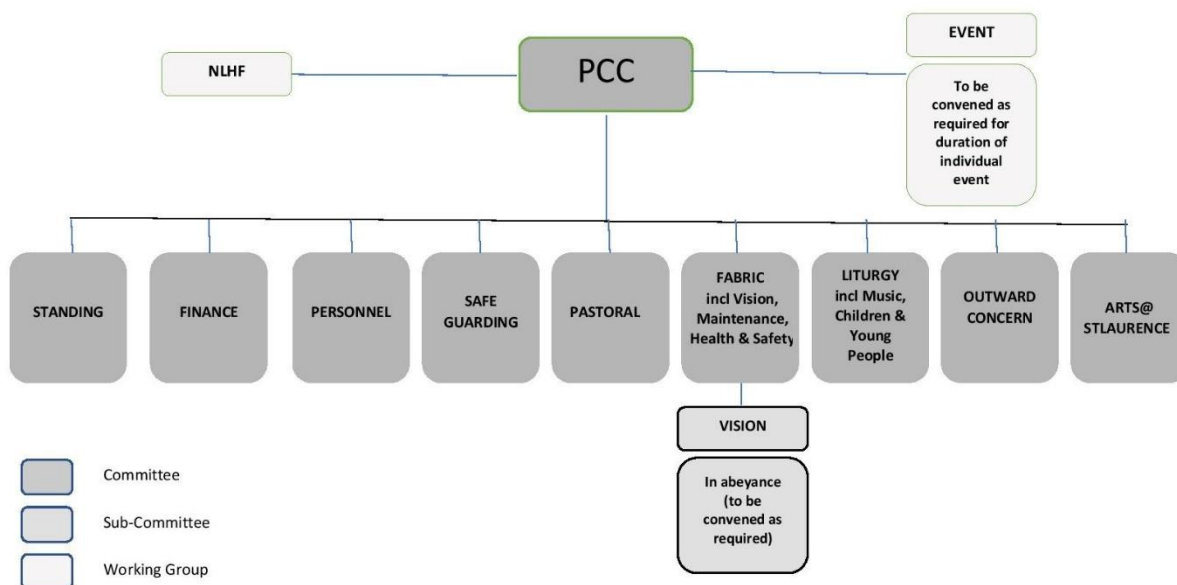
- Caroline Culley

Vacancies

- Up to three elected laity

**Note:** nominations for PCC membership may be submitted up to 11.30am on 11 May 2025.

***Lesley Harling***  
**PCC Secretary**



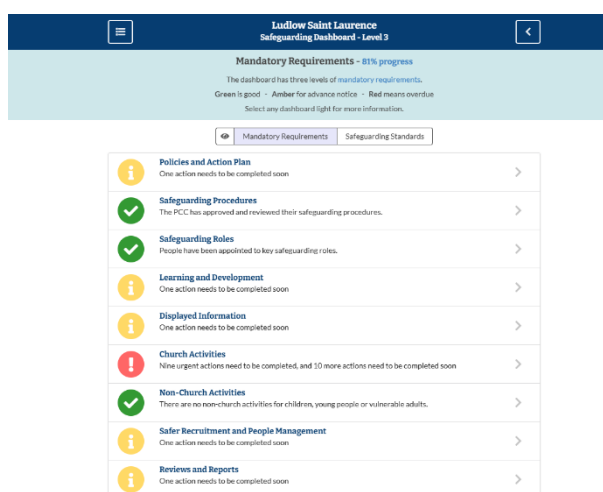
#### d. Safeguarding Officer

This report covers the developments in Safeguarding during 2024.

At its meeting on 15 January 2024 the PCC reviewed its adoption of the Church of England's 'Promoting a Safer Church' and 'Protecting All God's Children' Safeguarding Policies. No changes were proposed.

Now that DBS clearances need to be renewed every three years instead of five years as was the case previously, a number of DBS clearances are coming up for renewal. The application process for DBS checks is now done online which has made the process both simpler and quicker.

The PCC continues to update its Safeguarding Action Plan using the Parish Dashboards Software. The PCC last reviewed this Action Plan at its meeting in March 2024.



There have been several additions to the Parish Dashboards software which have helped us maintain a single central record of roles within our church community, the DBS checks and training that are required for these roles and the people assigned to these roles. Records are kept of DBS clearances received and training courses that have been successfully completed.

Recent updates to the Parish Dashboards software include the ability to define Roles and produce Role Descriptions.

The current version of the Parish Safeguarding Handbook is available from the safeguarding page of our website <https://stlaurences.org.uk/safeguarding/>



The Church of England has updated its provision of online safeguarding courses.



The link to the C of E Training Portal is <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/>. If you register, you can gain access to these courses. It is suggested that all of our volunteers take at least the Basic Awareness course but these courses are available to anyone in our church community. You will get a certificate for successfully completing any course and I would be grateful if you could forward a copy of your pdf certificate to me so that I can add it to our records.



Recently a number of our volunteers have successfully completed at least the Basic Awareness Course.

**R Franks – March 2025**  
**Parish Safeguarding Officer**



## MISSION

### a. Anna Chaplaincy

I was licensed as an Anna Chaplain in November 2024 since when I have been expanding my work with the care homes in Ludlow and Bromfield. After attending a course on Spiritual Care for older people I now better understand the challenges of this stage of life and have learnt more about how to have spiritual conversations with people of faith and of no faith. I am inspired by what those with dementia and those in the last stage of life, tell me of their faith journey, even through the hardest of times.

### *Caroline Culley (Reader)*

### b. Arts @ St Laurence'

The year saw a full [Arts@StLaurence](#) programme of nearly 30 events.

As last year, the second annual Ludlow Piano Festival in May was a great success. The programme included a sell-out Celebrity Concert, a final concert by the inspirational Italian pianist Sangiovanni Scipione and a concert for schools. To maintain the brand image, a series of pop-up events took place in November. These included a memorable concert by Jeneba Kanneh-Mason, and Open Piano, whereby local performers were given 20-minute slots in which to showcase their pianistic skills. All of these provided a splendid showcase for our Steinway concert piano!

The season began in April with one of the major concerts of the Ludlow English Song Weekend, directed by Iain Burnside and including Roddy Williams. Later in the year there were two fundraiser events. The first was a concert curated by Alistair McGowan in aid of the Friends of Mortimer Forest. The second was in aid of a Motor Neurone Disease charity. This took the form of 'radio adaptation' of 'Great Expectations', directed by Kim Begley. St Laurence's also hosted a Lacock Summer School on Early Tudor Music.

As usual, there were outstanding performances at Saturday lunchtime recitals by both a number of organists and students from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (RBC). Moreover, Di Xiao, one of our favourite pianists, made a return visit, bringing a group of young Chinese piano students to St Laurence's to perform as part of the summer school that she organises for them at the RBC.

There were a number of other highlights. One was a concert given by the Cheltenham Bach Choir. Another was the final concert of the year, 'Christmas by Candlelight' including string players from the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Regular events included performances by our local groups: Ludlow Orchestra, Ludlow Choral Society and the Edge Chamber Choir which were much appreciated.

The informal Wednesday lunchtime recitals in the chancel continued successfully during the summer months, involving Michael Oakley and friends with its emphasis on early music.

All of the events that we have curated have benefited from generous sponsorship on the part of a number of individuals. This has helped to ensure the overall financial viability of the Arts programme.

Looking forward to 2025, a full and exciting programme of events is in place including the third Ludlow Piano Festival which has already established itself as a major annual attraction.

Finally, I wish to express my thanks to my fellow members of the [Arts@StLaurence](#) Committee and to the band of stewards who always offer a warm welcome to our audiences.

***Ewart Carson Chair, [Arts@StLaurence](#)***

### **c. Bell ringing**

There is concern in the wider world about falling numbers of active, skilled bellringers with many experienced older ringers forced to abandon 'the exercise' due to the physical demands of ringing and of accessing ringing chambers. Despite the considerable challenge of climbing 136 steps St Laurence's band of bellringers continues to buck this trend, ringing for the Sunday Eucharist virtually every week as well as on Monday practice nights. In addition the band rings rang at Remembrance, for a wedding and a funeral as well as quarter peals rung on Sunday afternoons before Choral Eucharist.

With the support of ringers from a several local towers, notably Clun, Knighton and Stoke St Milborough, we can usually muster 8 or 10 ringers with as many as 18 turning out on some Mondays. The addition to the band of a number of experienced ringers moving into the area has allowed us to ring a wider range of methods, raising the standard of ringing.

Richard, our Tower Captain, is also Ringing Master for the Church Stretton District of the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers and Ludlow ringers are active in supporting special practices all over the district, which covers 31 towers from Stoke St Milborough to Welshpool and from Wigmore to Westbury.

The highlight of 2024, however, was the tower outing. Instead of the traditional day spent visiting 5-6 towers within 20-30 miles of Ludlow a group of our regular ringers travelled to the Scottish Highlands to spend a week at the Highlands Ringing Centre taking full advantage of the two rings of bells it offers – one of 12 bells and one of 8 bells – and visiting a few other Scottish towers. To mark the occasion a new tower logo was created and is now in use on sweatshirts and polo shirts. The tower was booked by three visiting bands in 2024, one attempting a full peal for the Food Festival, which unfortunately failed.

The ringing simulator purchased in 2023, to which the PCC made a generous contribution, was put to good use with a number of brand new ringers, their progress accelerated by the opportunities it provides to ring silently and at different times, without disturbing the neighbours.

***Lesley Harling, Tower Secretary***

#### **d. Celtic Prayer – An Evening Liturgy**

Celtic Prayer services continue to be held monthly at St Laurence's. The services are led by two people, out of a team of six leaders from various churches in the area. Attendees come from different churches within Ludlow and the surrounding villages. It also attracts visitors to the town, drawn in by the board advertising Celtic prayer, outside the church door. Up to 24 people attend the services. They are drawn by the quiet nature of the service, with periods of silence, Celtic music, singing Taizé chants as well as readings and times of prayer.

**Caroline Culley (Reader)**

#### **e. Children and Young People**

St Laurence's Church has no formal 'Sunday School' as we do not have enough children regularly attending the main Sunday services. However, there are always activities available for them. On Sundays these are frequently used by one child who attends regularly, and others who attend occasionally.

Most of these activities are also available during the week and are well used, primarily by small children. Some families leave the children's area tidier than others. The midweek welcoming stewards do a good job of tidying the children's table when they have time.

The jigsaws are particularly well used which means that their boxes constantly need repair.

The repairs are carried out as and when there is time. (Any offers?)

We get occasional extra equipment passed on to us, often anonymously. Some of it we cannot use so it is passed on again to a charity shop.

Older children and teens are mostly catered for at 'The Living Room' (relocating in 2025 to St John's Church) and other appropriate services.

Several local schools (state and independent) choose to hold their 'Celebration' services for Christmas, Easter, school leaving, etc in St Laurence's.

**Sandi Burley**

#### **f. Church tours**

In recent years, the guided tours of St Laurence's church offered to the public, helping them understand the 'place' it holds in the town's religious, social and architectural history, as well as its mission today, were organised by Alan and Pam Latchford. It was a great loss to the town and the church in 2024, when Alan and Pam moved away to live with family in Aberystwyth but they departed with our warmest wishes for health and happiness.

From April 2024, under 'new management', tours continued to be offered on the St Laurence website, bookable via the Parish Office in Stephen House. The process of charging was clarified and formalised and, with the cooperation of Broadmill, a facility to pay in the shop was introduced,

reducing administrative processes for the office in relation to invoices, or chasing late payment etc. No charges are made for children aged under 16 years.

Nine people offer their time to facilitate the guided tours. Of these, eight are current volunteer church stewards and one, with a detailed knowledge of the building, is a 'retired' steward. Once a booking is received by the office, the details are shared with the tour organisers, who canvass the guides for their availability.

Between April and December 2024, guided tours were provided for 162 people, who formed seven groups. A small advertisement was placed in *The Tower* magazine but no identifiable feedback was received. Later in the year, it became apparent that a commercial tour operator was using the church to facilitate their private tour business. Work was begun to create a process whereby such groups would be required to pay for their future use of the premises.

St Laurence's church continues to enjoy its 5 star rating in Simon Jenkins' work, *England's Thousand Best Churches* and is listed among the top eighteen across the country. It is anticipated that guided tours of the church will increase in popularity aided by its *Tripadvisor* rating, as being the fourth most popular attraction in Ludlow.

Such popularity amongst visitors is aided by the dedication and hard work of our tour guides: *"There was much more to see in this church than I had expected and the volunteer guides were very friendly and keen to share their knowledge which meant we spent longer in there than anticipated and got a lot more out of the visit."* *Tripadvisor* - 29 April 2024

## **Eric Griffiths**

### **g. Christian Aid**

We continued to support Christian Aid throughout 2024, through our membership of the town's Christian Aid committee. We held a number of events raising funds for Christian Aid. The needs grow and as we raise the money we are increasingly aware of our good fortune and of our responsibility to do all we can to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters globally.

Listed are the principal events and monies raised -

- Lent lunches: £1441.06 - Two were held in St Laurence's
- Donations: £1207 - This was raised by two retiring collections (at the end of Christian Aid week and on Harvest Festival Sunday) at St Laurence's, replacing the house-to-house collections, and by including money collected at St John's
- Coffee morning: £1308.00 - Icon Coffee again donated all the coffee and we are hugely grateful to Anthony Shuster for his generosity.
- Street collection with carol singing: £832.00
- Gift Aid: £427.25.

We would be unable to raise any money without the commitment of you all and the enthusiasm and readiness of the wonderful team of helpers.

A huge thank you to everyone.

**Claire Wilcox**

## **h. Conservation Trust for St Laurence Ludlow**

Nil report.

## **i. Contemplation**

The Contemplation Group meets every Wednesday morning. We gather at 10am and meditate in silence from 10.30am until 11am. We do not use any set text, but those joining us may bring their own aids to contemplation, reading material or an image if they wish.

After many years of Helen Blyth's generous hospitality, the Group is planning to move in 2025 to meet at St. Laurence's.

All are very welcome to take advantage of this time of quiet and spiritual sustenance.

**Liz Gardner**

## **j. Fairtrade**

St Laurence has been a Fairtrade Church since 2010, a status renewed formally online on 14 January 2022. There are many ways to support Fairtrade, but just two core requirements to be awarded Fairtrade Place of Worship status: Use Fairtrade products wherever possible (at least tea, coffee and sugar) and share information about Fairtrade products with the wider congregation. The Fairtrade logo is used in notices and service sheets.

### **Fair Trade Fortnight 9-22 September 2024**

Celebrated 30 years since Fairtrade products first hit the shelves. The Fairtrade Foundation urged everyone to Be the Change by picking up Fairtrade products and speaking up for fairer trade.

### **Fair Trade Stalls**

Ced at St Laurence twice monthly after the 10.00 Parish Eucharist. Sales January - December 2024: £1,585.43 with 5% paid to St Laurence - £80.00. Orders have been placed with a range of companies supporting producers and selling Fairtrade products. Access to a shed at the Old Gate House has provided backup storage for Fair Trade stalls to continue whilst limited space in St Catherine's chapel available. The assistance of volunteers is appreciated.

### **Big Brew**

Was held on Sunday 8 September after the 10.00 Parish Eucharist with a Traidcraft Stall and Bring and Buy Bake Stall using Fairtrade ingredients. £70.00 was raised and divided between Traidcraft Exchange and the Fairtrade Foundation.

### **Shop at St Laurence**

Supports some of our common aims involving sustainable, ethical, local sourcing as well as a limited stock of fairtrade goods.

### **Ludlow Fairtrade Town Group**

Developed a new Ludlow Fair Trade Shopping Guide which has been circulated including the Shop and the church. Icon Coffee is not included in the Guide as Fairtrade tea and coffee are not provided.

### ***Penelope A Bridstrup Ludlow Fairtrade Town Group***

### **k. Handbells**

Ludlow Handbells had another good year in 2024. We are a small group, most of whom have been playing together for several years. We enjoy each other's company and the music that we can make together, though we also like the challenge and satisfaction of playing in front of an audience.

Because each person plays only two notes in a piece of music, we depend upon each other and it makes for a very tight team. Ten or so years ago we were short of people and had to play more than two bells each but this last year we were in the positive position of almost having too many people or not enough bells! We amended our music to include some of the base bells that we hadn't been able to use in the past. It has also given us a more flexible team and helped us improve our skill and repertoire.

Our playing year began on 5 March when we started working towards the Wednesday lunchtime concert we had been invited to play in July. The concert took place in St Laurence's chancel and we thoroughly enjoyed doing it. We do not usually have many invitations to play during the summer but, towards Christmas, we were more in demand. As in previous years, we played for the St Laurence's Winter Fair. In December we went to St Peter's parish rooms to play for the Ludlow Cancer Support Group Christmas party. Then the following two nights we played in the pre-Christmas events in Castle Bookshop Gardens - we've been asked to do this for a year or two now and we really enjoyed being part of it.

We finished our handbells year by ringing carols at the start of the Nine Lessons and Carols service on the 23 December, which is something we feel honoured to be asked to do.

### ***Sally Newman-Kidd***

## **I. Langwasser Link**

For more than forty years Ludlow has had a link with the Evangelical Lutheran churches in Langwasser, a suburb of Nuremberg, Germany. The message on the banner hanging in St Laurence's south aisle celebrates this friendship with a quotation from St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, "For we are fellow workers for God" ("*Denn wir sind Gottes Mitarbeiter*"). Our banner's twin is displayed in Paul Gerhardt Church, Langwasser.

2024 was a 'fallow' year for the Link. There were no visits by us to Langwasser or to us from Langwasser. But contact was maintained via email. Our principal contact is with the Paul Gerhardt church which is one of four parishes in Langwasser.

We also kept the Link on the agenda of the Diocese's Hereford-Nuremberg Partnership Committee, along with other deaneries and parishes that have links with churches or deaneries in Nuremberg Diocese.

As reported at the 2024 APCM, Jörg Gunsenheimer, the minister of Paul Gerhardt church retired in autumn 2023. (Note: Jörg's official title, 'Pfarrer', doesn't have an exact equivalent in the Church of England: 'minister' is used here as a neutral approximation.) He has not been replaced and the four parishes in Langwasser now have only 2½ ministers between them. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany continues to face the same sort of financial and resource constraints that we do in the Church of England.

## **Colin Weston**

### **m. Liturgy**

The Liturgy Committee is responsible for developing and maintaining standards in liturgy of St Laurence's discussing all aspects of worship and planning for the major services over the year including civic services, special services and guest preachers.

This committee has met three times during 2024 and has discussed topics including:

- Terms of reference.
- Review of Incense Policy.
- Cessation of Baby Loss Awareness service but the continuing availability of ribbons for tying on the church railings by the North Door.
- New format for the Service of Light to not have individual names read out during the service and therefore reduce the number of candles required
- Production of a Service of the Word booklet to be used in exceptional circumstances when there is no member of clergy present.
- Clergy Rotas
- Lent Course
- Ash Wednesday service.
- Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter Services
- Improvements in the music published in the orders of service for the Plainsong Mass and the possibility of practising it with the congregation.
- Communication and Information Template for the production of pew sheets

- Arrangements for the Mayor's Service being within a Parish Eucharist
- Ascension Day and Corpus Christi Services
- Ephesians Sermon Series – the production of booklets and arrangements for including the series on the website.
- Suggestions for how we could promote greater involvement of children in services
- Review of Hymns being used for the Mass Setting when no choir is present.
- Inclusion of antiphonal psalm when no choir present.
- Review of the visit of the Derby Singers. It was felt that there were issues with their visit in 2024.
- Problem of the number of funerals and the availability of clergy to conduct the services.
- Review of arrangements for in-service Baptism.
- Suggestion of having a Recessional Hymn on Palm Sunday
- Patronal Festival
- Harvest Festival
- All Saints and All Souls services
- Remembrance Sunday service with Archdeacon Fiona Gibson
- Leaving service for Wayne
- Roger Judd's final service
- Purchase of additional Common Praise hymn books particularly for use in Matins and Evensong services.
- Advent, Christmas and Epiphany services
- Fifth Sunday Benefice Eucharists and the distribution of Benefice services held at each of the two churches.

## **R Franks**

### **n. Music**

This has been a good, steady year, with many positive experiences.

#### **Choir/Singers:**

As ever, our choir continues to be a very committed, capable and enthusiastic group of musicians, who delight in using their skills to enhance the liturgies of St Laurence's whenever possible. The number of singers has remained static, which is encouraging, though we are always looking to recruit good singers who can commit to the work of a busy choir.

Like many church choirs, finding a source of children choristers continues to be a challenge. Local schools are no longer a natural source of young singers, usually as part of a family that might well worship in St Laurence's. As I mentioned a couple of years ago, 'we are dependent on regular St Laurence's families with children who might provide these singers in the years to come.'

#### **Organists:**

As ever, our organists enjoy playing in St Laurence's and are appreciative of the kindness, positive comments and general support that is shown by clergy, choir, and congregation alike. The big change in 2024 was the full retirement of Roger Judd from playing regularly for services at St Laurence's. Happily, he is still delighted to return for the occasional service to help out. His



special contribution to the music at St Laurence's was highlighted when he finished on Easter Sunday.

We welcomed Andrew Padmore into the music team at St Laurence's, where he has not only settled in very well, but has added something very special, with his own style to organ accompaniment, and at times has also directed the choir. He is also a great support and provides a wealth of experience, which is very much appreciated.

Comments from the organists suggest that they enjoy the fact that St Laurence's offers a wide range of good music, well prepared and delivered within a well-planned liturgy, in a pleasant and workmanlike environment where they are valued. Although the working relationship of the music team is always professional, striving for the very highest standards, this does not preclude some fun moments and the opportunity to make the most of the texts we encounter. For example, at times the psalms offer moments of both great drama as well as sensitive tenderness. By choosing appropriate organ registrations and choral dynamics, we hope to bring the psalms to life in a special way.

### **Service music:**

#### **a. Congregational**

The plainsong Mass XVIII, introduced in 2022, and used specifically in Advent and Lent continues to offer a more reflective setting to those of Dunachie, Dyke and Mawby. The congregation picked up the new setting very well – 'Mass of St Thomas' by David Thorne. Hymn singing continues to be strong and enthusiastic.

#### **b. Choral**

The choral repertoire continues to develop and broaden. This keeps the service music 'fresh' and varied and provides a good challenge for the singers. New music for Evensong and Matins has included a setting by Herbert Sumsion, which has a much loved 'have a banana' moment in the 'Nunc Dimittis'. Settings of the responses by Reading and Clucas have been learned and revised, and now appear regularly on the music lists.

#### **c. Civic Services:**

As always the Remembrance Sunday service was poignant and powerful. The May Fair service by the dodgems was less poignant and powerful (though much loved by the choir members!).

***Michael Oakley Director of Music***

#### **o. Outward Concern**

The Outward Concern Group was wound up in June 2024. It was set up to act as 'a conscience for the church' at a time when the church was thought to be too inward-looking but the PCC and Group members agreed that the situation had changed and the group was no longer relevant. The PCC has taken on direct responsibility for decisions relating to the charities to be supported each year under the commitment to aim to give the equivalent of 10% of planned giving shared between an international, a national and a local charity and issues related to the Langwasser Link, the main areas of Outward Concern activity in recent years.

## **p. Pastoral Care**

Our team of pastoral visitors has expanded to eight over the year. Between us we visit over 30 people regularly in their own homes, in the care homes of the town and in the local hospitals. Many are former members of our congregations. We take home communion to some people and carry out pastoral visits to others.

In addition, an ecumenical team leads services of Holy Communion and dementia-friendly services at the five care homes in Ludlow and one in Bromfield. The total number of attendees is around 40 people each month. Pastoral visits are also carried out in the care homes.

We have also responded to calls for emergency pastoral visits.

### ***Caroline Culley – Pastoral Care Co Ordinator***

## **q. Volunteers**

It is increasingly hard to keep track of the number of individuals who contribute to the life of the church, ensuring that everyone who comes in through the doors has a positive experience, whether they come in search of private prayer, communal worship, historical research, a guided tour, a tourist experience, a meeting with friends, the view from the top of the tower, a lunchtime recital, a warm, safe space, a cup of tea or coffee, an evening concert, a birthday card or a christening present, a space for their children to read, play or explore or an opportunity to sit and think.

In 2024 those who added an entry in the visitors book (about 1% of the total through the door) came from 24 different countries with the highest numbers coming from English-speaking countries, in particular the USA (from 24 different American states), Australia and Canada, but also widely from Europe with Scandinavia well represented. The more unusual homelands included Mexico, Mongolia, Singapore, Chile and Japan but a large majority of visitors were British, travelling from 47 different geographical counties.

The 50+ welcome stewards and Broadmill staff in the Shop at St Laurence and Icon Coffee play a key part in creating the atmosphere within the building (see below for visitor comments, which are almost exclusively positive). It is, however, fair to say that for Business as Usual we are indebted to the other 100+ volunteers. They work, alone or in one of numerous small teams, to carry out specific practical tasks, often unseen, to ensure that the life of the church continues day to day – those who support services by singing, serving, reading, interceding or producing pew sheets, those who care for the fabric of the building, those who sit on committees and deal with essential paperwork and procedures, those who visit the housebound and isolated and of course those who pray for the church community.

We now have nearly 150 names on our 'books' with about half of those volunteering in more than one way. In 2024 we lost several loyal and long-serving volunteers, sadly, through illness or death or because they moved away. This was balanced in some areas by new people stepping forward but there is always room for more.

In 2024 volunteers undertook training in fire evacuation procedures and welcome stewards were invited to hear from Paul (Lay Pastoral Worker) and Caroline (Reader and Anna Chaplain) about their roles in relation to supporting visitors to church in need or distress. The volunteers joined

members of the congregation and the wider church community in celebrating the official opening of Stephen House before the traditional summer hog roast.

*Openness and vibrancy, warm welcome, peaceful, actively creating a community, friendly, inspirational, informative staff, calm atmosphere, very kind staff and volunteers, tranquil, breathtaking, an oasis in a hostile world, serene place, touching, warm sense of community, truly special, bellissima, heavenly, calming and thoughtful, very knowledgeable and friendly people, serenity in a mad world – bless this place, a very spiritual place of worship, clearly at the heart of the community, stunning*

**Lesley Harling**

#### **r. Broadmill (The Shop at St Laurence's and Icon Coffee)**

- Broadmill Limited is a not-for-profit company and not affiliated to any other company.
- In 2024 the company donated 40% of its share capital to St Laurence's PCC.
- Melanie Trappe the manager of Icon Coffee and Sian Griffiths the manager of The Shop have joined the board of directors and become shareholders.
- The majority of the cakes, quiches and soups are produced locally by Jane Lloyd, pastries are also local and made by Matty's Délices. Our coffee roasters, Hundred House are now based in Ludlow.
- Icon produced a net turn-over of just under £200k and were given another 330 caffè sospesos. It sold nearly 43,500 drinks, 20,000 cakes, over 1,000 sausage rolls, and 2,500 cold drinks.
- Broadmill generated over £27.5k for the Church's mission work.
- The Shop's previous year's fall in the sale of Christmas cards was reversed in 2024 and, despite tough retail trading conditions, the Shop produced a net turn-over of £119k, slightly up on 2023, with another £17.5k going to the Church.
- The Shop sold over 6,500 cards excluding Christmas cards and more than 1,500 candles during the year.
- Therefore In 2024 the total contribution to the church by Broadmill was £45k up from £39k in 2023.
- Broadmill continued to employ nine full- and part-time local employees.
- We would like to thank all those who supported us throughout the year and look forward to welcoming them back again in 2025.

**Anthony Shuster** Broadmill plc

## **FABRIC**

### **a. Fabric Committee report**

This year's Fabric Committee work has been able, largely, to concentrate on more planned maintenance with major works on Stephen House and the heating system completed, at least for now. While not perhaps as warm as we would choose, the energy bills continue to be a major drain on resources and many visitors to St Laurence's, with experience of other churches, often comment on how comfortable the building feels.

The main project of the year has been defrassing of external stonework of north and east aspects of the building. Inevitable damage is caused by rainwater, frost and pollutants in the atmosphere. Works have ranged from repairs to small joints to replaced stone blocks. It is skilled work requiring scaffolding but the bulk of the financial burden has been carried by the generosity of the charitable Conservation Trust (the Palmers). This work is part of the on-going quinquennial maintenance, the current phase of which is approximately halfway through.

Less high profile but no less important are regular works such as the resealing of the Nave wooden floor and projects like the new Lady Chapel handrail making movement within the building a little safer and a little easier for the less mobile.

Work is also continuing on natural damage to the Sacristy at the rear of the Chancel and damage to the West Window as is conservation work to some of the Church's fabrics including the HMS Ludlow flag for which an appeal is presently underway.

As ever, the work continues.

***Stuart McLaren Chair, PCC Fabric Committee***

### **b. Friends of St Leonard's Churchyard report**

It has been a challenging year for the Friends administratively, with difficulties arising with the appointment of a Treasurer following the sad and unexpected death of John Barnard the year before, the sudden ill health of his successor Tony Mahalski which in turn has made his wife Linda unable to fulfil as much of the secretarial duties as she would wish. The appointment of a third Treasurer, Daniel Seal, took place at a Special General Meeting convened for the purpose in June and even since then we have encountered setback after setback with the restructuring and bureaucracy of HSBC with whom we still have the misfortune to hold our account even though it continues to be inoperable. Since it appears that none of the major banks is inclined to accept new applications from voluntary societies and community groups, nor to provide local branch support, we are not optimistic about obtaining a better service elsewhere.

On the bright side, membership continues stable and our inability to spend any of our funds has improved our financial position significantly. Loyal volunteers have continued to support regular working parties, some jointly with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Caring For God's Acre. Thanks to Graeme Perks our benches are serially undergoing restoration, and throughout last year's growing season regular maintenance, also free of charge, was generously carried out by Philip Watts (who, sadly, has now left us and moved away).

Some professional work has been carried out on several trees adjoining a neighbouring property in Corve Street (The Friary) at the householders' expense. During the Fringe Festival we hosted a theatrical production by Birmingham-based Calathea Arts (but had, on the PCC's advice, to turn down the offer of a subsequent event by the same organisation because of its avowedly pagan content). Well-attended public events featuring moth trapping and release (one of which identified a very rare moth - the Crescent Plume, which feeds only on the Common or Spiny Restharrow and has previously only ever been sighted on three occasions in Shropshire), and a 'bat walk' have been hosted.

The five War Graves in the churchyard have, in conjunction with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, continued to be cleaned and made accessible to visitors and for the annual Armistice Day Service of Remembrance on 11 November.

***Nick Ford Chairman, Friends of St Leonard's Churchyard***

## **FINANCE**

### **Accounts**

Financially the church had a good year meeting its many and varied commitments on time and in full. Free reserves were £37,957 (£15,217 in 2023), calculated as the unrestricted funds, less the designated funds and the tangible fixed assets.

The balance sheet remains strong after paying for the completion of the renovation works to Stephen House. The difference in the Restricted Funds is as expected and this now stands at £113,999. The Unrestricted Funds went up by £23,503 compared to 2023.

The most significant change was increasing the PCC Reserve from £11,000 to £20,000. This provides greater confidence in our sustainability and our ability to meet unexpected events.

### **Fabric**

Visitor income and successful applications for grants have enabled the PCC to maintain its £25,000 pledge to church maintenance. Significant works included repair to the St Leonard's churchyard wall and 'defrassing' work (removal of loose, friable, or decayed stone and mortar to ensure structural integrity and aesthetic preservation) and parapet works all along the south side of the church to address issues noted in the Quinquennial Inspection (QI). We spent £29,892 in total on maintenance and repairs to the fabric.

### **Charity Giving**

Congregational giving to Christian Aid, the Train-a-Priest Fund and international emergency collections in the church raised £2,226. Our single largest donation was to Christian Aid of £1,206. The church processed payments to 12 other charities (see the pie charts under Charitable Giving).

The Rector's Discretionary Fund activities distributed £8,278 to local initiatives, investing in the lives of those in need in the community. The reserve for 2025 and beyond stands at £6,215.

As a one-off gift, an additional payment of £3,500 was made in December 2024 to the Hereford Diocese Board of Finance towards the Parish Share Covenant. From 2025 this amount will now be budgeted in the Covenant commitment. 55% of our stewardship givers are part of the Diocese Parish Giving Scheme.

### **Visitors**

We welcomed 90,606 visitors in 2024 (2023: 71,000). Our thanks to all the stewards and volunteers for reenergising the church experience for all those who come through the doors. The Icon experience has certainly changed the atmosphere in the church and this is often mentioned in the visitors' book. A number of local groups are choosing the church as their "community hub and warm space" to meet in regularly.

External church income was £120,000 (2023: £95,000). Visitor donations, the Goodbox receipts, tower visits and the Shop and Icon Coffee incomes were all up. However the visitor analysis shows the average cash donation was 39p.

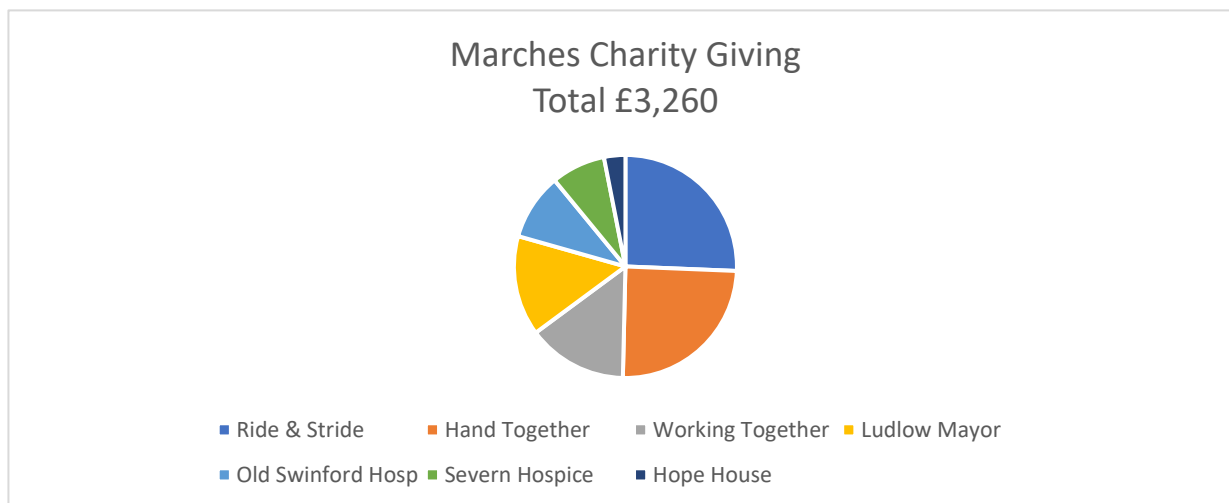
The cost just to open the church in 2024 was £87,000 (insurance, maintenance for the church (excluding QI works), security, fire prevention and utilities). To complete our wide range of services costs £29,000.

## Stephen House

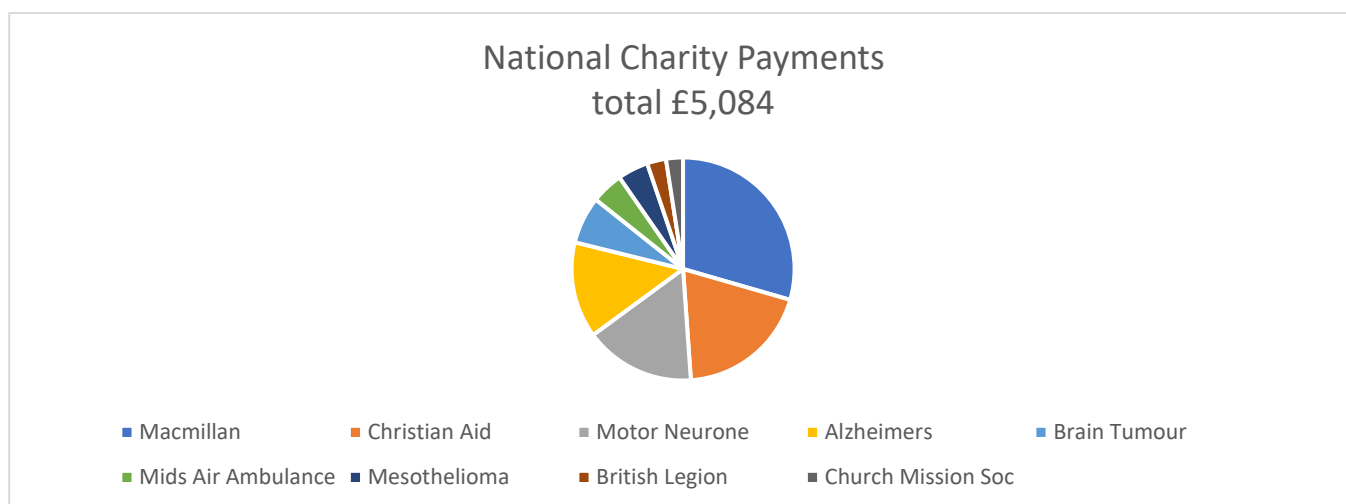
Stephen House became open fully in November 2024 with Paul Kemp becoming our Local Pastoral Worker. The SH mission programme is fully funded for 2025-2027. At the year end the restricted fund for Stephen House stood at £82,033. There have been no costs to the PCC regarding Stephen House.

## Charitable Giving

The Rector's Discretionary fund has been at the forefront of our community giving. £8,278 was spent supporting those in our community in need, including families and children through the secondary and junior schools. Locally we shared £11,548 to good causes.



At 1 January 2025 a sum of £6,132 remained for distribution when the new Rector is in post.



Since April 2024 the Diocese Policy for charity donations at funerals has changed. Funeral directors now count the donations and send them on to the chosen charities. However during the year we have been asked to process or have raised further funds for a variety of national 'good causes' as can be seen above.

Our thanks go to all who contributed so generously over the year to these good causes.

**Peter Nield**  
**Director of Finance**