

**Ludlow St Laurence Annual Report
for Annual Parochial Church Meeting
11.30am Sunday 10 May 2026
St Laurence's Church**

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CLERGY REPORT FOR 2025

PCC Lay Chair's report

Kelvin's ministry as Rector of Ludlow ended on Easter Sunday 2025 immediately after a joyful and inspiring Easter Eucharist service in a packed St Laurence's during which three adults were baptised. He, Ruth and the family left for Ross-on-Wye with all our blessings, and gratitude for the transformations he achieved during his time with us. We continue to reap the rewards of his ministry as we see a lively and engaged congregation growing in numbers and 'growing younger', a well-used church building which brings in people from the local community as well as visitors and pilgrims and healthy finances.

However his departure meant that for most of 2025 St Laurence's had no ordained clergy. Ensuring that services, particularly eucharistic services, continued was a challenge. The situation was exacerbated when Revd Andrew Body who took many services also moved away and we thought we might have to replace some with a Service of the Word. However our concerns proved unfounded. Archdeacon Fiona was very supportive, as was the Very Reverend Michael Tavinor and Bishop Richard came one Sunday but the bulk of our services have been taken by clergy from neighbouring parishes in the deanery and, in particular, a small group of retired clergy with Permission to Officiate within the congregation and the town. Other retired priests and our Licensed Lay Minister Caroline have officiated at funerals and Caroline and our Lay Pastoral Worker, Paul, have led other services.

In all we welcomed 15 different people to lead our 8.15am BCP Communion or 10am Sunday Eucharist and I would like to thank them all: Revd John Beesley, Revd Prebendary Ashley Buck, Revd Sharon Constable, Revd Prebendary Dr John Daniels, Venerable Dr Fiona Gibson, Right Revd Richard Jackson, Revd Justin Parker, Revd John Perry, Revd Jane Plackett-Ferguson, Revd John Stocker, Revd Michael Tavinor, Revd Peter Walker, Right Revd Michael Westall, Revd Ian Williams and Revd John Williams. We are also very grateful to all those who have officiated at funeral services during the vacancy, in particular Revd David Roberts and Caroline.

We hope that we can look forward to welcoming them back to St Laurence's in 2026 while we await permission to start advertising for a new Rector of Ludlow.

R Franks

PCC Lay Chair

LAY PASTORAL WORKER'S REPORT

The beginning of the past year at Stephen House saw a focus on establishing and maintaining links with other agencies, in particular:

- Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service
- Shropshire Council's Rough Sleeper service, Housing Options Team and Benefits Team
- Hands Together Ludlow
- Ludlow CE School
- Shropshire Mental Health Service
- Ludlow Council
- Connexus Housing

- Ludlow Foodbank
- Station Drive Surgery
- Ludlow Police

Whilst initial progress to establish regular contact with other agencies, in particular Shropshire Council, was slower than anticipated there are now solid relationships with all of the above. This focus has meant that those coming to Stephen House can be supported more effectively. Clients come to Stephen House in a variety of ways, with informal referrals coming from agencies listed, as well as family, friends and visitors to the church (both St John's and St Laurence's). Need is also identified by word of mouth, or from time spent at the Rockspring Centre or Ludlow Foodbank.

To date, nine people have been supported with moves into stable accommodation. This includes four who had no fixed abode at all.

The facilities are used regularly, with the shower used 3-4 times a week on average. The same is true of the washing machine and drier, with clients leaving their washing for collection at an arranged time. Visits by clients to Stephen House are predominantly by appointment or are prearranged.

In addition to Stephen House, my work also includes, or has included

- Leading three morning prayer services weekly, one at St. John's
- Leading monthly Living Room Services at St John's
- Planning and participating in the Christingle and Christmas Day Services
- Regular collaboration with faith leaders locally
- Representing St Laurence's at Churches Together Around Ludlow meetings
- Monthly sessions at Ludlow Foodbank, with occasional deliveries: 1-2 a week on average
- Home visits to clients: 2-3 a week on average
- Support with hospital visits and benefit meetings
- Ex officio membership of St John's PCC
- Membership and participation in Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance, and Shropshire Homelessness Forum
- Advocacy for clients with other agencies

The support and prayers of the congregations and PCCs of both St John's and St Laurence's have enabled Stephen House and its position amongst other agencies to develop organically, which has been hugely beneficial for the people we support.

Thank you.

Paul Kemp

CHURCH OFFICERS' REPORTS

a. Churchwardens

Elizabeth (Liz) Gardner and I continued in office as churchwardens through most of 2025, being both re-elected at the 2025 Annual Parochial Church Meeting. When Elizabeth was, unfortunately, forced to resign in October due to ill health and in the absence of anyone willing to stand for election as churchwarden at a special meeting of parishioners the PCC agreed that I should continue as sole warden until the 2026 APCM.

I am very grateful to Elizabeth for her collaborative approach, hard work, wisdom and friendship during her service as churchwarden. It was a pleasure to share with her the workload and responsibilities of serving as Bishop Richard's officers, working with Kelvin, the PCC and our indefatigable assistant wardens Richard (Dick) Franks and Michael Davies to represent the congregation and community of St Laurence's and look after the church building.

For us 2025 was a year of two halves, or more accurately of three thirds. From January to April it was largely business as usual, which at St Laurence's is in itself quite busy. From May to August we were adjusting to being 'in vacancy', working hard to ensure that the life of the church continued as far as possible unchanged following Kelvin's move to be Rector at Ross-on-Wye, finding out and, with the help of our wonderful office staff, meeting all our obligations and preparing for the process of appointing a new Rector. From August to December we were coming to terms with the prospect of a longer-than-expected interregnum and planning ahead, maintaining momentum rather than the status quo. We stepped up efforts to work with Ludlow Town Council and the Ludlow Town Walls Trust to address the issue of the collapsed town wall, recruited a new finance team of Anna Dunne as Finance Manager and Tessa Francis as Accounts Assistant and started to focus on the fabric of the church with a Quinquennial Inspection due in 2026 and on financial strategy, stewardship and fund-raising.

We are immensely grateful for all the support, encouragement and prayers of members of the church community who have stepped forward to help us in many ways, for the selfless commitment of a small army of clergy people, some working but many retired with Permission to Officiate, and who have come from near and far to enable us to maintain our normal pattern of Sunday services as well as Special Services and monthly Wednesday evening communion, baptisms and funerals throughout the year and for the invaluable assistance of Caroline, our Licensed Lay Minister and Anna Chaplain, and Paul, our Lay Pastoral Worker, who have taken on much of the pastoral work normally led by the Rector.

It has been a special delight to see service attendance not merely hold up but increase slightly with a number of new members of the congregation, many of them younger adults and we are very conscious that that could not have happened without the generous giving of gifts and time by more people than we could possibly number, or name. Thank you all.

Liz and I were admitted to the office of churchwarden by Archdeacon Fiona at a Visitation service held in Cleobury Mortimer in July 2025

During 2025 we attended

- every PCC meeting and every PCC committee meeting, singly or jointly

- every weekly KIT (Keeping In Touch) meeting with the Rector, Lay Pastoral Worker, Parish Administrator, Finance Director, Custodian, Social Media Coordinator to discuss the day to day running of the church
- every Sunday Eucharist and most other services including Evensong, Celtic Prayer, school services, funerals etc

We also

- completed the annual Mission Statistics return
- took a formal part in Civic Services
- supervised the church building its artefacts and furniture
- worked closely with all members of church staff, Broadmill and volunteer teams to ensure the smooth running of the church
- engaged with congregation members and members of the local community acting as a listening ear and a channel of communication
- organised the annual celebratory hog roast in July

The level of activity in the church outside of services continued to rise as we welcomed 98,000 visitors in 2025. As wardens we are always conscious of the need to ensure an appropriate balance between the use of the building as a community space, visitor attraction, hospitality venue, exhibition space and performance venue and its primary purpose as a house of prayer and worship. It has been heartening to see the effect of Paul Kemp's pastoral support work bear fruit with increasing numbers of people looking to the church and Stephen House for advice, practical assistance and a sense of community. At the same time we are also conscious of the impact of all these activities on the fabric of the building and of the challenges of such flexible use of our limited space.

In 2025 in addition to the 30 Arts events noted in the Arts @ St Laurence's report, the church hosted the English Song Weekend and the Song of the Hill concert and two fund-raising efforts for the church – a Fashion Show and the Winter Festival weekend. We were glad to again offer a range of local groups space to showcase their activities in a series of exhibitions which proved very popular with local residents and visitors. New this year was a display of models of two different Ludlow Town Halls

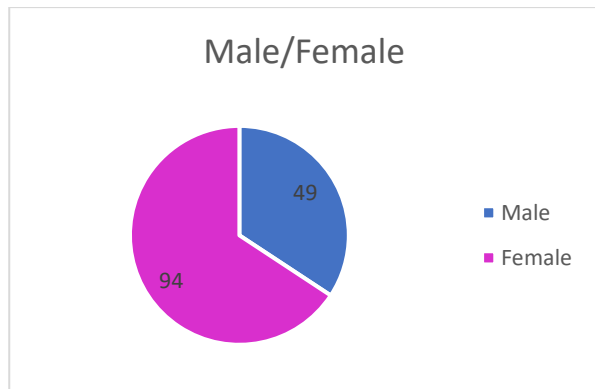
Inventory

No items have been added to or removed from the inventory since the last APCM

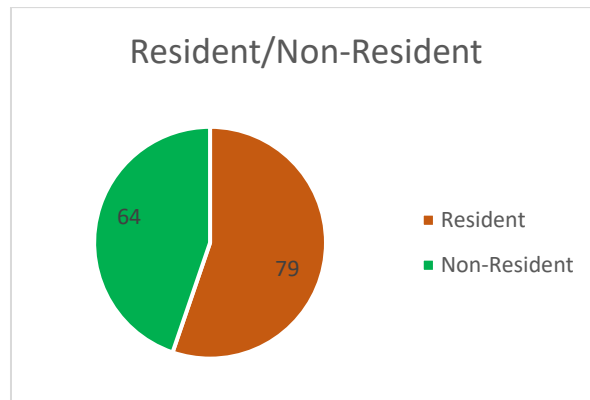
Lesley Harling, Churchwarden

b. Electoral Roll Officer's Report

The number on the current Electoral Roll for the Parish of Ludlow - St Laurence following the recent revision is 143 of which 94 are Female and 49 are Male.



The current situation is that 79 members of our Electoral Roll are Resident in the Parish of Ludlow – St Laurence and 64 are Non-Resident.



Additions and Removals

Since the creation of the new roll in 2025, 11 people have been added to the Roll (4 Male and 7 Female, 5 Resident and 6 Non-Resident) and 7 people were removed from the Roll, 4 having died, 1 who has moved away and 2 who no longer attend St Laurence's.

R Franks
Electoral Roll Officer

c. PCC Secretary

As of 31 December 2025, there were thirteen PCC members (one churchwarden, eleven elected lay members, one co-opted lay member)

In 2025 the PCC:

- Held eight regular meetings and two special meetings in Stephen House with an average attendance of 87%
- Considered 193 papers and reports
- Passed 73 resolutions after discussion
- Reviewed and adopted or re-adopted policies under a rolling programme: PCC Guidance; Health and Safety; CofE Safeguarding policies [Promoting a Safer Church and Protecting all God's children]; Financial procedures; Legacies; Benches in the churchyard
- Took eight 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:

- Dick Franks (term expires May 2027)
- Eric Griffiths (term expires May 2027)
- Ian Marshall (term expires May 2029)
- Mark Turner (term expires May 2029)

Ex-officio member continuing in office

- Caroline Culley

Vacancies

- Up to eight elected laity

Elected member at end of 3-year term of office, standing for re-election:

- Jean Ferguson-Davie

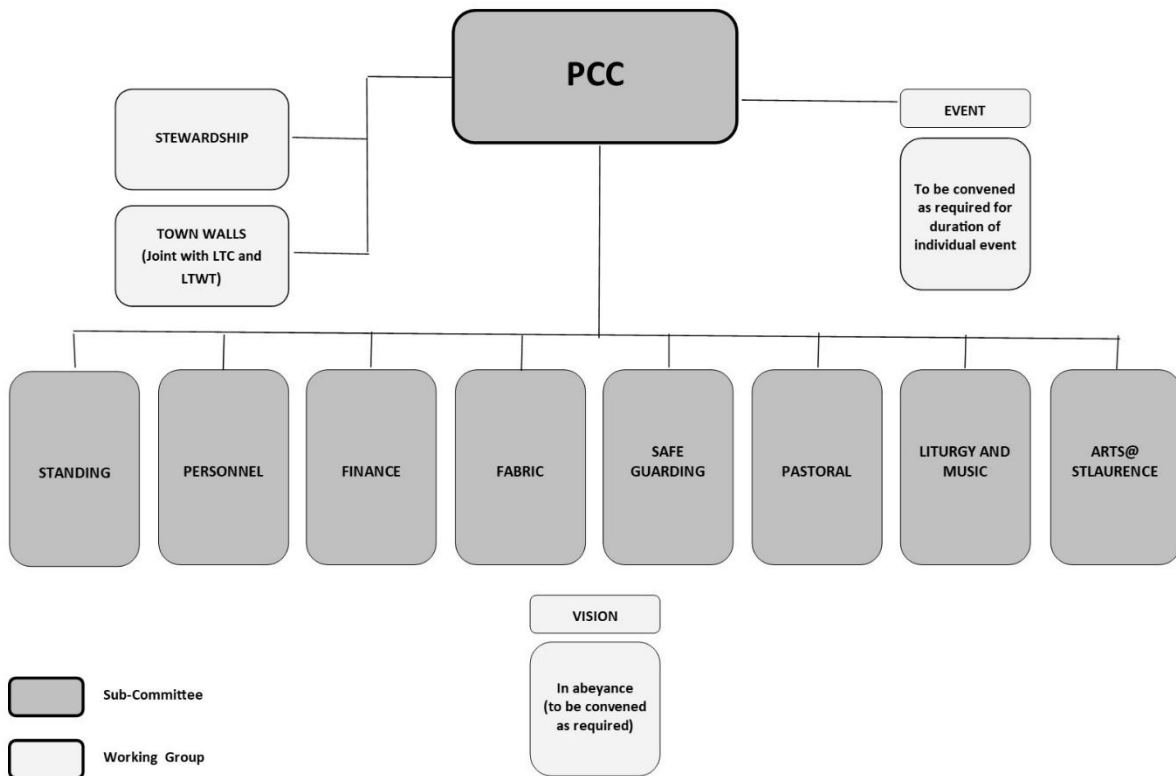
Co-opted PCC member standing for election:

- Elizabeth Gardner

Note: nominations for PCC membership may be submitted up to 11.30am on 10 May 2026.

Lesley Harling
PCC Secretary

PCC committees and working groups



d. Safeguarding Officer

Safeguarding Report 2026

This report covers the developments in Safeguarding during 2025.

At its meeting on 17 March 2025 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.

The Diocese is now using Thirtyone:eight to handle DBS check applications. It is now possible for me to initiate and handle DBS checks for many of the roles. The process seems to be working well and is generally much quicker than it used to be when we had to go through the Diocesan office. DBS checks have to be renewed every three years.

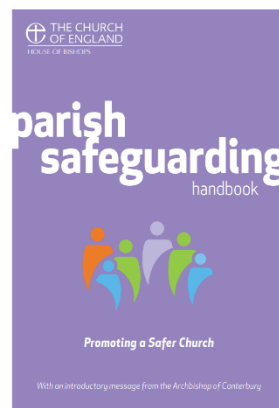
The PCC continues to update its Safeguarding Action Plan using the Parish Dashboards Software. The PCC last reviewed this Action Plan at its meeting in April 2025.

The screenshot shows the 'Ludlow Saint Laurence Safeguarding Dashboard - Level 3'. At the top, it indicates 'Mandatory Requirements - 90% progress'. Below this, a legend explains the dashboard lights: Green is good, Amber for advance notice, and Red means overdue. A 'Dashboard Updates - January 2026' box mentions a survey of 1,700 parish users and that changes for 2026 affect three dashboard lights. The main content area has two tabs: 'Mandatory Requirements' (selected) and 'Safeguarding Standards'. Under 'Mandatory Requirements', there is a list of five items, each with a status icon and a description:

- Policies and Action Plan** (Green checkmark): The PCC reviewed their action plan on 09/03/2026
- Safeguarding Procedures** (Green checkmark): The PCC has approved and reviewed their safeguarding procedures
- Safeguarding Roles** (Green checkmark): People have been appointed to key safeguarding roles
- Displayed Information** (Yellow info icon): One action needs to be completed soon
- Reviews and Reports** (Yellow info icon): One action needs to be completed soon

The Parish Dashboards software helps us maintain a single central record of roles involving children or vulnerable adults 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.

The Church of England has withdrawn its Parish Safeguarding Handbook, but it is still available from the safeguarding page of our website <https://stlaurences.org.uk/safeguarding/>



Current Safeguarding guidance is now available in an online e-manual <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual>

This link is also on the safeguarding page of our website

The Church of England provides several online safeguarding courses along with other safeguarding resources. The courses are regularly updated and should be refreshed every three years.

The National Safeguarding Team
Promoting a Safer Church

Home Courses Resources Records Help

Courses

Choose the course you require by selecting the appropriate tab below.

Basic Awareness Foundations Leadership Senior Leadership Other Courses

For everyone within church settings who needs to have a basic awareness of safeguarding issues. Please choose the most suitable version for your needs from the options below.

Options:

Please note: you only need to complete one version of this course.

Basic Awareness '26

Basic Awareness '26 (Enhanced Accessibility)

Basic Awareness '26 (British Sign Language)

The link to the C of E Training Portal is <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/>. There is also a link to this on the safeguarding page of our website along with instructions on how to register. If you register, you can gain access to these courses. It is suggested that all 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 – April 2026
Parish Safeguarding Officer**

MISSION

a. Anna Chaplaincy

My role as Anna Chaplain over the last year has included leading services in care homes and visiting individuals. I have visited people at the end of their lives to pray with and for them and their families. I have taken quite a number of funerals and visited the bereaved families beforehand to both plan the service and hear about their loved ones. I have met some of the family members at church services after the funerals and have had conversations with them.

The Diocese has asked me to meet a number of people who are considering becoming Anna Chaplains over the year. We have spoken about the role and the possibilities and opportunities it offers in their contexts.

I have loved working with older people over the year, hearing their life stories and their faith stories and sharing communion with them. I have learnt so much. It is also a privilege to meet some of their family members.

Caroline Culley (Licensed Lay Minister and Anna Chaplain)

b. Arts @ St Laurence's

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

Like last year, the third annual Ludlow Piano Festival in May was a great success. The programme included a sell-out Celebrity concert, and stand out concerts given by rising star Alim Beisembayev and Joanna MacGregor. A new feature was a sell-out 'Desert Island Piano' featuring Sheila Hancock being interviewed by Alistair McGowan.

As usual, there were outstanding performances at Saturday lunchtime recitals by both a number of organists and students from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (RBC). The Gala Organ Recital was given by Thomas Trotter. Moreover, Di Xiao, one of our favourite pianists, made a return visit, bringing a group of young orchestral musicians from Nanjing 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 piano recital by Tomos Boyles which included the Bartok sonata. Others included a first visit by the Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra, the final concert of the year, 'Christmas by Candlelight 2' including string players from the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, a welcome return by the Cory Band and the Pearl of Africa Children's Choir.

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 2026, a full and exciting programme of events is in place including the fourth 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

Bell ringing continues to thrive in Ludlow. In 2025 the band had 18 ringers, including one new member and two learners who are being trained under the ART (Association of Ringing Teachers) scheme. Two experienced Ludlow ringers are teaching them using the simulator which the PCC helped to finance in 2022 and one learner was awarded an ART Level I certificate in bell handling.

The tower is very active at district level, with five of the eight Church Stretton District Officers in 2015 being Ludlow ringers. Noteworthy ringing achievements in 2025, performed by the local band, sometimes with support from other local ringers, included: a special 'date touch' of 2025 changes of Stedman Caters composed by one of our ringers Paul Marshall and rung on 1 January 2025; a quarter peal rung half-muffled to mark Good Friday and as a farewell compliment to Reverend Prebendary Kelvin Price; general ringing to celebrate the 80th anniversary of VE Day and half-muffled general ringing on 11 November 2025 for Armistice Day.

Nine bands visited Ludlow to ring our bells including the Ancient Society of College Youths who rang a full peal of Cambridge Surprise Royal in memory of Chris Kippin, a Cleobury Mortimer ringer and College Youth and a band from Hemel Hempstead who ring a full peal of Verulamium Surprise Royal.

Members of the St Laurence band of ringers support service ringing at St Peter's, Stanton Lacy and St Mary's, Bromfield. On Wednesday, 30 April 2025, a contingent of Ludlow ringers joined Ross-on-Wye ringers for Kelvin Price's installation at Ross-on-Wye. Members of the band rang for the wedding of Jade Priddy, member of the St Laurence Choir, and Luke Henson on 12 April.

Neil Pirie

d. Celtic Prayer – An Evening Liturgy

We have held eleven Celtic prayer services over the year. The average attendance is 15 people. We have regular attendees from a variety of churches and nearly always have a number of visitors who attend after seeing the poster on the door.

There are five leaders of these services, from several local churches within and beyond Ludlow. Our services are quiet and reflective, with times of silence. We usually join together to sing a Taizé chant and there is the opportunity to light tea lights in our time of prayer. All are welcome.

Caroline Culley (Licensed Lay Minister)

e. Children and Young People

The children's area in the north aisle is kept stocked with toys, puzzles, books and drawing materials, and is used extensively during the week by families visiting the church and Icon Coffee. The regular Sunday morning congregation currently includes only two young people (8-18) and two children (5-8). Visiting families with children are directed to the children's area and/or are offered activity bags. All are invited to wave worship flags at points during the service and to follow the retiring procession. Without an increase in numbers more organised activities are not feasible.

Sandi Burley

f. Church tours

Tours continued to be offered at St Laurence's, bookable via the Parish Office online or by telephone.

A new process for charging was formalised by February 2025 and, with the cooperation of Broadmill, a facility to pay in the shop was introduced, thus reducing administrative processes for the Parish Office in relation to invoices, or chasing late payment etc. No charges are made for children aged under 16 years.

Initially nine people offered their time to facilitate the tours but by the end of the year, due to various personal issues, that number had reduced to six, all of whom are volunteer church stewards. The contribution of the guides is invaluable, providing a warm welcome and knowledgeable information for visitors, whilst also earning income for the church. Anyone interested in becoming a church tour guide is encouraged to contact Eric or Wendy Griffiths. Your help and interest would be most welcome and guidance would be offered in the early stages. You do not have to be an historian; simply an enthusiast.

Between January and December 2025, guided tours were provided for 199 visitors, who formed 13 groups, an increase over 2024 (+75 people; +2 groups as recorded). Commercial tour

operators visiting the church to facilitate their private tour businesses, are charged in accord with agreed policy.

St Laurence's church enjoys a 5-star rating in Simon Jenkins work, *England's Thousand Best Churches* and is listed among the top eighteen across the country. According to the internet, the church scores 4.7 in its Ludlow 'attraction' rating, actually surpassing the castle (4.4).

Such popularity amongst visitors is aided by the dedication and hard work of our tour guides:

"Volunteer staff are accommodating and well-informed... guided tours with rich insights... stunning stained glass and historical depth." reviewbritain.com – 2025

Eric and Wendy Griffiths

Guided Tour Organisers

g. Christian Aid

We continued to support Christian Aid in 2025 as active members 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 -

- Two Lent lunches were held, both in St Laurence's, one hosted by St Laurence's and one by the Methodists, raising £2391.31, 65% more than in 2024.
- We held our customary two retiring collections for Christian Aid, raising £1712.00 in Christian Aid Week and £432.72 at Harvest Festival. A special collection for Myanmar made £562.10.
- The annual coffee morning raised £1619.75, 20% up on 2024. Icon Coffee again donated all the coffee and we are hugely grateful to Anthony Shuster and Broadmill for all their assistance.
- The December street collection with carol singing raised £848.00, a very slight increase on 2024, and donations at the Living Nativity amounted to £122.50
- With various other donations the amount raised in the year was £8072.68 with an additional £575.39 generated through Gift Aid, giving a grand total of £8648.07, a considerable increase over 2024

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

The Conservation Trust for St Laurence's continues to raise substantial sums from regular supporters, occasional donations, fundraising events and, this year, some significant bequests from lovers of the church. Events in 2025 organised by a new Events Group included a summer garden party, autumn lectures in the historic Palmers Hall, a Christmas party held with the Civic Society in the church and the popular Palmers Quiz at the Brewery. Further sums were raised from text and QR code giving and Easyfundraising.

These funds have allowed the Trust to make grants of £90,000 to the church this year: nearly £14,000 to repair breakages in the southeast and north transept windows caused by vandalism and to install protective mesh to the outside to prevent further damage; and over £76,000 towards the exterior stonework repair and restoration work. This will continue through 2026 with a further £45,000 already committed to completing the programme.

Our funds in hand now stand at £225,000, a reflection of our commitment to hold a substantial sum in hand to contribute towards the conservation of the East Window and the Ten Commandment Window. We await developments on this in consultation with the Church. In 2025 we recruited a paid secretary. Our nine trustees met quarterly to review progress, agree on grant-funding and plan events. Re-invigoration of the Trust information stand in the Church is now a priority. We continue to seek additional volunteers to contribute to the work of the Trust.

Karen Raymond Blake, CTSSL

i. Contemplation

The Contemplation Group - now in its twelfth year - meets weekly on Wednesday morning for a short time of silent meditation. We are grateful to Helen Blyth for extending a welcome to all who wish to attend.

The Group is ecumenical and informal, gathering just before 10.30am for half an hour of contemplation and sharing coffee and fellowship afterwards.

For further information please contact:

Helen Blyth 01584 875 041

Liz Gardner 07864 918 215

Liz Gardner

j. Fairtrade

St Laurence has been a Fairtrade Place of Worship since 2010. To be awarded that status a church, mosque or synagogue has to commit to use Fairtrade products in its regular activities – we always use Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar after Sunday services - ensure that the congregation is aware that the products are Fairtrade and promote Fairtrade at Fairtrade Fortnight or at other points in the year with events, stalls etc.

For most of the 16 years since St Laurence's gained Fairtrade status Penny Bridstrup has led a team organising Fairtrade stalls twice monthly after the main Sunday service, holding Big Brew events and promoting Fairtrade Fortnight and playing an active part in the work of the Ludlow Fairtrade Town group. Whilst awareness of and support for the principles of Fairtrade remain high the increasing availability of Fairtrade goods in shops, supermarkets and online have meant that Sunday morning sales have been falling.

In 2025 Penny decided, reluctantly, that the time had come to wind down operations and we had a big 'Final Fling' in September celebrating 16 years of Fairtrade stalls. We will retain our Fairtrade status, using Fairtrade products for church events, promoting the movement and supporting Fairtrade initiatives in the town.

k. Fellowship groups

The seeds sown by Kelvin when he hosted a small group at the Rectory for bible study (the first such at St Laurence's for some years) really flourished in 2025. We saw an exciting increase in people at all stages of their faith journey seeking to share their experiences, explore and learn more. We now have five groups meeting regularly during the week.

Monday Group led by Caroline Culley

Over the course of 2025 we studied 'Return of the Prodigal Son' by Henri Nouwen, John Pritchard's 'Twenty Questions Jesus asked' and 'Walking backwards to Christmas' by Stephen Cottrell. The books have all been very different from one another and have led us to having some really interesting discussions. We feel our knowledge of the bible has increased and we look forward to learning more over the next year. We meet in someone's home on Monday mornings. We have room for a few more people. Please get in touch if you would like to join us.

Caroline Culley

Tuesday Group led by Paul Kemp

Our first fellowship group, which grew out of Kelvin's house group, continued on Tuesdays at Stephen House in 2025. With a large and varied core membership, we met for a simple meal and conversation, which included topics such as the day's lectionary reading or the previous Sunday's sermon. We also spent some weeks looking at the book 'God on Mute' by Pete Greig. Later on in the year, due to being in the lovely position of an increase in numbers putting pressure on space, other groups began, some meeting at Stephen House. After a short break in the summer, we recommenced the Tuesday group, looking at the book 'Practicing the Way', by John Mark Comer.

Paul Kemp

Wednesday group led by Lily and Nick Hingston

The Wednesday Fellowship group started in late summer 2025 when the Tuesday group led became too large and needed to 'multiply', and in response to new enquirers seeking guidance on how to read / study the Bible. Meetings were in Stephen House from 6pm to 8pm, starting with a simple meal, attended by up to 11 people and using Bible Society's 'Bible Course'. We see ourselves as a small 'family' unit of the church. Some members are new Christians, eager to learn more about the faith. It has been so encouraging to see a growing awareness of God at work in our lives in all kinds of ways.

Eileen Padmore

Thursday Men's Bible Study led by Ollie Atkins and Nick Hingston

The group (which we call 'The Forge') has about a dozen members, who meet on Thursday evenings at 7.00pm in Stephen House. Meetings begin with a meal before bible study following a recognised course, or preparation for the following Sunday service theme, and prayer. The group aims to be a mutual support for members and there is a strong sense of belonging to the wider family of St Laurence's.

The group is available to any man with an interest in learning more about the Bible and deepening their Christian faith. Young men with no Christian faith introduced to the group are now regular members of St Laurence's congregation. We are very fortunate to have the wisdom of the Revd John Burley as a regular member.

The group recognises that men (particularly young men) have certain difficulties and issues in today's world and feels that Christian support in a male environment can be valuable for their wellbeing.

Andrew Padmore

Shema led by Eileen Padmore

The Shema prayer craft ministry started in March 2025 with the aim of making things for people with love and prayers. The group started small and is growing slowly and organically. We meet twice a month in a variety of venues (Stephen House, Icon coffee shop, own homes) to share and pray for our creations and encourage one another. The crafts practised include knitting, crochet, calligraphy, wood carving, patchwork and writing.

Examples of our work are: prayer shawls to celebrate baptisms, births and weddings and to comfort those going through a difficult time; emotional support chickens for those in care homes, particularly those with dementia; handmade calligraphy cards; a carved rosary; and a prayer rug with Christian symbolism. Prayer shapes are requested and used in our pastoral care ministry. They have been used in street evangelism and in Ukraine.

Eileen Padmore

I. Handbells

The Ludlow Handbells team is a small, tight-knit but very friendly and supportive group which has been playing together for several years. Knowing each other and each other's skills well allows the team as a whole to produce the best results.

We practise on Tuesday evenings in the choir vestry, an enjoyable experience in itself but are often learning and rehearsing for public performances, which can be challenging but always satisfying. As has been our custom in recent years we played in July for one of the summer lunchtime Chancel Concerts. The following month we had the sad honour of playing at the funeral of Thelma Ayre, a long-time member of the handbells team. Later in the year we played for St Laurence's Winter Fair, the Ludlow Cancer Support Group's Christmas party and two pre-Christmas events in Castle Bookshop Gardens. Our year culminates in the traditional ringing of carols at the start of the Nine Lessons and Carols service in St Laurence's on 23 December.

m. Langwasser Link

In April 2025 we were delighted to welcome two dear friends from the Evangelical Lutheran Paul-Gerhardt-Church (PGK) in Langwasser to St Laurence's when Joerg Gunsenheimer, the former minister of PGK, and Albrecht Roettger joined us for Revd Kelvin Price's final service in Ludlow on Easter Day. The two churches have long had close links, as part of Hereford Diocese's partnership with the Lutheran Church's diocese of Nuremberg St Laurence's with many visits made between the two congregations

Colin Weston

n. 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.

Its main purposes are:

To review (normally annually) and develop the liturgy strategy

To support those who deliver liturgy ie clergy, lay readers, servers and musicians, both staff and volunteers

To promote and foster best practice that St Laurence's may be a beacon of excellence in liturgy

To provide a forum where suggestions and queries about liturgy may be raised and addressed

This committee met four times during 2025 and discussed topics including:

- A review of the Terms of Reference for this committee
- Arrangements for Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter services
- Production of a Service of the Word booklet to be used in exceptional circumstances when there is no member of clergy present.
- Health and Safety issues over 'Darkness' services
- Being a Dementia Friendly church
- Benefice services on 5th Sundays and at other times between St Laurence's and St John's
- A new Major Services Planner has been produced covering 2025-2030
- Mothering Sunday and the Service of Light to be included on the list of Major Services.
- Arrangements for the Mayor's Civic service
- Arrangements for Ascension Day, Pentecost, Corpus Christi and the Patronal Festival
- Moving the Harvest Festival to the last Sunday in September rather than the first Sunday in October.
- Arrangements for All Saints and All Souls services
- Arrangements for the Remembrance Day services
- Arrangements for Advent and Christmas services
- Review of Pastoral Offices
- The problem over enforcing the 'No Intinction rule' was discussed

This year we had to say goodbye to Rev Andrew Body who has been an invaluable asset to St Laurence's as a whole and has brought a wealth of expertise to this committee. We are very grateful that he has offered to continue to provide us with weekly sermons for our website until we have a new incumbent.

R Franks

o. Music

This has been an unusual year for the choir, in the absence of a Rector. The interaction between clergy and choir is an important means of communicating ideas and feelings about the liturgies that take place in St Laurence's. During this time, we have been acutely aware of the importance of ensuring that the musical dimension of services in our lovely church continues as they have done for so many centuries.

Choir/Singers:

The choir of St Laurence's continues to be a well-integrated group of musicians for whom the services offer both musical and spiritual challenges and rewards.

Membership remains consistent, with a couple of new members in 2025. Nevertheless, we are always looking to welcome new members, ideally with some choral experience. While it would be very good to have children in the choir, we are dependent on regular St Laurence's families with children who might provide these singers in the years to come.

Organists:

As noted in previous annual reports, St Laurence's is most fortunate in our team of organists. Each musician brings his own particular style, and all enjoy playing in St Laurence's and are appreciative of the kindness and support that is shown by clergy, choir, and congregation alike. They are committed to St Laurence's in large part because we offer good music within a well-planned liturgy, in a pleasant and workmanlike environment where they are valued.

Service music:

a. Congregational

Across the year we have used four different congregational settings – three by modern composers, one plainsong for use in Advent and Lent. The plainsong setting has taken longer to get established, but it now sung with greater verve.

b. Choral

New music for the Eucharist has included a new choral setting by Stanford, plus new anthems by Byrd, Mozart, Ives, Will Todd, Bainton, Bach, Stainer (2), Malcolm, Croce, Elgar and an anthem for Remembrance Sunday by choir member Richard Wilkins. New music for Evensong and Matins has included new setting by Richard Ayleward, plus responses by Clucas.

Civic/special Services:

The choir sang for special services on Remembrance Sunday and for the May Fair.

Plans for 2026:

- a. To continue to explore new music for choir and congregation.
- b. To continue to provide a stability within the liturgies, especially in the absence of a Rector

Michael Oakley Director of Music

p. Pastoral Care

The Pastoral team have made individual visits to over 30 people in their own homes and in care homes during 2025. Most of these receive communion from us on a monthly basis, whilst a few receive a pastoral visit. All visits include catching up and listening to people's stories, and some include deep theological discussions. Sadly a number of people have died over the course of the year.

Our visits to Care homes continue. We see over 25 residents each month. We visit Alexandra House, Hendra, Churchill and Onny Cottage, whilst individual visits are made to residents in Four Rivers and Hagley Place. Services can include many interruptions but can still be deeply spiritual occasions.

A number of visits to local hospitals have also been made, to Ludlow residents who are patients.

We have eight members in our LPV team. We are looking for new members to join our team.

Caroline Culley – Pastoral Care Co Ordinator

q. Volunteers

St Laurence's could not function so well as a multi-purpose building – first and foremost a place of worship and prayer but also a warm and welcoming space for local residents, tourists and casual visitors, students of church architecture and mediaeval history, aficionados of fine music, families with children, connoisseurs of good coffee, cakes and fine gifts and those seeking peace and solace – without the assistance of well over a hundred volunteers. Some, like the stewards whose warm welcome sets the tone for all our visitors, have a visible presence. Others work behind the scenes or out of opening hours and are rarely seen to be acknowledged but the contribution of this largely invisible majority to the fine state of the building is immense.

An obvious example is our newest team of 'Divine Diggers' who are doing sterling work to improve the external appearance of the church and its environs. Anyone taking a stroll along Church Walk can see the difference they have made. The south aspect is unrecognisable with the former wild flower garden cleared and the area around the boiler house enclosure tidied. But they are far from alone. St Laurence's seems to be bucking the trend experienced in many churches and many other areas of 'vanishing volunteers'. As some step back having 'done their bit' others seem to appear, perhaps because it is seen as *such a vibrant focal point of the wider community*.

We are blessed that so many people will give their time on a regular basis but also step in on other occasions as required. We deem it essential to have two welcome stewards on duty whenever the church is open but if someone cannot do their usual 'slot' someone else will fill in for them. And they organise the swap themselves which is a boon to the rota coordinator!

We are extremely grateful to them all and were pleased so many could join members of the congregation, staff and the wider church community for the traditional summer hog roast in July, following the naming of the main meeting room at Stephen House in memory of our dear friend and Assistant Priest, Revd Prebendary Ann Barge.

In 2025 volunteers and Broadmill staff undertook training in fire evacuation procedures, administering CPR, using AEDs and stemming blood loss in emergency situations and were introduced to the requirements of 'Martyn's Law' the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act which requires all buildings with a capacity of more than 200 people to make provision at all times for rapid evacuation, and invacuation, in the event of a terrorist attack and the steps we have taken to allow us to secure the church building rapidly.

Lesley Harling

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

Broadmill Limited is a not-for-profit company and is not affiliated to any other company. We continued to trade successfully in 2025 as The Shop at St Laurence and Icon Coffee. We were, however, significantly negatively impacted by the increase in employers NIC without there being any similar increase in the small business employers NIC allowance.

Melanie Trappe continues to manage Icon Coffee and Sian Griffiths The Shop, taking on all day-to-day responsibilities.

We continued to support the community using local suppliers wherever possible and employing nine full and part time local employees. The majority of the cakes, quiches and soups are produced locally by Jane Lloyd, pastries are also made by a new local supplier. Our coffee roasters, Hundred House are also based in Ludlow.

Icon produced a net turn-over of just under £230k, an increase of 15%, and sold over 50k drinks and 28,000 food items while generating over £33k for the Church's mission work. The Shop continued to improve sales, increasing card and book sales to produce a net turn-over of £121k, slightly up on 2024, with over £18k going to the Church. Thus In 2025 the total contribution to the church by Broadmill was over £50k up from £45k in 2024.

We would like to thank all those who supported us throughout the year and look forward to welcoming them back again in 2026.

Anthony Shuster *Broadmill plc*

FABRIC

a. Fabric Committee report

The Fabric Committee is responsible for all the estate of the parish, comprising St Laurence's Church, the adjacent churchyard, Stephen House and St Leonard's burial ground and advises the PCC on matters relating to them. The committee reduced from six members to four during 2025; it must meet at least four times a year.

In July 2025, Stuart McLaren stepped down as chair after several years of service. Eric Griffiths replaced him.

Works to the fabric of LSL have included:

- I. Completion of repairs to hood moulds over the SE Parvis Room window (£11,067.90).
- II. Defrassing and stone replacement to the east elevations (£38,000).
- III. Mesh protection fitted to windows of the Lady Chapel and the north transept (£16,956.72).
- IV. Stone replacement to the east and north walls (£26,426.97).
- V. Repairs to vandalised windows (covered by insurance).

Such improvements (i-iv) were only achieved through the support of the Conservation Trust, for which LSL is truly grateful.

The works are most clearly exemplified by the improvements to the 13th century 'side' window in the east wall; the sills to the vestry and the string course along the north wall.

Sandstone types used in the restoration include St Bees (Parvis Room); Forest of Dean lilac (hood moulds, vestry and north aisle sills); and Howley Park (sacristy sill).

Quinquennial inspection in 2021 identified 214 issues requiring remedial works. At close of the reporting period, more than 71 had been addressed. Many remaining issues need major funding input. Work began to identify an architect for the next quinquennial inspection in 2026.

White Ensign; the conservation appeal raised over £6,000. The necessary faculty application was submitted on 17 October 2025.

New equipment included the purchase of a museum quality vacuum cleaner to facilitate cleaning delicate items such as the Comper banner and woodwork in the chancel. A battery-powered lawnmower was also purchased to tend the churchyard.

Vision Project was revisited, particularly regarding funding to pursue a new NHLF bid.

Divine Diggers, a new group of volunteers was formed to tidy and tend the churchyard around LSL and would welcome new members. Theirs has been a tremendous and much appreciated effort. Concerns expressed about the southwest corner of the churchyard being used as a 'beer garden' were considered at Fabric Committee meetings and were ongoing at year end.

Stephen House became the subject of investigation as to its mains water supply. The issue was unresolved by the end of the reporting period.

St Leonard's burial ground received expressions of concern from neighbours about trees blocking light etc. Suggested removal of the trees was considered for faculty approval.

Eric Griffiths

Chair, PCC Fabric Committee

b. Friends of St Leonard's Churchyard report

When I took over as Chairman of the Friends of St Leonard's Churchyard in June 2025 there were four pressing matters to be resolved.

- The group had no functioning bank account. After much effort this has been resolved.
- A large branch had fallen in the churchyard blocking one of the minor paths. This has now been cleared.
- The Friends had been approached by some of the residents of Merchant Court who felt that a number of trees in the churchyard next to their flats were blocking their light and feared that the trees might compromise the structure. Efforts to resolve the issue have begun.
- The churchyard had become rather unkempt. We had several successful work parties which more or less rectified this.

As usual we held a Remembrance service at one of the war graves in the churchyard on 11 November.

Clive Richardson Chairman, Friends of St Leonard's Churchyard

FINANCE

Accounts

The church had a good year, meeting its commitments on time and in full with the help of the many gifts and donations from congregation, visitors and friends.

At the end of the year the Church had a relatively healthy surplus of £33k in its general funds (used to meet regular operational expenses). Average expected outgoings each month are c£28k. Therefore, free reserves of £33k gives us a reasonable operational buffer but still does not meet the Charity Commission's target of c£80k which would give us the resilience of 3 months of operating expenses.

The free reserves are calculated as unrestricted funds, less designated funds of (£13k) and tangible assets of (£111k). The tangible assets are largely the Steinway piano, the Eagle lectern and the long lease of Stephen House. The value of these assets is depreciated each year, so this sum does not reflect the current value of these assets. The current value, which is greater, is used to ensure that we are appropriately insured.

The Church also had, at the end of the year, c£183k in restricted funds, a significant increase due largely to an increase in the donations and legacies to Stephen House. It is to be noted that these funds are legally tied up for specific uses (see below) and cannot be drawn upon by the Church for general operational expenses or occasional unforeseen expenditure, they therefore do not contribute to our overall resilience.

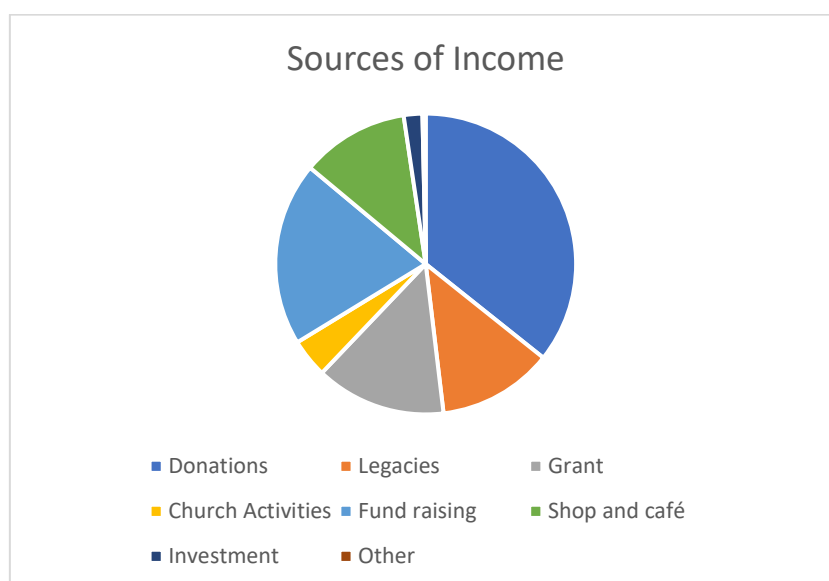
The Church has a healthy balance sheet of £342k made up of tangible assets, cash at the bank (including any money owed to us at year end) less liabilities (any money we owed at year end). This represents an increase of 28% on 2024.

Income

The Church benefits from income from a wide range of sources. These sources include Church activities, such as weddings and funerals which doubled compared to 2024. The income from fundraising events and the shop and café also increased by 9%. The greatest area of income for the Church remains donations, legacies and grants, made up of regular giving and gift aid, as well as visitor income. Donations were similar to 2024 at £153k, although legacies increased substantially, £53k this year. The accounts also reflected a grant from the Conservation Trust of c£60k which was spent within year on the fabric of the Church including the masonry and repairing and protecting the windows in the Lady Chapel.

The Church saw an increased footfall of over 98,000 this year. The footfall for last year was c90,000. This increased footfall is reflected in the increase in income from the shop and coffee shop, fundraising events and church activities. We thank all those who have visited us this year for their ongoing support as well as those who continue to give regularly.

The relative split of income sources is shown in the table below.



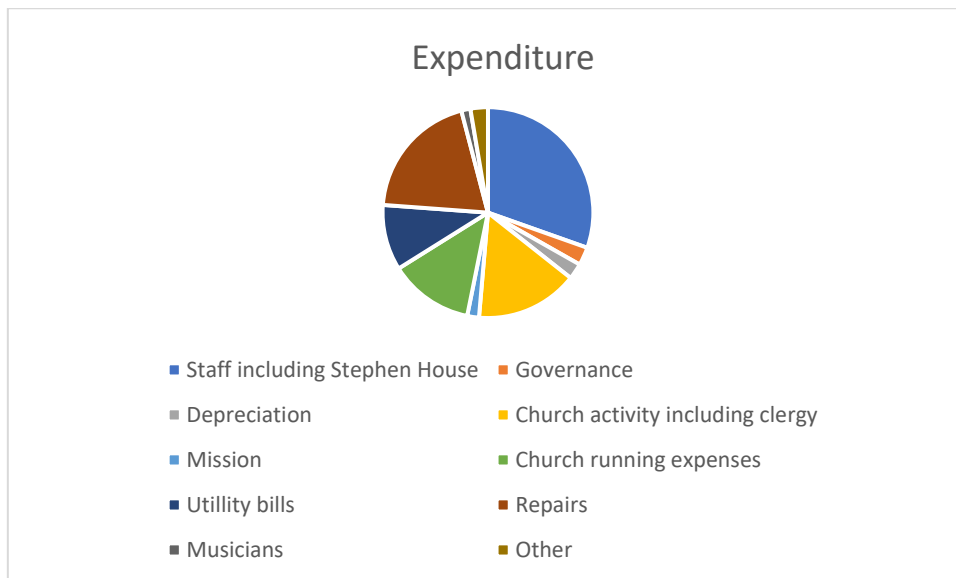
The total income for 2025 was £408k after the costs of raising funds of £20k. This is a monthly average of £34k. The costs of raising funds are related to the management of the various digital devices that help us to accept card payments and record gift aid.

Expenditure

The total costs of running the Church, including Stephen House, in 2025 were £335k. This was significantly below the costs incurred in 2024 of £490. The difference of £155k was largely down to the refurbishment spend on Stephen House in 2024. The majority of other costs remained relatively stable with any increases reflecting inflation or changes in Government policy such as NI and minimum wage.

The pie chart below shows the major areas of spend, noting that most of the repair costs were met by the grant from the Conservation Trust. We were also able to contribute c£57k as our Parish Offer to the Hereford Diocese.

In 2025 regular expenditure excluding spend on the major fabric projects was £275k and income was £348k. The difference of £73k does not reflect free reserves for the PCC, as stated above, as some of the surplus income is contained within the restricted funds therefore leaving the free reserves at £33k for this year.



Restricted Funds

There are a number of restricted funds which are usually put in place in response to a need to attract income for specific activities. The fund for the flag set up at the end of 2024 raised c £6k which will be spent on the restoration of the flag once a faculty has been approved. Other funds are reserved for flowers, bells, and arts. There are one or two funds where the object of the giving is no longer deliverable. The PCC will seek to direct these funds to support similar activities as they arise. The largest restricted fund is in place to support Stephen House.

Stephen House

Stephen House was fully operational for the entirety of 2025. The running costs, including the costs of the Local Pastoral Worker were £25k. The funding position improved during the year from £82k to £142k, this includes c£13k designated funds for art projects to support mission activities. The Stephen House mission is therefore fully funded for 5 more years.

Charitable Giving in addition to the Stephen House Mission

In 2024 the rector's discretionary fund was at the forefront of community giving. Before Kelvin left the benefice, he had directed c£3k to funding local needs in 2025. £4.5k remains in the fund ready for the next Rector.

The Church continued to give to specific national charities either through direct payments or supporting charitable events such as Lent lunches. The amount paid to these charities was £2,226. Our thanks go to all who contributed to charitable giving through the Church during the year.

Anna Dunne

Finance Manager

Parish Giving Scheme

- Number of PGS donors at start of financial year (January 2025 to December 2025) was 35
- Number of donors at end of financial year was 32
- Total giving was £31,915.17
- Total gift aid recovered by PGS was £7707.33
- Number of donors who have agreed to the annual inflationary increase was 21
- Number donors giving regularly by standing order but who have not joined the PGS was 20
- Number of people on the St Laurence electoral roll was 164

The Parish Giving Scheme, PGS for short, offers secure and simple ways for everyone to give to their chosen church. The administration is centrally funded via a CofE Church Commissioners grant. St Laurence Ludlow together with thousands of others throughout the Church of England have chosen PGS to help us manage financial gifts from our community with maximum security and minimum fuss. The PGS reduces the administrative burden of processing donations and gift aid, freeing up the Parish to focus on the management of its life and ministry.

PGS at St. Laurence's was launched in March 2021. With minor fluctuations, the number of people enrolled in the scheme has remained the same since our original roll-out. A majority of our PGS donors have generously opted into the automatic inflation increase to their donation. This increase in this reporting period was 2.8% (in accordance with the CPI) and was made on 1 June 2025. This important feature of PGS has gone some way towards combating so called 'static giving'.

At the year-end there were thirty-two people giving to St Laurence's via regular monthly PGS payments, 21 of which increased their donation using the PGS automatic feature to protect against inflation.

We can reassure members of PGS that 100% of their donations go to their nominated church, not to the Church Commissioners or the Diocese, and that their information is held by PGS under the strictest security.

For more information about PGS please contact our Parish representative Richard Wilkins (richardjwilkins@aol.com or 07901 658737). Alternatively, see the PGS website at www.parishgiving.org.uk or phone them on 0333 002 1260.

Information packs are also available near the steward's desk in church.

Richard Wilkins

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The Deanery Synod held three meetings during 2025 and the DS Service in the summer. Deanery Synod met on February 13th, May 25th and December 4th 2025. In February we heard about the many social problems affecting our area such as homelessness and addiction. This was a problem even in towns that seemed to be quite wealthy.

The Deanery Synod met for an evening service at Diddlebury Church on a beautiful summer's evening. Sadly, the attendance was not as good as one might have expected but those who did come enjoyed the service and the bountiful refreshments afterwards. Many thanks to those who provided the refreshments.

In December we learned that there were problems with the bank in accessing our small amount of funds. This will be addressed between Colin Weston and Henry Chance. Other issues raised included the Deanery Strategy (yet to be released), the on-going vacancy at St Laurence's and efforts to find a new rectory. Rev Richard Hill introduced himself and to the support that is available to retired priests and their families. This covered illness and or the death of the retired clergy. The Hereford Diocesan Clerical Charity can be contacted.

The DS decided they need more information concerning the support given to the ordinands in Tanzania and whether this was still a live subject. This will be taken forward at the next meeting.

Sue Harrison-Stone
Ludlow Deanery Synod Secretary