



archdeacons'

visitation news

Spring 2020 - issue 19

Dear Churchwardens

We started the year with around a thousand church members from right across the diocese gathering together in a series of open conversations. It was encouraging to see so many of you engaging in this process of discerning how we best shape and resource ministry in and through as many healthy and sustainable churches as possible. The questions we were wrestling with are not going to be answered with quick fixes, but rather a careful reimagining of how we are church in the Diocese of Worcester in 2020 and beyond, across the wonderfully diverse settings of the hamlets, villages, towns, cities and large urban areas of our patch, reflecting different cultures and traditions.

We had no idea back then how much the world would change in a few short months. This edition of *Archdeacons' Visitation News* is only available digitally, and we have been able to update this and one or two other articles, to reflect the different situation in which we now find ourselves.

Reimagining of how we are church has been forced upon us in an unprecedented way by the need to close all our beautiful buildings for worship in late March. As archdeacons, we have been encouraged by the way congregations have risen to this challenge, offering support and prayer remotely by phone, email and good old-fashioned post to each other and the wider community. We have been enabled to worship via online services streamed by many of our churches, and by tuning in to those on national TV and radio if computers and smartphones are not our thing. We have adapted, but it has been hard, and will remain so for the foreseeable future. And furthermore, this transition is set against a backdrop of tragic loss of lives through COVID-19. Most, if not all, of us will have been impacted by this and will be grieving in different ways.

We hope that the stories shared in this publication, all written before lockdown and the impact of a global pandemic, might serve to lift your spirits and remind you of all the church across Dudley and Worcestershire has done, and will do, to encourage life and hope in different ways.

My prayer is that we can tell similar stories well into the future as we find new ways for churches to flourish in the current context and in whatever the 'new normal' we eventually begin provides opportunity for. Thank you for all you contribute to the life of our currently dispersed churches, and may you be blessed as you serve.

Nikki Groarke



The Archdeacons of Worcester (The Ven. Robert Jones) and Dudley (The Ven. Nikki Groarke)

PRAY – LIVE – BE



When I was preparing to become Bishop of Dudley, I was asked what my priorities were going to be. Three words came straight to me as personal priorities: PRAY – LIVE – BE. Even in the midst of lockdown, I am still finding them helpful.

First of all, I need to PRAY, to have a living relationship with God at the heart of my life and woven into each day. I know I will need to nurture that sacred centre, a place of inner stillness in the midst of our turning world. I've spent most of my ministry as a Vicar, with a church with daily prayer times next door. As a Bishop, I have to make my own patterns of prayer, based at home and more in private. I know, too, that I will be fed by sharing in worship up and down this diocese, in cathedral, parish churches and chaplaincies, and I look forward very much to joining you for that.

Secondly, to LIVE. To settle into a new diocese and to begin to make a new life here. Moving house, leaving friends and familiar things behind is always a challenge for me, as I know it is for many clergy, and it's been so good to find welcome, and warmth and friendship here in the Diocese of Worcester. Thank you for that! Jesus says in John 15:4, 'Abide in me as I abide in you' and that verse can also be translated, 'Make your home in me as I make mine in you.' All of us experience movement and change in our lives, and it's good to be reminded that, in Jesus, we can always find our true and lasting home.

And finally, to BE. There will be lots of things I will have to DO as a Bishop, some fun, some less so. That is the same for all of us in our life and work. But above all, I know I will need to step aside sometimes and simply 'BE'. To BE the Child of God that I am through birth and through baptism. To enjoy God's creation and the company of friends. To pause and to know God's sustaining presence in the midst of a busy day. To BE with you in the churches and communities of this diocese as together we BECOME the Body of Christ for the sake of God's world in lives of love, compassion, justice and freedom.

May God bless you in your life and ministry. I look forward to meeting you soon.

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Catching up with our Strategic Projects

We have two projects in the Diocese which receive Strategic Development funding from the Church Commissioners: *Calling Young Disciples* and our two resourcing churches – All Saints in Worcester and Top Church in Dudley.



Calling Young Disciples (CYD)

The project has had a team change during the past year, with Clare Crew moving on and Sian Morgan joining as a Mission Enabler. Sian is from St Michael's Church in Norton, Stourbridge, and has already been part of a CYD 'Hub' learning community, so is very much 'home grown'.

To date, Mission Enablers have worked in 15 different parishes and 50 churches. These churches have seen:

- 278 new volunteers recruited
- 155 new regular worshippers
- an increased openness to trying new ideas
- an increase in confidence and skill level within the parishes.

Project Director, Ruth Walker, said: "It's great that results from the evaluation of *Calling Young Disciples* continue to be positive. The Mission Enabler model has inevitably worked better in some places than others, but overall it seems to be working."

Thanks to the project, there is evidence that families are taking small steps on their faith journey and that churches are increasing their profile in the community – for example Singing Angels in Sedgley was part of the Christmas light switch-on. In Lye, Amy Stokes has been working with the Roma community, which has seen more local people engaging with the church.

Together with Children's Officer Emma Pettifer, the CYD team has been running training to help grandparents share their faith and Helen Laird has launched 'Baptism Books', a monthly resource to help families explore their faith together. "Each month this resource takes a well-known book and uses it to explore a biblical theme through activities and prayer. It has attracted lots of interest from both within and beyond the Diocese," said Ruth.

Looking forward

The *Calling Young Disciples* project is due to end in 2022 and the team are beginning to

look back at previous placements to offer additional support. They are also working with some parishes which don't currently have any engagement with children and young people.

Ruth concludes: "Please pray for all our parishes as they continue to try to bring more children, young people and their families to a living faith in Jesus."

Resourcing Churches

Both Top Church in Dudley and All Saints in Worcester developed significantly in 2019 as they continued on their journey as resourcing churches, with the expectation that the additional resources they receive will be shared with other churches in a variety of ways.



All Saints, Worcester

All Saints continues to develop vocations from its congregation, with six people currently training for ordination and working with other parishes as part of their training. This includes Steve and Rhi O'Roarke who are currently serving at St Barnabas with Christ Church and Giles Joiner, who is gaining experience in Kempsey and helping to develop a partnership with them.

Rich Johnson, Vicar of All Saints, said: "We've spent time talking to different parishes to find out where they might need some support and it's been great to see different people come forward to help meet those needs – God has definitely had a role to play."

All Saints has also been developing partnerships with other parishes. "We were asked to visit Inkberrow over a six-month period to see where we could support their informal worship," continues Rich. "Other parishes have asked if our Director of Worship can help them and we supported the Alpha course in the Worcestershire West Rural Team. It's great to be able to help parishes and build confidence, but it's very much about collaboration – we're often learning just as much."

Building work

There have been building projects developing at both All Saints and St Helen's on Worcester High Street. All Saints has been given faculty permission to take out the pews and install a new servery and sound system. "These changes will enable us to function better as a church, but will also enable the flexible space to become a venue for the city," said Rich.

St Helen's is just going through final permission for a 12-month programme of work. The kitchen will be relocated, there will be an extension for new toilets and a glass door will be put in which will open onto Worcester high street. "It's brilliant to see things moving forward in so many different areas as our resourcing church continues to develop," concludes Rich.



Top Church, Dudley

At Top Church, the first phase of their church development was completed by Advent. Vicar James Treasure said: "Our church is already looking so much better! We have a separate area for our children's work as well as a flexible space which lets us use chairs in different formations. This year, we hope to improve our toilets and also install better AV equipment."

Throughout 2019, the congregation at Top Church has continued to grow with around 180 people attending their Christmas carol service. "Although they don't all come every week, we're reaching around 150 people, including 35 under 16s," said James.

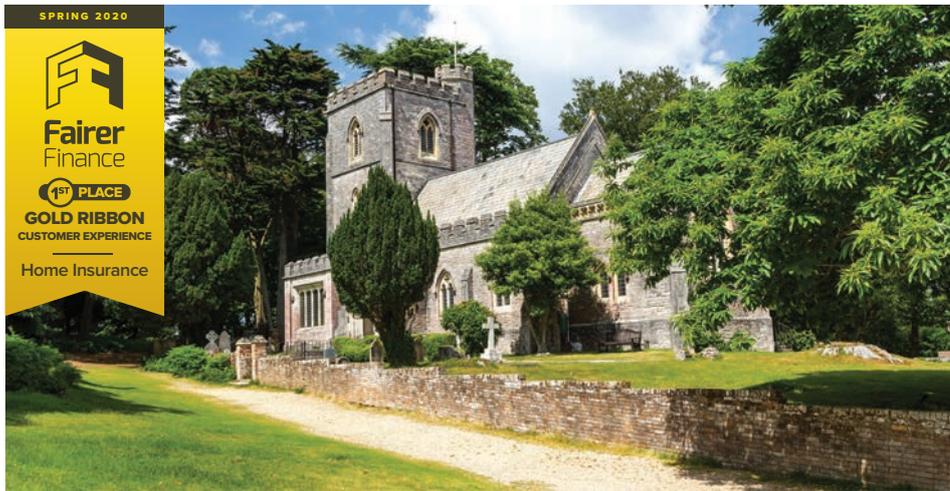
Community engagement

The Top Church team has been focussing on reaching out into the community. They have been providing chaplaincy to local charity CHADD and Pegasus Secondary School and Dudley FE college as well as building links with primary schools. They have been operating a 'Place of Welcome' in the church and are planning a toddler group.

"So far, setting up a resourcing church been a rollercoaster of an adventure, but a brilliant one!" said James. "We've been able to build a strong team and Dudley is a unique place with some great opportunities. As we move forward, we'll be looking at what might be next for our church, continuing to reach out to the community, build our congregation and begin to think about how we might be able to resource other churches locally."

We have donated more than £325,000 to churches around the UK

Trust130 is a special promotion to increase our support to local churches and their communities. It was initially introduced as a one-off giving programme in 2017 to celebrate and thank our church customers for trusting us over the previous 130 years.



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A donation of £130 may not sound much, but churches and congregations have used the donations to fund all sorts of things. From the restoration of church artworks to new sound systems, from family BBQ and fun days to new chairs to replace pews, and from structural repairs to new noticeboards and kitchen equipment, the money really does make a big difference.

There is no limit to the number of donations you can receive, so start spreading the word.

If you would like some posters or postcards to help you promote this locally, please don't hesitate to contact us on **0800 783 0130**.

If you or your church family would like to know more, or to get a quote, simply call us on **0800 783 0130** quoting **AVNEWS20** or visit: www.ecclesiastical.com/trust130

Has your church benefited from one of our Trust130 donations? We'd love to hear how the money has helped your church. Please send your story to: trust130@ecclesiastical.com

¹ Subject to terms and conditions – please visit www.ecclesiastical.com/trust130



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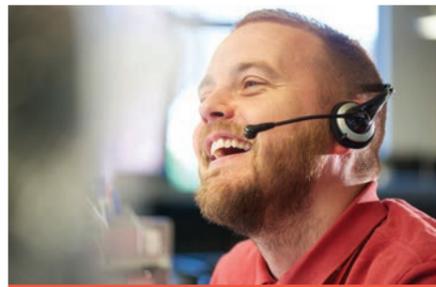
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Taking a sabbatical in 2021?

Ecclesiastical's Ministry Bursary Awards provide financial support for members of the clergy taking extended study leave, and we are now accepting applications for sabbaticals taking place in 2021. You can find out more about the Awards, check the eligibility criteria and apply on our website. Find out more: www.ecclesiastical.com/mba





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We know that managing the risks associated with church premises can be a demanding responsibility. That's why we offer a Risk Management Advice Line. Whenever you need information about managing risk, and can't find what you are looking for on our website, our experts are here to help.

We also have a preferred supplier network of market leaders in their chosen fields offering a range of risk management products and services available at preferential rates.

Call our Risk Management Advice Line **0345 600 7531** or email us at: risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com.

Please have your policy number to hand when you call. The line is open from 09:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday excluding Bank Holidays.

Information at your fingertips

More than ever, it's important to feel informed. Please also feel reassured that we continue to be here for you.

We are updating our website regularly with the latest **COVID-19** advice. The website is also a fantastic source of information from safety to security and grants to outreach, plus our products and services.

Find out more at: www.ecclesiastical.com/church

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Parish Pixels Regional winners

Show your support!

The first stage of our Parish Pixels competition is complete.

Congratulations to our nine Regional winners.

Now our judges would like your help in deciding the overall National winner. Please 'show your support' for your favourite entry by voting online at:

www.ecclesiastical.com/parishpixels

Vote now



1 Scotland

St Cuthbert's: Like the ice appears to break the window, we are a beautiful church in a broken world doing our best to live as Jesus commanded.

2 North East

St Stephen's C of E Church: We are a church family that is open and active every day to support our local community through the beautiful chaos of life and help people to discover the love and grace of God.

3 North West

Freedom Church: We may not have our own church building and we may live in an area of deprivation, but we believe that it doesn't matter where you meet to worship God, as long as you meet to worship God.

4 East Midlands

St Stephen's: We will not be beaten by metal thieves!

5 West Midlands

St Luke's: The St Luke's family has been sparkling like a diamond at the centre of the community of Kingstanding for over 80 years, shining out the love of God for all to see.

6 Wales

St Teilo's: A place for quiet reflection.

7 Eastern

St Paul's: We are open every day of the week, welcoming all, offering space, time and hospitality to our local community and beyond.

8 South East

Parish Church of St Stephen: Inspired by the angels, our choir fills our beautiful building with uplifting music to worship the Lord and feed our souls.

9 South West

All Hallows: We celebrate our faith joyfully.



Our Movement for Good awards



Ecclesiastical has always believed in supporting the causes that can make a positive difference to people's lives.

That's why we work closely with the communities we serve to tackle the issues that are important to them.

We recently launched our Movement for Good awards for 2020 – a programme designed to give £1 million to charities.¹

These awards are a way of recognising and supporting the efforts of these dedicated men and women – people who devote their energies to changing people's lives for the better.

We've opened up the awards to exempt charities so are delighted that churches can be nominated for a donation – don't forget to tick the exempt box on the registration form.

More details about the awards programme can be found on our website at: www.ecclesiastical.com/movement-for-good

¹ Please note, anyone can nominate but only eligible charities can win an award. Go to the website address above to view the full Terms and Conditions.



Do we have up-to-date contact details for you?

If you need to update us on changes to names, email addresses, phone numbers and changes to PCC members, you can do this by calling our team on **0345 777 3322**



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Another million pounds to support church youth work

Another million pounds is being made available by Allchurches Trust – owners of Ecclesiastical Insurance Group – to support churches and Christian organisations to connect with young people.



The latest round of grants took the total amount of Growing Lives funding awarded by Allchurches Trust to over £1.3 million pounds, benefiting more

than 140 projects. St Margaret's Church in Aspley, Nottingham, has a £7,000 Growing Lives grant to develop its 'Bee family' programme – an after school community group aimed at young families who live on the local estates.

With demand for grants still high, Allchurches has decided to continue the Growing Lives programme into 2020, making another million pounds available.

Allchurches Trust chairman, Tim Carroll, said: "Our Growing Lives grants programme supports a wide range of projects with young people at their heart. It's always inspiring to read about the innovative ways in which the organisations we fund are working together to meet local need and realise the power of young people to strengthen community."

Under Growing Lives, grants of up to £25,000 are available and the amount depends upon the cost of the project and the level of need in the community, ranging from 10% of project cost to 80%. Churches can apply for a grant under this programme even if they have received funding from Allchurches in the last two years, as long as it is for a different project. The programme is also open to cathedrals.

You can find out more at:
www.allchurches.co.uk/growinglives

“ St Margaret's Church in Aspley, received a **£7,000** grant to develop its 'Bee family' programme... ”

Keeping in touch

More than ever, it's important to keep in touch. We hope that you, your church and community are well and finding new ways to stay connected.

We send updates and useful advice by email once a month. If you or anyone else in your church would like to be added to the list, please visit: www.ecclesiastical.com/signup. If you no longer wish to receive them, you can unsubscribe at any time.



Church Buildings Team

The Diocesan Church Buildings Team includes Mark Carter as Church Buildings Officer and two part-time Assistants – Kate Andrew and Pat Evemy. They can help guide parishes through the process of making changes to church buildings, churchyards and ancillary buildings such as church halls.



Mark says: "Within the team we all have different skill sets and once a parish has contacted the office, we'll allocate the best person to that query – just because a parish has dealt with a particular team member previously, doesn't mean they'll deal with the same person next time."

Parishes are encouraged to get in touch when undertaking both big and small projects.

"If your PCC is starting to explore a bigger project, please contact us right at the start of the thinking process, as we can help source funding for feasibility studies for example," continued Mark. "We can also help with the recommendations that arise from a church's quinquennial inspection, assist with putting together a maintenance plan to tackle structural issues, look at the accessibility and sustainability of the church (including helping with Eco Church) and also help engage the wider community."

Help with a range of issues

The Church Buildings Team can also help when an incident has happened at the church, for example if lead has been stripped from the roof or damage has been caused due to a break-in.

Mark says: "Always deal with the emergency services and insurance company in the first instance, but also speak to our team as well as the Archdeacons' Office. In the majority of cases, temporary protection should be put in place immediately without worrying about the need for permission. Our team can advise on that, as well as help sorting out a permanent fix."

Throughout 2020, the team are offering training. Some sessions will be general, but others will cover specialist areas such as fundraising and conservation. They are also happy to organise specific training if a few churches can get together at benefice and deanery level. "If parishes have any ideas about what they'd like to be trained on, please let us know," Mark says.

Simplified faculty permissions

On 1 April, a range of changes to faculty permissions came into effect, designed to make life easier for parishes. Some matters previously requiring a faculty will now only need permission from the Archdeacon and some items which were previously requiring Archdeacon's permission now won't require any permission at all.

"This should reduce the time it needs to make straightforward changes," says Mark. "However, even if churches are doing something which doesn't need permission, I'd still suggest they speak to us as we can ensure they are getting good value from their contractors and that the work is to the best possible standard."

The Church Buildings Team are there to support parishes in whatever way they can. "Please talk to us – as often as is needed. When we're able to, we love coming out to see things in person and spending time planning with parish representatives to improve and conserve our beautiful church buildings, allowing them to operate effectively in the mid-21st century and be used by the widest number of people."

Contact the church buildings team on: 01905 732809 or churches@cofe-worcester.org.uk



Healthy & Sustainable Churches

Earlier this year, we held a series of 'Open Conversations' around the Diocese. More than a thousand people attended one of these – if you were one of them – 'thank you!'

Through these events, we explored the 'big question' as to how we can organise our resources and finances to enable as many healthy and sustainable churches as possible across Worcestershire and Dudley.

Obviously, since the start of the year, things have changed dramatically and decisions on how we move forward as a Church will need to take our current situation into account along with feedback from the conversations. Our 'big question' though, remains. It challenges each church to think about its health and sustainability. There are many different aspects to this, including:

- Whether those attending church feel they are growing in their faith, becoming Kingdom People with a real sense of journeying with Jesus.
- Whether more people are coming to faith in Christ, worshipping regularly in some expression of Church.
- Whether the church community is broadly representative of the community it serves – with people of varying ages and backgrounds.
- The extent to which the church engages with those outside it; communicating effectively with them, serving the needs of the wider community, and attracting those who are not regular attenders to events.
- The degree to which the church is appropriately able to sustain its life and ministry in terms of both human resource (volunteer and paid ministry) and financial resource.
- Whether the building is sustainable and supportive, rather than a drain on time and energy with a feeling that it would be difficult to turn around.

This is a challenging set of factors, and probably few churches would identify with all of them. The teams at the diocesan office are here to serve parishes and working out what might be done in addressing these areas. We want to help and support you as you tackle these issues, so please get in touch.

John Preston, Diocesan Secretary



Developing the Undercroft at Worcester Cathedral

The Undercroft at the Cathedral sits underneath College Hall on the south side of the Cloisters. It's the last intact monastic building in the Cathedral which has not been in regular use to date. At the beginning of last year, the Cathedral was given a £1.1 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and they have raised around £900k themselves to develop the space into a new education centre.

Dean of Worcester, Peter Atkinson, said: "It's been a long process to get to this point. Around 15-20 years ago, there were plans to turn the space into a café – we're very glad now those didn't get approved due to access concerns! Then around eight years ago, we started to think about what else the space could be used for. Our education work had developed significantly by that point, but had no proper facilities so it seemed to be an obvious choice to develop the Undercroft to give the team a permanent home."

The initial application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, although strongly supported by a range of people, was turned down. "They wanted to understand how our plans would help to make our education programme bigger and better, rather than simply providing accommodation for what already existed," continued the Dean. "We were disappointed,

but accepted the challenge and began to think about how our education programme could extend beyond primary schools."

The team looked again at the whole proposal and went back with new plans, which were accepted for future development around three years ago. Once the full grant was given, work began at Easter 2019 and is due to be finished later this year.

"We will be creating four spaces in the Undercroft, putting in a new stone floor with underfloor heating as well as stair and lift access. There will also be toilets and a small servery area. It will be the main space for school visits and can be used for a range of other education activities, but will also provide general meeting rooms that can be used by both the Cathedral and the King's School. The project has also given us the chance to find out more about a large 13th-century sculpture

of Christ in Majesty which is in College Hall. This was badly damaged in the Reformation and needs restoration and conservation as well as research into its history."

Many of the challenges faced by the Cathedral during the project are similar to those parishes might face when making changes to their buildings to ensure they are still relevant into the future. The Dean said: "It was vital that we came up with a use that continued to respect the building and its history. The Undercroft was built to be part of a religious community and the activities that it will be used for in the future will still add to our religious community.

"It was essential to have an architect who understood this and could make the space usable in a way that satisfied all the relevant authorities. In our case it was the Cathedrals' Fabric Commission, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and Historic England, as well as the Lottery Fund. There are also specific challenges when asking other people for money. If someone is giving you funding, they are entitled to attach conditions to that gift. In the end, the National Lottery Heritage Fund presented us with a good challenge – it enabled a better final outcome. It's important that they ask what any project is contributing to the life of the wider community. Churches should be ready for those challenges."

The Dean also says that it's not just the larger funders who are important. "We have to work hard to communicate with all donors. They want to know what's happening and that their gift was worthwhile."

He concludes: "At the end of the day, any building is better for being used than not. We all have a responsibility to preserve the historic fabric of our country, but not if it means that the building can't be used. This is especially important for our churches which are at the heart of their communities. The majority of people understand this, so don't give up with a project that you know will make a difference and help more people to experience the love of God."

The progress of the Cathedral's Undercroft project can be followed on their dedicated Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/WorcUndercroft/>

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