



St Leonard's Church

Chesham Bois

Annual General Meeting

To include Vestry meeting and
Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2024

The Parish Centre, Glebe Way, Chesham Bois, HP6 5ND



Agenda & Minutes

Reports from Parish Organisations

For the Year Ended 31st December 2023

Rev'd Laurie Clow

Sam McEwen – Ali Greenhalgh – Katie Flory

Registered Charity Number 1134113





CONTENTS

Vestry Meeting Agenda	Page 1
Minutes of Vestry Meeting 17th April 2023	Page 1
Annual Parochial Church Meeting Agenda	Page 2
Minutes of Annual Parochial Church Meeting 17th April 2023	Page 2
Reports from Parish Organisations	Pages 4 - 18



VESTRY MEETING AGENDA

1. Welcome and Opening Worship
2. Apologies
3. Confirmation of 2023 Vestry Minutes
4. Election of Church Wardens: Sam McEwen and Ali Greenhalgh

MINUTES OF THE VESTRY MEETING HELD ON 17th APRIL 2023

Present: Laurie Clow
28 members on the electoral roll

Apologies: Fred and Jeanne Clayton, Jonny Somervell, Alan and Jane Lewis, Steve and Juliet Brown, Ali Clare, Ruth Dunn, Gilly Hafner, Bekki Hadley, Paul Evans

1. **Welcome and Opening Worship:** Chris Clare opened in prayer, and Laurie then led the meeting in worship. Laurie also mentioned that it would be Chris' last APCM at St Leonard's. He also stated that although anyone was welcome to attend, only members of the electoral roll were eligible to vote.
2. **Present and Apologies:** as above.
3. **Minutes of Vestry Meeting held on 11th April 2022:** Taken as read and approved.
Proposed: Choi van Rest **Seconded:** Cathy Baldwin **Unanimous**
Abstentions: None
4. **Election of Church Wardens:**

Nominee	Proposed by	Seconded by
Sam McEwen	Ruth Leach	Alice Somervell
Alison Greenhalgh	Cathy Baldwin	Diana Wright

Sam and Alison were elected by **unanimous** decision to serve as Church Wardens for the next 12 months.
5. **Thanks to the Outgoing Church Wardens:** Laurie thanked Cathy and Choi for all their hard work during their time as church wardens especially during Covid.
6. The vestry meeting was closed.



ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Confirmation of 2023 APCM minutes
3. Correspondence
4. PCC reports:
Wardens' Report and presentation of Log Book of Fabric and Ornaments
5. Reception of Independently Examined Accounts
 - 5.1 Honorary Treasurer's report, as attached
 - 5.2 Present accounts as an accurate record of PCC activity
 - 5.3 Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2024
6. PCC Elections for 2024
 - 6.1 Electoral Roll Officer's Report and Election of Electoral Roll Officer for 2024
 - 6.2 Election of PCC members in addition to ex officio members and church wardens
Following to continue:
Jenni Sawyer, Tom Brewer, Gilly Hafner, Stephen Pimenta, Alan Lewis & Paul Evans
In line with APCM 2015 resolution, Peter Flory and Jackie Lambert act as ex-officio posts for qualified LLM's
To be elected for 3 years: 1 person: Paul Chiapetti
7. Reception of Reports from Parish Organisations, as attached
8. Any other business of general Parish interest to be submitted to the Churchwardens or the PCC Secretary before **Sunday 31st March 2024**

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING HELD ON 17th APRIL 2023

1. **Present and Apologies:** as above
2. **Minutes of APCM held on 11th April 2022:** Taken as read and approved
Proposed: Jill Hale **Seconded:** Jackie Lambert **Unanimous**
Abstentions: None
3. **Correspondence:** None had been received
4. **Parochial Church Council Reports**
Reports from the PCC and its various sub-committees were reported in the TAR. The Log Book was made available for perusal and reports from the wardens were read out. Laurie thanked the staff team and members of the various committees for all the work they carried out.
5. **Presentation of the Independently Examined Accounts**
 - 5.1. Katie Flory reported that the PCC have accepted the accounts which have been fully audited, and Katie presented them to all present
 - 5.2. Katie thanked Peter Flory, Ruth Leach and John Ogle for their help with the finances.
 - 5.3. Katie thanked St Leonard's for its generosity and giving, however, the next budget was likely to be a deficit one.
 - 5.4. Katie officially presented the independently examined accounts.
 - 5.5. Katie proposed Nicola Anderson as the Independent Examiner for 2023.
Proposed: Peter Flory **Seconded:** Alison Greenhalgh
Unanimous decision and there were no abstentions



5.6. Laurie thanked Peter and Katie for all their work and presented them with gifts as a token of appreciation and asked that everyone look at the accounts.

6. PCC Elections for 2023

6.1. Electoral Roll and Electoral Roll Officer

The published Electoral Roll at the church incorrectly listed 142 members as of April 2023. Another 3 members needed to be added, and it was agreed that the PCC would be authorised to correct and publish the new electoral roll in May 2023.

Proposed: Laurie Clow **Seconded:** Jenny Robinson **Unanimous**

Marian Chiappetti (helped by Ruth Leach) was thanked for carrying out her role and agreed to continue in this capacity.

6.2 PCC Nominations

Laurie said that the existing PCC members were Katie Flory, Jenny Robinson, Malcolm Hafner, Marion Campbell-Brown and Peter Flory and Jackie Lambert as ex-officio members. Ade Dunn was stepping down as PCC secretary (ex officio position).

Nominee	Proposed by	Seconded by
Jenny Sawyer	Alice Somervell	Bekki Hadley
Tom Brewer	Choi van Rest	Denise Kolb
Paul Evans	Alice Somervell	Ruth Leach
Gilly Hafner	Choi van Rest	Ruth Leach
Stephen Pimenta	Alison Greenhalgh	Choi van Rest

Unanimous decision and there were no abstentions.

Paul Evans agreed to liaise as Youth representative until a replacement is found.

7. Reception of the reports from Parish Organisations

Laurie encouraged everyone to read the different reports about all aspects of our church life. He then thanked Chris and Ali for their faithful serving at St Leonard's (49 years) and how Chris has been a brilliant number two during his time here. Laurie mentioned that Chris has a real prophetic gifting, and his preaching had really taken off in the last year or so. He sensed a new season for Chris and Ali. Chris responded by saying how much of a wrench it was to be leaving St Leonard's but he was convinced that it is where God is calling him. He affirmed Laurie in his walk with Christ, and for Laurie and Wendy to keep taking risks as they follow the Lord.

8. Any Other Business

Choi gave thanks for all that Laurie and Wendy have given to St Leonard's and its members especially during the difficult period of Covid and the changing of the services.

9. In Conclusion

Wendy closed the meeting in prayer.



RECTOR'S REPORT

Well, 2023 *has been* a year for our church fellowship. Since lockdown, churches throughout the country have hit difficult times, some immediately or others like us weathered the initial storm to only face the same issues later. So many have moved from us; many as they relocate for family or work reasons, many as they have been called home to glory and some as they have decided that our pattern of worship or vision was not for them.

Wendy and I were grateful to spend the first three months of the year on Sabbatical, connecting with the Portals at the Tree of Life - do ask Laurie about Richard from Zimbabwe - and returning to the UK refreshed and renewed in our vision. We were not expecting what was waiting for us on our return. Chris and Ali Clare responded to the Lord calling them to be with all their family in Sheffield. Wonderful obedience, but I miss their wisdom, insight and leadership everyday - not to mention their friendship and personal support for me.

Finances began to be an issue and we realised that Maryland was becoming increasingly untenable. We worked hard to find solutions but we had to take the deeply painful decision that it would have to close. We announced this in July but gave everyone a term's notice to try to soften the impact of the closure. We also took the decision to leave the Beacon School and for the sake of unity return the main family service to the Church building. This meant that we had to juggle the service times - not a popular move for some. We moved to the new pattern out of revelation and desire to promote unity - the financial saving afforded us by leaving the Beacon was not a motivating factor, just a very handy coincidence as it transpired that losses from the cost of the Maryland closure mounted up. The summer was a difficult time for me personally and the unsympathetic press coverage of the Maryland closure should have been an indicator to me of what was to come.

We continued on with our Parish Centre redevelopment project and as the time for our application became due so all hell broke out. To see Wendy's picture on the front of the local press, while she was on a mission trip to Burundi was deeply painful. To encounter members of our wider community who were believing the narrative in the press that was 99% lies and "misinterpretations" was shattering. The only spiritual organisation I have been a member of is the Church of England - I have never thought of this as a cult! The language that seemed to offend was that of St Paul not the preacher and I will never be ashamed of the Gospel and the words of Scripture - I will defend them and my Saviour with my last breath... ..and then personal bereavement with the passing of Wendy's Dad just before Christmas.

BUT

In the midst of all this I want to honour some people - ALL OF YOU HERE AT ST LEONARD'S
You have been utterly awesome. Hugs from so many of you - especially that painful Sunday in October. Kind words at just the right time. Prophetic words that strengthened at my wobbliest times. Reminders of previous revelation that encouraged me to persevere. Cards to encourage, flowers to cheer, WhatsApps to counter the lies. Conversations to make me smile and sometimes laugh out loud. You have been modelling the Kingdom of Jesus to me and Wendy - THANK YOU all so much. All this without mention of the first three months of 2024 - this for next year!



Choi and Cathy had it hard during the Pandemic - thanks to them for their amazing work and continued friendship (Cathy & Neil have joined the Elders and Choi is SOE [ask her!]) BUT Sam and Alison have had a baptism of fire, facing controversies locally and nationally and having to learn the reality of church politics very quickly. They are awesome and I cannot be more grateful for them. Ade Dunn has done so much on PCC and now is resting - thank you my friend, especially for the sneaky beers at the Mad Squirrel. Thank you again to Gilly Hafner for picking up these reins so effectively and efficiently. Thank you to Peter Flory and Jackie Lambert for LLMing and leading the new 8.30am service. Thank you to Ruth, Bekki and congratulations to Jonny & Alice - Welcome Abigail.

We have to mark a huge milestone though - Chris may have managed 49 years (7x7 - a perfect Jubilee as Peter pointed out in July) but Peter and Katie have been actively serving this church for longer. Katie has been treasurer for 16 years. Wow! She has done this full of faith and surprised me 8 years ago when I arrived, in her approach to spending and the Lord's provision. About 7 years ago she suggested that she might want to stand down but a couple of people we thought might take up the reins kept moving away, so Katie kept on keeping on. She has been a friend, a partner in our vision and sometimes a poker - poking me to take the riskier option and reminding me that Jehovah Jireh. When we seed tithed the building project and sent the money to pay for the new flats for the Portals, she was excited. A huge thank you to Katie from me for the last eight years and from all of us for the previous eight as well - not to mention all the other stuff you have done, continue to do and I hope will do in the future. You (and Peter!!) are part of our foundations; you held on to the Gospel and the truth of Jesus when the church was not necessarily known for that. You helped bring those changes and you have been at the forefront of the flourishing of St Leonard's over the years. You may not be treasurer but my prayer is that you will continue to walk with us into the future season of flourishing and you will see the building completed that you were part of dreaming for back in the 80s!!!!

Read the reports, we are still a vibrant Gospel community. We are focussed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. His Spirit will lead us. We are a courageous and prophetic family who will see the breakthrough of the Kingdom of Jesus in and through our lives.

"Thanks be to God who gives us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" 1 Corinthians 15.57

Laurie Clow - Rector

RESPONSE FROM THE WARDENS

2023 was a year of significant change for St Leonard's. The year began with Laurie and Wendy having departed for a much needed and long overdue sabbatical with the hope of restoration and uninterrupted time alone with the Lord. We were left in the very capable hands of Chris Clare who navigated us through the first few months of the year before sharing that he felt the Lord was calling them away to Sheffield once Laurie returned at the end of March. So, it is not without a degree of sadness that we say a huge thank you to Chris and Ali Clare for contributing to the life of St Leonard's and the local community in more ways than we can list over 49 years! We finally bade them farewell in early July with many former members coming back to a celebration event in the Rectory garden.



At the end of May, responding to the Lord calling us to unity, we left The Beacon School. We would like to thank The Beacon for providing our family service with a home for nearly 13 years before we moved forward into the church for our next season. The new Sunday service pattern of 8:30am and 10:30am (and fortnightly Encounter services at 7:00pm) began with the aim of encouraging the whole church to move forward together as one, irrespective of the service attended. We especially thank Jackie, Peter and Katie for their leadership and support for the 8.30am service and all those who have kindly been involved providing refreshments after services - your work does not go unnoticed.

Alongside the departure of Chris and Ali, there were a number of other leadership changes. We thank Choi Mei Van Rest and Cathy Baldwin for their excellent service as Church Wardens until April 2023. At the APCM, Sam McEwen and Alison Greenhalgh took up these roles. Cathy and Neil Baldwin joined the Eldership in April, later joined by David and Rachel Phillips in September. We are grateful for the time and energy given to the church by all those in leadership in so many ways enabling church life to function. We appreciate the commitment and faithfulness of the PCC members who so prayerfully consider decisions large and small for the operation of the church. Special thanks to Adrian Dunn for several years of service as PCC Secretary and to Gilly Hafner for stepping into the role from April. We remember Jenny Robinson for her service and well thought contribution on PCC prior to her sudden death in June.

Bekki continues to deliver excellent children's work through regular Junior Church sessions and Family Fun Days reaching well beyond the church membership. We are so grateful for her creativity and unwavering energy and commitment to the children and families. She has been able to seamlessly adjust to new surroundings in Chesham Bois School every Sunday - we thank you Bekki! In addition, we thank her amazing volunteer team for pouring into the children and giving so much of themselves week in, week out and during school holidays. We are grateful for the support of Chesham Bois School enabling us to use their facilities on Sunday mornings.

Youth work has continued to thrive under the leadership of Alice and Jonny in the early part of the year, together with Paul, James, David and Denise. Thank you for mentoring, teaching, guiding, running Sunday breakfasts, evening sessions and giving of yourselves to support our young people throughout the year. A special thank you for giving your time for residential weekends and Limitless in August. You are an amazing team!

We are extremely grateful for our superb office team led by Ruth - thank you for keeping us all organised! We congratulate Alice and Jonny on the birth of their beautiful daughter Abigail in November and recognise the additional work Ruth has taken on during Alice's maternity leave.

December sadly saw the closure of Maryland Pre-School Nursery, after many years providing an outstanding pre-school provision to the community. This was not a decision taken lightly by PCC. We would like to thank the amazing staff and management committee who made Maryland such a special place throughout its life.

A second Planning Application for the Parish Centre was submitted during 2023 and heard at the Planning Committee in October with the decision deferred as the Councillors wanted more information on the impact on the Beech Woods at Ashridge (a Special Area of Conservation). The decision was due to be made at a closed meeting in December but this was cancelled, so the year ended without a decision.



Finally, we are immensely thankful to Laurie and Wendy - their faithful commitment to the gospel in good times and bad is such a powerful witness to us as a fellowship. We uphold them, stand alongside them and ask that you please continue to pray for them, the wider leadership and our church family as we move forward.

Sam McEwen and Ali Greenhalgh – Churchwardens

WARDENS' REPORT ON THE FABRIC AND CHURCH PROPERTIES

During March, in both the Church and Parish Centre, there was a fire extinguisher service and the gas boiler also underwent servicing.

In the Church, the previous Church Wardens Smart Watered all items of value (silverware plate, cups and sound equipment) in January 2023. The faulty gas valve on the boiler was replaced in January. During June, the church clock was repaired.

In the Parish Centre, we undertook piano tuning in November along with PAT testing which included the church office electrical equipment. The Fixed Electrical Survey took place in April. During the year, repairs were made to the boiler.

The Church continues to use 19 Stubbs End Close (Amersham) under Licence form the Chiltern Christian Trust.

Thank you to the Property and Fabric Committee and Office Manager for overseeing these property matters.

Sam McEwen and Ali Greenhalgh – Churchwardens

PCC TREASURER'S REPORT

In 2023 both income and expenditure in the General Fund decreased, resulting in a net deficit in the General Fund. The giving to our Mission partners has been sustained, however, we have not met all our costs.

In 2023 we underpaid our Parish Share to the Diocese due to lack of available funds.

We have paid less rent for the Beacon as we moved the 10.30am service into the church from the Summer term. We made substantial redundancy payments as well as covering a deficit on the closure of Maryland at the end of 2023.

In 2023 the PCC spent £17,823.30 on the Parish Centre development project and received gifts of £6,500.00 for the project.

Our Lord and Father is generous to us and many within the church family have continued to reflect that generosity in their giving. The budget for 2024 acknowledges a need to reduce our expenditure and to pray for provision for the work here.



Simplified accounts for the General Fund, the Parish Centre Development funds, Maryland, Mission and the Parish Centre are available as a separate appendix to this document.

Thank you to those who support me in my role, especially Ruth Leach, Alice Sommervell and Peter Flory.

Katie Flory – Treasurer

SAFEGUARDING

The Oxford Diocese have a very organised and thorough safeguarding team thanks to the leadership of Louise Whitehead. We work closely with this team and it has enabled St Leonard's to enhance their application to all things Safeguarding. I am incredibly grateful to the hard work and diligence of Sam McEwan and now Marion Cambell-Brown as administrators of our safeguarding policy in alliance with Oxford Diocese.

The PCC has complied with the duty to have 'due regard' to the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance, and does this by following the Diocese of Oxford Safeguarding policy and training guidance.

The PCC works closely with the PSO by having a designated safeguarding representative - Sam McEwan for the first half of this year and then Marion Campbell-Brown from September 2023. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at PCC meetings, and the Diocese has provided parishes with a new online safeguarding hub and dashboard to assist us with keeping up to date with our requirements. We have been commended on our use of these tools and recognition of the importance of safeguarding. There are now standard procedures and online safeguarding training modules for volunteer and paid roles within the church.

We thank everyone for their cooperation in helping us to make sure that we cover our responsibilities in this very important area.

Denise Kolb - Parish Safeguarding Officer

ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT

The Electoral Roll at the end of March 2024 stands at 101 members.

The changes are made up of the following:

46 members removed from the roll due to:

- 39 worshipping elsewhere
- 1 moved away
- 6 deaths

0 new members have been added to the roll.

Marian Chiappetti – Church Electoral Roll Officer



WORSHIP AT ST LEONARD'S

2023 was a difficult year for worship. By the start of year, two of our worship leaders had left or weren't serving which left just Laurie and I with the worship leading responsibilities. This was particularly challenging for me whilst Laurie was on sabbatical and for Laurie whilst I underwent surgery and recovery. A few musicians also left us over the course of the year.

In May we left the Beacon and our services changed to 8.30am, 10.30am main service and Encounter.

It was fantastic to see many of the young people return from Limitless on fire for God and keen to become involved in worship at church. In the autumn term, the young people started to play and sing more in the worship team. As we move into 2024, I'll be running Youth Worship jams regularly to encourage the young people in their musical gifts, to give them the opportunity to learn different instruments and to teach them what it means to worship.

As 2023 drew to a close, I was encouraged to see a couple more church members attending Encounter on a regular basis.

Jonny Somervell – Worship Pastor

PRAYER AT ST LEONARD'S

It has been an awesome privilege to pray for people and see God set them free from strongholds through Freedom Prayer over this year. I love witnessing the transforming and healing power of the Holy Spirit, not just during prayer appointments, but in their lives afterwards. I love seeing people recognise their original design and begin to walk in who God made them to be.

Here is an awesome testimony from Charlotte Archer:

"The Living in Freedom teaching has been a powerful resource for me personally. Before the teaching, I lacked faith in some areas of my life and walked in insignificance, often struggling to hear God clearly, to pray out loud, to pray for others. I didn't really understand all the gifts God had already given me. The revelation I have received through Freedom Prayer, this year and in previous years, always resonates and goes deeper than I am able to when praying alone. Looking back, I can see how Freedom prayer has set me free of some of the things that "entangle", such as the insignificance and unbelief and has enabled me to hear God much more clearly. From struggling to pray for others and feeling uneasy praying out loud, I am now on the prayer team and have the privilege to pray for others. God even blesses and encourages me when listening in prayer for others. It's such an encouragement when the words or pictures that God gives me, make sense to the person I am praying for, even when sometimes they make no sense at all to me!"

This year, we have delivered 76 prayer appointments, and provided 20 Original Designs by email for the visiting Swedish Youth Team last Easter. People's relationship with Father is deepening and there is greater experienced freedom. This then feeds in corporately to St Leonard's.



In October, I gathered the prayer team to build unity, encourage and inspire them and for us to pray for each other.

In November, Laurie responded to revelation in launching Watchman Prayer Evenings. This is a chance to go on to the ramparts like Habakkuk, to keep watch like Nehemiah's builders, to proclaim, to battle and to intercede for all that the Lord is calling St Leonard's into: a new place of breakthrough - new births in the Kingdom, healing, finances and building plans.

If you would like to book a prayer appointment at a time that suits you or discuss Freedom Prayer or any other prayer needs, then please contact me at prayer@stleonardscb.org.uk.

Ruth Leach – Prayer Team Coordinator

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

It has been great to see our children grow in their faith. On average we have about 7 children each week (ages between 4-11). We provide a creche, creating a warm and welcoming area, previously in the Beacon School and now in the Birkett room at Church. Though this is only sporadically used.

Since the relocation from the Beacon, Junior Church meets at Chesham Bois School; the children have adapted well to the new environment. We join in with worship as a church family and then walk down to Chesham Bois School together.

Interactive discussion and Bible study form the majority of our time together, we have explored a variety of different biblical themes. The children enjoy reading the bible together and then discussing the meaning of the verses and we often watch a short cartoon video. We use creative prayer which helps the children to connect with God, talking and listening to God. We explore different ways to pray and help the children realise they can pray anywhere and anytime. Our craft activities are connected to prayer or to the bible teaching

At Christmas the children helped to lead our Family Celebration. It was great to see the children's engagement and excitement about planning, leading and being part of the service. The children loved being fully involved in planning the service, giving amazing ideas which formed the majority of the service.

Fun Days

The Lord has used our Fun Days to reach out to families who don't attend church, building relationships by providing organised games, food, bible teaching and crafts linked to the bible teaching. The most important part of the fun day is telling them about Jesus in a fun and engaging way.

At the end of each fun day all the children receive a goody bag with sweets, prizes and sometimes a book to remind them of the bible teaching. The parents also get a goody bag with sweets and leaflet that invites them to the next fun day.



February Half Term - Superhero party because 'Jesus is my superhero'. We had 41 people (children with their parents/carer).

Easter Fun Day and Easter Sunday - On the Easter fun day we had lots of fun doing Easter Egg Hunts, egg and spoon races and lots of other fun activities. For the teaching, we had different parts of the Easter story inside some golden eggs for the children to look inside and explore the real meaning of Easter. This was a fun way to teach why we celebrate Easter to the children and families who attended. All the families were invited to the Easter egg hunt before church on Easter Sunday. It was great to see a number of families in church on Easter Sunday.

May Half Term - 'Jesus the Real King of the World' to coincide with the coronation of King Charles. On this fun day we had 31 people (children with parents/carers) attend.

Summer Fun Days - The summer holidays were a great opportunity for outreach as the parents/carers are always looking for something to do with children.

- Schools Out - a beach party to celebrate the end of term/beginning of the school holidays. This ended up being an indoor beach party due to the lovely British weather. However, this did not stop the families from coming as we had 46 people (children with parents/carers) attend. During this event we set out water and sand pits for children to play in and enjoy and did lots of beach themed activities.
- Noah's Ark fun day - Activities included junk modelling - especially using cardboard boxes to make a big ark
- Junior Church Sports day - We had 19 people (children with parents/carers) attend
- Messy Play fun day - walking in paint, shaving foam, water and lots of other messy materials. The children made their own sandwich for lunch, decorated a biscuit, and heard teaching about Jesus. We had 19 people (children with parents/ careers) attend.

October Half Term - Light Party as an alternative to halloween. It was amazing to have the opportunity to teach about Jesus being the light of the world and what that means as the opposite to halloween. We had 19 children and parents / carers attend.

Christmas Holiday - Christmas Party which was a great opportunity to share the real reason for Christmas and do some fun crafts. It was great to have 27 children and parents/ careers come along to this fun day.

I would like to thank the amazing team who have shown God's love to those attending the fun days and poured out their love of God into the children attending Junior Church on a Sunday. If you would like to join this amazing team, either on a Sunday or for a Fun Day then please contact me on children@stleonardscb.org.uk.

Bekki Hadley – Families & Children's Worker



OPEN THE BOOK MINISTRY

Our Open the Book team started 2023 continuing to be passionate about sharing Bible Stories with the children in just four of our local schools, St Mary's Amersham, St George's, Chalfont Valley and Chesham Bois CE School. The team consists of over twenty members who come from six different churches in the locality.

The children in our schools come from many different faiths or none, but all are enthusiastic to take part and dress up as a character in the Bible story. The assembly also includes a time of reflection on the theme of the Bible Story and finishes with a prayer.

It is a great privilege to go into the schools and see the expectancy on the faces of the children. It is wonderful to hear them recalling previous stories in detail.

We pray this weekly input into these schools will enable the children to build up a knowledge of the Bible Stories.

Jackie Lambert – Open the Book Coordinator for Chesham Bois CE School

YOUTH MINISTRY

We began 2023 by finishing Alpha with both the younger and older small groups. The young people really engaged with the teaching and especially enjoyed the quality of the videos. In February we had our annual Youth Weekend Away, taking 14 teenagers and 5 team back to Rock UK. We had a brilliant time with teaching from Denise Kolb on hearing God's voice, reading the Bible and praying with others.

We continued the popular Youth Breakfast fortnightly during the 10.30am Family Celebration, and at Easter we decided to invite the half a dozen Year 6s in junior church to join us for the final term as a transition into youth.

At the end of May we saw two more of our young people make the decision to reaffirm their baptismal vows and we had a glorious morning with the service outside in the sunshine!

In June we said goodbye to Chris Clare as he moved to Sheffield with his family. Chris has always been an invaluable member of the youth team and we will miss him very much.

Perhaps the highlight of our year at St Leonard's Youth was going to Limitless Festival in August. We took 13 teenagers, 5 leaders and 2 young adults (former St Leonard's Youth) to the festival and had an incredible time. The theme of the week was 'Transformed lives transforming lives' and we heard some brilliant and challenging talks about how to let Jesus transform our lives. The young people were keen to engage with worship and prayer, and also chose to go to extra talks outside of the main sessions. The sense of community was a particular highlight and as a team we were very proud of how the young people approached the week.



Returning home to 'real life' in September the young people asked if we could use the Limitless teaching series on YouTube to carry on thinking about the teaching we'd heard over the summer. By this point we had left The Beacon on a Sunday morning and were using Chesham Bois Primary School to host Youth Breakfast.

In December, Youth joined with Junior Church to arrange and lead the Family Christmas Celebration which went really well!

In 2024, I look forward to developing the Youth Worship Jams as well as looking forward to the Youth Weekend, Church Weekend and Limitless 24! I'm so thankful for all our volunteers and I'm currently praying for a couple more people who feel God might be calling them to engage with youth work.

Jonny Somervell – Youth Leader

HOMEGROUPS

Our homegroup meets weekly in term time to grow in fellowship, pray for one another and talk about a wide range of topics. One of the highlights of the year was getting together as a small 'choir' to sing at Ali's wedding. It was a total joy to be able to worship together and to share our love for Jesus with Ali & Pat's guests at their Summer wedding.

In Autumn, we welcomed a new member to our homegroup and it has been a delight to witness friendships grow through encouragement and support. All homegroups at St Leonard's also paired up with another homegroup for weekly sessions on various aspects of Living in Freedom. In our pairing, we unpacked and discussed the material covered in Living in Freedom 1 and the sense is that the discussions arising have been useful to clarify how we live out what we have learnt. It has also been a wonderful opportunity to see other members of our church family on a more regular basis and to learn from one another and grow in fellowship.

The year was rounded off with a lovely Christmas concert by Kings Chamber Orchestra and a beautiful Christmas meal together. This occasion is always a special time for our homegroup as we come together to celebrate our love for one another and unity in Christ. Being part of this homegroup has been such a blessing in numerous ways and it has been a privilege to journey together, support one another in prayer and in practical ways and have fun along the way!

Choi van Rest – Homegroup Leader

SENIORS' MINISTRY

At our Easter Celebration in April we were delighted to welcome Cedars, the seniors' group from King's Church, who were keen to join with us once again. We had a short service which included a talk from Laurie and a testimony from Jo. This was followed by tea and hot cross buns. It was a blessing to share fellowship together.



For our summer event in July we combined forces with Cedars once more. We began with a thought-provoking talk given by Laurie. We also enjoyed a delicious cream tea. Entertainment was provided by Cedars with a fun and challenging quiz introduced by Simon Stringer and singing led by Ruth Boughton. Ruth also encouraged us with a verse from Isaiah (46.4).

At Christmas we had our annual service of Carols and Readings accompanied by Jonny on the piano. Tea and mince pies followed. We were pleased to be joined by two or three new faces from the local community. One of our regular guests wrote afterwards: "When all around is the commercialisation and gluttony of the day, it was lovely to get to the real meaning and hear those so familiar bible passages and then sing carols. I did enjoy Laurie's talks and singing. I felt blessed to be invited. Lovely tea too."

As well as events, team members have been involved in visiting and praying with a number of our seniors. This year Heaven received Anne Ellis, Jenny Robinson, Lina Waite and Robin Hale: we will miss them.

We are thankful to the Lord for Laurie and all who contribute so willingly to the ministry to seniors.

Jo Jennings and Barbara Williams – Seniors' Leaders

KINGDOM PARTNERS

The Mission Committee seeks to be led by the Lord to support others beyond the parish of St Leonard's. This includes regular giving, support in prayer, irregular and one-off giving.

Within the Mission Committee, we feel led by the Lord to support Kingdom Partners who have been St Leonard's congregation members or who have direct links with congregation members. This gives us a more intimate understanding of the blessings of the Holy Spirit and encourages both St Leonard's and our Kingdom Partners. We see unity and community manifest across continents.

During the past year we have regularly supported a range of partners both locally and abroad:

Steve and Lindsey Poulson working with CMS in Honduras
Jack and Claire working with Frontiers in North Africa
Tom and Verity working with CMS in Uganda
The Lunchbowl Network in Kenya
Pete and Sarah working at Tree of Life in Mannenberg, Cape Town
Adam Prior working at Oak Church in Stevenage

We also continued to support 3 charities: Tearfund, Foodbank and Restore Hope with occasional gifts, promotion of their work and appeals, prayer support and updates. In addition, we made a single donation to Agape Alive in India that has close links with members of St Leonard's.

During the year Tom and Verity sensed that were to return to the UK and so our funding for them came to an end.



We have supported Oak Church through COVID and beyond. At the end of 2023 we felt it right to stop our funding and they go forward with other partners.

With the changes in Kingdom Partners we have assigned more funds to existing partners to shield them from the effects of inflation over recent years.

Malcolm Hafner – Member of Mission Committee

MARYLAND PRE SCHOOL NURSERY

When we started term in January 2023, we had 23 children on roll and another expected in the next week or so.

We welcomed Arabella to the staff in February who was a great asset and later Charlotte Anning who again slotted in and contributed so much. Rachel Porter joined us on the management committee, bringing an energy and caring approach and shared her skills as a speech therapist.

Our financial situation was bolstered by the SEN funding from last year, to support our children with low & emerging needs, to cover this Spring term. We also received funding from PIP and an extra £500 from SENIF for interventions.

We saw the implementation of the lending library go from strength to strength, and our roll grow to 31 by June, 25 of whom we would expect to stay on in September 2023.

A questionnaire sent out by Bekki provided some hugely positive feedback on parental feelings about Maryland; feelings of a warm, safe, kind and caring atmosphere engendered by excellent experienced staff. They praised communication, Forest school, and other resources and events. 80% felt that they knew what their children were learning and how to support them. There were of course the usual comments about wanting extra hours, breakfast etc.

Another successful communications week was enjoyed by staff and children alike and Bucks County were keen to use some of our images for their website!

The Easter activities started with successful Easter egg hunts at Maryland, managed by staff and committee and culminating with a beautiful Easter service in Church on March 30th.

Our Forest school and gardening continue to be a great unique selling point and again Amy Lofthouse and Dawn Gould were loyal and active supporters of Forest school particularly, and provided invaluable supply help. Andrea Hayers and parent helpers also helped to support Henny in her activities. The knowledge that these young people absorbed (some only 2yrs old) from Forest school is quite remarkable.

In the Summer we had the devastating news that Maryland would close in December 2023. This obviously was heartbreaking for parents, staff and children. We are grateful to Dinah Eames and Natalie Furlong from County who met with us to see if they could help keep us going and to the parents and the Rector for all their thoughts and proposals to try and find a solution.



Our Sports day and leavers' ceremony on July 20th went ahead and proved to be a poignant and emotional event. With cake and ice creams!

Autumn term began of course with much fewer children (15 in total) as several parents had decided to remove them to spend 3 terms at new settings. Nevertheless, it was a joyful and productive term with those few children benefitting enormously from the staff who nurtured them.

We were able to produce our nativity service at the end of term, in church, and many thanks go to Peter Flory for accompanying the children as they learned and performed the songs to a packed church. Daniel produced some stunning stills for the website yet again. The staff did an amazing job.

Thanks go to all members of staff and committee who have worked tirelessly over the last 25-30 years to make Maryland one of the best settings in this area.

Andrea Hayers – Chair Maryland Committee

CESHAM BOIS CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

“Believing, Achieving and Caring Together. We place the child at the centre of all we do. We welcome all children and families. Our work is driven and inspired by our Christian values (love, thankfulness, integrity, aspiration, respect, and resilience) which are lived out on a daily basis by children and adults. Our caring, nurturing learning environment enables all children to achieve together.”

Chesham Bois School continues to deliver strong outcomes, as recognised by the end-2022 OFSTED inspection that rated the overall effectiveness of the school as 'Good', with behaviours and attitudes plus personal development all 'Outstanding'. Building on strong Christian values the school helps young people develop who bless their peer groups, families and the wider community, and as well as positioning them well for further growth. In the July 2023 annual survey, an overwhelming 97% of parents 'value the Christian ethos of the school' and even the pupils are enthusiastic on the question 'do you like being at CBS' with 100% answering either 'yes' (90%) or 'mostly' (10%). One of the highest positive scores from the parents (91%) was to the question 'the school is well managed and led' and an even greater 96% responded that 'staff are friendly and approachable'. Pupils agreed that 'our teachers are friendly and caring' (81% 'yes' and 19% 'mostly'), and in their survey 100% of staff reported being 'proud to be ...at this school'; one commented on 'the strong sense of a community family with staff, children, parents and governors'. All of this feedback is testament to the professionalism and strength of leadership, teaching and other staff.

Following minor refresh in 2022, the Vision and Values for the school have remained constant through 2023, with each half term providing a focus on each value in rotation. There have been some staff changes, but we are fortunate in not having any vacancies or having to spend significantly on supply. There were some changes in the team of governors, but the three Foundation Governors have remained in place for the full year and into 2024.

Led by a Foundation Governor, a highlight during the spring term was the Prayer Day, at which young people circulate around 'stations', each with a focus on one of the six values. Resilience, for example, was explored through each pupil untangling a big knot in a length of cord, thinking about how this



could be a metaphor for other struggles in our lives and how prayer and perseverance can be the key. This annual event is much anticipated by the pupils, appreciated by the teaching staff, and brings together a number of local churches to provide an enriching day for the pupils. We were also pleased to be able to support the launch by the school during the autumn term of the 'Junior Duke' award programme. Initially as a pilot for Year 5 pupils, this is an age-appropriate version of the well-known Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and includes targeted challenges such as caring for others.

The wellbeing of pupils, staff and parents has been recognised and supported by governors through regular monitoring and advice being made available. A termly breakfast meeting for staff and governors provides an informal setting for communication, while periodic governor visits provide a more formal opportunity to test and add value on key topics.

Over the year we had visits by the Diocese to provide training to governors and staff on 'Church schools in modern Britain' as well as on SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools). This provided the opportunity to reflect on the principle that the core purpose of any Church school is to maximise the learning potential of every pupil within the love of God.

Chesham Bois School is blessed with a strong team of leadership, teaching and other staff, and is set to continue with a strong performance into 2024.

**Peter Flory - Joint Vice Chair and Foundation Governor
with Jackie Lambert and Donald Campbell-Brown – Foundation Governors**

DEANERY SYNOD

Amersham Deanery Synod, a group of representatives from Church of England churches in an area extending beyond Amersham itself which meets four times a year. St Leonard's elected lay members are Peter Flory and Jackie Lambert. The clergy are automatically members.

There are two working sub-committees, the standing committee and the Mission and Pastoral committee which Peter sits on. This gathers and prays for each parish and its current needs and ensures parishes are supported during interregnums. Full details are available on the Amersham Deanery website: amershamdeanery.org.uk.

At our March meeting we had exciting presentations on the Food Hub at St George's Little Chalfont and The Dove Café at St Thomas Holtspur, Beaconsfield. These were exciting ventures dealing with the real human need that is present in our area and how this is also presenting evangelistic opportunities and drawing folk into our churches. We also received an update from Rev'd Jeremy Moodey on the General Synod proceedings. The Annual General Meeting of the Amersham Deanery Trust was held and this included the acceptance of the annual accounts and Budget for the following year.

The June meeting saw us spend an Evening with Steve and Lindsey Poulson with a full update on their different projects. The other item of the evening was with regard to safeguarding with an update on progress across the whole of the diocese over the years and how that training and awareness is becoming effective but there is still and always more to do.



The September meeting was cancelled.

In November, we received finance updates, presentations on the Parish Share 2024, and Diocesan and General Synod Reports. The meeting concluded with a musical exploration from Sean Groombridge on the subject of “Let everything that has breath – Praise the Lord!” where we visited and experienced different musical genres in worship.

Needless to say we received our usual regular Area Dean’s reports throughout the year along with regular Diocesan and General Synod reports. All papers and minutes can be readily seen on the website amershamdeanery.org.uk

Peter Flory and Jackie Lambert – Deanery Synod Representatives

PARISH CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT

Over the course of 2023, a second planning application was being reviewed and determined. It had been submitted to Buckinghamshire Council on 13th Dec 2022. Further ecology reports were required to meet requirements that had materialised after the submission was made. This included biodiversity reports, and further survey work on protected wildlife (such as bats, badgers and newts). The Project Team fully met these requirements, and when it came to the Planning Committee meeting on 17th October, there was a long debate about several aspects of the proposals. However, the only issue which was cited as a reason to defer the decision related to the Beechwoods SAC (Special Area of Conservation). Councillors requested that Local Authority planning officers provide a report to demonstrate that no harm would come to the Beechwoods SAC as a result of visitors to the Parish Centre site in Chesham Bois. This request was at odds with the officer’s advice which was that they saw no discernible harm arising.

Despite the officer’s professional opinion, the Councillor’s voted to defer and the date for reconvening to determine the decision was set for December 2024. However, the meeting was not able to proceed due to one of the Councillors being unable to attend. Therefore, the new date was set for 9th January 2024. St Leonard’s have a strong case for appeal should the application be refused on the grounds of the Beechwoods SAC issue, as Natural England and the previous planning appeal Inspector could see the only issue being net gain in residential, which was dealt with by removing the Keeper’s Cottage from the application. Please do continue to pray for the process which has been a long and demanding one. We do believe that the vision for this redevelopment, and the future provision for the church and community makes it worth the journey!

David Clare – Project Manager for Habitat for Humanity