

VICARS REPORT

As we look back over 2023 we have so much to be thankful for.

2023, has been a significant year in the life of St John's Longbridge. Most notably after 22 years of faithful service to this community, Colin Corke moved on to a new post at St Chad's, Rubery. We would like to thank Colin for his friendship in this transition and his continued support for the revitalisation. Colin has been instrumental in holding everything together with the Diocese, with Gas Street and with the community of St John's, so thank you Colin.

If you cast your minds back to the start of January, there was still a significant number of buckets dotted around the Church space catching rainwater. In March works commenced to replace the leaky roof and make the Church dry once again. The replacement of the roof was done through a significant financial contribution from St John's and the Strategic Development Funding. Thank you for your generosity in helping to make this happen.

In preparation for the revitalization, monthly prayer gatherings were launched. People from Gas Street, the local community and St John's came together to pray and worship. Regularly there were over 50 people in attendance, and there was a special sense of God preparing us for what was to come.

As part of Colin's final Sunday in October, in his sermon he told us about the various Doctor Who's who had moved on over the years. He said, 'I would want to be a bit like Jodie Whitaker, who when she left, said - tag you're it.' This was really significant. As a Church preparing for the revitalisation the vision is still the same. We all want to see the community of Longbridge transformed. This has always, and will always be the vision. Colin served faithfully as vicar, and with his blessing, passed the metaphorical baton onto all of us to see Longbridge transformed. In Colin's final week as vicar at St John's, the Church was packed with nearly 500 children, parents and teachers from Albert Bradbeer for their harvest assembly. This was a fitting final service for Colin.

In early November, Bishop Anne joined us for the installation of Tim. Bishop Anne reminded us of her sermon from the 65th Anniversary Sunday, where we need to be a Church who thanks God for all he's done in the past, acknowledges him in the present, and seeks him for what he wants to do in Longbridge for the future.

In December, building on the existing relationship with Colin, we hosted Albert Bradbeer for their Christmas assemblies. Again 500 children, parents and staff came through the door to celebrate Christmas. There was also a successful Carol Service and Christingle Service led by the congregation.

We also wanted to take this moment to say a huge thank you to you, the existing congregation of St John's. We have loved getting to know you over the past year. You have been so warm and welcoming to us, been willing to try new things and have continually held the vision of the revitalisation to see the community of Longbridge transformed. It has been a joy and a pleasure to do this with you.

We are really thankful for all God has done in 2023, and we are excited and expectant for 2024.

Tim Hughes & James Leavy

PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT

Since the last APCM in April 2023 we have held 4 PCC meetings and attendance has been excellent and we have been joined in our meetings by members of Gas Street and the Diocese.

This year has been an exceptional one where the PCC has been working closely with the Diocese and Gas Street to make sure the revitalisation of St Johns as a Parish Church goes smoothly. There have been lots of important discussions and decisions to be made over the year regarding the DAC application for the proposed changes to the church building. Colin and Anthony have done a lot of work and attended a lot of extra meetings so they could report back on developments for which the PCC is very grateful.

Now that the Launch date for Gas Street joining us is imminent a number of people from the PCC and other roles are stepping down which will mean there are various vacancies for new people to fill.

6 people will be standing down from the PCC. There will therefore be a number of spaces available for new members to be nominated at the APCM.

We also still carry a vacancy for a Churchwarden to work alongside Barbara Mills. Barbara has continued to work single handedly during the last 12 months as Churchwarden and the PCC are extremely grateful for all of her contribution to the smooth working of St Johns.

David Parry has kept the PCC up to date on accounts which we have looked at carefully. Over the years we have done various forms of fund raising for a new roof and the PCC were happy that the money raised has now gone towards our new roof. The PCC is extremely grateful to David for controlling the finances and for keeping us so well informed. David is now standing down as Treasurer and the PCC thank him for all his work over the years.

Irene Lees is also standing down as Safeguarding Officer and the PCC is very grateful to her for all her hard work on this. Irene has kept the PCC informed of developments and made sure we are up to date with everything.

Chris Darnbrough is also standing down as the Hall Lettings Secretary. The PCC are very grateful to Chris for her work dealing with hall rentals and acknowledge that this has been a major part of our income over the years.

Over the last 12 months the PCC has worked closely with members of Gas Street as they began holding monthly Prayer Gatherings to introduce new people to St Johns. It is hoped some of these new people will make St Johns their church. We are also grateful to Gas Street for their help and support since October when Colin left.

It was with sadness the PCC said goodbye to Colin in October. The PCC thank Colin for all his guidance and work over the last 22 years and for his input into all the discussions and decisions over the last 12 months. The PCC wish him well in his new post.

Many thanks to all the PCC members for their time and commitment over the last 12 months when we have had some very important issues to discuss and decisions to make. Many thanks to those members of the PCC who are now standing down – it has been an exceptional year and your support has been invaluable. And, many thanks for those who have said they will continue on the PCC for another year – your input will be greatly appreciated during this transitional year.

Thank you to Chris Darnbrough for preparing these annual reports.

The Electoral Roll has been displayed on the notice board for 2 weeks prior to the APCM. This will be put forward for approval by all those present at the APCM.

Jackie Potter

WARDENS REPORT

We were pleased to move back into the church when the roof was finished. It is still a pleasure to be free of all the buckets and bowls and see the seating set out properly. We had the Walk of Witness on Good Friday starting from St John Fisher and finishing here for Hot Cross Buns and a hot drink.

We had several visits to Gas Street St Luke's which gave us an interesting insight into some of the things they hope to bring to St John's.

Colin's last service was on the 1st October followed by a buffet lunch, thank you to those who organised this. He was licensed as associate priest at St Chad's on 6th November. Tim Hughes was inducted as Priest in Charge at St John's on 5th November.

Albert Bradbeer School came into church for their harvest celebrations. On 18th December they came back for a very interesting Christmas celebration organised by Gas Street.

In October we closed our Place of Welcome due to lack of support. Sadly, the choir disbanded after Colin's last service. We miss them and thank them for all the years they have given to the music in church.

The Hall, Vestibule and Toilets are still cleaned for the benefit of hall users and the church floor was polished before Colin left.

Barbara Mills

CHOIR REPORT

This is our last choir report. We have not had too bad a year, but with lots of illness unfortunately we didn't do any choir practices. We decided to finish the choir on Colin's last Sunday. We did ourselves proud on his last day. Thank you to all the choir members through the last year's. Thanks to Jenny and lastly thank you to the congregation for all their support. It does seem strange sitting in the congregation now, but we don't regret all of our fun times in the past years.

Linda Walker

THE BRIDGE

The last edition of the Bridge was produced with the December 2023 and January 2024 magazine. We have tried very hard over the last 20 years to produce an enjoyable, readable magazine for you all. We would like to thank all our readers for their loyal support over the years.

We look forward to a brighter future for St. John's when it joins with Gas Street to become "Gas Street, Longbridge" on February 4th.

Thank you too, to all the team, David for printing, Sheila for proof reading, Margaret and her team for stapling the magazine together and to Hazel for the co-ordination and distribution of the Bridge.

Thank you all.

Jackie Potter and Chris Darnbrough

THE HALL

Over the last 12 months the hall has been used by our very regular groups, Fitness for the over 55's, Line dancing and Karate, as well as Rainbows and Brownies.

Because of the uncertainty as to when the hall would be out of action due to forthcoming renovations, the Drama Group and the Satori group decided to move on. There has not been much demand for children's parties and other bookings, and consequently, income from this was considerably reduced.

My thanks go to Barbara and Margaret for keeping the hall, kitchen and toilets clean and tidy and to Colin and Barbara for their support and help.

Chris Darnbrough

CHURCH FLOWERS

There have only been four ladies on the team for the last two years. which has proved difficult at times. However, we have managed to do the major festivals, and also maintained doing flowers in church each week, except for Lent and Advent. My thanks go to the ladies for their help and support.

Hazel Tovey

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

April 2023 – January 2024

The Fellowship has met on the first Monday of each month at 2.30pm. The pattern of our meetings are as follows: -

The ladies go into church for a short service led by Colin. We have 2 hymns and a bible reading. After this we go into the hall for refreshments and a variety of activities, including the occasional speaker. The last time Colin took our service was on the 4th of September. He was invited to speak to us about his life from childhood to the present time. We all thanked him for the 22 years he had led our services. We appreciated it very much.

From October 2023 we did our own services. The committee decided to use the hall because it was warmer!

We had a speaker in November, Mince pies and Carols in December and a New Year party.

Because of the alterations to the church building and the cold months ahead, we will not be meeting until Easter, when we hope somewhere suitable and warm can be found for us.

Mary Leigh