

ST JAMES' CHURCH

Brownhills



Following Jesus

APCM
REPORTS
2025

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Reports relating to St James' Ministry & Mission

1. Discipleship/Life Groups

Our mid-week Life Groups continue to meet fortnightly, and we now have 5 (one at Tuesday tea-time, one on a Wednesday morning, one on a Wednesday evening and two on a Thursday evening).

The Tuesday Life Group is facilitated by Gayle and over the past year our members have benefitted from our 'Spiritual Disciplines' Learning, 'Talking Jesus Course', and this calendar year, 'the Romans Course'. We always begin by eating something for tea together and sharing what's happening in our lives, before moving into reflection, study, discussion and prayer. We express our views and learn well from one another, and always conclude with each member having the opportunity to pray aloud.

Recently we had a leaving gathering for Sam Fiddler and Matt Dale, for which we had an open house (they are discerning a church closer to their home in Kingswinford now). Gayle says: 'it continues to be a real joy and privilege to see each member of the group's love for the Lord and their active desire to follow Jesus' will for their lives. This month we're looking forward to welcoming in Patrick and Priya, two of our newer members, to our Life Group and to seeing them gain the same sense of joy in belonging as the other members'.

Ann Lapworth, with support from Liz Corbett, facilitates the Wednesday morning group, which consists of ladies only. Ann says: 'The past 12 months as a whole within the group of 8 (ladies) members has been a thorough blessing and very enjoyable. Love, unity, agreement, study, prayer, support for each

other when required also some social meals has laid a firm foundation alongside a hunger and thirst for more of our 3 in 1 Lord God. Also there has been a desire for fruit that remains this to be evidential in our daily lives, church body and local community.

The coursework has been very interesting, beneficial, enjoyable and has been thought provoking. The group has participated fully and openly and this has encouraged and enabled further personal study and growth in a greater measure of daily life. The group is active in prayer and ministry one to another. I'm sure I can speak on behalf of the group that we look forward with thanksgiving and eager expectation to more of all the above for gods glory alone, Amen'.

The Wednesday' evening Life Group is facilitated by Pete and Sarah Biggs. They say: 'our Life group continues to meet on a Wednesday evening. During this year we have had a change of members but still average 6 per meeting. We deeply engaged with the *12 Spiritual Disciplines*, found great value in the *Talking Jesus programme*, and are now halfway through the *Romans Course* - exploring more about God's eternal purpose and uncovering the gospel's profound impact on everyday life'.

The Thursday Life group with Margaret and Steve Powell, Brenda Timmins, Ann Wilkins, Graham Sutherland, and Roger and Liz Corbett, has met fortnightly in each other's homes. Liz says: 'we have eaten together, prayed together, laughed and cried together. We have studied and discussed the Bible and explored what it means to be followers of Jesus and members of his church. Recently we have enjoyed looking more deeply into Paul's letter to the Romans gaining an insight into what Jesus' life,

death and resurrection mean to us. I am forever thankful for this group'.

As regards the other long-standing Thursday evening Life Group, Joy shares: 'Our group is very much enjoying the current studies on St Paul's epistle to the Romans. By looking deeper into it we are discerning God's will for us for the future. We also pray for St James and our church family and enjoy fellowship (and homemade cake!).

*Liz Corbett, Ann Lapworth, Pete Biggs, Sarah Biggs, Joy Powell,
Angela Cooper & Gayle Greenway*

2. Worship

"I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving." Psalm 69:3.

Over the past year, sung worship in services has continued to be a source of spiritual nourishment and community engagement. We have seen growth in attendance and participation, with new initiatives enhancing our worship experience.

The worship is varied and wide ranging and it aims to praise and worship God to the utmost and to enable a diverse congregation to do this. Heart of Worship (HoW) continue to offer an invaluable lead at a variety of services and is constant in number yet could do with more members, so if it's something you would be interested in, please see Pete. The musician rehearsal on Mondays still meet and is brilliantly led by Gareth. A new initiative aimed at empowering and encouraging younger church members is ably led by Gayle and Tom. These musicians are utilised in ameliorating the current musical provision by adding

colour, texture and emphasis to worship times. My prayer for this coming year is that the sung worship will usher people into a real sense of meeting with God, guided by the Holy Spirit. So, let us always praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving!

Pete Biggs, St James' Worship Co-ordinator

3. Social Events Team

We are truly blessed to have been able to provide opportunities for our church family to come together in the presence of Jesus to socialise whilst raising money for future outreach projects.

Throughout the last year we have had women's and men's meals, that have enabled us to find friendship and fellowship. The summer church family BBQ, Community Fun Day, trip to Llandudno, enabled us as a church to share food and show our servant hearts for one another. The Christmas Fayre, brought the local community together and provided a much-needed distraction to some challenging weather we were experiencing. And who can forget this year's New Year's Eve party, complete with our own snow, disco, giant Jenga and food!

The Fish & chips and bowling event saw a huge attendance, where the Holy Spirit led us to share testimony, fun and wonderful food together, whilst establishing who has the skill to strike! We couldn't have done all this without the support from members of our church family volunteering, so thank you to all that have helped and

If you missed any of the events that we have done so far, then you can check out the latest news in the fellowship room on the TV that we have installed. Already on the calendar is our Curry and Giant Jenga night, Wrekin' walk, Beetle Drive and Community Fun Day.

Jesus is at the heart of our ministry. We are ensuring that our social events are evangelistic, with prayer and worship built in. This is all in-line with our church's mission statement: 'Called by name & empowered by the Holy Spirit to share God's love with words and actions.

Andy Stokes, Vic Whitehouse and Natalie Trawally.

4. Pastoral Team

Over the past year we've continued to meet on Monday evenings bi-monthly at the Vicarage. We take time to eat first, before spending time considering any of our members in need of support, often with reference to the church directory, to appreciate who we need to be mindful of re-connecting with, or to offering them a pastoral visit or a listening ear on the phone. We share too about anyone we are already in regular contact with, through visits and phone calls. Home communion, and communion at the hospitals is offered by Gayle and other members of the Pastoral Team when necessary.

The essential network of delivering parish magazines, notice sheets and Bible reading notes continues. These items go to people who have no internet connection and can't always attend services but like to feel they are still part of the family. Many thanks to Alan Cooper who does a lot of work in this area. The Pastoral Team WhatsApp Group is essential, too, for keeping us all up to date with people's prayer and practical needs when we aren't physically all gathered together. We're here primarily for those who aren't linked in with a Life Group, to help ensure that people all know that they belong within the church family.

Joy Powell & Gayle Greenway

5. Our Place of Welcome

We continue to meet every Tuesday morning, offering a warm welcome, drinks and a quiet time in church. We have purchased a table-top oven which enables us to offer a greater variety of food – i.e. pancakes, soup and toast, bacon sandwiches, hot sausage rolls. This is not every week but every so often.

We have struggled this last year for volunteers. Brenda T has been greatly missed and we have been down to only two or three helpers most weeks. We have now successfully recruited one more volunteer and hope for a few more so that we can offer ‘specials’ and more variety. In addition, Carol G has managed to keep the crotchet work going – raising money for Glimmer of Hope with easter Egg baskets etc.

Joy & Den Powell

6. Kingdom Kids & Ignite

In the Summer of 2024, following a week at New Wine, our Youth Leader, Mel Pearce announced that she would be leaving to start new employment. This has affected the Youth and Children’s ministry deeply as, having been already short on leaders and volunteers, numbers dropped to 3: Carol, Gareth and Sue. An advert was placed for a new Youth Leader and we continue to wait. In the meantime, it was decided to reunite the two groups of Sunday Club and Tribe and continue with materials linked to the main Church services. The Light Party, the alternative to Halloween, went ahead and was enjoyed by those who attended. However, numbers were smaller and Gayle, inspired by that and other factors, will be deciding on a different alternative for youth next year.

A Christmas family film night went ahead on 13th December and was enjoyed by all. The Youth and children were then involved in the drama throughout the Christmas Eve service which also went well. 2025 started with the two groups' names being changed, inspired by prayer and fellowship started last Summer: Sunday Club became Kingdom Kids and Tribe became Ignite. The groups were separated for teaching when possible. Shrove Tuesday was celebrated with a Pancake Party which went very well and was enjoyed by children and parents. Numbers of attendees were again smaller though, although fun and deeper learning took place.

Around February, the teaching materials were changed to St Helen's, Bishopsgate children's resources. The book of Acts was chosen and continues at the moment. Leaders find the materials provide continuity and the 'storyline' of the book becomes clearer to the children. Numbers attending KKI at times reached 9 and a new family with 5 children joined the group. New assistant helpers, Mobina D and Natalie T, volunteered to help.

With their involvement, this has meant that it has been possible to teach the groups separately on two of the weeks. Another volunteer is urgently needed to help with the third week of the month. All the youth and children are growing in their understanding and enjoyment of KKI. They produced a lovely Mothering Sunday card which was presented to all the ladies of St James.

Carol Glass, Gareth Glass & Sue Bryan

7. All 4 Jesus Puppets' Group

All 4 Jesus Puppet Group meet each Wednesday in the Church Hall. Mal and Lily Pearce left the team at the end of August (thank you for all their hard work and dedication to the group) and Heidi and Ousman

joined (welcome)! Members are now: Carol, Gareth, Heidi, Mariama, Alfie and Ousman.

At the end of October five members of the team attended two days of the One Way UK European Convention and had a great time learning new skills and magic tricks. These skills were put to good use to learn to use a puppet to play different musical instruments and hold hand mikes. Five All Age Services include the puppets each year and the group was also involved in the Christmas Eve Service. The group sometimes go out for a social evening to celebrate.

Carol Glass

8. The Lamp Foodbank

The Food Bank continues to be open every Tuesday and Thursday from 11am to 1pm in the Brownhills Community Centre. The shelving has been reorganised so that the management of stock is much easier.

In the year to March 2025, we have supported 755 adults and 490 children. We have handed out 7842.93kgs in food and 1678.41kgs in non-food. This works out as a monthly average of 63 adults and 41 children.

Presently we have access to funding from Walsall Council. Hopefully, this will continue. There is a steady flow of donations from within the Fellowship

In addition, we are supported by donations from local residents and businesses. On a weekly basis we collect items from local stores. Under the guidance which we have from the Black Country Food Bank, when we have donations of fresh produce and bread and cakes, these are not included in the weighed allocations to claimants. Each claimant is told that they can help themselves to items on a separate shelf.

Since Melissa Pearce left to start her new role for Aldridge Parish, her mother Julie Owen has taken over the management of the paperwork. Julie and her husband Roger are also the main collectors of items from the local stores as well as being the main purchasers of stock.

The Food Bank is supported by a quite large team of hardworking volunteers. In addition, we have supported some young offenders by providing them with supervised work. The need for Food Banks is likely to increase. Thus, the need for donations will also increase. There is a collection point in the Fellowship Room into which donations can be discreetly placed. Small cash donations can also be made to senior members of the team

The benefits the Food Bank provides for our communities are quite substantial but there are still unmet needs, and it is anticipated that these needs will increase.

Roger Corbett.

9. Our 3 Charity Partnerships

Over the past year we have continued to support our 3 charity partnerships financially. Our local charity partners are 'Love Black Country and Love Walsall', our national partners are 'Christians Against Poverty' (CAP), and our international partners, which we agreed on following last year's APCM, are 'World Vision'.

These 3 charities have received £1200.00 this past year. Over the past year we have gone deeper with 'Love Black Country and Love Walsall' through some of our members and I attending worship, training and outreach events that they provide each month. Over the coming year we look forward to engaging more with their training opportunities, with the next event being 4th June, which will centre on prayer and mission for God's Kingdom to come into our neighbourhoods.

With CAP, we've gone deeper by accessing their 'Money Coaching' training material, which has enabled clearer conversations to happen with some of our members and others in the local community who need support with managing their finances.

Lastly, our partnership with World Vision saw visiting speaker Crystal Nnoruka come to share about the charity's work and their special project in Uganda at our Sunday morning service at the end of September. As a result of that engagement we saw some of our members offer themselves to be 'Chosen' by children in Pajule, Uganda, to become their sponsors.

We look forward to further building on these 3 charity partnerships over this next 12 months now, as we seek to have open hearts and minds.

Rev'd Gayle Greenway

10. The Eco Church Team

At St James' Church, we believe that caring for God's creation is a core part of our Christian mission. In response to the growing environmental challenges facing our world, we have chosen to partner with A Rocha UK by enrolling in their Eco Church programme.

Why We Are Becoming an Eco Church

We are called to be stewards of the Earth - not only for our own sake but for future generations and all of God's creatures. By becoming an Eco Church, we aim to reflect our commitment to sustainability, justice, and the protection of creation in our worship, teaching, and community life.

Key Objectives of the Eco Church Award

The Eco Church Award encourages churches to take action in five key areas: -

1. **Worship and Teaching** – Integrating creation care into our services, prayers, and preaching.
2. **Buildings** – Managing our church property in environmentally sustainable ways, including improving energy efficiency and reducing waste.
3. **Land** – Using any church grounds in wildlife-friendly and sustainable ways.
4. **Community and Global Engagement** – Advocating for environmental justice locally and globally and encouraging our community to live sustainably.
5. **Lifestyle** – Inspiring and supporting our church family to make ethical and sustainable choices in their daily lives.

Our goal is to work steadily toward achieving a Bronze, Silver, or even Gold Eco Church Award as we grow in commitment and practice.

Through this partnership with A Rocha UK, we hope to be a visible sign of hope and responsibility in our community - showing that following Jesus and caring for the environment go hand in hand.

Andy Stokes, Ann Wilkins, Joy Powell and Margaret Powell

11. The Church Website & Social Media

There has been a complete overhaul of the website to attract more traffic, engagement, and get people curious about learning the word of God. This includes optimized layout, for less click through and better navigation.

We have the ability to take our ministry wider, appealing to all generations through social media. We have created a social media strategy for the year to grow our outreach. Building on the following we have on Facebook and Instagram, we have created a TikTok account where we will post engaging short videos, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Vic Whitehouse and Andy Stokes

Deanery Synod Report

The Synod has met three times since the last APCM. The November Synod was cancelled due to inclement weather

The first Synod was on 20 June 2024 at St Chad's Lichfield. The main topic was a presentation by Revd Simon Foster the leader of the Diocesan Mission Team. He spoke on Pioneering Parishes Growing Faith

The second Synod was on 16 September 2024 at St Anne's Church Burntwood. The main topic was a presentation by Claire Whitney the Diocesan Lay Ministry Learning and Development Officer. She spoke on encouraging vocation in our parishes using the "Notice, Nudge, Nurture" process

The third Synod was a Zoom meeting on 19 February 2025. The main topic was an interview of Rt Revd Dr Timothy Wambunya the new Bishop of Wolverhampton. He told his life story. He answered some questions. He emphasised that his intention is to be involved with all the parishes in the Ecclesiastical Area of Wolverhampton

There is one year left in my 3 year term.

Roger Corbett, Deanery Synod Rep

Treasurer's Report

2024 was very much the year of the roof payment. Two grants were received – Entrust (£26,000) and Staffs Historic Churches (£2,500).

We sold our half of Snowdrop Close to the Diocese, used money out of CCLA and Barnetts Lane Two accounts, and with the hard work of the fundraising committee, it meant that the roof was paid for in full, with no need of a loan.

The general state of the accounts is not so good. When we met with our accountants, they pointed out that all aspects of income were down – standing orders, envelopes, fees, hall rental and general giving, but nearly all of our expenses were well up – parish share, general upkeep and utility costs.

This led to an overall loss on the year of £20,000. (This had nothing to do with the roof payments). This obviously cannot be sustained. The PCC will need to think long and hard about reducing expenses and wastage, and our giving must increase if we want our church to continue, or expand, the work already begun in the community.

Whilst it is recognised that essential maintenance and energy costs have to be met, our overall spending should be considered a little more robustly in the next financial year.

We are always happy to answer any questions you may have regarding the accounts.

Alan Wiley Treasurer to St James' PCC, and Joy Powell, the previous Treasurer to St James' PCC (up until 31st Dec 2024)

Electoral Roll Officer's Report

This year, as with every 6 years, we have been asked by the Church of England to prepare a new roll – everyone has to fill out a new form. This means that the total on the Electoral Roll for 2025 will be 79. 66% of those on the Electoral Roll live inside the Parish and 34% live outside the Parish.

Sarah Biggs, St James' Electoral Role Officer

Safeguarding Report

Due to the committed involvement of a large number of fellowship members, the gatherings connected with the church are safe and welcoming. This is especially important in the cases where those attending are vulnerable adults children and young people. The appropriate training is being undertaken and is kept up to date. Reportable concerns have been reported and sign-posting has taken place where required.

The policies for safeguarding related matters are reviewed annually in November by the PCC and the reviewed document is placed on our church's website. The Diocesan Safeguarding Team's approach to Safeguarding across the Diocese is under review at this time.

Roger Corbett

Churchwardens' Report

The house our PCC own (50 Lichfield Road): The tenant has now been in occupation for over 15 years. He is up to date with his rent. Some repairs have been undertaken. The house is over 100 years old so that it is likely that there will need for further repairs. The rent is increased

annually. The Renters Reform Bill in its present form still permits a church to obtain possession of a house if it is needed for a Curate. If the Bill is changed during its passage through Parliament, we may have to consider taking possession now of the house to provide accommodation for a future assistant curate. If the Bill remains unchanged then this will not be necessary as the proposed use of the house by a curate will be a ground for possession.

Barnetts Lane Cemetery: Last year we gained a gardener who was able to get on top of the grass mowing for us. Sadly, this gardener took certain liberties and we were forced to explore new options.

Thankfully, we had a new gardener start, on the recommendation of Brenda S, who is proving to be a real asset to our team. This means that the amount of complaints about the cemetery grass have decreased. There are, however, ongoing issues due to fly-tipping at the cemetery. In this, we're thankful to a local lady called Denise Broadway and the Norgrove family, who often support us by taking away things that have been left at the cemetery. Prayers are values for the protection of the cemetery and loved ones memorials.

Cremated Remains Area: This is now full, although re-openings for further interments of ashes will continue throughout the years.

Great Charles Street Cemetery: This cemetery is legally closed. The management of the site is being done by Walsall Council.

The Church Hall: In recent months the TS Vigo Cadets who use our hall on Tuesday evenings have received a discount on their hire of the hall and many grateful thanks from our Standing Committee. They have helped us hugely, by organising a work party one Saturday to remove some tiles in the main store room that were hanging down. They also painted the entrance area of the church hall and carpeted it for us, and painted the walls inside the main room of the hall. We look forward to

continuing the supportive partnership with them, and to inviting them to enjoy Café Church with us in the coming months (see Vicar's Report for further info on Café Church).

Quinquennial Inspection: Over the past few months we have started our Quinquennial Inspection, which is a legal requirement according to the C of E rules. We appointed Stephen Pitt-Francis to be our architect. He spent all of Shrove Tuesday inside the church building and around the church site carrying out all that was required. Now we are waiting for his write-up and recommendations.

Fabric Report: The work on the church roof started around the 20th June of last year, and continued through until 5 days before Remembrance Sunday. The work being undertaken did not impinge on the use of the church building. The funds to cover the cost of the works were in place, for which to the Lord and all His workers here we are extremely grateful. We are thankful also to Dennis and Joy Powell for their diligence in sorting out the Enover Grant Funds application and seeing that this money reached the church accounts. The church roof looks beautiful and it is a real relief to know that buckets inside the building are no longer required.

Roger Corbett & Margaret Powell

Cards & Flowers

I am the Birthdays Administrator. Having revised and updated my calendar, the birthday tally now stands at 87 individuals from within our church family. It is a tremendous privilege using my good memory to mark people's special days by sending them a card to mark the occasion and bless them in that way. I enjoy helping them realise that they have not been forgotten in the hustle and bustle of life, a special ministry that is rewarded when

they open the card and find someone has taken the trouble to appreciate their big day. If anyone in church has a birthday which is not marked on my calendar and they want to be remembered, please let me know. Thank you very much.

Angela Cooper.

Margaret adds: 'we are sending more birthday cards out at St James', it's a true blessing because we are getting more diverse people at Church. Also, people still appreciate the memorial cards, which lets them know we are there for prayer and support at the special service for their loved ones. Additionally, from some of our members I receive requests to arrange flowers for special times throughout the church year. I always seek to come up with new and unique arrangements, reliant on the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit and I enjoy spending time making the arrangements to God's glory.

Margaret Powell

Work in our Local Schools & with Local Children & Young People

August saw Mel, St James' Children's and Community Worker, leave St James' for a new role in Aldridge Parish. We had a time of celebration to bless her in Jesus' name and to give thanks for her 10 years here. Two weeks before that we had 3 days of a Summer Holiday Club, which focussed on Music, Dance and Art, around the theme of expressing ourselves in worship to God. We're repeating that this summer. Also, in church we've enjoyed welcoming in new children to get to know them at our Light Party in October, Pancake Party on Shrove Tues and Easter Activities afternoon last month.

Our ministry to all 6 primary schools, as well as to our Secondary School, Brownhills Ormiston Academy, has continued through me going in to pastorally listen to pupils, and to provide assemblies and RE lessons. My next batch of lessons, coming up towards the end of May and into June, will be to give out Youth Bibles, provided anonymously by one of our members, and talk through with the classes how to make the most of them as they move on to secondary school.

Over the past year we've also invited the local schools in for Experience Christmas and Experience Easter lessons, during which I've been once again extremely thankful for the leaders who have joined me to run these lessons. These lessons saw many pupils make connections for the first time with what Jesus is all about. Our next opportunity to invite pupils into the church building for an experiential lesson will be around Pentecost, when we invite pupils to a Prayer Room that we'll have set up with various stations to engage them. In all of this work, we pray and trust that we're sewing important seeds in young minds, that in the Lord's timing will bear much fruit.

Rev'd Gayle Greenway

Vicar's Report

Dear church family,

Isaiah 43 verse 1 says 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine'. That's one of the 4 key Bible verses that links to the 4 strands of our Mission Statement at St James, which is: **'Called by name and empowered by the Holy Spirit to share God's love through words and actions'**. If that phrase is too much to remember for anyone, just think of us being CALLED & EMPOWERED TO SHARE THE GOSPEL. As I reflect over the past year, I praise God that

there has been evidence shown of more and more of our church family members realising that they are **called personally** to take part in Jesus' mission here in Brownhills. I'll reflect now on how we've seen greater participation over the past year, as well as on what we can do going forward to see God's vision for us come more so to fruition over the next 12 months.

Okay, so looking back on our **worshipping life together**, I'm so thankful for the continued sense of expectation to meet with the Lord that's been evident in our worship services and pray for increased oneness among our Heart of Worship Team – singers and musicians altogether. Our singers and musicians have increased their times together, guided by our Sung-Worship Co-ordinator Pete. It was been great too, seeing Mariama, Ousman and James joining together to form a Youth Worship Band since January, supported by Tom and I. On the first Sundays of the month when they have been singing and playing, it has been a joy to see them being supported by the rest of our singers and by Pete. Please be praying for Mariama, Ousman and James as they aim to grow their worship leading gifts to the glory of the Lord.

As part of Sunday worship, it has been great to periodically continue to hear some testimonies and stories of what God has been doing in people's lives. Stepping into the next few months I'll be looking to make sure testimony and story sharing stays firmly on our radar, since we were very much convicted about the power of this medium during our Jesus Shaped People Programme.

Reflecting on **God's vision for us**, from which we've gained our Mission Statement, on Saturday 22nd February we had our second annual Vision Day, during which we used a tool called 'The Trellis and The Vine'. Through prayer I was led to use this tool, which is all about identifying our Trellis – the structure of all the things that we do in our life

together – and to what extent these things support the Vine Work. The Vine work is the work of growing in knowing Jesus and being able to share Him with others, and to through that see God’s Kingdom break through more into St James’ and Brownhills.

What we realised at our Vision Day in relation to our worship services is that we need a service periodically that’s more overtly inquirers friendly, and our PCC decided in March to experiment with having a Breakfast Café Style Church Service every 5th Sunday of the month when we have one of those, starting in June. So please start thinking and praying about who you could ask to come along to this service for food and a gentle introduction to what following Jesus could mean for them.

Closely linked with our worshipping life at St James’ is our aim to be growing all the time as Jesus’ disciples. Through our Vision Day we realised we have a need to make **prayer ministry** more accessible, so I look forward to training our intercessors and prayer ministers during July. The start of Lent saw the beginning of our **Weekly Prayer Meeting** on Fridays 5.30 – 7pm, also inspired by the Vision Day and some of our members gaining a heart from God for His Kingdom to come. I’ve been excited by the Lord moving hearts and minds and pray that we all are!

Study and **fasting** arose on our Vision Day as two further spiritual disciplines needing our attention, in addition to prayer. I rejoice that this prompted the inclusion of an addition opportunity to study to our Life Groups, that began at the end of last month – with Carol Glass leading studies on John’s Gospel, accessible to both genders fortnightly on Tuesdays. In respect of fasting, I’m really looking forward to us having two corporate church days of fasting during early September.

On both of these days the church will be open all day and there'll be a time of worship and prayer happening.

Reflecting on our ***Life Groups and learning on Sunday mornings***, many of us found the Spiritual Disciplines teaching enlightening and challenging, and our SHAPE programme showed us that we have 4 times the amount of people than in 2016 who are engaging with, or at the beginnings of engaging with, their spiritual gifts. Praise Jesus! After SHAPE came our 'Talking Jesus Course', which helped some of our members realise that sharing Jesus, with His power at work through us, need not be as scary as they imagined. For others of us God gave a nudge through the course to be starting to experiment with sharing our faith more with family members, friends and work colleagues. Again, we say praise Jesus and may there be more of this activity! During Lent we embarked on our current programme, the Romans Series, which we're finding Spirit-filled and encouraging. My main prayer for us in this series is that we each fully grasp that we can ALL walk fully into the life Jesus has for us – embracing His freedom and choosing to bring His life into every situation and sphere of our lives. Sin no longer has a hold on any of us who are in Jesus Christ!

Appreciating ***our life together as a church family***, I thank God every day for all of you and for your continued desire to work together to care for one another pastorally, to show hospitality and love each week and at all of our one-off events. The commitment and love of each of our teams included in this booklet comes through in their reports. It's also true, though, that we need more leaders for Kingdom Kids and Ignite, and our Youth Worker position isn't yet occupied. Please be praying intentionally and consistently for these needs, that God will bring more people into His kingdom with us, and that among those

people there'll be some who are called to nurture children and young people.

Lastly and vitally, as I reflect on ***our participation in Jesus' mission to Brownhills***, I am increasingly confident in God that we get it at St James' that we exist for our non-members. We know we're here for those who aren't yet aware of God's great love for them in Jesus. I am sure that it's your heart for the gospel and love for God and people that has motivated all of our work over this past 12 months. Looking to the next 12 months, let's commit to seizing every opportunity that Jesus brings us to speak about Him and to be 'the pleasing aroma of Christ' (2 Corinthians 2: 15). Let's make the main thing our Vine Work, to know Jesus and make Him known, making sure our Trellis Work never detracts from but instead always supports it.

With love and many prayers in our Resurrected King, Jesus,

Rev'd Gayle