

ST JAMES' CHURCH
Brownhills



Following Jesus

APCM
REPORTS
2022

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Reports relating to St James' Ministry & Mission

1. Discipleship Groups (Grace, Truth & Life Groups - GTL)

We have five Grace, Truth and Life groups, meeting fortnightly in the evening or morning and since September, we have been using a mix of the Bible Course video clip sessions and *Going Deeper* notes, tracing the big picture of the Bible storyline from Genesis to Revelation- helping us to understand God's plans and purposes for us today.

We have learnt a great deal and been encouraged as we have seen so clearly how much God loves and cares for us and has a plan for our lives. We have enjoyed being together, praying together and supporting each other, and getting to know new people who have joined our groups.

If you would like to know more about our GTL groups, please talk to any of the current facilitators of the groups – Pete B, Sarah B, Ann L, Liz C or Gayle G.

Liz Corbett, Pete Biggs & Gayle Greenway

2. Worship

“Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. Sing to him a new song; play skilfully, and shout for joy. For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.”

Psalm 33:1,3-5

Do we need reasons to praise and sing for joy to our awesome God? Explore some of the reasons given at the start of this psalm..... the word of God is right and true..... He adores what is good and just..... His love is unfailing and His love fills the earth. So we sing to praise His name because of who He is and because of what he has done.

Sung worship here at St James continues to be directed by the worship leader and additional musicians. Heart of Worship (H.o.W) offers an invaluable lead at a variety of services, is relatively constant in number and continues to sing, pray and study the Bible together. Other musicians rehearse together when available and continue to add to the praise that is offered to Him. My prayer for this coming year is that worship in its myriad forms will lead people, guided by the Holy Spirit, to a greater knowledge and love of God and to a closer walk with Him.

Pete Biggs, St James' Worship Co-ordinator

3. Social

Our social events were very much affected again by the Covid situation. When we were able we went back to serving refreshments after the morning service – which was very much appreciated. During the year the men held a curry night in a local Balti and the ladies enjoyed an afternoon tea at the Community Centre. A coffee morning was held in the autumn raising money for St Giles and Macmillan charities. In the summer we had a barbecue at the side of church followed by a chance to join a New Wine Celebration online in St James. Place of Welcome has opened the vast majority of Tuesdays – meeting in the Hall when it was deemed safer. It is proving very popular with people just looking to sit and chat over a drink. We did manage to hold our regular soup and a roll at Christmas and pancakes were served on Shrove Tuesday.

Joy Powell

4. Pastoral Care

Caring pastorally for our members, but also for anyone known to us out in the wider community, is really important to us. That's why we've kept having our Pastoral meetings every 3 months on Saturday mornings. These sessions have given us the chance to be ministered to by worshipping together using a morning prayer resources and some hymns/worship songs. These morning's have given us a chance to pray more intentionally for each other, often recognising that we each give a lot in terms of care to our own biological families too. We've gone on to then catch up with how we're each getting on keeping in touch with people on our lists and in particular those members of church who've been unable to re-join in-person worship since the pandemic's onset. These sessions have included the opportunity to reflect on a topic relevant to pastoral ministry, and in more recent times, ones in relation to mental health, like depression, anxiety, self-harm and eating disorders.

For our members who haven't yet returned to Sunday services, and who aren't online and so are unable to join the service's livestreams, me (Joy), Den Powell and Sarah Biggs, who are also on the Pastoral Team, have faithfully posted notice sheets and occasionally other materials, through doors to show that these members are still cared for and in our prayers.

Some members of our Pastoral Team, Den Powell, Gayle Greenway, and Jill Morgan, have been taking communion to those who are now unable to leave their homes.

Finally, over the past year our Pastoral Team WhatsApp group has been invaluable in helping us communicate with each other quickly to facilitate pastoral visits happening when most needed, and to inform our prayers for those known to us who are in need.

Joy Powell & Gayle Greenway

5. Tribe & Sunday Club

Sunday Club (for Primary school children) and Tribe (for Secondary age young people) groups continue to meet on Sundays as one mixed 'group' at this time. However other holiday activities have been offered over the year April to April which have been well attended drawing in many more children and young people, and there is a possibility that other children and young people might attend more regularly. Two children of Creche age may start to attend too which may suggest the need to start a Creche Group. Mel, Joy, Sue, Carol and Gareth Glass continue to lead, with Abbie as Young Assistant Leader. Abbie is now reducing her time of service as a Young Assistant Leader and the group will be looking for someone interested in the opportunity to work with young people, to help.

We continue to take the care of each child and young person very seriously and endeavour to develop good practise in our ministry with young people and children. All our volunteer workers have enhanced DBS disclosures.

Carol Glass and Mel Pearce

6. Puppets' Ministry

The Puppet Group, 'All 4 Jesus Puppets', continues to meet on Wednesdays. For most of this year (April to April) we have been able to meet in the Church Hall which has been lovely and especially when social distancing was not an issue anymore. Nevertheless, members of the team remain vigilant about Covid 19 and some continue to wear masks. The team consists of Bella, Lily, Carol and Gareth.

We were very sad to lose Abbie whose studies prevented her from continuing with the ministry. Our profound gratitude goes to her for all

her hard work and input. The ministry, in the last 6 months, has participated in the Christmas Eve Service, in the Children's Services and in one All Age Service. The team has expanded their ministry this year by incorporating laser lighting and the use of a fog machine. They have also created a logo for their ministry which is now proudly displayed on their blue t-shirts. We continue to pray that the LORD's name will be glorified through our ministry.

Carol Glass

7. The Lamp Foodbank

This ministry of St James' opened in July 2019. It is now open between 11am and 1pm each Tuesday and Thursday. The Food Bank is in effect a partnership with Brownhills Community Association and the Black Country Foodbank based in Brierley Hill.

The need for the Food Bank is growing. We get a steady flow of voucher holders. The number is increasing. With the current state of the economy and the increase in prices not least in the cost of gas and electricity, the demand will certainly increase.

We have a number of individual donors who support the Food Bank with food and other items and in cash. There are also some local businesses which provide support. The Food Bank is very generously supported by the Brownhills Community Association.

The Food Bank is staffed by committed groups of volunteers who work extremely hard managing the stock and fulfilling the voucher requests. Some of the volunteers have a strong connection with the Church. The others are not directly connected with the church but are still determined

to assist in participating in the mission of the Church “by loving their neighbours as themselves”.

Melissa Pearce very effectively manages the work of the Food Bank. She undertakes the not inconsiderable clerical work generated by the project. She liaises with the organisations which issue vouchers; this includes having voucher information sent directly to her. She also does the shopping necessary to maintain the stock.

There is an increasing need for stock donations. These can be delivered to the Church when there are Services and when it is open as a Place of Welcome. Donations can also be delivered to the Food Bank itself at the Community Centre on a Tuesday or Thursday morning

There are lists of the items which are needed in the Fellowship Room. Melissa provides strong support not just for the claimants but also the volunteers. Through the service to the Food Bank by Melissa the ministry of the Church is greatly enhanced

Roger Corbett, on behalf of Melissa Pearce (The Lamp FB Co-ordinator)

8. Charities & Missions that St James’ supports

Over the past year, as has been recent years’ practice, our church council gave £400 each to the same six charities as previous years – Christian Aid, Pathway Project, Thomas Project, St Giles Hospice, Barnabas Fund and SGM Life words.

Over the past few months our church council has been considering charities to enter into a partnership with. We’re aiming to choose 3 charities whose work is consistent with our aim as a church to be growing in sharing Jesus through what we say and do. At our next PCC meeting,

during May, we will continue this conversation and decide on a local, national and international charity to partner with and to mutually support.

Ann Wilkins & Gayle Greenway

Deanery Synod Report

Synod has met four times since the last APCM. The first meeting was on 17 June 2021 by Zoom. The main topic was a question session with Bishop Clive. The second meeting was on 27 September 2021 here at St James. This was a “Deanery Quiz Night” managed by Lilas Rawling the Lay Chair. The third meeting was on 23 November 2021 at St Michael’s Lichfield. The speaker was Pete Bate who spoke about Living in Love and Faith. The fourth meeting was on 16 February 2022 at St Anne’s Chasetown. This addressed two topics. First was a presentation by Revd Chris Baker on the Shaping for Mission proposal. The second was a presentation by Revd Rod Clarke on the prayer initiative “RAISE” This is all about encouraging all of us to go deeper in our prayer lives.

The Deanery Secretary Mrs Anita Brookes has prepared some notes for APCMs. These are attached. They provide an excellent insight into the matters discussed.

Copies of the unapproved minutes of the meeting on 16 February 2022 which provide even more information about Shaping for Mission and “RAISE” are available after the meeting. These minutes do make interesting reading.

Roger Corbett

Treasurer's Report

Financially, 2021 did not start well - another lockdown when the Church could not open at all and the Diocese saying that they would not be able to assist parishes with their Share any more.

The bank announced that we would become liable for bank charges on three of our accounts and also handling charges on cheques and cash. Owing to the several generous donations by the middle of the year I was hoping to break even. As the year progressed and the Church re-opened we began to receive more from fees, donations continued to come in, the Diocese announced a free month on Parish Share and we ended the year with a surplus on the current account.

Other accounts remain fairly static – obviously interest rates have fallen. Lichfield Road account looks particularly healthy but the PCC is about to consider the installation of a new bathroom on the premises. Many people who were able, changed to Standing Order for their regular giving which keeps the bank charges down. The Diocese announced a new way of calculating the Parish Share – now called the Common Fund, which actually means we are paying £375 less each month in 2022. They now use the National Indices of Multiple Deprivation to base this on. The Diocese relaunched the Interior Decoration Scheme in 2021 which we have joined.

HSBC became counterless but we can now pay in at the Post Office which is actually proving more convenient – charges still apply. We gave £400 to each of 6 charities during last year. The PCC is considering a change of charity for the coming year.

Joy Powell, Treasurer to St James' PCC

Electoral Roll Officer's Report

The total of 88 that we had last year remains the same for 2022. 60 (68%) live inside the parish, and 28 (32%) live outside the parish.

Sarah Biggs, St James' Electoral Role Officer

Safeguarding Report

Gayle and I continue to ensure that records are kept relating to incidences of disclosure in connection with vulnerable children and adults in our care at St James'. I have almost completed Safeguarding Leadership Pathway course. The current policies and practices within the Parish are being examined to ensure that we are totally compliant with the current national policies. The aim is to have this completed by the next but one meeting of the PCC.

Roger Corbett

Community & Children's Worker's Report

This past year we have persevered once again in the face of the challenges presented by Covid, especially with regard to staffing at the Lamp Foodbank. I undertook Safeguarding training, as well as Mental Health First Aid training, and the latter has been helpful for my work in these times we're in. We have nurtured our existing bonds and been excited by being able to form new ones, too, that have added overall to the community spirit at work through St James' influence – through the Foodbank and what we've been able to do in the local primary schools.

Schools' related work: Over this past year I've enjoyed leading craft clubs at St James' Primary School, Holy Trinity C of E Primary School, and

Brownhills' West Primary School. Gayle has led assemblies at Holy Trinity School on a regular basis, and our volunteers, together with Gayle, were able to host a dramatized wedding in church, with pupils from Millfield primary school, last October. More recently, we've also gained more of a link with St Bernadette's Primary school, with plans in place to set up a craft club there in the near future. Also over this past year, I've carried on serving as a school governor for Brownhills West school, which I see as an wonderful privilege as I seek within this role to represent the care of our church towards this school.

More recently, we've enjoyed having the year 4s from the primary schools in church to go through our 'Experience Easter' activities, and we're soon looking forward to seeing local year 6 and 7 classes coming into the church to experience our Prayer Room activities that we're setting up on 23rd May to be experienced over the days of 24th – 26th May by the schools' pupils.

Periodically, in collaboration with the Open the Book Team, we've filmed Bible events and parables that we've been able to make into video clips to send out to the schools, thus making sure that when our physical presence has been hindered through the pandemic, the word of God has still reached local pupils.

Foodbank related work: Many families from the six primary schools have been in financial difficulties and I have been able to assist with food parcels, unfortunately some families have suffered from domestic abuse, made worse by the pandemic, and I have been able to seek additional support for them from the various agencies within Walsall.

Additionally, our link with One Stop shop, established through our foodbank work, has meant we could continue supplying Brownhills West school with bagels and crumpets for a breakfast club happening each day during term time, so that every child starts lessons well fed.

Moreover, Christmas, once again we did Cookies with Santa at Christmas, at the church hall, which was a lovely occasion and a great success, a Pancake Party on Shrove Tuesday, a Holiday Club morning in February Half term, and Easter Garden Making at Easter.

Also, once again we did the 'Glimmer of Hope'. I asked all the local schools to provide us with the names of their vulnerable families. We supplied the families with a Christmas hamper containing a present to the mother and /or father, as a gift from the children, a Christmas pudding, mince pies, crackers, biscuits, hot chocolate, marshmallow, selection boxes, etc.

Last, in recent months we had a go at partnering with a local company to host toddler's play afternoons at the church hall, offering the hall as a free space, to serve their needs and help us get to know more young families. Having done this, we're now looking to start a regular toddler's play morning/afternoon during the autumn term.

Gayle Greenway, completed on behalf of Mel Pearce

Churchwardens' Report

THE REPAIRS TO THE CHURCH ROOF: Two quotes were obtained by Simon Smith the architect who deals with QI matters for the replacement of the broken tiles. At its meeting in November 2021 the PCC agreed to proceed with the lower quote. The consent of the DAC and/or the Archdeacon is needed. A request was made of the architect for copies of the quotes. These would be needed by the DAC and/or the Archdeacon. The request was made on 25 November 2021. The copies were received at the end of January 2022. Mr Smith had been off work with COVID.

The quotes are dated at the end of September 2021. It was therefore necessary to check that the quotes were still valid. The company which

provided the higher quote was still prepared to proceed on its basis. The other company was not prepared to proceed based on its quote. There had been a substantial increase in the cost of materials.

It was agreed that the higher quote was not affordable. By email dated 23 February 2022 Mr Smith was asked for his advice. He was asked if there are any alternatives the Church could consider. No reply has been received. The position will be reviewed at the next PCC meeting.

THE REMOVAL OF THE DEFECTIVE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR: The intended contractor has not been trading because of the restrictions imposed because of the pandemic. It is not clear if the company has completely ceased trading.

THE BARNETTS LANE CEMETRY: The volunteers continue to keep the cemetery neat and tidy and to lock and open the gates. The volunteers have obtained some brown bins from Walsall MBC. These were obtained at no cost to the Church. They are stored apart from the main bin. The volunteers have arranged for these brown bins to be emptied at no cost to the Church.

On Mothering Sunday, the large bin was full. Three of the brown bins had been moved onto the area where the large bin stands. These bins were full. On top of these brown bins were a number of sacks containing items cleared from the graves. It was obvious from the nature of the bags used that they had been filled by the volunteers. These bags and the items in the brown bins have been removed at no cost to the church.

In recent months there has been a marked increase in the number of unapproved additions to some memorials including photographs of the person who has passed away and edgings. The monumental masons are reminded that these breach the Regulations. The pathway from the gates to the top of the cemetery has some potholes which are increasing in size and in number. The risk of damage to vehicles and/or injury to pedestrians is quite high. Consideration will need to be given on how the risks can be reduced.

50 LICHFIELD ROAD: The tenant has been in occupation for almost 14 years. He is up to date with the rent. He also keeps the house in good order. The managing agents (Paul Carr) undertook an interim visit in February 2022. The report confirms that the house is in generally good condition. There are a very small number of damp areas. The agents have been asked to address these as soon as possible. The PCC has approved the modernisation of the bathroom suite. It is anticipated that the minor works necessary to address the damp patches will have to be undertaken before the new bathroom suite is installed.

THE CREMATED REMAINS AREA. The present area is now for practical purposes full. Investigations are underway to find a suitable area for a fresh Cremated Remains Area.

THE CHURCH HALL: One of the regular users of the hall, complained that the storage area of the hall was damp. The storage area has been checked including during quite heavy rain. No obvious leaks have been detected

There is a need to list the items stored in the hall. The aim is to improve the accessibility to the stored items. This will need the formation of a work party.

Roger Corbett & Margaret Powell

Cards

We continue to give a birthday card on behalf of everyone at St James' to each of our members who we're aware of are happy to receive one. We record the birthdays on a spreadsheet, and then I, Angela, break the lists of names and dates down into a month-by-month basis, so that cards can be made and completed for the recipients. If we don't have your birthday down, and you'd like to receive a card when it's your birthday, please let me or Margaret know when your birthday is and we'd be very glad to include you. I find it very rewarding to serve our church family in this way and pray it is a blessing.

In terms of our memorial services, I (Margaret) continue to send our memorial card invitations, personally inviting those who have lost their loved ones to come and be ministered to at these services, which happen 4 times a year.

Finally at the moment, we send cards out for couples who have got married on their first anniversary letting them know they are in our thoughts and prayers.

Angela Cooper and Margaret Powell

Vicar's Report

Dear church family,

It continues to be a wonderful privilege to serve in leadership among you as part of the family. As I reflect over the past year, I 'm so thankful for your ***openness to try out new things and to adapt***, to be open to God's vision.

Casting my thoughts back to last summer, we enjoyed some lovely Sunday afternoons over at Chasewater with children and young people and their families, and it was great to make the most of the green for outdoor services on Sunday evenings, which gave us greater freedom to worship without wearing masks. Over the summer, we had 14 mini-gatherings for afternoon teas, too, which enabled us to ***reconnect*** with some we'd not seen since prior to the pandemic.

Moreover, the Summer months involved fortnightly prayer walks around different areas of the parish, which gave us the chance ***to see the roads and streets of Brownhills and Clayhanger with fresh eyes***. This process has greatly supported our PCC's understanding of God's call upon St James' to be a people through whom others come to experience God as the Wonderful Counsellor.

During the autumn I and I know many of our Sunday Club and Tribe leaders and other volunteers were encouraged by October's Light Party that we had to enable local primary age children to ***hear the gospel message*** whilst having a very fun evening.

November was very much an encouragement too, in that for the first time since the pandemic starting, we were able to have the ***Remembrance Sunday services and parade in person***. We did experience a difficulty with our sound system when it came to the outside Act of Remembrance, and so are very thankful for the anonymous gift we have received of a portable sound system to support us with any future outside services and

events. That Remembrance Sunday morning was ***extremely important for our local community, which greatly respects Remembrance***, and I am especially grateful to Dan Stratham at the local Air Training Core and to all Royal British Legion volunteers who collaborated so well to make sure it was a success.

As for December, less restrictions meant ***more singing was possible and enabled us to restore the link*** with local leaders, like MP Wendy Moreton, who kindly attended our Carols by Candlelight service and read for us. What I was most excited by, and I pray we can all be increasingly excited by, is what a brilliant opportunity Christmas, and then later, Easter, gives us to gently get to know new people. To help us keep in touch with new people who come to us, we have new some postcards that are kept under the seats in church, and on the fellowship room welcome table. If you notice someone new, please sensitively introduce yourself, and ask them their name, and when appropriate, draw their attention to these cards.

As for Easter, it has been such a joy to worship with more freedom in respect of Covid, and I'm extremely thankful for ***the growing partnership with local churches*** that we have for the Good Friday morning March and Act of Witness. It was wonderful to welcome so many and to witness together to God's love. From last September we've started to establish a Joint Service too – one late September, and one late May, to alternate between our local churches as to who hosts the service. In many revivals throughout Christian history, this partnership together in prayer and worship for God's Kingdom to come has been very important, so please can I ask you to pray for the continued growth of these relationships.

Looking ahead, as many of you'll be aware by now, we're setting up a ***Prayer Room in church for Ascension Day to Pentecost*** (26th May to 5th June). The church will be open more than usual during that time. We'll make sure you know more soon, but right now, please can I encourage you to make the most of this time and make sure you come along to see

what it's all about? ***As you do that, I know God will meet you in a special way.*** Also, towards the end of those 10 days, our Community Fun Day (Sat 4th June) will be a chance to have fun celebrating our Queen's Platinum Jubilee, to get to know people, and invite them, too, to experience the Prayer Room.

Reflecting on the 5 main priorities that I was presented with when I was exploring whether God was calling me to work with you [1) to be growing in our ways of worshipping together, 2) to be learning more about following Jesus together, 3) to grow as a church family in which each generation is present and active, 4) to grow in sharing the gospel, and 5) to serve the local community] our PCC has been thinking and talking together over the past months about our ***values and culture.*** We've considered what is most important for us – how we really want to be – and the opposite – what could stand against us getting there.

Now that we're in a better place concerning Covid, ***our PCC are having a day away on a Saturday this September*** to enjoy getting to know each other more, share food and fun, and to go deeper into our vision process. On this day we'll start from the place of holding central the 3 things we sense we've heard so far about God's vision for us: to be a church who ***share with others that God knows and sees them personally,*** to be a church who know that ***in our strength all is impossible, but with God, all IS possible,*** and to be ***a church who point to the His nature as Wonderful Counsellor.***

As we look forward together to the coming year, please pray for me and our staff team and PCC, and as you pray, know that I and our staff and pastoral teams are regularly praying for you.

With love and every blessing in the Lord Jesus,

Gayle