

2019

Annual Report

The Parish Church of the Ascension, Hall
Green

CHARITY NUMBER 1133810

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council of the Ascension, Hall Green

Aim and purposes

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) along with the vicar, Reverend Nejib Boumenjel, share the responsibility of promoting the mission of the church: pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical in the parish of the Ascension, Hall Green.

Objectives

Our site brings people together for Christian worship, education and fellowship as well as providing multiple opportunities for service to wider community. Anyone is welcome to worship here and to become part of our parish community.

Our Vision:

At the Church of the Ascension we seek to be a friendly and welcoming church with a passion for loving service to the local community where people of all ages can experience the love of God, grow in faith and receive the spiritual and pastoral support they need.

Our Mission Statement:

The Church of the Ascension exists to Love God, Love People and to make disciples of Jesus who will make a difference in our community and beyond.

When planning our activities, we have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. We try to enable people to live out their faith as part of our Christian community through:

- Worship, prayer; and education in the gospel;
- Provision of community spaces;
- Mission and outreach work;
- Partnership initiatives with Job Marston Centre, hall users, fellow churches and others.
- Pastoral care for people living in the parish; and
- Stewardship of the Ascension's physical, financial and human resources.

People

At the start of this Annual Report, it is important to recognise that fulfilling our vision and mission requires the efforts of many and to thank everyone giving their time and talents in God's service.

We remain fortunate to have so many dedicated and talented people at the Ascension. We would especially like to thank Rev. Nejib Boumenjel for his continued leadership and dedication as we explore how we can grow in faith and further develop in loving service to the community. Thanks are also given to our team of readers, church officers, those who coordinate different aspects of our mission and outreach work and all who perform less visible but still important tasks.

Activities and Achievements

Worship and prayer

Our regular pattern of worship settled and matured in 2019, with three services every Sunday – at 8.30am, 10am and 4pm. Occasional services are also held at 6pm on a Sunday. Sunday School took place at 10am and 4pm services to enable our children to learn more about our faith.

The 4 o'clock congregation has become an integral part of our Church life and the service of Holy Communion at 4pm each Sunday continues to be well supported. It is in Arabic on the first three Sundays

of the month and in English on the fourth and fifth Sundays of the month. One particular highlight in 2019 was the visit of Bishop David on Sunday 24th February 2019.

Public worship was suspended in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Church reopened in June for private prayer and public worship resumed on 26th July with Covid secure measure in place. At the present time, services are being held at 10am and 4pm on Sundays and a mid-week service at 10.30am on Wednesdays.

The audio-visual system in church is used every Sunday at 10 am services and often as an aid to illustrate sermons, talks and readings. It is also used at the 4 pm service, not least to provide the backing music for the hymns and worship songs sung at that service.

Sadly, musical activities have been suspended since March 2020 but we look forward to their resumption led by Director of Music Clive Jones and our dedicated choir, when it is possible.

The Church Away Day in June was a highlight of 2019, offering the opportunity to get to know one another better and to enjoy worship together and fellowship. As a Church community, we also enjoyed celebrating Nasar's baptism in September 2019 and Lee's confirmation in November.

We continued to consolidate and grow Messy Church, guided by the values of being Christ-centred for all ages, creativity, hospitality and celebration. We ran 10 Messy Church sessions in 2019 and 2 in 2020 with a variety of seasonal and other themes with an average attendance of 24 children and 12 adults. Messy Church has been suspended since March 2020 but it is an important ministry, planting seeds of faith in our 'Messy' community, and we hope to be able to resume at some point.



There are fortnightly prayer meetings where we share and pray for those things that we would like to seek God's guidance for as well as things for which we would like to give thanks. Bible Study also takes place on the evenings of the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month. Prayer meetings and bible study have continued virtually using Zoom.

We were delighted to hosted the 3D course in 2019/20. This was the major programme offered by the Diocese for the development of discipleship, offering Christians the opportunity to meet in small groups to study the Bible, discuss issues of faith and life and to pray together. 12 people, 6 of them from the Ascension, participated and Rev. Nejib was the tutor. The course had to be suspended in March 2020 but it is hoped to complete it when restrictions allow.

The number of people on the electoral register increased from 83 to 99 in 2019, due mainly to a number of members of the 4pm congregation joining the register. Our regular Sunday attendance in 2019 was 77 while there were 97 people attending worship on Easter Day 2019 and a total of 176 on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 2019.

Since the start of 2019, we have sadly marked the passing of, among others, Audrey Andrews, Gerald Marsh, Roy Moore and Beryl Robinson. We would like to pay tribute to them and to express our sympathy to their loved ones.

Pastoral care

Some members of our parish are unable to attend church due to sickness or age. The vicar and lay pastoral team respond to the sick and to requests from other church members who wish to receive home communion or other support. Our continued thanks to the small, dedicated team involved in this vital ministry.

Safeguarding

The PCC has complied with its duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have due regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. In November 2019, the PCC reviewed its safeguarding policy; a copy of this can be found on our website <http://www.ascensionhallgreen.org.uk/>. Over the past year, the PCC has also adopted additional policies as required in the Diocesan safeguarding checklist.

Mission and evangelism

Helping those in need – both at home and further afield - is a demonstration of our faith.

Since October 2016, a group of volunteers from inside and outside the church community have run a local foodbank at the Ascension every Friday.

In 2019, the foodbank assisted 1089 adults and 531 children and gave out 13.3 tonnes of food. This represents an approximate 30% increase on 2018.

The service is provided by volunteers most working in shifts and some involved in physical hard work collecting large quantities of food parcels. A real spirit has developed among the team.

The foodbank has continued throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, providing an invaluable service. The service has been adapted to make it Covid secure. Both volunteers and clients miss the opportunity for chat and informal support but it is hoped to be possible to resume this at some point.

On October 2nd 2020, Brian Cove retired as foodbank coordinator. Thanks are given to Brian for his role in establishing this vital mission and for his hard work, enabling the foodbank to develop and thrive over the past 4 years. Jon Meadows and Rev. Nejb are taking over the coordinator role.

Starting in November 2018, a Place of Welcome has been held in the coffee lounge on Monday morning as a place where everyone can go for a friendly face, a cup of tea and a chat.

In response to need further afield, a box is placed at the back of the church every Sunday for charity donations. In 2019, we collected for the following charities: Bible Society, Church Mission Society, Diocesan Malawi Appeal, Birmingham City Mission, St Mary's Hospice, Mission to Seafarers, Church Army, RNIB and the Missionary Aviation Fellowship. We also collected for Christian Aid week in May and for the Children Society at the Christingle service.

Partnerships

Some of the key activities taking place in our two community halls and / or undertaken by organisations with strong links to The Ascension are described below.

Job Marston Centre

The JMC Board met approximately monthly in 2019 and the early part of 2020. It was agreed at the AGM following a resolution passed and in accordance with the legal requirements, no formal AGM would be held in the future. The Articles of Association have been amended accordingly.

The Board said farewell to Mark Gaston, Money and Benefit's Adviser who was taking up a post elsewhere, but were pleased to welcome Rajna Begum as his replacement. The Adviser is kept very busy every Friday morning with booked appointments and the 'drop-in' service during the Food Bank sessions. Booked appointments from 2 August 2019 to the end of December 2019 totalled 60, together with 136 [some repeats] during the afternoon 'drop-in session.

The Job Club, led by the Administration Manager Sylvia and assisted by Community Coordinator Andrea has also been busy. Clients numbered 90 (some repeats) during the period as stated above. The assistance given to clients is valued.

The Monday morning Place of Welcome led by Community Co-ordinator Andrea had 349 attendees [with repeats] between August 2019 and December 2019. Open to all, it serves a regular group of people who appreciate being together in a welcoming environment, and provides free refreshments, games and arts and crafts. It was suspended in March 2020 due to the pandemic but has recently resumed.

Andrea conducted mindfulness sessions at Hall Green Secondary School with students anxious regarding forthcoming GCSEs. These sessions were welcomed by the school and the pupils.

During July 2019, we welcomed two pupils from Kings Norton Secondary School embarking upon 'work experience' and feedback from the school and the girls concerned was extremely positive.

We are grateful to all our staff for their dedication and involvement with all of the services provided by JMC and those also associated with The Church of The Ascension. We also thank all those who assist with the maintenance and upkeep of the hall, gardens and House.

Following the 'lock down' due to Covid-19, our Administration Manager and Financial Assistant were enrolled into the Government furlough scheme. Our Community Co-ordinator continued to work designated hours from home and all staff continued to receive full salaries and contact continued with hirers and users. The Money Advice service continued via telephone at the Narthex premises, with regular reports being received. This particular service is supported by Yardley Great Trust together with our PCC. Also, through our Community Co-ordinator, contact was retained with Place of Welcome attendees either by phone, visits or emails and assistance was given to Job Club clients where possible. Volunteers for assistance with the Food Bank were recruited due to present volunteers withdrawing under CV19 restrictions etc. Now supervised Child Contact has resumed in the House, with Slimming World and our Pre-school Play Group and Hall Green Youth resuming in the Hall. Many applications for funding in order to replace lost income from hirers were carried out during the 'lock down' which raised £15,000. This amount includes a generous donation of £5000.

Margaret Hyde – Chair, Job Marson Centre

Hall Green Churches Child Contact Centre

Until the middle of March 2020, both Hall Green and Smith's Wood Child Contact Centres continued to be very busy as a consequence of closures of other Child Contact Centres in the Birmingham area within the last few years. Hall Green Centre usually operates from the Church Hall every Saturday between 2pm – 4pm and on alternate Saturdays between 11am – 1pm; Smith's Wood Child Contact Centre in Smith's Wood, North Solihull is usually open on alternate Saturdays between 2pm – 4pm.

Both Centres were obliged to close for direct contact from the middle of March, when the government imposed a nationwide lockdown as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. However the Coordinators were able to help some families using the Centres to make alternative arrangements for child contact with the non-resident parent. Where this proved to be impossible, the Centres were then able in some cases to provide remote contact - one of the Coordinators supervised child contact sessions tele-visually using three-way Skype.

The Centres were able to re-open again from 11th July 2020 with strict Covid-19 precautions in place. The sessions have been reduced to 50 minutes with only four families at Hall Green and two families at Smith's Wood accommodated in each session. Two such sessions are held at Hall Green weekly and Smith's Wood fortnightly between 2 pm – 4 pm and two sessions at Hall Green between 11am and 1pm fortnightly. Cleaning and sanitising has to take place between each of the sessions. Each family is allocated a table and their movement in the contact area during a session is restricted to ensure social distancing is maintained between each family. Unfortunately, the contact sessions have had to be rationed to cater for both pre-lockdown families still needing to attend the Centres and a steady stream of new families referring or being referred to the Centres.

Since the beginning of 2020 both Centres have been undergoing the NACCC (National Association of Child Contact Centres) three yearly re-accreditation process. This time round it has been more onerous both because of the pandemic and the additional requirements imposed by NACCC, including scrutiny of the Centres' finances. The Assessor allocated to the Centres lives in the Colwyn Bay area of North Wales and in the end the whole process was accomplished remotely avoiding the need for her to visit either Centre. All the documents she needed to see were sent by email and copies of confidential files and spreadsheets containing personal data forwarded using Egress (encrypted email). She had a remote tour of each Centre using iPhone video facilities and many photos and floor plans were provided. The process concluded with a Skype meeting on 10th October 2020, when she met all four coordinators online for discussions and questions. Both Centres have come through the re-accreditation process with flying colours and without the need for any action plans.

Volunteer numbers across the two centres, including the Trustees, are currently 49. During 2019 5 volunteers left for a variety of personal reasons and 7 new volunteers were recruited.

In the financial year 2019/20 grants were awarded by CAF/CASS totalling £5,610, Gentleman's Night Out Charity £1,000 and Yardley Great Trust £11,500. A bequest of £1,000 was also gratefully received from the estate of the late Brian Whately – Brian had been a generous supporter of the Charity for a number of years. So far seven months into the current financial year 2020/21 grants have been awarded by CAF/CASS totalling £5,340 and We Are All Going To Make A Difference Charity (formerly Gentleman's Night Out Charity) £1,000. Income is also received from other donations and from the 'one-off' administration fees paid by each family commencing child contact at our Centres.

This relatively good financial situation enabled the charity to extend the contract of Sarah Ali, our part time salaried Coordinator, for a further year from 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021. Sarah has become an invaluable member in our team of four Coordinators, particularly in relation to the processing of new referrals. Grateful thanks are also due to Frances Hooper for the considerable amount of work she undertakes in relation to operations and recruitment of new volunteers and Angela Feenan, who runs the Smith's Wood Centre. Until Christmas 2019, Angela also ran the fortnightly morning session at Hall Green but she has now stepped down from that role because of her extensive family and work commitments. Finally, the Centres could not operate without the commitment of our Team Leaders and volunteer support workers; grateful thanks to them also. The Centres really do have a fantastic team of volunteers!

The project continues to be supported by Churches Together in Hall Green. The Directors and Trustees much appreciate the work of Rev Nejib Boumenjel, the Hall Green Ministers' representative on the Board. My thanks particularly to my colleague Trustees, David Andrews, Frances Hooper and Tina Pickering.

Clive Jones, Chair of Directors and Trustees and Joint Coordinator

Hall Green Youth

Hall Green Youth (HGY) was formed in 2006, building on a long history of interest in youth work through Churches Together in Hall Green. Its mission is to connect with and meet the needs of young people. The emphasis is on developing relationships with young people and between them and others in their communities to encourage mutual understanding.

In 2019, HGY worked with 62 young people. The main activities were:

- Breathe: a lunch time club for year 8 pupils at Hall Green Secondary School.
- Just Us Girls: after school clubs at Ninestiles School.
- Just Chill: A youth club for 11-18 in the Chatterton Hall on Thursdays for 2 hours.



Just Chill is registered as a safe space for young people to access in the Hall Green area.

The young people HGY work with typically struggle with one or more of the following: low self-esteem, low concentration, emotional issues or anxiety. HGY's activities provide young people with a place where they can feel safe and be themselves. Activities include arts, cooking, physical activity, drama and team building; these help to build the young people's confidence.

In April 2019, Cheryl Fox-Barrett left Hall Green Youth after 10 years. HGY's Board expressed its gratitude to Cheryl for her work; she enabled Hall Green Youth to identify the needs of young people and work with other local organisations to meet these needs in the most appropriate way.

Katrina Matthews-Boulton and Luke Boulton continue to be employed as part-time youth workers. The Board is grateful to them for their commitment, their skill in building relationships with young people and their ability to develop and deliver activities which help young people to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

On 9th November 2019, the Board held an away day to develop a vision for the next 5 years. This reached the conclusion that the unique contribution that Hall Green Youth can make in the next 5 years is outreach - reaching the young people that Churches and others don't. A number of possible opportunities to connect with other organisations to support young people's emotional wellbeing were identified and will be taken forward in 2020 and beyond.

We had to cease delivery of all project activities in mid-March 2020 due to Covid-19 and Katrina and Luke were furloughed. They have now returned from furlough and contact has been re-established with Hall Green and Ninestiles Secondary Schools with a view to resuming the activities there when we, and they, judge that it is safe and practical to do so. Just Chill, the community youth club that meets in the Chatterton Hall on a Thursday, resumed on 1st October.

Mothers' Union

Mothers' Union works in 83 countries across the world to promote stable marriage, family life and the protection of children through praying, enabling and campaigning.

It is with great sadness that the Ascension Branch went into abeyance after completing the 2019 programme. It had been without a leader for over two years and Nosh and Natter meetings became less frequent during 2019, with only a handful of members attending. An average of nine came to the Tuesday afternoon meetings. As only two remained on the Committee and, after a comprehensive 'mail drop' to all Branch Members, no one came forward to join it or to lead the Branch, it was decided that we would cease to meet in 2020. Those wishing to continue membership of the World-Wide Mothers' Union can do so by contacting the Diocesan Office.

Fellowship

Church members operated The Ascension Coffee Shop from 10.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. every Wednesday in the Coffee Lounge. The aim is to provide a low-cost meal or snack and friendship for members of our local community. A Christmas community lunch was also arranged. Coffee shop was suspended in March 2020 due to Covid-19

Monday Club is open to all and offers friendship, entertainment and support to older people, many of whom might otherwise feel lonely and isolated. It completed its 50th year in 2019 and was due to



continue to meet fortnightly between March and December this year. Due to Covid-19 only two meetings took place in March and, unfortunately, no further sessions will now be possible in 2020.

Lunch Club gives the opportunity to eat out in good company. It would normally meet on the last Thursday each month, except December, and visit Golf Clubs and pubs, enjoying good food from either the main menu or a more modest set menu. However, the entire 2020 programme had to be cancelled following our meal at Moseley Golf Club in February, because of Covid-19.

Heritage Open Day

On Saturday 21st September 2019, we held an open morning as part of national Heritage Open Day. Church was open for people to look around and find out about its history. We had over 30 visitors, including a number from people with past connections to the Church. Unfortunately, we weren't able to hold the equivalent event in 2020 but it will be back in 2021.

Parish Pixels' Photography Competition

We enjoyed entering the 'Parish Pixels' competition celebrating churches across the UK in Autumn 2019. Our photograph showcased what makes the Ascension special – it's people. Our thanks to everyone who participated and, in particular, to Trevor Harker for organising and taking the photographs, and for using this as an opportunity to raise funds for the Ascension.

Beechcroft Tennis and Multi Sports Community Club

Beechcroft has continued to thrive with the extensive range of sporting activities it accommodates. It's two leading activities are Tennis and Walking Football, but Table Tennis, Netball, Hockey, Walking Hockey and Netball, Junior and Toddler Football and Fitness Classes are also offered. It closed in March 2020 when the government imposed the nationwide lockdown but over the last few months it has gradually resumed most of its outdoor sporting activities with strict Covid-19 precautions in place.

The Club has a lease from The Church of the Ascension until 2034. During 2019 lengthy negotiations with the Club for an increased rent were eventually successfully concluded. These followed from the rent review provision in the Lease, triggered on 1st July 2018. The annual rent has been increased from £2,600 to £3,750. This covers the period from 1st July 2018 to 30th June 2022. The next review falls due on 1st July 2022. However, to assist the Club's financial position a discount of £575 was agreed for the year 2018/19, so that the amount payable for that year was £3,175.

The negotiations took into account the fact that the previous rent of £2,600 per annum had remained unchanged for a period of at least seven years during a time when the Club had continuing financial difficulties, which could have led to it closing. The Club (via one of its sponsors) has paid rent up to 30th June 2020.

Clive Jones

Structure, governance and management

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC is a Registered Charity. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. The membership of the PCC consists of the incumbent, churchwardens, two licensed readers, members of the Deanery synod and members elected by members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the church. All members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the electoral roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent.

The PCC met 6 times during the year between May 2019 and February 2020 and again in September 2020.

The Church is entitled to nominate 3 representatives to sit on the deanery synod. This provides an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church. Margaret Davis resigned in Autumn 2019, leaving us with a single representative, Anthea Tinline.

The PCC elects a number of sub committees. The Standing Committee met three times to make decisions between PCC meetings while the Halls Development and Management Group meets regularly to consider both maintenance matters and the future development of the halls as a community resource.

During the year, the PCC took a decision to seek registration of the Church of the Ascension Parish Hall Charity Hall Scheme 2013. Registration was achieved in January 2020 (charity number 1187634). As a separate charity, the Hall Charity will have increased scope to seek funding to support improvements to the halls for the benefit of users and the local community.

Sarah Barnes, PCC Secretary

Financial Review

Total receipts to the General funds for the year ending 31st December 2019 amounted to approximately £78,200. Of this amount £10,245 was received from Gift Aid and GASDS claims to the Inland Revenue. This remains an important source of income for us and would urge that all donations are given in the most efficient way.

In addition, we received investment income of £15,893, an increase of some £10,000 from the previous year, this being a result of investing the sale proceeds of the house in Studland Road in various Church of England investment accounts. Combined income from regular planned giving and Cash collections remained fairly steady during the year.

Expenditure on unrestricted funds for the year was just over £73,000 resulting in an excess of income over expenditure of £4,700. This is the first time for some years that we have been in 'positive' territory and is a welcome relief

Reserves Policy

The PCC maintains a Reserve Policy; the cash balances held in unrestricted funds more than satisfy the target in the Reserves Policy. The Reserves Policy was reviewed by the PCC on 13th February 2020.

Covid-19 Update

Although not required for this report, due to the delay in publication because of the pandemic, things have moved on considerably and many may question the impact on the Church finances. I am happy to report that as a result of the 'Funding Program' from many years ago the majority of donations from our members comes in by Bank Transfer. There has been little impact on these donations and I continue to forecast a 'break even' position for General Activities for 2020.

The one area that has been affected is the 'Halls Account'. Understandably income has been reduced to near zero since lock down began, but annual expenditure will only be slightly lower than usual. I am forecasting a deficit to the Halls Fund of between £10K - £15k for the year. This will have to be funded from somewhere, most likely a transfer from the General Funds!

Jon Meadows, Treasurer

Church of the Ascension Annual Property Report 2019/20

The Church

The faculty for the new church boiler was granted on 10th July 2019. Following the advice of the architect, an asbestos survey was then commissioned from J Cullen Thermals Ltd. As a consequence, two small pieces of asbestos sheeting were found affixed on the underside of the wooden shelf over the top of the radiator by the inner entrance of the church. These were professionally removed. The survey report also flagged up the possibility of asbestos in three other locations - the interior lining of the vestry safe, the organ blower chamber and the old boiler in the basement boiler room. Following enquiries, it was established no asbestos was present in any of these places.

The new boiler was eventually installed in the week commencing 14th October 2019 by Warmingtons Plumbing and Heating at a cost of £11,621.64 (inclusive of VAT – the VAT is recoverable - see next section). It has been located on the wall in the lobby behind the rear door of the vestry, which includes the staircase leading up to the north gallery, and has a new flue system, the outlet for which is on the outside wall immediately behind the boiler. It is working well and the church is much warmer for services. The old boiler has been removed from the boiler room by the contractors.

Quinquennial Report

The Quinquennial inspection in relation to the church and churchyard was carried out by Chris Thomas in April 2019 and his report was received in July 2019. This was discussed by the Standing Committee in August 2019. Works that need to be carried out were shown in three categories – those requiring immediate attention, works within 18 months and works within the Quinquennium (5 years).

The works requiring immediate attention (QQI Part 1) were contracted to Croft Building & Conservation Ltd of Cannock and were carried out in February and May 2020 at a cost of £4,740.54 including £790.09 VAT. The VAT is recoverable under the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme (VAT). They included cleaning out all rainwater goods, gutters, outlets and gullies, various minor slate repairs, re-fixing the sacrificial lead strip to the south transept, minor repointing to flashings, asphalt abutment and hip tiles and repairing the keystone above the main entrance doors.

The repair of the loose pulpit newel post originally included in Part 1 has been deferred; upon closer examination by the contractor more extensive work is required which will include removing some of the stair treads and underside panelling, overhaul of the balusters and handrail in the contractor's metal workers workshop, excavation of the surrounding floor with removal of some of the quarry tiles and the digging of a small hole for the re-fixing of the newel post. The quote for this is £5,148.10 plus VAT, so the PCC has decided to defer these works until a later stage of the QQI works.

In June 2020 some bits of stone dropped off one the quoin stones (dressing stones). They 'edge' the square base of the tower at its corners on either side of the church entrance. Some of these stones are in a poor state and need defrassing (removal of loose cement mortar and brushing off back to sound stone) with repointing of localised areas. This has been quoted at £705.38 plus VAT and the contractor has been asked to proceed. A date for the works is awaited.

Part 2 of the works (QQI Part 2) – those required within 18 months - include repairing or renewing high level stone dressings, mouldings and balusters, repair and decoration of the roof access door, re-decorating the cast iron gutters, renewing missing brick corbels to the tower, repointing open joints to the tower brickwork, repairing and redecorating the south transept door, repairing and redecorating the sundial and repairing impact damage to the boundary wall. The budget cost figure provided by the architect was £134,000 exclusive of VAT. The most substantial items within this work were £105,000 for the high-level stone dressings, mouldings and balusters and £15,000 for the missing brick corbels to the tower and the repointing of open joints to the tower brickwork. These works (less the impact damage to the boundary wall) have now been costed more accurately by a quantity surveyor, Paul Daniels of Worcester, and come in at £78,080 plus

VAT of £15,616, significantly less than Chris Thomas's budget estimate. However, when professional fees (architects and quantity surveyor) and building control fees are added, the total is increased to c.£90,000 plus VAT of c.£18,000; the VAT element will be recoverable. Chris Thomas emphasised in his report that it's important to plan now for the phasing and funding of these stonework repairs before it becomes a matter of crisis management. As yet, our architect has not been able to find a conservator to provide a report on the sundial to advise what needs to be done to restore it.

Part 3 of the works to be carried out within five years have a total budget cost figure of £20,750 exclusive of VAT. The repairs will be outlined in a subsequent Annual Report, when it is possible to proceed with them.

The Churchyard and Churchyard Wall

In August 2019 six lime trees immediately behind the churchyard wall on the Fox Hollies Road section were pollarded by tree surgeons at a cost of £2,700 plus VAT. The branch growth from some of these trees had been overhanging the pavement area next to the road and they required drastic pruning. Community Garden Trust continue with the grass cutting and leaf clearance. Whilst their performance has improved, their contract will remain under review.

The churchyard wall was also viewed by the architect as part of the Quinquennial Inspection, particularly the section on Fox Hollies Road where it bulges in several places. He advised further investigations should be carried out. In March 2020 it was inspected and surveyed by a conservation structural engineer, Jeff Stott of Mann Williams, Bath. In his subsequent report he advised that the section of wall fronting to Fox Hollies Road was in a poor state – *'The wall leans through most of its length but only becomes concerning as it wraps around six trees, five of which are very mature limes. Here the trees are leaning beyond their middle third implying that they could continue to move under their own mass. The brick shows various areas of past repair, repointing with open joints and damaged brick due to harsh cement mortars and frost. The coping stones do not cover the head of the wall and are damaged in many areas. Therefore water enters freely into the fabric of the wall and will eventually break down the efficiency of the mortars. The back face of the wall is also in poor condition and it's likely the wall has been affected by root growth, invasive woody plants such as ivy (now partially removed) and by various areas of rebuild where jointing to the original is weak. The wall is in danger of collapsing around the trees due to the amount of lean, the continued pressure from the trees and the likely breaking down of the fabric (of the wall) caused by storm water and the wall's poor condition. Whilst the wall does not appear to be at the point of collapse, we could not predict how long it would be until that collapse.'*

Following my discussions with the professionals, the structural engineer drew up three options for repair supported by annotated drawings. Option 1 was the removal of the trees and rebuild of wall, Option 2 was to take down the wall and rebuild with insertion of helical piles and caps at 2 metre centres to give added strength to a new wall and Option 3 the provision of Reverse Buttresses constructed in brick with deep foundations and attached to the back of the wall using helibar anchors built into the buttresses and drilled through the existing wall. This would reinforce the wall and hold it in position – there would be 13 buttresses in all; 6 x 2 for each of the trees and an additional buttress near to the corner with the School Road section, where repairs to the rear of the wall and rebuilding the top half are also required to consolidate the wall. This additional buttress would be designed to deal with the 1.4 metre retained height to the corner. In addition Option 3 works would include repointing a further 20% of this section of the wall, lifting 50% of the copings and repointing 100% of the copings. This option is the most complex.

Budget Costings were prepared for each of these Options by Paul Daniels (PD), Quantity Surveyor, to assist with funding applications:

| | | |
|----------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Option 1 | Trees removed and rebuild | £109,930 + VAT |
| Option 2 | Trees remaining and rebuild | £147,780 + VAT |
| Option 3 | Reverse Buttresses and repairs | £50,920 + VAT |

Option 3 is by far the cheapest at £50,920 + VAT and has been adopted by the PCC. This basic cost has to be built up to include professional fees (architects, structural engineers and archaeology), building control and possible listed Building Consent. Therefore, the total cost including VAT is c.£75,000. Unfortunately, churchyard wall repairs are excluded from the VAT recovery scheme.

The structural engineer has expressed concern about the possibility of hidden burials immediately behind the wall. Burials are recorded from 1813 to 5th January 1968 in records at the B'ham City Council archive and the Register in church. Subsequent entries relate to burials / interments of ashes in designated cremated remains areas in the churchyard. Church Monumental Inscriptions (gravestones and monuments) were recorded in 1993. Whilst it is thought unlikely there are hidden graves up against the wall, our architect advised that a consultant archaeologist could be employed to report and work on site with the contractors. He/she would advise during the ground excavations to mitigate against disturbance of any hidden graves when the positions of the reverse buttresses are being determined. This apparently is standard practice in such situations. Tree roots also have to be navigated when determining these positions.

There are important health and safety implications for pedestrians walking along the pavement in front of the wall and by the junction of Fox Hollies Road and School Road as well as for church users. Ideally the works should be carried out in one go - it is more cost effective, but lack of adequate finance will prevent this. The structural engineer has identified two sections of the wall where essential work needs to be undertaken over the winter period (but ideally before winter set in) to avoid a collapse. They are the 23 metre section leading to the corner of the wall with the School Road section (installing five reverse buttresses, four of which are on either side of two of the trees, with wall repairs and partial rebuild of the end section) and at the third tree from the Fox Hollies Road entrance to the churchyard (installing two reverse buttresses on either side of the tree where the wall is only one brick thick around the tree). These works are budgeted at c£33,500 - £35,000. The remaining work on the wall would be included with the QQI Part 2 works to be carried out in 2021.

A faculty application for the wall and reverse buttress work was submitted to the Birmingham Diocesan Office on 8th July 2020 and the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) has recommended the application should be granted, but subject to 8 conditions. The most significant of these are that the works are accompanied by archaeological observation and supervision when trial holes are excavated at the proposed reverse buttress locations to assess whether any burials are affected and the PCC obtaining planning consent for the works. At first it was thought that planning consent would not be required but, when clarification was obtained, the Planning Department said it was necessary because of the construction of the 13 reverse buttresses as part of the scheme. Our architect has been instructed to submit the planning application but more detailed plans need to be drawn up, ground conditions in the proposed areas of construction need to be assessed in more detail and the structural engineer needs to fully design the buttresses and provide plans and other documentation. Our architect and structural engineer will be meeting on site shortly to progress this procedure. The planning application process will add at least eight weeks to the pre-construction timetable and will delay the start of the essential urgent work. All of the wall will be monitored over the winter period.

Funding and Church Restoration Funding Appeal

To date the church has financed the QQI Part 1 Works and the professional fees of our architect, structural engineer and quantity surveyor incurred in relation to the churchyard wall and the QQI Part 2 Works. About £170,000 needs to be found to finance all these works and this amount could increase as works progress. So far, three grant applications have been submitted, slanted mainly towards funding the urgent essential works on the churchyard wall. The application to the Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust for £20,000 has been rejected but applications to Historic England and the Grimmitt Trust for £27,500 are still pending. The church has some funding available but during November it is intended to launch a Restoration Funding Appeal, addressed in the first instance to church members and the local community, towards raising the money needed. Quite a few grant providers who make larger awards require evidence of matched funding before being prepared to consider awards - significant funds raised through a church appeal would enable applications for further funding to be submitted to these providers.

Church Hall and Coffee Lounge

In the Coffee Lounge, the new cladding was extended around the remainder of the internal wall area in the customer / public area to complete the face-lift. It covers the wall area to just above table / chair height. Above that the walls have been redecorated. This was a JMC initiative, the cost of materials being funded by a grant from the Co-op. Both stainless steel sliding doors to the stainless-steel counter unit were replaced at a cost of £431.32. One of them had been badly damaged during the 2018 Hall break-in. The work was funded from the insurance settlement.

In the Hall itself the old stage doors at the back of the stage were removed and the space bricked in at a cost of £1,225; this work took place in February 2019. Bricking in this area has undoubtedly enhanced Hall security. Replacement instant water heaters supplying hot water to the wash basins in the ladies and gents toilets were fitted by Solihull Plumbing and Drainage at a cost of £875. This followed from a substantial leaking of water into the gentlemen's toilets from the water heater immediately above them. Both heaters were found to be corroded, so both were replaced.

The Church Hall commercial sized boiler had given problems twice during 2018, cutting out unexpectedly and/or failing to come on at designated times. Investigation by Warmingtons found there was loose wiring in the boiler unit. This was corrected and the boiler returned to normal function. A few months later the boiler again started to cut out but this time there was a loud undulating noise in the boiler room coming from the separate pump. Warmingtons advised the pump was starting to fail and it would only be a matter of weeks before it failed completely. The quote for fitting the replacement pump, new isolation valves and adapting the existing pipework was £3,130.80, inclusive of £521.80 VAT. There was a delay in the pump being delivered to Warmingtons due to supply shortages but it was eventually fitted on the 3rd March 2020.

A replacement safe standing on a wooden plinth was fitted in the church office in March 2019 by A & D Lock & Co. The safe itself is bolted to the wall immediately behind it. The old safe was damaged beyond repair in the break-in. The total cost of £1,201.20 was covered by the insurance settlement.

N. T. Jones Roofing carried out two roofing jobs during 2019. The first in August 2019 was the replacement of the leaking flat roof over the former Theatre 28 prop room behind the church office. This included insulation with a vapour check layer and the re-rendering of the outer wall adjacent to the play area at the rear of 93B School Road. In November 2019 the parapet wall over the Coffee Lounge was capped to eliminate leaks into the Lounge during very wet and windy weather. The cost of these works was £5,115. The roofers still have to investigate leaks into the Hall via the Belvedere on the pitched roof during stormy weather.

Some additional cupboards have been installed in the One to One Room for Food Bank use. In Autumn 2019 the pantry next to the former prop room was cleaned and repainted; some alterations were also made to the shelving to increase its storage capacity. This again was to provide additional capacity for the storage of food bags - many thanks to Nicole and Rob Mainwaring for undertaking this work.

Following on from the 2018 report and the PCC's strategy to deal with improvements to the Church Hall on a piecemeal basis, three quotations were obtained to replace the existing windows with PVC double glazed window units. The quote from Performance Trade was adopted. It is not only the cheapest at £17,136.52 plus Vat (£20,563.82 in all) but it comes from a company specialising in commercial double glazing with a good reputation. It has its own manufacturing unit for the production of the window units and its own scaffolding to use on site when they are being installed. They are part of the Amber Windows Group.

An application for grant funding was submitted by Brian Cove to Veolia Environmental Trust and an award of £20,820 has been made. This includes an amount for contingencies to cover unexpected additional works in rectifying any difficulties that could occur in the removal of the existing windows and the installation of the new ones. Examples of this could be damage to window surrounds (including damaged plaster) or replacement of rotting wood in some of the dormer windows. A condition of the grant was that 10% of the grant amount (£2,082) was to be paid to a designated landfill site - this sum has been paid from church funds. A detailed survey of the window spaces was carried out by the contractor's surveyor in the Hall on the 31st July 2020. Over the last few weeks work on the production of the new double-glazing units has been carried out at the contractor's manufacturing unit and they are due to be installed in the week commencing 26th October 2020. Grateful thanks to Brian for all his work in relation to the grant application.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic the Church Hall was closed to all its users (except the Foodbank) in mid-March 2020. As an essential service to the community, the Foodbank was permitted to continue and there

was an unprecedented increase in demand for its services. The Hall area itself became a storage area for the much-increased amounts of food required and the newly re-roofed former Theatre 28 Props Room at the back of the Hall was cleared for food storage as well. When this room is no longer required for food storage, it is likely to be re-purposed as a multi-purpose room. With its own separate entrance, it would be an ideal venue for meetings of smaller community or church groups. The interior will require some renovation, including a new ceiling, other plastering repairs and complete redecoration.

Hall Green Child Contact Centre was given permission to reopen from 4th July 2020 with strict Covid-19 precautions in place. From late August some other groups have returned and the Place of Welcome started again at the end of September. All groups using the Hall have to provide risk assessments for their activities and implement strict Covid-19 precautions.

General

The five yearly electrical circuit inspection across all of the church site (including both Halls and 93B School Road) was carried out in September 2019 by Nima Tahmasebi and his brother Kamran (Atlantic Engineering Group). They are both qualified electricians. During 2019 Nima did a lot of work rectifying lighting across the site, including changing bulbs and fluorescent lights in both the church and Church Hall. He also fitted a new timer for the Church Hall exterior night lights.

Since the 2018 Report, Bryland have continued to carry out the six-monthly testing and maintenance of the three fire alarms on the site (Church Hall, Chatterton Hall and 93B School Road) and the annual checking and maintenance of all the fire extinguishers across the site. PAT Testing of all electrical equipment took place in October 2019 and very recently in October 2020.

Clive Jones, Churchwarden

Property Report from the JMC for the Chatterton Hall and the House.

JMC works with the PCC in the maintenance of the buildings we occupy.

The upkeep of the Hall continues and has included the successful removal of the radiator covers, to enable the bleeding of the radiators and a replacement valve in the boiler allowed the pressure of water in the taps in the kitchen to be successfully increased.

Minor repairs have also been carried out to taps in the kitchen as well as the toilets. Repairs to the lighting have carried out and a 'deep clean' of the kitchen has taken place.

There is weekly testing of the fire alarm, together with a risk assessment carried out, details of which are regularly logged in a 'site checking' file.

Following break-ins into the Play Group shed, and as recommended by the Police, plastic 'spike' strips have been fixed to the fencing to the rear of the Hall. The gate between the path and the garden has been extensively repaired. However, the large trees in the Chatterton garden are a cause for concern.

During the recent cleaning out of the hoppers it was observed that a small portion of the roof covering had 'risen' and this repair is now in hand.

In order to conform to the Government guidelines, the Board undertook professional water testing for Legionella disease etc. together with the subsequent requirement of regular flushing of the water system during the lock down period. Four hand sanitisers have been installed.

The House, 93b School Road

The garden at the rear of the **House** has been re-furbished with a soft play area funded by a grant obtained by The Ascension Pre-School Play Group.

The House gullies and hoppers have been cleared. An infestation of wasps was 'dealt' with and various holes in the brick work were cemented in to avoid any further ingress of wasps.

Appropriate sanitising equipment available throughout the premises has been provided, together with a table 'screen' in order that the service, by appointment, to a limited number of clients for Job Club can continue.

Thanks are extended to all those who voluntarily give their time and expertise to assist with the upkeep of these premises and gardens.

Margaret Hyde – Chair, Job Marson Centre