

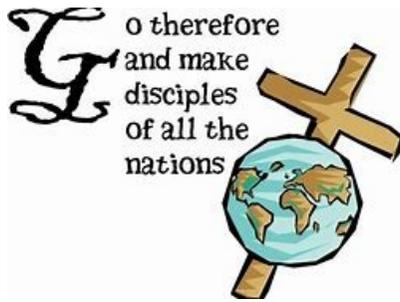


**ST BARNABAS
with
CHRIST CHURCH
REPORTS 2023**

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RECTOR'S REPORT 2023

Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion; to you our vows will be fulfilled. You who answer prayer, to you all people will come." (Psalm 65:1-2)

As we have worked as a PCC to report and reflect on the last year, my mind has turned often to Psalm 65, a song of trust and praise in the one who is the source of all blessings. We continue to live the truth of these words in our own lives and in the life of our church. We have come together, week after week, to offer our praise and thanks to God, and He has been faithful to us. This has been in our Sunday and Wednesday services, in special occasions and cluster gatherings. This has been for celebration and for memorial, for the church family and for the families of our community. This has been in simple acts of service in caring for one another and our buildings, and in more ambitious undertakings such as concerts and longer commemorations for Holy Week or Remembrance. In particular, we have offered prayer as hospitality and invited any and all to pray with us.

"You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it." (Psalm 65:9)

We have experienced God's care for us, and been able to show that care in our parish. We visit in people's homes. We welcome school children in ever increasing numbers into church. We give generously to the life of our diocese and to mission organisations near and dear

to our values. We have been committed to maintaining and improving our buildings and grounds. We can see that reviewing our giving will be an important challenge in the coming year, as we adapt to higher costs in the current economic climate and a change in the number of those able to give regularly and generously to the life of the parish. However, we are able to draw upon the reserves that our church hall creates for us, and have a more equitable commitment asked from us by the Diocese of Worcester financially, as we now are sharing the costs of ministry share for two stipendiary clergy across the three parishes of our cluster. Moreover, giving comes in many forms. A culture of generosity and willingness to lend a hand is a hallmark of the life of this parish, and I have been so encouraged by seeing this in action in the last year or so as I get to know the church family more deeply. We have continued to see our resources able to meet the duties and opportunities that fall to us. This has felt more stretched at times, as we have said sad farewells to some beloved members but as we have sought to find people to take on key roles, either individually or as teams, we have found new ways of working and being faithful together.

"You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance." (Psalm 65:11)

Revd Sarah Northall



CHURCHWARDEN'S REPORT 2023

As churchwardens, we are responsible for the care and management of the church building. As the Bishop's officers we have a duty of care for the clergy and also represent and communicate with the congregation.

Rev. Sarah Northall continued as our interim Priest-in-charge until 10 July when she was licensed by Archdeacon Robert as our Priest-in-charge.

INVENTORY

A new inventory for St. Barnabas was updated by Margaret Gandon during the year. Our very grateful thanks for all her hard work, as this was a big undertaking. Also thanks to Jackie Campbell who took photos of the church property.

FABRIC

We thank the Fabric committee for continuing to maintain our church building.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Sue Sykes continued to faithfully lead Open the Book at St. Barnabas school. She has been joined by some volunteers. The Cluster clergy make up the Chaplaincy team who lead assemblies at Bishop Perowne Cof E College. Green Lane Preschool still meet in the church hall during the week.

MUSIC & AUDIO VISUAL

On two Sundays a month, John Hocking leads our music worship. If he is not able to be in church, he records the music on the organ. The band plays on the other Sundays. We are very grateful to all our musicians and to those who operated the audio visual system.

WORSHIP

Our thanks must go to all those who have led our services - Revds. Sarah Northall, Diane Cooksey, Rosie Moss and Andy Gandon. We are pleased to welcome Rev. Jonathan Kimber who now has Permission to Officiate (PTO). Also Julie Berrow (Licensed Lay Minister) and Sue Sykes who lead our SES and SEW services (Something Else Sunday, Something Else Wednesday). This year we welcomed a new archdeacon, Mark Badger. Thanks to all the readers and those who lead intercessions. It is encouraging to see young people assisting in our worship. The 10am Wednesday service is still held weekly. The Prayer Chain met regularly throughout the year, praying for people who have asked for prayer, and situations in the world.

FINANCE

We do appreciate the work that our treasurer, Aidan Melarkey, has done during the year. We also thank John Dentith for all his work with planned giving and assisting the treasurer.

January	Burns' Night party
March	World Day of Prayer Lent groups St. Barnabas school in church Bishop Perowne year groups in church Mothering Sunday
April	Holy Week services Cluster breakfast followed by the Passion Play in Cathedral Plaza Cluster service led by Archdeacon Robert
May	APCM Deanery service at Hallow
June	St. Barnabas Patronal
July	Picnic on the Green Rev. Sarah's Licensing service St. Barnabas year 6 leavers service
September	Pop up café for parents of St. Barnabas Reception children Ride and Stride Arts exhibition
October	Harvest festival Beetle Drive Bishop Perowne in church
November	Service in Christ Church for Patronal
December	Brass band concert Nativity sets exhibition Carol singing on the Green Carols around Tolly Shoe boxes for the homeless Schools Carol services Crib service, Midnight communion



GOODBYES

We were saddened by the deaths of faithful members and friends of St. Barnabas this year: Ann King, Sheila Bright, Judy Ford, Mark Watson and Rev Nancy Murray-Peters. They will be missed.

I would personally like to thank Mary for all her hard work and support during her time as churchwarden. Her dedication to the role was greatly valued by everyone.

As there were no nominations for a second churchwarden at the APCM, I have been ably supported by "assistant churchwardens" on Sundays throughout the second half of the year.

Again, many thanks to everyone who works so hard for the church – you are all very much appreciated.

Rachel Chalmers and Mary James

PCC SECRETARIES' REPORT 2023

The PCC met on the following dates in 2023: 16 January, 20 March, 9 May, 14 May, 27 June, 11 September, and 7 November. A joint meeting with the PCC of St Wulstan's took place on the 4 December but with no formal business discussed or recorded. The 2023 Annual Parochial Church Meeting was held in church on the 14 May and was followed by a short PCC meeting to elect posts.

In between those meetings specialized sub-committees met to discuss and process appropriate matters, subject to the approval of the PCC. Minutes of the sub-committees were submitted for approval as necessary. The sub-committees were: Parish Hall, Mission Giving, Worship, Events & Publicity, All Age Outreach and Fabric. Our Eco Warriors Judy and Chris Ford were active up until the time of Judy's untimely death.

PCC meetings began and ended with prayer or the grace. Agendas, minutes of previous meetings and reports/sub-committee minutes were collated by the joint secretary and circulated to PCC via email prior to each meeting. Attendance at PCC meetings during 2023 was approximately 66% .

In no particular order of significance, items on PCC agendas, additional to finance and general administration, during 2023 were:

- Safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults
- Health and Safety
- Christ Church building maintenance and future use
- The large table at the west end of the nave
- Welcome leaflet and pack
- Replacement photocopier
- External noticeboards
- Contactless giving
- One Off Giving Scheme for visitors to church
- Replacement for verger and church cleaner
- Sidespeople/Money Counting Team
- The Rectory
- Defibrillator
- Worcester Concert Brass concert
- Mission Accompanier
- Christian Aid
- Tree planting
- Foundation Governor for St Barnabas CofE Primary School

- Health & Sustainability Plan
- New dementia-friendly doormat
- Nicholson Pipe Organ minor repairs
- Disposal of old banner

Jackie Campbell Joint Secretary

John Dentith Joint Secretary

FINANCE REPORT 2023

Treasurer's report available separately.

WORCESTER AREA DEANERY SYNOD 2023

The Worcester Area Deanery Synod has been established for three years. In the year 2023 there were three formal meetings of the Deanery Synod and one gathering of members for the Ascension Day Service (18th May) which was at Hallow. The first meeting was held at the parish church of St Philip and St James in Hallow in March. Area Dean, Revd Diane Cooksey, asked the outgoing Archdeacon, Robert Jones to lead us in worship. Revd Kalantha Brewis the Vicar at Hallow gave an overview of the four churches that make up the West Worcester Beacon Group of churches with Hallow being the largest, but also including Grimley, Holt, and Lower Broadheath. The (then) Lay Chair, Robert Pearce, gave an update on vacancies – particularly the Saltway Team which is to be provided with an extra 50% diocesan post to make it up to a full-time post – and the position of retired, Revd David Sherwin's position to be filled as a 'House for Duty'. Feedback was given from the Diocesan Synod and a copy of that summary later circulated for PCC members and Parish Secretaries. If you as a Parishioner did not get a copy of that and want to in the future then ask your Deanery Representative or PCC Secretary.

A question from the floor of the Meeting why we did not 'as a Deanery' discuss the 'Living in Love and Faith'. Revd. Diane Cooksey explained that it had not been a matter for Synods except General Synod although people were encouraged to engage with the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) process. She said that there had been extensive advertising of Diocesan LLF Courses and also as a Deanery we too had provided an online course too so that people



could discuss the issues. It had not been well attended. About 'Kingdom People' and priorities. Diane Cooksey spoke about the vision for doubling the number of children and young people attending. The intention to fund 'at least' two children/youth workers per Deanery. Regarding 'New Housing Communities' we were told that money may be available for new building development. Mention was made of 'Faith at Work'.

New and returning Synod Members attended the 1st Session of the 2nd Worcester Area Deanery Synod at Broadwas Village Hall in July. The Area Dean reminded the meeting that our Deanery currently has 42 church buildings not including the Cathedral; 12 Benefices; 31 Parishes; 14 stipendiary Clergy; 6 stipendiary Curates; an unknown amount of PTO's (as some live within or without the Deanery...); 2 self-supporting Curates; 13 LLM's (and some in training); 27 ALM's (last year!) of differing vocations.

Synod Representatives were asked to consider what: 1) Joys; 2) Challenges; that we thought our individual Parishes represented. Diane explained that following the retirement of Revd David Sherwin 18 months ago, it had been agreed that the Northwest parishes of Clifton, The Shelsleys and Harpley will be transferred to the Kidderminster and Stourport Deanery where they will form part of what will be a 'Rural Mission Area' with three priests sharing a responsibility for them all. It was hoped that the Rev'd Julia Curtis will be licensed to these parishes in the Autumn.

Sarah Northall spoke on Mainly Music – Anne Potter spoke about 'Forest Church', Lyndsey Coulthard told us of a 'Sunday Stars'. Money is available (up to £1000 initially) to 'kickstart' a project from the Kingdom People fund.

Diane declared Sue Rowlands – Lay Chair; Paul Fulbrook – Secretary; Robert Pearce – Treasurer. Diane appointed Revd's Paul Wilcox and Anne Potter to the Deanery Leadership Team. Prayer cards obtained from The Diocese relating to 'Vision' and 'Growth' were distributed for members to take back to their PCC's.

The final meeting took place on Tuesday 14th November 2023 at St Helen's, Worcester.

Revd Dr Rich Johnson gave Synod some information about the restoration of St Helen's Church, including a brief history of St Helen, the mother of Emperor Constantine. The meeting was told about the long-term plan for installing a door in the church directly onto the High Street.

Sue Rowlands, the Lay Chair, gave a brief introduction to herself and said that she would like to be invited to parishes to come and find out more about them. She introduced the three priorities that should be the focus over the next 3 years of this current synod. They are: Praying for one another, Communicating more effectively, Working more Collaboratively where appropriate.

The date of future meetings was given out including the intention to hold the November 2024 one on a Saturday morning saving the need to travel on a dark night and to allow for a more innovative discussion platform.

Paul Fulbrook (Worcester Area Deanery Secretary)

WORSHIP AT ST BARNABAS w CHRIST CHURCH 2023

Revd. Sarah Northall was licensed as priest-in-charge of St Barnabas w Christ Church in July 2023. At the same time Revd. Rosie Moss was licensed as Associate priest for the cluster, which includes St Wulstan, and St Nicholas, Warndon.

The pattern of Sunday services was as follows:

- 1st "Something Else Sunday" (SES). Service of the Word with the lay team (led by Julie Berrow LLM).
- 2nd Sunday Eucharist
- 3rd Sunday Eucharist
- 4th Sunday Eucharist
- 5th Cluster service

Sunday and midweek Eucharists continued with Revd. Sarah Northall, Revd. Rosie Moss, Revd. Diane Cooksey (St Nicholas), and Revd. Andy Gandon (retired priest in the parish), including Holy



Week, Easter and Christmas. One midweek service per month was a Service of the Word led by Julie Berrow LLM or Sue Sykes.

Visiting clergy and preachers included:

- Andy Campbell (Mission accompanier) 16/4
- Archdeacon Robert Jones: Fourth Sunday of Easter (30/4)
- Rev. Duncan Hutchison (DOW education team) Trinity Sunday (4/6)
- Rev. Canon Stephen Edwards (interim Dean, Worcester Cathedral) (26/6)
- Rev. Paul Swann – via video (8/8)

Seasonal and other services:

- Cluster Eucharist at St Nicholas, Warndon (29/1)
- Service to mark the Coronation of HM King Charles III (6/5)
- Remembrance Sunday with uniformed organisations (12/11)
- All Souls' SES (5/11)
- Mothering Sunday Eucharist (19/3)
- Palm Sunday SES (2/3)
- Quiet hearts, Quiet minds: A series of talks with Compline (3-5/4)
- Maundy Thursday (6/4)
- Cluster Eucharist at St Barnabas (30/4)
- Christ Church SES (4/6)
- St Barnabas Patronal (11/6)
- Cluster service at St Wulstan's (30/7)
- Harvest Festival SES (1/10) included St Barnabas Primary School poem and painting competition.
- Cluster Eucharist at Christ Church (29/10)
- Christ the King at Christ Church (26/11)
- Cluster Eucharist at St Wulstan's (31/12)

Schools services took place for St Barnabas' Primary School and Bishop Perowne C of E College at Easter and Christmas. St Barnabas' Leavers' service was held in church in July.

Julie Berrow

PASTORAL COMMITTEE REPORT 2023

Dementia Friendly Churches

In February members of the committee reviewed a document produced by the Methodist Women in Britain on creating dementia-friendly churches. This enabled discussion on small changes which could lead to a safer, more comfortable environment within our own church. Areas discussed were offering a positive welcome into church, lighting, signage, ensuring the Narthex doors are left open and replacing the mat between the Narthex and the church with one of a brighter colour.

In addition, a request from a member of the congregation has led to the steps leading down to the pavement on Green Lane being edged with a high visibility, safety paint.

Home Communion

Authorised members of the committee have been taking communion to housebound members of the congregation, on request. Included are former members of Christ Church as well as St Barnabas.

Home and Care Home Visiting

This continues to be an important focus of the work of committee members.

Prayers

The prayer request box outside church continues to be used and requests are incorporated into the mid-week service.

The prayer chain, which includes other members of the clergy and congregation, continue to meet in person on a monthly basis to pray for those who have requested inclusion on the weekly pew sheet, plus others who may be ill or facing difficulties.

Julia Adams 21/02/23



OPEN THE BOOK REPORT 2023

In January 2023 we continued with Year Three of the Open the Book stories.

Sadly, during that Spring Term Judith Ford died. Judith had been a faithful member of the Open the Book team for many years, contributing on “Teams” when she was unable to take part in person. We attended training days together and she kept the planning and resources good order. She is much missed.

September saw the start of our 16th year of Open the Book at St Barnabas School and we began with Year One again and included the Christian Value Stories for each half-term's Value. Three new volunteers offered to join the team in September and I am very grateful for all their help and enthusiasm.

As ever, the Staff at St Barnabas have been wonderfully welcoming and supportive and my thanks go to them and the fabulous "Tech Teams" for keeping us on the straight and narrow and making Open the Book the success that it is.

Sue Sykes



EVENTS GROUP REPORT 2023

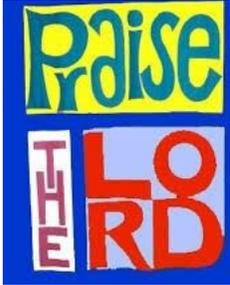
The Events Group met a number of times during 2023 to organise social event which were as follows:

- Burns Night supper in January with Scottish dancing.
- Helped organise the Cluster breakfast of Hot Cross buns in church before going to the Passion Play in the Cathedral Plaza.
- After the St. Barnabas day service, coffee and cakes were served.
- Our parish picnic was held on the green with a quiz & games.
- The group helped at a breakfast at a Pop up café in church for parents of children starting school at St. Barnabas for the first time.
- The second weekend in September we hosted an Arts & Craft exhibition of the work of church members & friends.
- A Beetle Drive was held in October.
- We had a busy December. The Worcester Brass Band concert was very successful, attended by over 80 people with £433 being sent to St. Richards Hospice in memory of Rev Nancy Murray-Peters.
- The Nativity Set Festival was appreciated by many.
- Carols on the Green with mulled wine was enjoyed by many.

Mary James

ECO CHURCH REPORT

(Eco rep to be appointed)



MUSIC REPORT 2023

Music over the last year has continued more or less as before with adaptations to the changes in services - notably at the first Sunday in the month, which in future will usually be non-Eucharistic. The recording facility on the digital organ has proven its worth with weekday services now having access to accompanied hymns as well as those Sundays when no organist has been available. Thanks are due to Mary James who has shown her virtuosity in managing the sequencer system. The Viscount digital organ has now been in place for almost three years.

The pipe organ continues to be used periodically though perhaps less frequently. We are committed to continue tuning and minor maintenance on the instrument. The organ tuner fitted a new housing to cover the coupling around the blower to protect it from the encroachment of cleaning equipment and other items. At this time we discussed some ongoing problems with the action (corrosion of tracker and sticker wires and de-naturing of leathers). These are symptoms of the general deterioration of the organ. Any further repair/replacement of these would be a large and costly undertaking and may no longer be value for money

Thanks are due to Brian, John, Andy, Guy, Jonathan and Steve who make a great contribution to the music on the 1st and 3rd Sundays, and also to Brian for his support behind the scenes in developing the music selection system spreadsheet.

John Hocking

SAFEGUARDING 2023

During 2023, the PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (the duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

Safeguarding is on every PCC agenda when Rachel Chalmers, the

PSO (Parish Safeguarding Officer), reports on any safeguarding issue. She reports on any updates from network meetings run by the diocesan safeguarding team.

The PSO also shares data provided by the parish dashboard. This dashboard monitors our compliance with all Parish safeguarding requirements. An action plan that addresses any areas that require attention can be generated from the information.

Thanks to Pippa Hawkins who continues to have responsibility for Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance.

Everyone who needed a DBS successfully gained one. These have to be renewed every 3 years.

Safeguarding training also has to be renewed every 3 years. There are various courses – an online Leadership course for anyone in a leadership role; Basic Awareness and Foundation courses for PCC members and those who are involved in children’s and vulnerable adults’ work.

Members of the diocesan safeguarding team are very supportive. There is information on posters at the back of church. There are details of local and national organisations as well as diocesan and church details.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is a vital part of church life. We need to promote a safe environment for everyone, offering support when needed. This is everyone’s responsibility.

If you have any questions or safeguarding concerns, do contact Rachel Chalmers or a member of the PCC.

I would like to thank everyone who has supported me this year in my role as Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Rachel Chalmers





FABRIC COMMITTEE REPORT 2023

Although there were no major projects delivered during the year, the Committee continued to meet regularly to monitor the condition of the Church to ensure it is maintained in good condition. Examples of the issues addressed were replacement of defective lights and switches and the laying new paving slabs to replace damaged ones. The Committee pursued the replacement of the existing entrance mat with an equivalent that was dementia “friendly”. They also facilitated the planting of trees to commemorate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee and in memory of a member of the congregation. The Committee ensured that the statutory duties were carried out in respect of health and safety, fire protection and legionella control.

The Committee also commenced consideration of what needs to be done to bring Christ Church and its Vestry back into purposeful use. The problem of dampness and black mould growth appears to have been successfully addressed with improvements made to the ventilation of the building.

Philip Adams Chair Fabric Committee

CHURCH HALL REPORT FOR 2023

The hall continues to be used by Green Lane Preschool Monday – Friday. It is also used for church functions, meetings and private hire. The City Council hired the hall as a polling station for the local elections.

The heating boiler and gas hob were serviced in February and the fire equipment was serviced in November. A new dishwasher was installed in March.

The lead water pipe was replaced in January and a glass sealed window unit was replaced.

Thank you to the small team who replenish the paper towels and toilet rolls. They also check the fire and carbon monoxide alarms, emergency lights and the water temperatures to help prevent Legionella.

The inventory was checked with the annual “Spring” clean with help from many church members.

Bill Chalmers

MISSION GROUP REPORT 2023

Group members are: Ann Bryant (Chair), Jackie Campbell and Marian Bailey.

Meetings are held periodically, often via Zoom, to discuss the donations from the Mission Fund. Minutes of the meeting are sent to all PCC members prior to the next PCC meeting for approval. Payment is usually made via bank transfer and is organised via the Church Treasurer.

The chairperson arranges for the donations to be made and notifies the charity or organisation of the donation. Donations are usually organised at Lent, Harvest and Christmas and a donation list is always on the Mission Fund Notice Board and in the Church Magazine. The Mission Fund receives 10% of the previous year's Planned Giving and the Sunday morning service plate collection.



During 2023 the Mission Fund made 21 donations to Local, National and International charities or organisations, totalling £4,150. A full list of donations can be found at the end of this report.

When it comes to deciding on Mission Fund donations, this year has been a particularly difficult and distressing one. We have made 3 donations to support the DEC and the British Red Cross during 2023 – in March for the DEC Turkey-Syrian Earthquake Appeal and, in September, for 2 donations to the British Red Cross for the Morocco Earthquake disaster and the Libyan Flood disaster.

During Christian Aid Week, which is held every May, we held a Christian Aid envelope collection campaign, which raised £155.

John Dentith organises the Children's Society Coin Box collection throughout the year, which raised £140. John also sent a total of £93.40 to Maggs Day Centre, which was raised from the Christmas Tree Stars and the Maggs board where Christmas messages to church friends were written, instead of Christmas cards. Thanks to John and all who contribute to this annual Maggs campaign.

Once again, we send sincere thanks to Mary James and her helpers for organising the Christmas Shoe Box Appeal. A total of 150 shoe boxes were filled and sent to St. Paul's Hostel, Maggs Day Centre and Women's Refuge.

Finally, on behalf of the Mission Fund, sincere thanks to members of the Planned Giving and the congregation of St. Barnabas with Christ Church for their continuing support.

Ann Bryant

St Barnabas with Christ Church Mission Fund

2023 MISSION FUND DONATIONS WITH AMOUNTS

LOCAL:

Acorns Children's Hospice	£200
Behind The Smile	£150
Maggs Day Centre	£200
The Myriad Centre	£150
New Hope Worcester	£200
St Paul's Hostel	£200
St Richard's Hospice (memory of Nancy Murray-Peters)	£100
WCWR (Worcester City Welcomes Refugees)	£100
Worcester Foodbank	£200
Worcestershire & Dudley Historic Churches Trust	£100

NATIONAL:

Church Urban Fund	£200
Eco Church Project	£200
PSP Association	£200

INTERNATIONAL:

Bishop John's Lent Appeal for Diocese of Peru	£250
British Red Cross – Libya Flood Disaster	£200
British Red Cross – Morocco Earthquake Disaster	£200
DEC Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal 2023	£500
Mary's Meals	£200
Practical Action Harvest Appeal 2023	£200
Tearfund	£200
USPG Harvest Appeal 2023	£200

TOTAL AMOUNT to date: **4,150**

THE BEREAVEMENT JOURNEY & BEREAVEMENT CAFÉ 2023

The Bereavement Journey and Café are a joint project between St Nicholas' Church, Warndon and the Lyppard Hub which started in 2022. A team has been established to support the café and the course, including ministers, volunteers and the project manager at the Hub. Leaders attend online training and support is available from *At a Loss*, who developed the course with Holy Trinity Church, Brompton. People who have been bereaved join with others in a similar situation and share experiences of their grief journey. The sessions consist of short films, followed by discussion and cover the effects of loss, the pain of grief, moving forward and an optional session on faith questions.

The course is advertised through hospitals, hospices, GP surgeries, churches, funeral directors and community organisations. Participants self-refer or are referred by GPs or other professionals. The course is not counselling, and people may find they need one-to-one help as well. Anyone who has been bereaved at any point is welcome. Ministers in the cluster conducting funerals identify those who might benefit from the café or the course, with some attending the Blue Service at St Nicholas, and the memorial services at St Nicholas and St Barnabas.



In 2023, three courses were run. The first in January/February and the second in April/May. *At a Loss* revised the course materials and leaders attended further training in the Spring. The third course was run in October/November using the new materials, which are more inclusive and more prescriptive. The course, which is now seven weeks, rather than six, is widely used and *At a Loss* are keen that it is faithful to their ethos. They also recommend charging participants, but leaders and the Hub agree that it should continue to be free. Participants can donate at the end if they wish.

Feedback has been very positive. The groups bond well, and some people maintain contact afterwards, as well as attending the Bereavement Café. Participants who have completed the course report feeling more positive, whilst understanding that they are on a journey. We have seen people who struggle to come through the door for the first session, voicing hope by the last.

Most participants are women, all are of varying ages and situations, and almost all attend the faith questions session. Leaders feel that they are making a difference for those who attend the course and can signpost to other services as appropriate. We have a connection with our colleagues at the St Vincent de Paul Society in Droitwich, who are also running the course, to compare notes, and to be able to offer alternative dates.

The Bereavement Café runs on the second Friday morning of each month and has seen an increase in numbers. We are grateful to the course leaders, the Hub project manager and the volunteers who work with the bereaved at the café and on the course, for their time, commitment and compassion.

Julie Berrow LLM March 2024

