



THE PRIORY CHURCH OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL

Church Group Reports



DECEMBER 31, 2023

Church Groups report 2023

BELLRINGING Mark Pugh, Tower Captain

Through 2023 and into quarter 1 of 2024, we have been successful in maintaining our Sunday Service ringing commitment. Even though there has been loss of 1 to 2 members to other ringing groups, the support from Sarah & Chris of Lyonshall, has meant that since January 2023 we have been in a stronger position on Sunday service ringing. Whilst they are unable to commit to every Sunday, when they join us for Service ringing, the entire band gains from their ringing ability and this has helped to increase ringing opportunity with regards to 'technical' bell music. The Priory's 10 bells have been rung on many of the significant dates such as Remembrance, a number of the events up to Christmas 2023 also Palm Sunday & Easter Sunday 2023 & 2024. It must be noted that Easter Sunday 2024, the Leominster Priory members made up the ringing group which rang prior to service, using all 10 bells. This is a brilliant achievement and one we should like to see repeated on many occasions in the future.

From September 2023 we have also tried to increase the ringing to support Choral Evensong with long term planning to gain a quarter peal group for each 1st Sunday evening. Whilst we are not always successful in achieving the true finish and state it as a quarter, we have managed to ring and so use this time to grow confidence in those who have committed to each attempt. In efforts to raise our profile, it was publicised that we should be ringing over the start of the Town's Christmas Victorian market, scoring a quarter of Grandsire Triples, with a first on 7 bells for 1 of the ringer's, again The Priory bells and ringers achieving so much in different ways. In May, for the King's Coronation, we managed a positive attendance of ringers proclaiming with 10 bells ringing on the 6th & 7th. This was followed by hosting 'The Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers' AGM. Summer, as per normal, is a tough time with many heading off for holidays. We continued to ring throughout June – September with the loss of only 1 Sunday. So far, from the 1st of May 2023 to 2024 we have undertaken 50 out of 51, planned Sunday service rings; 26 using 10 Bells, 6 using 8 Bells & 18 on using 6 Bells. This means over half of Sunday ringing has been on 10 bells, a wonderful achievement.

There have been 46 planned Thursday night practices with 44 taking place so again a really good success based upon all attending as volunteers. Efforts were made at The Priory fete to attract new recruits, sadly this was not successful. At the end of September our ringing group managed a bellringing tour of Bromyard, Colwall & Ledbury, all now rings of 10. This was to encourage a confidence boost given Leominster bells are difficult to manage against these recently restored bell sets. Work of some description, does need to be undertaken on the Priory bell installation, so we may maintain our ability to attract ringers and continue to call the faithful to worship as well as ringing for all the other occasions.

Our Sunday service ringing on the day after our tour was noticeably different to past service ringing with an upbeat approach to rhythm. At the end of October we hosted the Leominster Explorer Scouts with the hope 1 or 2 may take an interest, I think they are all very busy with life. We can only hope it gave them an insight to the art of bellringing and the history of our tower and bells.

14 successful quarter peals have been scored with a special peal on 2nd July, rung to congratulate Rev. Jonathan Roberts on his ordination and first celebration of communion and to mark the 35th anniversary of the ordination of Rev. Guy Cole, Team Rector.

In summing up, whilst we are reduced in number on the usual Thursday night practice we try to maintain continuity rather than to cancel the ringing. Sundays appear to be the opposite with an increase in commitment and so we have been able to produce a fairly constant use of 8 or 10 bells. Over the recent few Sundays, we have been able to score Grandsire Caters on the 10 along with Stedman Triples on the large 8 bells, this is a fantastic achievement. We shall always be making effort to attract new ringers but must be mindful of retaining our group though encouragement of trying new ringing methods and retain a positive approach to our art.

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL Coral Lemm

There were a few issues with communication between various members of the town council in the run up to the trees being placed in the Priory, these were resolved, and the festival went ahead successfully. The Town Council kindly provided the 20 Christmas trees and stands, this worked very well, the trees didn't shed to any great extent, and in the main there was little or no damage to the trees and decorations provided by the community. At the beginning of January 2024 the trees were undressed and removed with no issues arising.

Before the visitors book went astray I was fortunate to be able to see some of the lovely comments made by visitors to our Priory Church.

CHURCH CLEANING

Keeping the church clean is always a challenge! Many thanks to the team who do a wonderful job, but more volunteers are always welcome.

CHURCH FLOWERS

Mandy Simpson has taken over running the Church flower team since Sheila Hodson moved away. We no longer offer wedding flowers as we have only a few in the group of arrangers. New silk flowers have been bought mainly for the Threads through Creation exhibition, however they will also help with the cost of providing flowers each week.

We are kept very busy with major festivals and events, as well as church member funerals. To keep the flowers in the Priory looking fresh and creative the few flower ladies put in a lot of time and effort. We have recently been hosting the Forbury Team Coffee mornings and have so far raised £200 towards some metal vases/pots. If you would like to join the flower ladies please see Mandy.

CHURCH LINENS GROUP Ceri Hibbert

2023 was a year of refurbishment rather than making from scratch. The Edrith altar frontal was remade due to glue stains, but keeping the original motifs. The same was done to a pulpit fall, where the white background was replaced but the red and gold motif was retained. A number of chasubles and stoles were washed and the gold fabric replaced, meaning they can continue to be used for years to come. If anyone would like to get involved in repairing, sewing or designing new linens please come and speak to me.

DEANERY LIBRARY Diana and Stan May

We continue to renew the books on the last Friday of the month. We hope people find the titles we choose suitable and interesting as some do seem more interesting than others!

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CHURCH Coral Lemm

Information advice and guidance has been provided to members of the congregation, in support of any concerns members of the congregation have raised.

EUCHARIST ASSISTANTS Jean R Dickson

For many years, members of the Priory Church congregation have been chosen to act as Chalice Assistants at the main Communion Services. We are all very aware of the responsibility we have been given and the privilege of serving at the heart of the Eucharist. Not all who are asked to serve feel able to accept.

We will continue to serve the Priory congregation to the best of our abilities. Thanks be to God.

FABRIC Geoff Bricknell

We have attempted during 2023 to maintain the fabric of the Priory and also address matters raised in our last quinquennial inspection, carried out in June 2020. In addition, working parties have been held during the year to clear gutters and gullies, keep ivy off walls, etc. The major work carried out in 2023 was the replacement of the western end of the valley between the norman nave roof and the main nave roof. Leakage had been occurring here for a number of years, despite various remedial works, and a decision was made by the PCC, following advice from our architect, to replace the valley here with stainless steel. Tenders were invited, a faculty applied for and granted, and a contractor (Reynolds Conservation) appointed. Work started on the 11th April and continued for 6 weeks. Careful inspection of the supporting timbers revealed additional works were necessary, and in the end, the total cost was £41,557 plus VAT (vat reclaimed under the Listed Places of Worship Scheme). Grants for this work totalling £21,000 (from the Garfield Weston Foundation, the National Churches Trust, the Wolfson Foundation and the Cecil King Memorial Foundation) helped a great deal to reduce the cost to the Priory. Following further vandalism, repairs were carried out in May 2023 to leaded light windows panes in the great west window and the tower step windows, costing a total of £1,343. An insurance claim helped to reduce the cost to some extent. A second contactless giving device was installed in May 2023, this one allowing givers to donate tax efficiently. Maintenance of the 2 let properties, 10 The Meadows and The Vergers House has continued in accordance with our policy of continuous maintenance and improvement. During 2023 all guttering and downpipes at the Vergers House was replaced at a cost of £1,580.

FRIENDS OF THE PRIORY Bill Quelch

Membership of The Friends, currently totals 90, which is open not only to the church congregation but to anyone in Leominster and beyond who have an interest in, and love of our wonderful Church Building. Founded in 1945, The Friends assist financially in the adornment, beautification, restoration and repair of The Priory, many projects being progressed in conjunction with the PCC. In recent years the original remit has been slightly modified, where we do contribute to the general life of the

Church. Over the last year we have supported items such as the Christmas tree, Materials for new Cope and Altar Frontals (Ceri Hibbert), Shoe Box Appeal and Music Folders for the Choir.

Priory Friends' income is derived primarily from subscriptions (see Priory web site link and Friends' screen inside church entrance for application forms), donations, Gift Aid claims and fund raising events. My thanks to those of you who are Friends, your on-going support is truly appreciated. To those of you who are not yet Friends please do join so that we have the funds to continue supporting future projects in The Priory.

My thanks to Friends' Chairman Shelagh Packwood, Treasurer Jimmy Lindsay and all other members of The Friends' Council. We are fortunate to have such a committed and supportive Council (New volunteers for Council would be really welcome).

FUNDRAISING/SOCIAL COMMITTEE Geoff Bricknell

An enthusiastic group met a number of times in 2023 to organise events, not just to raise money but to encourage social interaction and help develop friendships. It was a quite exceptional year from a fundraising point of view, with a total of £19,491 raised. The main fundraiser was an auction of promises in October which raised over £5,200, while the summer fete and Christmas Bazaar were both successful as usual. A Midsummer Ceilidh was held in June, the first for a number of years, which was very well attended and enjoyed by all, especially families. Another ceilidh is being held this year. Other social events included a bangers and mash evening, the harvest lunch and an Easter Monday walk. A Priory Pilgrim sponsored walk was also organised and raised a figure of £1,413. Regular Friday coffee mornings were held at the Forbury Chapel. We are indebted to Hilary and Ken Roberts who continue to allow us to use their home, garden and barn for social events, and to Bill Quelch for organising the 100 club draw year after year. Not forgetting of course all those who help to organise events and those who supported them. If you would like to join the group, do please speak to Geoff Bricknell.

FUTURES PROJECT: WENDY COOMBEY.

The PCC have committed to spending the next 18 months exploring the future of Leominster Priory. The Priory is a living and thriving place of worship and a community building in the heart of the town of Leominster. The Futures Project has been working to look at how we can develop both the building and our outreach to the local community, sitting alongside our mission action plan. We have recently secured a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver a feasibility Study for the building, a community engagement exercise, a business and sustainability plan and a future funding strategy. All this will be managed by a suitability qualified and professional project manager.

In addition, we will be undertaking 3 different heritage projects over the next year – led by a funded co-ordinator. All posts and consultancies will be appointed by either open recruitment or by competitive tendering and this will start in July 2024.

This is a very exciting project for the Priory and the steering group have worked very hard to secure the grant. The congregation will be kept updated on progress over the coming months.

HOLIDAY CLUB Anna Quelch

We had yet again another incredible week of fun this year with 93 children at this year's Holiday Club. The theme was Incredible Journey and each day the children saw dramatized stories from the Bible: Moses and the Ten Commandments, Gideon defeating the Midianites, Jesus by the Lake of Galilee, the Good Samaritan and the Banquet at Bethany. The daily Bible stories were reflected in the crafts the children made.

We had some exciting events during the afternoons

On Monday the children tried their hands at some bushcraft activities with Tim Gluyas, and the Community Police Officer arrived came to talk to the children about safety and what her job involves. The children had the chance to explore her police vehicle and turn on the flashing blue lights. Rather surprisingly, all 23 of the youngest children all managed to get in the car at the same time!

On Tuesday DWEAC came with their range of exotic animals and also a huge realistic T-Rex model that had a roar that could be heard right across the Grange. Even though the older children realised it was not "real" there were squeals and shrieks when the dinosaur roared and moved towards them - it was quite a spectacle.

Wednesday afternoon was a quieter day; the younger groups built dens using tarpaulins and chairs inside the church and had stories read to them, whilst the older groups went into town following the Heritage Trail.

The usual sports afternoon was held on the Thursday, with teams of mixed ages of children competing against each other in a selection of games, some of which involved water, which always proves popular.

The week was rounded off learning various circus skills followed by a circus show.

It was a busy and entertaining week, and we were delighted when Bishop Richard accepted our invitation to come and visit us on the Monday and was very impressed with what he saw; he even took photos of the stage set up.

We were grateful of the recent purchase of the smart small tables and chairs for use in the

younger group. These will also be well used at Messy Church as well as Holiday Club. Once again we were fortunate in receiving a very generous grant of £626 from the Town Council, which covered most of the cost of the hire of portable toilets and the necessary fencing for the outdoor play areas. We also received a donation from a member of the congregation towards funding two children's places. Of the 93 children attending 13 were referred to us by local primary schools and also the food bank and were given free places. In addition, we also offered a total of 20 subsidised places to families who are in receipt of benefits. Half of the children attending were repeat bookings, and came from 13 different schools.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the support of all our wonderful volunteers. There were 45 adults and 20 teenagers working with the children, 4 adults in the kitchen providing drinks throughout the day an additional 8 people helping during the sports afternoon and 16 stewards manning the door.

The Holiday Club Committee (comprising Yvonne Morgan, Christine Hurdidge, Sarah Chedzoy, Sally Hall, Sue Jones, Holly Joynson, Bill and myself) work incredibly hard from January-July putting together a varied and interesting itinerary for the children based on a theme and stories from the Bible. The Holiday Club team are an amazing group and it is a joy to hold this event every year.

HOUSE GROUP REPORTS:

Phillippa and Greg Wright:

Monday evening house group continues to be a place of learning and fellowship. We have between 7 and 9 people attend the group and would welcome new members. Our sessions start with a welcome beverage and chat. We then spend time in Bible related teaching with discussion. The evening closes with Compline. One of the most challenging studies this year was an exploration of ancient prayer practices including silent prayer and creative prayer. It is a joy and a privilege to share our faith stories and witness to how God is working in our lives.

We continue to support a house group in Yarpole which is currently running Christianity Explored.

Helen and Geoff Bricknell:

The house group meeting held at the home of Geoff and Helen Bricknell, is on the 1st Thursday of the month at 7.30pm. At present we have ten members; over the years, we have studied a wide and varied range of topics. Some of these have included: ethical issues, Bible study of Old and New Testament books, learning how to pray and Inclusive Church. In fact anything which people feel would enliven and deepen our faith!

Most recently we have been following the course entitled 'Wind of the Spirit' written by John Birch. It is an exploration in Celtic Christianity on 6 themes: Creation, Community, Solitude, Prayer, Mission and Fellowship. The online downloadable studies are varied, easy to follow and allow for plenty of discussion within the group. We are a friendly group and enjoy the evenings of fellowship and discussion.... people can contribute as much or as little as they want to. We share the reading of material, prayers and decision making as to what we study. Our evenings always conclude with coffee and cake and time to chat together about life in general!

It would be good to see more House Groups being formed; if you would like to be part of a group please get in touch with Fr.Guy.

INTERGENERATIONAL PIONEERS Kathy and David Bland

Our Pioneering working in Leominster over the last year has focussed on Messy Church, Barons Cross outreach, schools work and serving our local community. Some of the people we engage with across multiple ministries, with crossover between Messy Church and Food Bank, schools and Barons Cross as examples. Messy Church is a fruitful introduction to other ministries such as the Priory Choir and Little Lambs.

Messy Church – Messy Church has continued to grow and develop over the last year. We enjoyed holding a Messy Church baptism for one of the older children in March and inviting asylum seeking families to Messy Church over the Autumn which has been an opportunity for our Messy Church families to show love in action as we have offered welcome and hospitality. We celebrated Leominster Messy Church reaching its teenage years in May at our Pentecost Celebration. Notably we have several families who have been worshipping with us for the duration of those 13 years and others who have returned after a break. Pastoral support to this congregation is a significant part of our work. Average attendance is 60, worshipping community is 80.

Barons Cross Outreach – we have offered regular intergenerational activity sessions at the Barons Cross Community Room including once a week over the summer holidays and half term holiday. Some of the teenagers who attend these sessions have been coming since they were toddlers. Average attendance 15, connected with 25.

We are present at the Barons Cross support surgeries which happen once a month and have continued to be part of Team Leominster (the multi-agency group which meets monthly and includes a special focus on the Barons Cross community).

We were successful in applying for £900 funding from Herefordshire Council to offer six activity sessions with meals over the winter as part of their Winter of Wellbeing (WoW) program. The hoped for development of a Worshipping Community at Barons Cross has been stalled by management issues at Stonewater who currently own and operate the community building. We are hopeful that these will be resolved; however, the Sunday WoW session will be the next step in developing relationships here.

Schools Work – we continue to be part of the Open the Book team at Ivington School once a week and also support the ‘vicars assembly’ on Tuesdays. Additionally we welcomed EMC to Leominster Priory for the Year 7 Welcome service and will also lead a Christmas service for EMC years 7,8,9 and 10 in December. These are a missional opportunity to engage with students and their families. At Easter we hosted a week of Experience Easter – enabling our local primary schools to participate in and learn about the story of Easter at The Priory and will hold a ‘signs of Advent’ day for Leominster Primary school at the beginning of December. We also held a school visit for Lucton school in the summer term. We have developed a good working relationship with Bargates Nursery which Father Jonathan now leads on.

Local community

Additional to our paid hours we have co-led the support group for asylum seekers in Leominster which has facilitated collecting clothes toys and money, organised school uniforms and school shoes, offered links to volunteering opportunities, campaigned for the return of families (due to the hotel closure and re-opening) and most importantly offered opportunities for friendship. Since the re-opening of the Talbot we have organised two family sessions and a bonfire evening for Talbot residents, organised prayer mats for the Muslim residents, signposted families to activities and volunteering opportunities in the community and enabled them to find worshipping communities.

Kathy continues to manage Leominster Food Bank and Money Advice Centre and we continue to coordinate the delivery of food share food each evening to vulnerable people in Leominster – offering both practical and pastoral care for those in need. David & Kathy lead the team providing nightly food deliveries of surplus food to families across Leominster. These doorstep encounters are valuable times of pastoral support for many families in our community.

Future

The very DNA of pioneering means that things change; often at short notice as we join in where we notice God is at work. We have both been working with Lizzie Hackney to take our experience of the Intergeneration Mission project and the Barons Cross work to help shape the Diocese-wide Youth Hub project.

LITTLE LAMBS Phillipa Wright

Little Lambs continues to be a free drop-in provision for parents with children aged between 0-3 years. The group runs on Monday afternoons during term time at the Methodist Hall on Green Lane. Strengths: We have between 4 and 7 children attend most weeks, drawn from approximately 9 different families. There is a warm welcome with tea and coffee for the parents. The children have access to a wide range of toys, play dough and a creative activity. The creative activity is usually based around a Bible story to promote learning. We play Christian songs in the background.

Weaknesses: The challenge for Little Lambs is fourfold; the library run Rhythm Time in the mornings and so parents don't often want to venture out twice, there is limited parking, we have limited volunteers and there is a lack of professionalism.

Opportunities: There could be better publicity and more engaged follow up with baptism families. There is potential to build a youth ministry which takes families from birth to 18 but this may be something the Youth Hub want to explore.

Threats: We are grateful for the Methodist Church allowing us to use the hall for the cost of heating it.

MOTHERS' UNION Phillipa Wright

The Leominster branch of Mothers' Union continues to remain a viable entity despite a national decline in membership. We have 13 full members, 4 indoor members and are supported by two diocesan members. Last year we held events in all months apart from August. The committee has agreed to an open-door policy where we invite any one to attend in the hope that they will enjoy what we do and be encouraged to join. The aim of the local branch is to provide a place of welcome and friendship where God's provision to us is recognised through worship and prayer.

Locally we have helped to raise money for the Priory, Foodbank and MU Herefordshire. We support Hereford hospital by the provision of items for wash bags and in a recent initiative “knitted boobs” as teaching aids for midwives. On a diocesan level our fundraising supports the Crises Intervention Fund which helps many vulnerable people including the asylum seekers. Other initiative includes “Rise Up” against domestic violence, “Away From It All” providing holidays for families who are struggling, and “County Lines” which aims to help children caught up in drug smuggling.

Much of the global work is centred around liberation theology where help is given to try and relieve poverty and oppression by setting up community initiatives which encourage education, finance, and cottage industry. This year we learnt about MU efforts over the last 20 years in Burundi which is estimated to have helped 1,289 communities.

MUSIC Hilary Norris

Choir

The choir has continued to flourish. Support for Choral Evensong and other special evening services has been strong throughout the year. Thanks to all those that help to support these services – refreshments team, sound crew, stewards etc. We continue to try to encourage small choirs in village churches, partly by giving them opportunities to sing in the Priory, and sometimes by helping out for special events in their churches. The Priory has hosted a variety of massed choir events. The first was in May, the Coronation Service, when local churches, secular and school choirs from the area joined us for a wonderful, and most unusual service. For our Advent Service we were joined by choirs from across the Diocese, and hosted the launch of Marches Music Ministry, a new group that exists to support church musicians in the area. The Nine Lessons and Carols Service included three carols collected by Herefordshire folklorist Ella Mary Leather, and we were joined by Pete on folk violin to help launch the Museum's year of EML celebrations. We also enjoyed singing Choral Evensong at Hereford Cathedral in February. My thanks to particular members of the choir who give so much help in sorting music, looking after the Junior Choristers, mending robes, assisting with rehearsals, conducting and a host of unseen jobs. The choir is a great team and it is a privilege to lead them.

Work in the community/ Mission

Members of the choir have sung at a number of funerals and weddings (at the Priory and elsewhere), and also at other community events, for example for Ascension at Kingsland, and carol singing at the Forbury Residential Home. The Princess of Wales Carol Service in December was the largest service anyone can remember at the Priory (approx. 950 people) involving choirs from seven schools singing carols together, lovely flute interludes by Tim, and fabulous trumpet fanfares. My thanks to all in the choir for providing the foundation for wonderful singing from the whole community. They have also taken part in local RSCM events, including a session on encouraging children to join choirs in July. We also sung an impromptu concert at the Light-Up Leominster event following a procession that the Junior Choir took part in with fancy lanterns. The Priory was full of people that rarely, if ever, visit the Priory, and many stayed for a long time, enjoying the music, the building, the lights and a moment of calm and reflection. Most of the children in the choir come with little experience of music or of the church. As well as teaching the children musical skills to enable them to contribute to services through music, we also teach them about Christianity through discussion of readings, psalms, anthem texts, the church year etc at every rehearsal. In October, thanks to the generosity of the Ouseley Foundation, we appointed our first Choral Scholar, and she has been helping to train the Junior Choristers. Our thanks, also, to the Rowlands Trust for a grant towards a Choir Chaperone with safeguarding responsibilities to assist with the training and management of the children in the choir.

The children's learning is also supported by other adults in the Priory community in the preparation of special services eg The Nativity, and through their attendance at the two youth groups, Lions and Goats, providing the youngsters with valuable time together to socialise, have fun and explore ideas. My thanks to those that lead these groups and for their collaboration in ensuring that our youngsters have positive experiences.

Organ

For the last two years I have reported that the organ console may need attention soon (the restoration by Nicholson's (2015-2016) did not include work on the console). A quote from Nicholson's to complete this work was compared with other quotes, and a decision has been reached. The funding of this work is still a work in progress, but we expect the work to take place in 2024. The organ continues to be used by many people for practice and lessons, and for group workshops/events, particularly supporting the work of DHOTS (Diocese of Herefordshire Organist Training Scheme) and HOS (Herefordshire Organist Society).

In September I gave an organ recital in memory of Will Pridie. Will loved organ music, and history, and Wendy thought that raising donations for the renovation of the Bevington Organ would be a fitting tribute to Will. Funds were raised, the organ was dismantled in late December, and the work is due to be completed by David Gallichan in May 24. It is a beautiful and historic instrument, which should enhance the music of the Priory in a variety of ways. Thanks to all who generously supported this project.

Concerts

Many concerts have taken place in the Priory. The Priory has a growing reputation as a fine venue, and requests from new visiting groups (especially choirs on pilgrimage), as well as regular visits from local groups, and festivals, ensure that the Priory is very well used and appreciated as a major concert venue in North Herefordshire. Thanks to all those behind the scenes who help to set-up, provide sound, welcome and help at all of these events.

OPEN THE BOOK, IVINGTON SCHOOL Christine Hurdidge

Open the Book is now at the earlier time of 10.15 am on a Thursday morning, this has meant that we have lost a few volunteers due to the earlier time. So now we are a select few.

We are managing with David Bland and myself covering most weeks (it is easy for me to cover as I am already in school.) to cover the rota on a monthly basis, with 3 volunteers each week...we used to have the option of five available volunteers, including myself, when Open the Book was at 1pm.

The time changed to fit in more time efficiently into the school's very busy day.

The time slot available has also shortened from a half hour slot to 15 minutes, which can be challenging and a little hectic at times...when trying to set the scene and instruct an excited group of children as to what is expected of them in their part retelling of the story that day.

I now go through the story the day before, with the participating children, so that hopefully they are a little better prepared for taking part the following day.

I have had positive feedback from Teachers on 'supply', one particular Supply Teacher said he '*had come across 'Open the Book' before in other schools, but not one presented as professionally as ours.*'...which was a lovely compliment, and shows credit to my amazing team of committed volunteers...so a BIG thank you to Ivington C of E Primary School's 'Open the Book' Team of volunteers (all from the Priory)...I could not do this without you!

School appreciates all the effort we put in to delivering the Bible stories in an exciting and enthusiastic way and often uses our style of storytelling in their end of term services.

We are all gradually getting used to the new story material that we are now using. Although many of us still prefer the older version of the Lion Storyteller Bible. A copy of which is readily available to use in each classroom.

My Wish List: Someone, please, to create a costume for us... 'fit for a Pharaoh!' Thank you.

SHOEBOX REPORT Anna Quelch

The annual shoebox appeal in November enabled us to fill 120 boxes with stationery, hygiene items, hats, gloves and scarves as well as toys and sweets which were handed over to the Teams4U charity to start their journey to vulnerable children in Romania, and other eastern European countries. During the year empty shoeboxes are collected and lovingly covered in colourful wrapping paper by a team of volunteers, and in the autumn donations of items and money are received to allow me to go on a shopping spree and buy all that is needed. For 3 months my house is overrun with empty shoeboxes, wrapping paper and sellotape, and bags and bags of shopping, sorted into categories - enough to fill 14 trestle tables! Each box that leaves the Priory has a photograph in it of the group of volunteers who packed it with the words "Sent with our love and prayers from the Priory Church, Leominster". They are then taken to a warehouse where they are checked (for no unsuitable items i.e. war related toys, liquids), packed into cardboard crates, and loaded onto articulated lorries ready for their overland journey to eastern Europe. These shoeboxes bring such joy to families who live in poverty, and have an ability to let a child know that someone, somewhere, cares for them enough to send them this precious gift.

YOUTH GROUPS Clare Cathcart

Goats

Jonathan (curate) has continued to run the 14 - 18 year group. They meet together to share "Games, Opinions, Activities, Talk and Snacks". A wonderful Awards night was held in December with the funniest moments of the year celebrated, all professionally presented by Jonathan (Bland) and Tom (Ladd)

Lions

The 10-14 year group of young people started as "Lions" in summer term 2023. Held after junior choir practice they have enjoyed meetings with craft, chat or games. Thanks are due to their leaders who take it, and their parents who lend us their wonderful kids to share their fun with us.