

The Priory Church of St Peter and St Paul

**Church Group Reports**



**December 31, 2024**



**Church Groups report 2024**

**Bellringing Mark Pugh, Tower Captain**

Through 2024, our ringing group continues to be really supportive in efforts to maintain Sunday service ringing and where possible, Quarter peal attempts for Evensong, on the 1st Sunday of the month.

We continue to use the 8 or 10 bells for notable services throughout the year such as Easter, Remembrance and Christmas time.

All were proud to mark the 80th anniversary of ‘D-Day’ with 11 ringers, ringing before the special 6pm service with the 10 bells sounding in celebration across Leominster. Our Thursday night practice continues to be supported with our own small band and additional ringers joining from surrounding villages. The additional practice night support does not normally make up the Sunday service band however; many do help out with quarter peal attempts and the occasional event ringing where it does not clash with their own tower’s commitments.

The Priory bells are checked regularly for any issues but the ring is continuing to gain age and as within previous reports, I must reinforce the fact that 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. In an overall review, we continue to make efforts to ring whenever we are able to secure numbers for both Sunday and practice nights.

Our numbers have again decreased and we desperately need support to encourage more people to try this wonderful art of bellringing. Mark.

**Christmas Tree Festival Coral Lemm**

Overall, the feedback has been very good, with positive comments from our congregation and those visiting. We have a couple of small issues; we need to address going forwards. David Benson came to our rescue to ensure the stability of the laser cut trees by attaching wooden blocks to each of the Christmas tree stands. David also bought additional batteries, costing approximately £40.00, David is happy to cover this cost. Funding for additional batteries to be sourced for 2025. On occasion the lighting for the laser cut trees would flash, we need to ensure to set the controllers carefully and check each time we are available that the lighting remains on a non-flash setting. This year for the first time refreshments were provided to those dressing their trees, this was really appreciated, with nearly every group partaking. I hadn’t provided caffeine free tea or coffee, this is something to be considered for next year, on the same continuum I also didn’t provide gluten free mince pies or biscuits. I did notify all participants that the baked goods would not be gluten free, the schools responded by provided gluten free snacks to those who required GF. Hilary is happy to continue to incorporate the Christmas Tree Festival within the 9 Lessons and Carols service with participant from the CTF assisting with the readings Conversation was had with Stuart who is the Grounds manager for the Town Council, regarding 2025, we will not have the information regarding whether

we will receive the Christmas Trees until mid-year. The TC must apply for funding for their Winter Wonderland project. Further to the earlier conversation with Grounds manager, the TC council would be very happy to support the Priory CTF again this year.

Finances

We received £100 from the Co-op which was placed in the Priory bank account. The first Amazon order of £72.93 was paid out of this money, leaving £27.07 in the bank.

**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 A Simpson.**

We are kept very busy with major festivals and event. To keep the flowers in the Priory looking fresh and creative the few flower ladies put in a lot of time and effort. If you would like to join the flower ladies please see Mandy. The main financial change in the last 12 months was for Sue Jones, Leominster Team Ministry administrator to process flower invoices. This was due to a change in treasurer and also Paul Robinson, of Wholesale Flowers, from Worcester finding employment with J.Van Vliet – Birmingham Ltd, due to Paul selling his business.

Wholesale flowers are currently invoiced to Sue Jones via email she then passes the invoices to the treasurer. Locally sourced flowers from local flower farms are paid for by the person collecting them then the paid invoice is given to Sue who reimburses the cost from the team petty cash. The team then includes this amount in their invoice to the Priory quarterly. The PCC agreed a monthly budget of up to £50 for flowers. Any exhibitions, funerals etc are separately funded.

**Deanery Library Diana 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!

**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**

Following the major works carried out in 2023, in particular the renewal of the valley between the norman nave roof and the main nave roof, 2024 was a relatively quiet year for repairs to the Priory. The only repairs to the fabric of the building were carried out in April and November, following water penetration above the Lady Chapel. On each occasion we believe the cause was a build up of debris beneath the lapped lead joints. The debris was cleared and the leadwork re-dressed. The total costs were £408 including vat.

Regular working parties have taken place, when walls have been cleared of ivy, valleys swept out, and gullies at the base of downpipes cleared. The boilers have been serviced.

Repair of the modern electrical elements of the Nicholson organ took place in August at a cost of £24,385 plus vat. Further work was carried out in September.

Works to be carried out shortly include the repair of the flat roof flashing above the toilet block, and the 5 yearly test and inspection of the whole electrical installation at the Priory.

Additional recent information:

In late April 2025, we received a structural condition appraisal of the whole of the Priory from David Wiggins, a well qualified conservation engineer of Clach Conservation Engineering. As background, this condition appraisal was commissioned by Buttress Architects Ltd, who were appointed to carry out the feasibility study for the Priory Futures Group. The report raises a number of points, mainly relating to structural movement. Much of this movement is longstanding and to be expected in a building of this size and age. However, two particularly significant observations were made; Firstly, it was noted that there is a partial bending failure in one of the trusses carrying the main nave roof, giving a serious structural condition, potentially dangerous. As well as advising further inspection of all the roof voids to inform calculation based assessment to help design repairs, the engineer recommends the installation of temporary splints to relieve the failed truss. Secondly, the north west stair tower( leading to the bell chamber), is suffering on-going deterioration, possibly related to ground induced problems in the north west corner of the building. Part of the spiral arch carrying the stair is in a serious condition, and temporary support is required. To assist in the investigations, it is recommended that a survey of all below ground drainage, particularly along the south wall, the east gable and north west corner, is carried out. Other recommendations are also made in the report, but these are less urgent. To date, a copy of the report has been sent to our architect, Tim Ratcliffe, and a request made to him to visit us to observe the points made in the report and give his opinion on what movement, if any, has occurred since the south nave and aisle rooves were stripped and relaid in 2008/9. The Fabric Committee has discussed the report in detail, and has prepared a brief for Buttress Architects to commission the further investigations recommended, before remedial work can be considered.

**Let Property**: The Vergers House and 10 The Meadows

Maintenance of the 2 let properties has continued with our policy being one of regular maintenance and improvement. During 2024 new fascia boards were installed at 10 The Meadows at a cost of £427 and a new boiler was installed at the Vergers Hose at a cost of £2,593 plus vat. In addition, the Judas tree in front of the Vergers House was reduced in size following permission being granted, at a cost of £620. During the year a modest rental increase of 5% was made at both properties.

Following discussion at PCC meetings during the year, a decision was made by the PCC in November to obtain possession of the Vergers House and place the property on the market. The idea is that the proceeds should be a substantial element of the match funding required when applications are made for grants to carry out work being planned as part of the Futures Project. The property was placed on the market in January and at the time of writing a sale has been agreed subject to contract.

**Friends of the Priory Bill Quelch**

Vice-Chairman & Secretary

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 Festival (£150), Flowers and Equipment for the Threads through Creation Exhibition (£1000), the Shoe Box Appeal (£350) and a significant amount towards major Organ Repairs (£5000).

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. If any existing Friends

would like to revisit the amount of their Subscription, it would be very much appreciated.

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 and 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 are always welcome).

**Fundraising/Social Committee Geoff Bricknell**

An enthusiastic group met a number of times in 2024 to organise events, not just to raise money but to encourage social interaction and help develop friendships. It was a very good year from a fundraising point of view, with a total of £16,159 raised.

The main fundraiser was a sponsored abseil down the face of the Priory Church Tower held in October, which raised over £6,500, while the summer fete and Christmas Bazaar were both successful as usual. A summer Ceilidh was held in May, following the success of the previous year, which was enjoyed by all, especially families. Another ceilidh is being held this year, on June 14th, so put the date in your diaries. Other social events included a bangers and mash evening in February and the harvest lunch in October.

Regular Friday coffee mornings were held at the Forbury Chapel, which raised additional funds.

We are indebted 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 (07836 731293)

**Futures Project**

**Introduction**

In December 2022 a team was set up, called the Priory Futures Group (PFG), to act as the steering group for the newly created Priory Futures Project. The project had been discussed for a number of years and, thanks mainly to the energy and enthusiasm of Wendy Coombey, a decision was made by the PCC to support the project with up to £10,000 of funding. Thus the project was born. 2022 – 2023 During this period, Wendy Coombey was employed as a Project Manager to formally establish

the project and to apply for funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, as main funders, as well as from other sources. This work was carried out from September 2023 and continued into 2024.

Vision

Various meetings were held with the PCC and with the PFG to establish a ‘Vision’ for the Futures Project to work towards. There were many ideas thrown in to the pot and after much discussion we came up with: “To restore, enhance and protect Leominster Priory, in a sustainable way, as an inclusive, sacred place of worship and heritage, ensuring it remains at the heart of the community for future generations” This is what we are still working towards.

**2024**

Work continued preparing the bid, which was then submitted in March. We found out soon after our submission that we would be awarded the £120,850 that we had applied for – a very successful bid! In addition to the funding from the Heritage Fund, we received / have been promised the following additional amounts:

❖ National Churches Trust £8,831.00

❖ UKSPF Government Funding £9,000.00

❖ Leominster Town Council £1,000.00

❖ Leominster Priory PCC £11,372.95

❖ Edward Harley Trust £2,500.00

❖ Rowlands Trust £1,000.00

❖ The Elmeley Foundation £3,000.00

❖ William A. Cadbury Charitable Trust £750.00

Before we could get going, we had to wait for permission to start; this required that we carry out a number of tasks, designed to assure the Heritage Fund that we had everything needed in place. We were finally able to start at the end of July. The first thing we did was to advertise for, and appoint, consultants / contractors to fulfil the

main areas of expertise required:

• Project Management (Impact Consultancy)

• Heritage and Community Officer (HCO) (Hilary Norris)

• Architect (Buttress)

• Fundraising Strategy (Action Planning)

• Community Consultation & Engagement (Impact Consultancy)

• Business & Sustainability Planning (Action Planning)

At this point, Wendy Coombey moved away from the project and Rupert Fairclough took up the role of Project Director, with a brief including overseeing the project and its finances, managing all the consultants and contractors and reporting to the PCC. Included within the scope of the HCO brief were three sub-projects, which you will probably be aware of:

• Ducking Stool – Assessment, contextualisation, dating and planning of restoration / conservation

• Living Orchards – Production of a short film to celebrate the heritage of local apples and orchards

• Priory 900 – an exhibition and series of events in June/July 2025, involving the whole community

Throughout the year, the PFG met on a regular basis, at least once a month, and the Project Management team met on an at least weekly basis. This allowed the project to stay on track in terms of its deliverables and to keep expenditure in control and on budget. The Heritage Fund were fully supportive throughout the year and were happy with progress.

**The Future**

The Heritage Fund funding formally runs out in February 2026, however the first stage of the Futures Project is likely to complete by November 2025. At this point, and assuming that a decision is made to continue, the project will submit a further bid for funding of the next stage: to develop the concepts from the first stage into a detailed implementation plan.

Rupert Fairclough June 2025

**Holiday Club Anna Quelch**

We had yet again another incredible week of fun this year with 95 children at this year’s Holiday Club. The theme was Incredible Feast and each day the children saw dramatized stories from the Bible: the Wedding at Cana, A Little bit of Yeast (Jesus likening the Kingdom of Heaven to yeast, which when added to bread dough, grows into something huge), the Lost Son, the Feeding of the 5,000 and Pentecost. The daily Bible stories were reflected in the crafts the children made.

We had some exciting events during the afternoons: On Monday in keeping with the theme, the children made drop pancakes, and the older children enjoyed experiencing Gamelan music with Jonathan in the Forbury.

 On Tuesday Worcester based Animal Mania brought various animals for the children to handle ranging from a snake and a tortoise, to a giant rabbit. Community Police Officers Steph and Gareth came and talked to the children about keeping safe and showed the children what sort of equipment they carry on their police vehicle. Cooking also featured on the programme and the Priory was filled with the smell of freshly baked bread rolls.

On Wednesday all the children tried their hands at various Bushcraft activities with Tim Gluyas ranging from archery to fence building, and the younger groups enjoyed a story telling session inside “dens” made from tarpaulins and chairs within their groups areas, 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 with a “village fete” with various activity stalls in the churchyard and as well as bouncy castles, which proved very popular.

It was a busy and entertaining week, and we were delighted when the Mayor, Gill Murdoch, accepted our invitation to come and visit us. She was very impressed with what she saw, and returned on the Friday afternoon to witness the end of week celebration during which the children sing and dance in front of their to parents. We are, of course, indebted to the Town Council that the cost of hiring of portable toilets and the necessary fencing for the outdoor play areas is covered by their generous grant We had planned for an increase in the booking charge but on reflection decided against this due to the economic climate, knowing that some families are really struggling. Instead, we kept strict control of all our expenditure and did not spend much in the way of replacement equipment. We were also fortunate in receiving a donation from a member of the mcongregation which funded 2 children’s places. I am pleased to report that the Holiday Club

accounts show a surplus of £551 in 2024. Of the 95 children attending 10 were referred to us by local primary schools and were given free places, as well as a free place given to the Iranian boy, Arshia, who has attended the Priory. In addition, we also offered a total of 16 subsidised places to families who are in receipt of benefits. Over half of the children attending were repeat bookings, and came from 16 different schools. Of course, none of this would be possible without the support of all our wonderful volunteers.

Namely:- 38 adults working directly with children, and 5 key adults not working directly with children – Holly Joynson (all singing and dancing, front of stage person), Holly’s husband, Christopher, Carl Franklin, Anthony Hurdidge (teenage debrief), and Bill and myself on admin.

 27 teenagers who have attended Holiday Club as children themselves, and who come back to help the adults.

Lesley Marsh and Stephanie Franklin plus 2 volunteers who worked tirelessly in the kitchen keeping everyone refreshed with drinks and fruit. 8 additional people helped during the sports afternoon, and 16 people acted as door stewards during the week.

And of course, the Holiday Club Committee this year comprising Yvonne Morgan, Christine Hurdidge, Sarah Chedgzoy, Sally Hall, Des Hall, Sue Jones, Holly Joynson, Bill and myself. We meet on a monthly basis from January onwards and spend countless hours preparing for the event.

The Holiday Club team are an amazing group and, despite the hard work, it is a joy to hold this event every year.

Anna Quelch Holiday Club Coordinator

**House group reports:**

The house group meeting held at the home of Geoff and Helen Bricknell , is on the 1 st Thursday of the month at

7.30pm. At present we have eleven 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!

In recent months we have been following the ‘All Life is Here’ study material which takes us on an interesting

journey through Paul’s first letter to Timothy. The study encourages us to look at the way we live our different lives

as God’s people…. as life was lived when the letter was first written and now to us in the 21 st century. We have had many interesting discussions over the weeks!

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.

Monday night house group continues to meet every other week or so, to share in Bible study and prayer.

**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 youth groups.

**Barons Cross Outreach**– Winter of Wellbeing funding from Hereford Council (From DWP) enabled us to provide food and activity sessions at Barons Cross Community Room over the winter. This was extended until May. At the request of parents, we offered cooking sessions for adults on a fortnightly basis from May - July. We then received funding for summer WoW sessions. Which enabled us to offer 6 meal and activity session over the summer holidays and into September. These included indoor and outdoor activities for families. S & A Produce kindly donated snooker balls, cues and table football balls so that we could bring the old ‘Youth Club’ snooker table and table football table back into action. This has much enjoyed by participants and has been important in offering a message about residents of the estate being valued and listened to – people asked for the equipment to be made use-able so we enabled this to happen.
The funding for the WoW sessions included a significant contribution to staff costs for these sessions. Should we apply for this funding again this winter?

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).

**Messy Church** – Messy Church has continued to grow and develop over the last year. While Threads Through Creation was happening in Leominster Priory, we had one session at Leominster Methodist Church and another outside. We supported Leominster Festival with a pop up Messy Church on The Grange on a theme of sea creatures in Creation.

**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.
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 before Christmas we held a ‘signs of Advent’ day for Leominster Primary school. We also held a school visit for Lucton school in the summer term.

We supported workshops for Threads Through Creation for Kimbolton, Orleton and Ivington Schools.

**Local community**-Additional to our paid hours we co-led the support group for asylum seekers in Leominster which 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 Talbot closed to Asylum seekers in January, we have continued to support and visit the families who were living there and who are now dispersed in different towns around the UK. Three of the families joined us in August at Greenbelt Festival via the festival's Open Festival Scheme and two families visited Leominster over the summer. Enabling families to reconnect with each other and with people in the local community has been very important for their wellbeing and for creating a narrative of hope, especially during a summer where street riots and protests against asylum seekers were happening across the UK. Their experience has overwhelmingly been one of loss, so interrupting that experience with opportunities for reconnection and joy, has been an important part of our ongoing work with this community.
This September we have begun to support a refugee family from Afghanistan at the request of Herefordshire Council and we expect this work to grow as more families are placed in Leominster.

Kathy continues to manage Leominster Food Bank and Money Advice Centre and we coordinate the delivery of food share food each evening to vulnerable people in Leominster – offering both practical and pastoral care for those in need. The Talbot has reopened and is being used by Herefordshire council as emergency and temporary housing. We support people who are accommodated there as well as some people who are currently street homeless.

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.

**Mothers’ Union Phillippa Wright**

Another interesting year!

Fr Andrew Mayes continues to be a regular contributor to our meetings, and I am grateful for his support. It was wonderful to be able to get to know our team Rector in March. Tracey from Hereford Wildlife Trust revealed the extent of the Wildlife Trusts work in Herefordshire which was inspiring. We delved into local history with Peter Blench and Rob Walker. It was fascinating to learn how stained-glass windows were moved from one location to another! Our annual outing was well attended. The walk around Kenchester Water Gardens was enjoyable but I think we were all grateful for a chair in the shade whilst having a cream tea. We have hosted a Quiet Day in May and Mary Sumner Service in August. It is a joy to be able to support the Diocese of Hereford MU in this way and get to know members from further afield. We supported the Priory in the Christmas Bazaar. The branch had a Christmas tree which was decorated with the flags from all the countries where MU is present. It is remarkable how the vision of one woman has created a worldwide Christian movement devoted to sharing the love of Jesus by helping the most vulnerable in society. We have hosted 3 Friday Coffee Mornings which have been good ways to raise money, funds raised have been divided between the Crisis Intervention Fund (specifically for people in Leominster) and MU Overseas work.

**Music 2024-2025**

**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. A few of these took place during the ‘Threads through Creation’ Festival: one for school choirs involving eight schools and 230 children, a Deanery Choral Evensong with village church choirs, and a ‘Creativity in our Community’ Service when local community choirs from the area joined us for a wonderful, fun-filled service. For our Advent Service we were joined by choirs from across the Diocese. We have been pleased to welcome Stoke Prior School Choir at two Sunday services. At all of these the Priory Choir provided a friendly, a strong foundation..

The Nine Lessons and Carols Service was very well supported, and included some experimental items including three carols collected by Herefordshire folklorist Ella Mary Leather (joined by Pete on folk violin) to celebrate the Museum’s year of EML celebrations – one accompanied by a Keralan dance! We also enjoyed singing Choral Evensong at Hereford Cathedral in February.

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 Christmas Carols at West Eaton Residential Home, and for *Light Up Leominster*. They have also enjoyed several social occasions including the annual BBQ, Epiphany Party and a gamelan workshop.

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. Our Choral Scholar, Hepzibah Cole, completed her year supported by the *Ouseley Trust* which included brilliant outreach work in local schools and in the Priory supporting the *Threads through Creation* events and visits.

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. Our thanks 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. We have also had generous contributions from members of the congregation to support the Choir Chaperone role in the coming year.

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 nurturing our young people.

**Organ**

Work on the Nicholson’s organ console was completed in August/September. Part of the money for this was raised through a ‘sponsor an organ voluntary’ scheme. Thanks to members of the congregation for very generous sponsorship, and to the congregation for patience in listening to some very long voluntaries! The organ continues to 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). The choir was thrilled to be part of a joint concert with international organist, David Briggs, in July.

In September an organ recital was given with David Hatcher on viola da gamba to celebrate the restoration of the historic Bevington organ. David Gallichan, organ-builder, gave a fascinating talk about the restoration after the concert and his assistant, Kevin, delighted everyone with some guest slots in the programme. Thanks to all who contributed to this successful fund-raising venture, which started with a concert in memory of Will Pridie in 2023.

**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, 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. During the ‘*Threads through Creation’* Festival the Priory hosted some highly original concerts, including ‘Herefordshire Folk Now’ (in collaboration with Leominster Museum) involving puppets, musicians and Leominster Morris, and a fascinating concert by Oxford Gamelan Society with dancer Andrea Rutkowski. The performance of Haydn’s *Creation,* Leominster Choral Society/BPO, with Jacqui Parkinson’s panels to set the scene was an exhilarating experience for all. 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**

We are a team of volunteers from the Priory, the Methodist and the Baptist Church who go into Ivington C of E Primary School each week on Thursday @ 1pm to deliver their Collective Worship.

We follow the Bible Society Storyteller Bible and Handbook and have been working through years 2 and 3 in a  chronological order.

The stories are a mixture of Old and New Testament stories and they are delivered by a team of Storytellers in an imaginative and interactive way.

 Key Stage 2 children help to deliver the stories alongside the volunteers.

We begin by showing the children some Makaton signs to use, which are unique to each story, aswell as other actions or phrases they can repeat in order to make the story come alive.

The children join in enthusiastically and are always excited when it is their turn to join in with the acting up at the front. We also get to dress up and use a variety of props to enhance our storytelling.

We are very fortunate to have St. John's Church just across the road from school which we use.

Our Team of Volunteers work on a weekly rota  however they usually take part once a month, for the half hour session. We are always pleased to welcome new Storytellers...

Thank you for reading... Christine Hurdidge (Team Leader)

**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. I am indebted to the Priory family who support this charity so generously, to

the Knit & Natter group, whose nimble fingers produce mountains of hand knitted hats, scarves and teddies. Also my thanks to those who lovingly cover copious numbers of boxes so beautifully, and not forgetting Val Gates who

helps with the endless sorting and counting of items. Anna Quelch

**Youth Groups Clare Cathcart**

Jonathan (Curate) continued to run the 14 - 18 year group until he moved to Hereford cathedral  when leadership was passed on to David and Kathy Bland. The Goats have met together to share "Games, Opinions, Activities, Talk and Snacks". Goats members have led sessions; offering a mix of sharing skills, art, crafts, debating and games with a pizza making session, an awards evening, quizzes and Christmas tree decoration making also included. Thanks to the team of volunteers who have made it possible to continue.