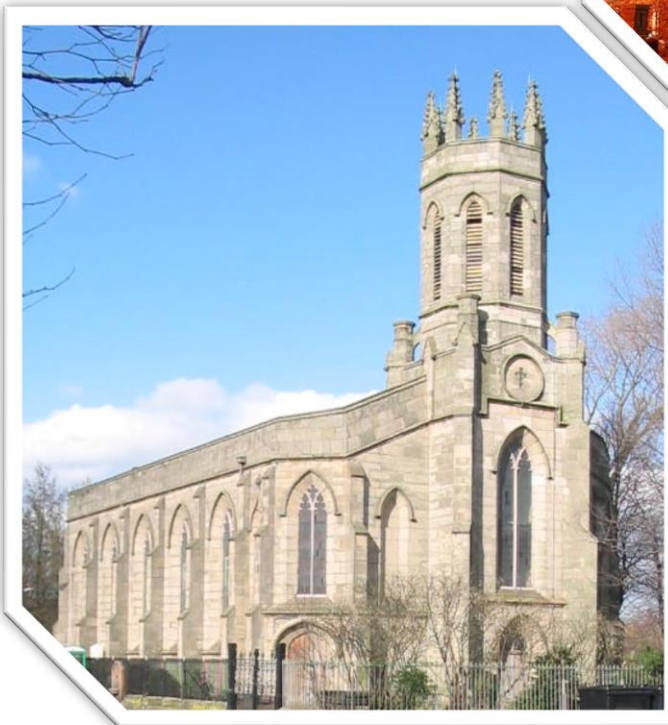


# **The Parish of Bilston**



**We are looking for  
someone special to  
pick up the baton.**



**St Leonard's**  
**St Mary's**  
**St Chad's**



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## WELCOME

Are you that someone special?

As a Parish we are looking forward to a bright future and praying for the person whom God is calling to come and share in our ministry in Bilston; could the person we are praying for, be you?

We recognise that the potential for growth in Bilston is amazing, we have come a long way in the past few years in mutual support and encouragement of each other, in discovering talents and skills we never knew we had and in stepping out to try new things. The Bible Study groups have blossomed, we have developed a youth program and the young people now conduct services, there is growth in fellowship after the morning services throughout the parish, Jacob's Well Café is open daily in St Leonard's, we have a Warm Space Place of Welcome at St Chad's and have opened a Community Kitchen at St Mary's. The Pastoral Team are now involved in Funeral, Wedding and Baptism ministry, do regular pastoral visits to members of the congregation and distribute Home Communions. The work in all 3 churches gives a platform for growth in the coming years. Most of these projects are not dependent on clergy and have been set up and run by members of the congregations and the church councils.

In each of our churches we offer a very warm welcome and we are reaching out to people where they are; offering food, companionship, warmth, a listening ear and caring hands.



We are seeking to follow Christ's example of meeting the physical needs of people in order to then meet their spiritual needs, sharing the love of God in very practical ways.

**The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave**

Bishop's House, 22 The Close, Lichfield WS13 7LG

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**THE BISHOP  
OF LICHFIELD**

***A word of welcome to the Diocese of Lichfield***

Cradled at the intersection of the Midlands and the North, and the interface between England and Wales, the Diocese of Lichfield is the ancient centre of Christianity in what was the Kingdom of Mercia.

We are rightfully grateful for the inheritance we have from our first bishop St Chad that leads us to focus on Discipleship, Vocation and Evangelism as we live and serve among the communities of Staffordshire, northern Shropshire and the Black Country.

By answering God's call to minister in Lichfield Diocese you will benefit from being part of a wide family, mixing with people serving in a variety of contexts – from the grittiest inner-city neighbourhoods of Stoke and the Black Country, to the leafiest rural parishes of Staffordshire and Shropshire, to the sparsest upland communities of the Staffordshire Moorlands and Welsh Borders.

And we embrace the widest spectrum of church traditions – evangelical and catholic, liberal and conservative, choral and charismatic – as we journey together in mission. As a colleague recently put it, it is our goal to be a 'spacious and gracious diocese'.

It is my determination and that of my episcopal colleagues that your calling to minister with us in Lichfield Diocese will be a time of encouragement, fulfilment, challenge and joy. You will not be alone in your ministry; as part of the wider team our colleagues among the diocesan staff keenly bring their various specialisms both spiritual and practical to offer resource and support as you serve our parishes, fresh expressions, schools and chaplaincies.

**The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave OBE**

Bishop's House, 22 The Close, Lichfield, WS13 7LG

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## Wolverhampton Deanery

Revd. Richard Merrick. Rural Dean.  
 c/o Holy Trinity Vicarage  
 Bushbury Road  
 Heath Town  
 Wolverhampton  
 WV10 0LY  
 Tel: 01902 828283 / 07759 658484  
 Email: revrichht@gmail.com

**Wolverhampton Deanery** includes the 16 churches within central Wolverhampton and Bilston as well as the Chaplaincies from the University, NHS and HMYOI. It is one of three deaneries covering the city and surrounding area.

As a member of the clergy team you would be included within a mutually supportive and yet diverse chapter who meet regularly together. The purpose of our Deanery Synod is to encourage parishes to seek to work in a spirit of unity and collaboration to support one another in ways that enable us to proclaim the gospel more effectively. Working within the diocesan framework of developing Discipleship, Vocations and Evangelism in our churches.

Beyond the Anglican Church there is a strong ecumenical network of different denominations who work together to seek unity across the diversity of the Church in Wolverhampton.

You would become a valued and vital member of these networks.

Revd. Richard Merrick.  
 Rural/Area Dean

## ABOUT THE WIDER PARISH

The Parish in its current configuration St Leonard's, St Mary's and St Chad's was formed in 1980 as a team ministry. Over the years staffing has been reduced steadily until now, when we move to a single incumbent. This requires a change to the Parish Scheme which is the reason for the current 'Priest In Charge' title. We do hope that the 'Priest In Charge' title will change to 'Incumbent' for the right person.



The town of Bilston sits in the historic 'Black Country' and has a proud history of steelmaking and coal mining. It is an old 'market town' and one of the few which retains a thriving market.



Bilston has excellent transport links; with the Midlands Metro going right through the centre offering a direct route to both Wolverhampton and Birmingham. It also has a small bus station with buses connecting with all of the surrounding towns. The Black Country Link Road and the Black Country Route give a direct link to the M5, M6, M54 and M6 Toll road.



The town of Bilston is served by 7 primary schools, with a further 3 only a short distance away, 3 high schools, 1 school for children with additional needs and the Bilston Campus of Wolverhampton College. All of the schools in Bilston are Ofsted Rated as either 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.



Within its 2.1 sq mile boundary Bilston parish encompasses 7 large housing estates comprising current and previous social housing, dating between 1920 and 1970, alongside several smaller and more recent private housing developments. Bilston has a diverse population with a recent rise in Eastern European families, but also well settled Asian, Afro-Caribbean, African and Romany heritage populaces. Our churches bear some reflection of this. Unlike some parishes most of the parishioners in Bilston do live within or close by the parish boundaries.



The Parish currently has a population of around 21,429 (as per the 2021 census) and is an urban priority area parish. It appears in the top 10% on the deprivation scale with a rank of 328/12,239. Health issues among the adult population are significant as are mental health issues. There are also a number of homeless people, mainly men, within the town as well as a number of bail hostels.



In recent years investment has and is being seen in the area with The Bert Williams Sports and Leisure Centre, the South Wolverhampton and Bilston Secondary Academy and Loxdale Primary school having been built within the Urban Village development. Other smaller housing developments have been established throughout the parish.



Facilities in Bilston are good with a library, Art and Craft Gallery, swimming pool and gym within the leisure centre, Robin 2 Music Venue, Hickman Park and several playgrounds. There are a number of Green Spaces including 2 fishing pools and access to the canal network. There is a large supermarket in the town along with several smaller ones, many others are a short drive or bus



ride away.



There are several other church denominations within the parish and close by, with whom we work closely as Churches Together in Bilston and Bradley; mainly Bilston Baptist Church, Excel Pentecostal Church, Bradley Methodist Church, St Martin's C of E Bradley, New Testament Church of God.

## FUTURE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following is a list of what we see as our potential challenges and opportunities for the immediate and longer-term future:

- ❖ Increased population and diversity in and around Bilston and a community with extensive need and deprivation
- ❖ To Build on work already begun in local schools including being Foundation Governor of Bilston CofE Primary School with whom we have close links.
- ❖ To develop networks with existing and future users of the parish centre.
- ❖ To reach new generations and grow new congregations through Fresh Expressions of Church and an evangelistic outlook.
- ❖ To contribute towards the transforming of our community.
- ❖ Opening up digital communication with the wider community.
- ❖ Exploring patterns of worship to offer a broad experience.
- ❖ Sustain and grow the existing worshipping communities.
- ❖ Further development of the work of lay Ministry amidst ageing congregations.
- ❖



- ❖ To build on the work of the Pastoral Team in their care of the congregations and their outreach to Care Homes.
  
- ❖ Find ways to develop ministry within the ongoing high levels of Occasional Offices.
  
- ❖ Develop and initiate work with children, young people and families.
  
- ❖ Use our ageing buildings to their full potential despite limited flexibility.

We are aware of and recognise how the changes in society as a whole are impacting upon all aspects of life including faith.

## WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We wish to appoint a minister who has a real passion and heart for mission and ministry, who will support us in reaching new generations and transforming our community; someone who will share our vision to see our churches continue to flourish and grow.



It is essential that you are/have:

- \* Committed to work with a collaborative approach to ministry and mission.
- \* Effective interpersonal and leadership qualities.
- \* Able to help develop, implement and sustain new initiatives.
- \* An ability to encourage and enable discipleship and leadership.
- \* An ability to support individuals and groups to discern, recognise and develop their God given gifts for the benefit of God's people and Kingdom.
- \* Comfortable with an Evangelical Anglican approach to mission and ministry but are able to minister across the whole parish which holds a broad central Anglican outlook.
- \* An understanding of and an ability to use audio visual and social media to aid communication.
- \* An up to date knowledge of policies and procedures required in a parish environment.

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

**"We are committed to serving God, sharing the gospel and serving our community to the very best of our ability day by day."**

## **ROLE DESCRIPTION**

### **PRINCIPAL AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

- ❖ Working with a group who are excited about new areas of mission.
  
- ❖ To support the whole Parish to work out its vision in relation to reaching new generations through developing Fresh Expressions of Church.
  
- ❖ To support the Parish to look at the needs of the area around us, identify gaps in provision and to implement initiatives which will help to reach out to the local community.
  
- ❖ To be responsible for the Parish, the pastoral care of the congregations, organisation of the worship, and with the church wardens, treasurers and PCC for the stewardship of the buildings and properties of the churches and the governance of the Parish Centre.
  
- ❖ To provide support for members of the congregations within the Parish, enabling them to be involved in the wider life of the church and community.
  
- ❖ To take occasional offices and services across all the churches within the Parish.

We expect the minister to take one day off each week and to take their full holiday entitlement as a matter of good practice.

We would expect our new minister to have well established networks and patterns for self-care and spiritual growth and we will encourage time for study.

## WHO ARE WE? – OUR BUILDINGS AND ACTIVITIES.

### ST LEONARD'S CHURCH

Bilston St Leonard: Walsall Street, Bilston, West Midlands, WV14 0AT.

St Leonard's Church is a busy church situated at the heart of the town centre, it is known by old Bilstonian's as 'Bilston's Cathedral'.

St Leonard's is a grade II listed building situated within a churchyard which has been adopted by the local

authority since 1952. The current

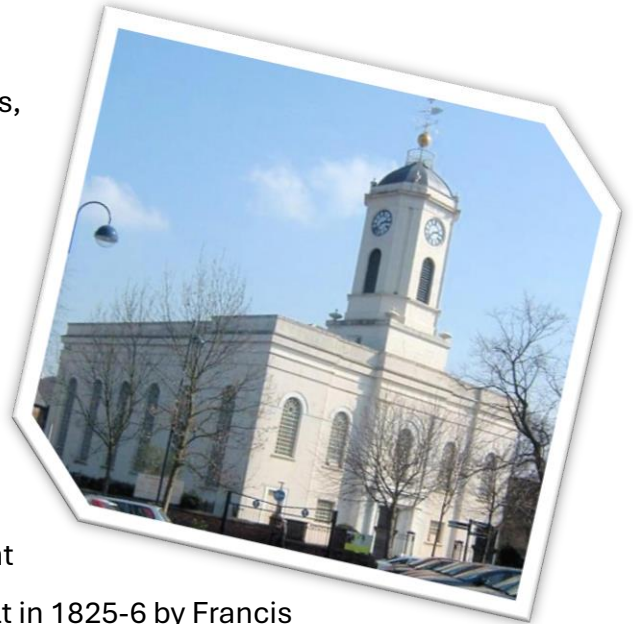
building was designed and built in 1825-6 by Francis

Goodwin and restored in 1882-3 by Ewan Christian, however records show a chapel on the site since 997.

With it's white painted exterior and 'pepperpot' tower the church can be seen for miles around.

St Leonard's church has a pipe organ which was fully restored in 2010, the console for this is on the ground floor in the south aisle.

A major refurbishment of the sanctuary and surrounding east wall area has just been completed, the completion of the interior and exterior redecoration which is 'desirable' will require some fundraising in order to complete the works.



Internally the choir pews have been removed and replaced with chairs, providing a large, slightly raised area suitable for performance. St Leonard's is equipped with a 32 channel sound system, 2 projectors and retractable screens and a variety of lighting options. This offers the opportunity for various activities including occasional concerts, whole school services several times per year, Churches Together Christmas services etc. The church itself can seat about 200 on the ground floor and a further 150 in the galleries.



All of the pews and the plinth in the north aisle have been removed allowing for a more flexible area which now houses a children's play area and the band corner along with the font. In the south aisle a small chapel has been created behind the organ console which is used for midweek communion services but remains a flexible space.

A glass screen, built in the 1980's separates the nave from a reception area. Within this area Jacob's Well Cafe is open from Monday through to Saturday enabling the church building to be open to members of the public seven days per week. This facility is operated by the PCC and is well used by the community, offering low cost, healthy food in a friendly and supportive atmosphere and offering volunteering opportunities. We employ 2, formerly long term unemployed, staff members for 10hrs each to manage the day-to-day running of the café. A lunch club is provided every Wednesday for anyone to join, meeting the needs of many isolated and lonely people, especially older men.

A craft/knit and natter group and a slimming group use the building on a weekly basis. The craft group regularly decorate one of the window sills and often get involved in social activities.

During the week many people call in to pray, light a candle or just look around, this offers plenty of opportunities for ministry.



A small group of young people – age 10-15, meet weekly on a Tuesday evening, some have been confirmed and some are working toward confirmation. They also enjoy taking occasional services.

St Leonard's congregation is larger than the other churches, however for a number of people attendance patterns are not weekly.

*Hi All,  
I visited St Lenards Sunday morning service @ 10:30am, on 19th May 2024.  
I would like to thank everyone for their warm welcome, you all made me feel truly welcome.  
The service was led by the youth of the Church, they did an exceptional job. And I have to admit, they are braver than myself!! It was a blessing to be a part of the service.  
I grew up in Bilston and remember fondly the bells ringing out on Sunday mornings.  
The next time I'm in the area on a Sunday, I'll will pop in to enjoy worshipping with you all again.  
God bless  
Love and prayers  
Debbie*

The majority of the congregation live within the parish or very close by and are fairly representative of the diverse nature of the Parish. There are a healthy number of members involved in the life of the church. Visitors regularly comment on the warm welcome that they receive at St Leonard's.

St Leonard's have a small worship band who organise quarterly Saturday praise services and take part in Family services once per month on a Sunday morning. St Leonard's has regular visits from 2 schools who both hold services in the church at Easter, Harvest and Christmas. In addition to this, classes from a number of schools and a nursery come to St Leonard's for visits on a regular basis. Members of the congregation are involved in the governing body of Bilston CofE Primary.

The Parish are involved in Churches Together in Bilston and Bradley, currently holding the chair and helping organise 4 main events per year: - Hope In The Park, a large evangelistic summer event in the local park





attracting over 1,000 people, Reclaiming Christmas, an event at Christmastime held in St Leonard's and involving our own band along with choirs from some local schools, Good Friday and Christmas carols outreach services in the town centre.



Occasional offices are very important to the people of Bilston

and present a significant opportunity for mission.

Currently funeral families are invited back for quarterly memorial services and baptism families invited to an annual renewal of vows at Easter.



Pattern of worship.

### **Sundays**

**10:30am -**

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday Common Worship family service

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays Common Worship Communion with Baptism (14 Baptisms in 2023)

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Family Service

**5.00pm** BCP Evensong, quarterly memorials.

### **Wednesday**

10.30 Midweek Common Worship Communion followed by Bible Study

### **Saturdays**

6.00pm quarterly inSPIRE Praise with Heart of Worship Praise Band

During the Vacancy we have been experimenting with a youth led Café Church one Sunday per month.

## **The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary**



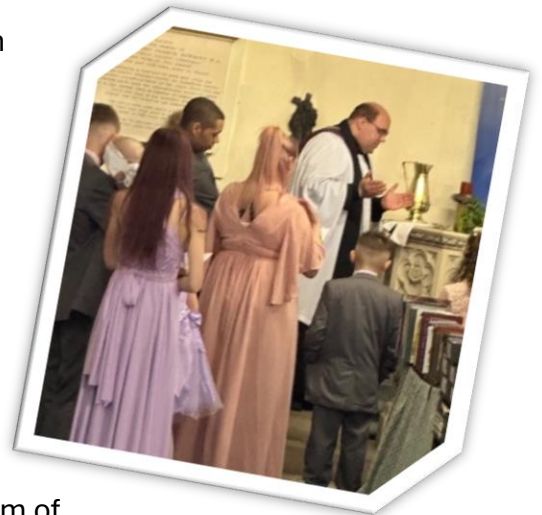
St Mary's is a 2\* listed building on the main A41.

It is a Waterloo church and was consecrated by Henry, Lord Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry on August 28<sup>th</sup> 1830. At the same time, the land around the church was consecrated as a burial ground. It has, since that time, had several alterations and improvements. The most recent in the 1980's when the church was re-ordered and a kitchen and toilet

built which enabled us to have a Narthex which can be used for social events and also as a room for hire.

The congregation use the narthex every Sunday after the worship for refreshments and socialising, as well as functions such as a Harvest lunch and Christmas meal.

Last year the decision was made to begin a Community Kitchen twice a month. This began as a lunch of homemade soup or sandwiches, cakes and limitless tea or coffee for £1. It has become extremely successful and we now serve a choice of 5 or 6 main courses, cakes, tea or coffee, still at a charge of £1 as a gesture of hospitality in giving something back to our local community. Our customers are mainly elderly and enjoy not just the food but also the companionship. Last Christmas the Community Kitchen was sponsored by a local firm of Solicitors, enabling us to supply a Christmas lunch free of charge. In addition, the local Lions Club supports us which allows us to maintain our charge of £1.





The Trefoil Guild use our facilities regularly for their meetings. It is guiding for adults and a source of fun and friendship, offering members personal and social opportunities while supporting Guiding and Scouting. Its' aims are to keep alive, among its members, the spirit of the Guide and Scout promises and laws whilst carrying that spirit into the communities in which members live and work. This is an opportunity that is open to both men and women aged 18 and above.



As a Church over the last two years, we have increased our congregation to pre-COVID levels with all new members becoming regular and active participants in Church life. We keep in touch with our local residents through our Facebook page and we regularly deliver leaflets to the surrounding houses and streets

alongside posters outside church so everyone knows when we have services and events. All of our fundraising activities, such as fetes, Christmas fayres, jumble sales, table top sales and charitable coffee mornings are always well supported by our local community.



Our Columbarium was opened in 1960 for the internment of the ashes of members of St Mary's but since that time the grounds of the church have been improved and enhanced. We are very fortunate that we have a group of volunteers who maintain our grounds and Columbarium. They are in an immaculate condition, open every day for those wishing to bring flowers or visit loved ones.



Although we are recognised as being a High Anglican church, since we have had only one Vicar in the Parish we have been more flexible in our form of worship, having a Eucharist every other week with the Churchwarden conducting a Service of the Word every alternate Sunday.

### **Pattern of worship**

Sundays 9.30am

1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays - Eucharist

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays – Morning Prayer

### **ST CHAD'S CHURCH**

Bilston St Chad; Connaught Road, Bilston, West Midlands, WV14 5NU



The large estate surrounding St Chad's was built during the 1930's as replacement housing for the slums that were rife at the time in Bilston. It was planned by the Diocese that St Chad's Church would be built at the

same time. However the Second World War

intervened and the structure was not built until the 1950's as a daughter church to St Leonard's.

Upon the formation of the Bilston Parish Team in 1980 St Chad's was recognised as an equal member of the Parish.

St Chad's sits at the heart of the estate and offers not just a place of worship but because of its multi-purpose design can be used for community events. The fabric of the church is in a good state of repair both inside and out. There is a car park and a green space surrounding the church, all enclosed behind fencing. The church offers a great opportunity for mission in the midst of the estate which has much deprivation and diversity.



A once a month "messy church" event -

Fusion @4 – takes place on a Saturday afternoon as a Fresh Expression of church for us. We have had up to 40 parents and children of all ages and abilities attending this.

A weekly 'Place of Welcome' meets on a Thursday morning which also offers a Warm Space in the colder weather. We are aiming to widen the appeal of this on the estate by introducing various craft and other activities. A gardening club has recently begun at this time.



We would really like to re-open our Toddler and carer group, 'Chads Place' when the time is right.



The worshipping community is a small, friendly group which is a very committed family. We have a

heart for the community around us and are not afraid to try new things in order to reach out.



## Pattern of Worship

### Sundays

11am Communion 2 Sundays in the month.

Service of the Word and Family Service make up the other 2 Sundays.



## THE PARISH CENTRE



The Parish Centre has been in existence for 25 years, replacing an old wooden church hall structure.

This is a large and well laid out community facility owned and managed by the parish and stands adjacent to St Chad's church.

It contains a large hall, kitchen, office space and several smaller meeting rooms. This building is a great asset to the parish and has in the past been used for many parish activities.



The centre is currently let to a pre-school nursery on a 5yr lease (3 yrs left to run). The lease agreement affords a significant income source for the parish and ensures that the building can be maintained at little cost to the parish.



The Pre-school nursery offers a further opportunity for mission and a group of the children has visited the church for story-time at Christmas. We would wish to build upon this opportunity to engage with children and their parents.

The Parish Centre is managed by a management committee consisting of members from all three churches and representatives from the nursery.

### **The Pastoral Team**

The Pastoral Team work together to share in the ministry of the Parish. They enable housebound members of the congregations to receive communion in their homes, they remain in touch with those who are sick and undertake a ministry to conduct services in 3 local care homes once per

month each. In addition to this they are committed to organising and inviting funeral families to attend a memorial service every 3 months and inviting baptism families to renew baptismal vows every Easter Sunday.



**THE LEADERSHIP TEAM**

Vacant – Priest In Charge

Phil Dooley – Reader (PTO) St Leonard's

Diane Woodberry – Reader St Chad's & Pastoral Team Lead

Joyce Groucutt - Verger St Leonard's & deputy warden

Mark Bircher – Parish Warden & Churchwarden St Leonard's

Jane Dooley – Parish Warden & Churchwarden St Leonard's, Café Manager and children and youth lead

Christine Mills – Churchwarden St Mary's

Eber Carter – Churchwarden St Mary's

Alison Spencer – Churchwarden St Chad's & Pastoral Team

Linda Pearson – Churchwarden St Chad's

Pastoral Team: as listed above plus

Charlie Smith

Mike Reaney

Jane Ratcliffe

Linda Stockall



**PARISH HOUSING****The benefice House – Cumberland Road, Bilston**

The house is a character detached property a little away from the town centre. With 2 reception rooms, a large kitchen/diner and a substantial study with the benefit of a separate entrance and a downstairs cloakroom; Upstairs are 4 bedrooms a family bathroom and separate toilet along with a useful large landing area suitable as a quiet space. The house also benefits from central heating and double glazing.

The off-road parking to front of the property is sufficient for several vehicles and an enclosed garden to the rear has a detached garage which is set beyond double gates.

## THE OCCASIONAL OFFICES

The Parish has a significant ministry around the occasional offices dealing with around 60-70 funerals per year, these are largely conducted by the Incumbent with the support of local retired clergy.

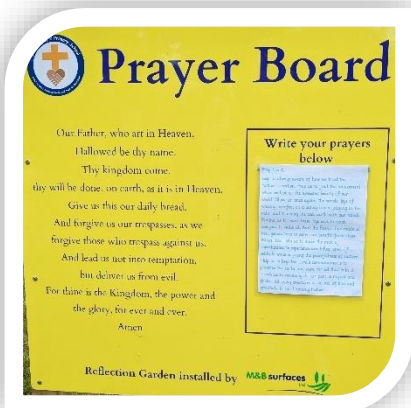
The majority of the 20 or so baptisms per year are conducted within the 10.30am morning service at St Leonard's; baptisms are conducted within the main services in any of the churches within the Parish at the request of the family.

In 2024 we currently have 6 weddings booked and a further 5 booked for 2025.

## SCHOOLS/EDUCATION

The Parish is served by:-

- ❖ Seven Primary schools all GOOD or above
- ❖ Three Comprehensive Schools
- ❖ One Special Educational Needs school
- ❖ The Bilston Campus of the City of Wolverhampton College



We currently have particular links with a number of these schools including a very strong and continually developing link with Bilston C of E Primary School.



## SUPPORT FOR CHARITIES

We regularly support local and national charities when appropriate including:-

MacMillan Coffee Morning, Children's Society, Barnabus, Leprosy Mission, various foodbanks.

## **POLICIES AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **Baptism Policy**

We operate an open policy, offering baptism to children and adults who live in the parish as well as those who have strong connections with the parish. Baptisms take place at St Leonard's, during the main Sunday service and with prior arrangement at St Mary's and St Chad's, during the main Sunday service. Baptism families are required to attend church services prior to the baptism a minimum of 3 times. Baptism families and godparents are required to attend a Baptism Preparation Session on a Saturday morning which includes a Baptism Rehearsal. Baptisms are now being filtered in order to cope with demand, this means if those who seek baptism live outside of our Parish they will need to consult the incumbent or equivalent authority of their own parish before seeking baptism in Bilston. It is offered freely once all the expectations are met and we seek those who are baptised to become members of our churches.

### **Marriage Policy**

We operate an open policy on the marriage of divorced people within the Bishops' Guidelines. All who live within the parish are welcome to get married at the church of their choice. Those who do not live within the ecclesiastical parish must meet the criteria for a qualifying connection. We have adhered to the new marriage legislation that has changed the registration of marriages. All Marriages will be registered with the Local Registry Office in Wolverhampton and any copy of marriage certificates can only be obtained from the same authority.

### **Funeral Policy**

All who live or die in the parish are entitled to a funeral service and burial/interment of ashes. Bookings are made and confirmed through the Parish Funeral Co-ordinator along with the incumbent (or equivalent) who will then distribute the request of a funeral service to an appropriate minister. To help with the high level of demand, we have and continue to seek support from colleagues in neighbouring parishes.

**Finance Policy**

Each church has its own treasurer and accounts by which they manage small scale spending; all other finances are managed by the parish as a whole. The parish employs the services of a book-keeper/accountant, part funded by the Diocese. We also enjoy a small reduction in Common Fund due to the levelling up scheme. Although we are not a wealthy parish, finances are currently under control and we have a small reserve for emergencies.

