



The United Benefice of Oldbury, Langley and Londonderry in the Deanery of Warley and Edgbaston

United Benefice Profile

May 2021

UNITED BENEFICE STATEMENT

The United Benefice is located within an area known as the Black Country, an industrial area approximately five miles from Birmingham, whilst retaining a very distinct identity to that of its neighbouring city. The United Benefice was formed in December 2004, but consultation is on-going about the possible closure of St Mark's Londonderry and the dissolution of that parish, which would be divided between the parishes of St Hilda's Warley Woods and Old Church Smethwick. Presentation is currently Suspended to allow this process to unfold, so the appointment will initially be of a Priest in Charge.

Following a shared vision day, the parishes of Christ Church and Langley have identified the qualities and attributes which they seek in their new priest:

- An Evangelistic leader with a visible presence taking the Church into the community.
- Has the gifts to build on the community work that is already in place, developing relationships within the parishes.
- At home with a variety and styles of worship and has an imaginative approach to appeal to young people.
- Listens to the congregations, works collaboratively and involves people in leading worship.
- In collaboration with others, has a creative approach to reaching out to children and families in the parish.
- Is adaptable but doesn't change things for the sake of it.
- Is willing and able to work ecumenically and across different faiths
- Is approachable and has a good sense of humour
- Will embrace fully the new opportunities offered by the move to Christ Church primary school, whilst providing stable leadership at this time of change.
- Is able to take the churches from where they are now to where God wants them to be in a stable and sustainable way.

Both Langley and Christ Church parishes fully accept the ministry of women priests.

PARISH STATEMENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, OLDBURY

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PARISH

The Parish comprises the centre of a small town, six miles north-west of Birmingham, but having its own traditions quite different from the city. There is a diverse mixture of ethnic groups including white British and those of Asian and African Caribbean descent, with the latter groups having become well established over the last 40 years.

More recently families from Eastern Europe have moved into the area. The population of Oldbury is 13,606 (2011 census) but that of the parish of Christ Church is only 3,773 of which 47% profess to be Christian and 28% of other faiths. Data from the Parish Deprivation Rate (2015) ranks the parish 718 out of 12,425, therefore among the most deprived in the country.

In 1974, Oldbury became part of the new Sandwell Metropolitan Borough and is now in the West Midlands County. Sandwell Council's headquarters are situated in the town centre. The town was significantly redeveloped in the 1960s with many areas of back-to-back housing demolished. Housing now a mix of social/privately owned. Most heavy industry has now closed and employment is mainly the service sector as well as warehousing and light industry.

The town centre has a library, large supermarket, banks, post office and small independent shops. There is a retail park within walking distance. The town is served by Sandwell and Dudley railway station and bus services are good. The M5 runs through the parish with Junction 2 just outside the parish boundary.

Other places of worship within the parish are St Francis Xavier RC Church, a New Testament Church of God, the Bethel Church, a Spiritualist Centre and a Gurdwara. There are mosques and a prestigious Hindu Temple just outside the Parish Boundary.

2. PATTERN OF CHURCH LIFE

Christ Church is a traditional church of central churchmanship. It has also been the civic church for Oldbury and Sandwell Council.



a) Times and types of services

Services are held at 11.15 am Sundays, and are generally Holy Communion but the first Sunday of the month is usually a United Benefice Service at one of the two churches. Music is led by a pianist and CDs and we use 'Hymns Old and New' (Anglican Edition.) Children are welcomed and activities are provided for children aged 3 – 11 during the service, linked to the theme of the day. Baptisms take place within the main Sunday service.

There is a monthly service of Holy Communion on a Wednesday morning. [is this right?]

b) The congregation

The congregation is diverse, both ethnically and with mix of ages but is a mainly mature congregation with some younger families and teenagers.

Average attendance at regular services: 2019: 24 adults & 4 children.

3 children (who attend Christ Church primary school) have been admitted to Holy Communion.

c) Assistant clergy, readers etc. One Reader licensed in 2020.

d) Lay ministry and leadership. Members of the congregation read the lessons and lead the intercessions in Sunday Services. They also take the lead in running Coffee Morning, Toddler Group, and visits from our local Church School.

e) Electoral Roll: 2018: 30
2019: 36
2020: 38

f) Baptisms/confirmations/funerals

Baptisms: 2018 - 2
2019 - 5
Confirmations: 2018 - 3
2019 - 1
Weddings: 2020: 1
Funerals: 2018 - 8
2019 - 2

g) Organisations, activities and groups

Monday 10.00 am – 12.00 noon: Coffee Morning

Thursday 9.00 am – 11.00 am: Carer and Toddler Group

h) Projects associated with the church

We collect food for the Food Bank which one of the congregations regularly delivers. We also take part in the World's Biggest Coffee Morning for Macmillan Cancer Relief and hold a collection for Christian Aid Week.



3. DESCRIPTION OF CHURCH BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

a) Church Building

Christ Church was consecrated in 1841 to seat about 1200 persons, and is set within a conservation area. Refurbishment took place in 1992.; the western half of the building was converted to offices to provide rental income to the Diocese.

The eastern half has been modernised as a church with chairs rather than pews but retaining original features such as stained glass and attractive Victorian tiles around the Sanctuary. There is an upstairs meeting room (ex gallery) and an outer vestry (also used for meetings) and a clergy vestry; also toilets (including disabled) and a kitchen area.

b) Users of Church premises Church groups – Coffee Morning and Toddler Groups.

Church fundraising activities, e.g Tea at the Ritz, Harvest lunch

c) Building works Due to water ingress, extensive external and internal repairs were carried out in 2015.

d) Churchyard A closed churchyard managed by Sandwell Council.



New Church. The Diocese has now sold the building to Kingdom Life Apostolic Chapel; the C of E congregation now pay £5000 to them annually as rent. Planning is underway for a new church to be established within Christ Church C.E (Aided) Primary School in nearby Albert Street. This is an exciting new opportunity for the congregation and community. A small kitchen and office space will be included in the new accommodation, as well as worship space, and it is hoped that the building work can begin in August 2021.

4. ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

- a) **Financial Situation.** Despite our relatively small congregation, we meet our housekeeping commitments and clergy expenses in full. A percentage of the Common Fund is agreed by the PCC and paid.
- b) **PCC** There are currently ten members of the PCC, which meets every six – eight weeks. In the absence of a Vicar, meetings are chaired by the Lay Chair. The whole PCC acts as a Standing Committee when required.

5. Opportunities and Expectations

- a) **Schools.** Christ Church C.E. Primary School is affiliated to the church, and with whom we maintain strong links. All year groups visit the church annually as part of their R.E. curriculum. The new incumbent would be expected to become a Foundation Governor of the school.



- c) The school was asked what they wanted in a new vicar, and stressed the importance of someone who would support the school and its children, visiting regularly and being visible around the site. Personal qualities which would be valued include having 'a joyful soul' and a sense of humour; being creative, welcoming kind and caring, always wearing a smile. The ability to tell stories well, to challenge, ask questions and share puzzles was highlighted, and someone who is knowledgeable

about the school and what the pupils are learning, as well about God and Christian beliefs is important.

6. Key Events/Activities in the recent past

- a) Changes/signs of growth** Despite the loss of our Vicar in 2020 and Covid 19, the congregation has been maintained and is growing.
- b) Good News stories.** Visiting priests have commented on the sincerity in our worship and the welcoming congregation. We in turn have benefitted from the variety of clergy we have welcomed to Christ Church with their sustaining support.

PARISH STATEMENT OF ST. JOHN & ST MICHAEL LANGLEY



HISTORY

In 2001 the Warley Deanery Review group was formed in response to a situation where there were six vacant parishes within the Deanery. The group proposed the merger of the two Langley Parishes, with the disposal of both St John's and St Michael's buildings and exploring one or more new venues for worship in the Langley Parish.

Following the closure of St Michael's Church in 2007 and the merger two parishes, worship took place at Edward Street Methodist Church, Langley with Holy Communion services on weeks one, three, four and five and a Family Service incorporating the Scouts Parade at St John's on week two. In September 2011 worship at Edward Street Methodist Church ceased and the congregation were informed that all future services would be held at the St John's building.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PARISH.

Langley is a large urban parish created in 2007 by the merging of the former St John's, Langley (Rood End) and St Michael's, Langley (Langley Green) parishes, plus a small area transferred from the neighbouring Blackheath Parish. It is situated about 7 miles north west of Birmingham. Our south west boundary is formed by a short section of the M5 motorway between junctions 2 and 3. We are in the Deanery of Warley and Edgbaston.

The current population of the parish is approximately 13,000 at the last census in 2011, but there are 2 new large housing developments near completion in the Langley Green area of the parish.

There is a varied ethnic and religious mix of population which at the Rood End part of the parish can be transient although is fairly static at the Langley Green part of the parish.

The Rood End area of the parish is within the top 10% of economically deprived areas in the UK.



The parish has both private and social housing within its boundaries including one block of high-rise flats. The ages of the properties range from the 1860's to the present time. Based on the last available figures 71% of the properties are owner occupied and 29% rented.

There is still a significant industrial presence in the parish including chemical firms and a few small engineering businesses.

There are three local shopping areas plus a large Asda and Aldi store within the parish.

There are seven primary schools (including one Roman Catholic, one Islamic and one Special school), two secondary academies and two centres catering for people with special needs situated in the parish. There are several private nurseries.

Leisure facilities / Community Groups:

Langley has a small theatre with an amateur dramatics group and a long established brass band.

There are two parks, one of which has a community centre.

Other leisure facilities in the parish include a swimming centre, a laser tag venue and an indoor go karting venue. The new Commonwealth Aquatic centre is being constructed on the boundary of the parish.



The Army Reserves and Army Cadets from 225 Field Squadron Royal Monmouthshire Royal engineers are based in Langley not far from The Oldbury branch of the Royal British Legion.

The 888 Air Cadet Squadron are based in Rood End.

The Church sponsors a long established Scout Group which has over 40 members.

The group is not meeting at present due to the Corona virus.

Sandwell District Scouts also have their HQ in Langley Green.

There is a bail hostel in Langley where a previous incumbent undertook outreach work.

Transport links:

Access to church by bus is quite good in the week, but with a reduced service on Sundays.

The Parish is served by Langley Green Railway Station which provides a rail link to Birmingham. There is a network of bus services which provide links to local areas including Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton, West Bromwich, Oldbury, Dudley and the Merry Hill Shopping Centre.

Religious Centres:

Religious centres from other denominations in the parish include Methodist Churches, Wesleyan Reform Church, Salvation Army, United Reform Church, Baptist Church, Jehovah Witness Kingdom Hall, several Pentecostal Churches, two Mosques and a Filipino Church.

The new Langley Centre of Mission is being established by the Church of England, Birmingham and Church Army.

The lead evangelist has recently moved into the area and she will be joined in the near future by a second pioneer.

PATTERN OF CHURCH LIFE.



Sunday services commence at 10.00am. Two per month are Holy Communion, the other Sundays are Family / Scout Parade Services or Songs of Praise. There is also a United Benefice service once a month, which is held at one of the two churches on a rota basis.

On the first Sunday in the month at 4pm we hosted FUSION (Messy Church).

Since March, due to the corona virus and the concerns of the congregation the

pattern of Church life has altered. We have adjusted to having one holy communion service per month. On the remaining Sundays, the Church Warden leads a service of Morning prayer. We have not held Family / Scout Parade Services, FUSION (messy church) or United Benefice Services.

There are seasonal variations to this pattern such as Lent, Easter and Christmas.

Over the Christmas period we usually have a candle lit Carol Service a Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve and a Christingle Service.

Our worship is usually based on Common Worship Order one using modern language.

There has been no Sunday school or Sunday Club for young children for a few years.

During the past 12 months there has been one funeral.

The average Sunday congregation is 18 adults and no children.

The majority of the congregation are elderly although there are one or two younger members, but no children or young adults. However Church Parades and Special services are attended by members of the Scout Group and their families.

Special Services:

Toys donated at the Toy Service are sent to Sandwell's Women's Refuge.

We have a collection box in church for tins and packet food which we pass on to the Smethwick food bank.

Following our Harvest Festival any harvest produce is also sent to the food bank.

We also support the Children's society with collections at the Christingle service and some members of the congregation have home collection boxes.



Langley worships in a central church tradition.

There are 20 on the electoral roll some of which live outside of the parish.

The Church sponsors a Scout Group which consists of Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. It has around 40 young people attending regularly.

In previous years we have had links with the local Primary School through visits to the church for both the Easter and

Christmas experiences. No visits have been made for a couple of years. We hope to rectify this in the near future.

We have no clergy at present. Members of the congregation read the lessons and we have a lay person who has permission to distribute Holy Communion.

The Church Warden who also manages the Scout group, plans and leads the Family / Parade services, the songs of praise and Morning prayer services.

The Benefice has a licenced Reader who worships at Christ Church.

DESCRIPTION OF CHURCH BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES.

St John and St Michael's is a single story building built in 1915 with two connecting halls and an office. The one hall was built at the same time as the church and the second added some years later. It is of a practical manageable size for our needs. The church interior has been adapted by removing the pews and adding flexible seating which allows better access for wheelchair users and for the church to be used for other community activities during the week.

The hall attached to the church has been refurbished due to dry rot treatment. The toilets have been modernised and an easy access toilet installed.



A new kitchen was installed in 2016 courtesy of a grant from Sandwell MBC.

The small hall is mainly used as a dance studio during the week.

The large hall is in need of some major refurbishment, which we hope to commence as and when funds allow.

The halls (Community Centre) are well used by a number of other organisations including A Dance Studio, Qur'anic classes, Knit and natter and the Beavers, Cubs and Scouts.

We are a Place of Welcome and have a thriving coffee morning which is well attended by Options for Life and members of the local community and church.

The halls are also rented out for private parties and functions.

At the side of the church is a large, well maintained area of grass. In the warmer months it is well used by the scout group. It is also used by other users for outdoor activities and functions.

The **vicarage** adjacent to St John and St Michael's Church is a beautiful family home built in the late 1960's with the following features.

Double Glazing and Central Heating.

Ground Floor:

Entrance vestibule and toilet, study, through a lockable door into the hall, lounge, dining room, kitchen, walk-in-pantry, utility room, boiler room, 2nd toilet and garage.

First Floor:

Landing, family bathroom, toilet, 2 bedrooms with en suite wash hand basins and built in wardrobes, 2 bedrooms with built in wardrobes, small storage room.

Outside:

Front drive with gardens and parking for 3-4 cars.

Large rear garden with lawn, bushes, mature trees including fruit trees and flower beds.



ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE.

Due to small congregation numbers and low income of the parishioners, we have difficulty in meeting our obligation to pay the Common Fund in full. However the PCC endeavours to pay as much as possible each year.

The day to day running costs of the church and halls are met by The Church and other groups that use the buildings.

We need to promote the use of the halls to generate income to assist with the running costs and fund repairs and improvements for the buildings.

We have an administrator who deals with the bookings, paperwork and finances regarding the Community centre and the Church. She also does a small amount of work for the Benefice.

Previously she worked five mornings per week but due to the corona virus this has been reduced to two mornings per week.

We have a small but enthusiastic PCC that meets every other month to plan and organise parish affairs. Generally, we do not have a need for sub-committees.

We also meet together for social events and activities.



OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPECTATIONS.

We understand ourselves to be called to:

Gather together for worship as the body of Christ and to celebrate and embrace presence and outreach in the Langley Community.

Serve our parish and congregation in ways which show the love and compassion of Christ.

The Church working with the user groups, community centre, residents and other organisations to find ways to address issues and concerns in all areas of the parish.

We are able to achieve this if we:

Grow together as a community of faith in fellowship and supporting each other. If we worship as the body of Christ and if we are a community resource embodying mission and outreach.

