

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST LAURENCE

MINUTES FROM THE FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY,
8th OCTOBER AT 7:30PM IN THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS

Brian Curnew (Team Rector) opened the Forum by welcoming people. After 14 years its beauties remain new every morning and for that reason I, along with many others, feel a great care for it. This evening we are beginning a process of which none of us know the result as we look to the continuing good stewardship and best use of our so great church.

Ewart Carson (Church Warden) also welcomed people on behalf of himself and his fellow churchwarden Anna Branston. A meeting which, as Brian has said, marks the beginning of a process that will take months, in fact several years probably to complete. The focus is our marvellous church where we want to ensure that it is and remains a building fit for the 21st century and beyond.

EC then went on to talk about:

Historic Perspective St Laurence has been a focus for community activity over many centuries. It has seen change, often at 50-year intervals. There has been quite recent expenditure something over 1/2 million has been spent during the past 10 years (grateful for Conservation Trust and its predecessors help).

The role of the church firstly a focus for Christian activity but also a venue for a whole range of educational and recreational activities (school history visits, concerts, the Ludlow Festival, the Choral Society and tourism).

Challenges how to make the building serve the wider community better, how can we make it more accessible, how can we make it more comfortable and economic to run.

Factual information about the fabric of StL and its finances EC introduced Shaun Ward to talk about the fabric. SW is not only Director of Music, but he also has very significant knowledge and expertise in relation to conservation architecture and is now StL's Clerk of Works.

Shaun Ward (Clerk of Works) commented on how good it was to see so many people, and introduced what he intended to talk about, ie the facts about the condition of the building at the moment and the work that is needed to maintain the status quo.

The Fabric Committee is responsible for the care and maintenance, and is chaired by a church warden (EC). It comprises volunteers and any member of the electoral roll can join that committee invited anyone who felt they had something to offer to discuss it at the end of the meeting.

Clerk of Works role is to facilitate the conservation of the building. Formulate and produce a strategic schedule of works a very long list, at the moment 75 projects in planning or taking place. Also compile a conservation management plan. Organise and supervise minor works on site (eg next week contractors will arrive to remove asbestos from the site and SW will supervise). The skills of a certain number of professionals are retained including: organ builder, stained glass conservator (just appointed), Treasures of Ludlow (builders), architect Tim Ratcliffe (with his wife Jan Tim Ratcliffe Associates).

SW then thanked his predecessor Chris Jeffery who chaired the Fabric Committee and was Clerk of Works for many years overseeing a huge number of major projects. (Applause.)

The PCC has a legal responsibility to appoint an inspecting architect who inspects the building every 5 years and produces a list of recommended works. The inspection carries a fixed fee and can only take one day, so fortunate to have the skills of architect Tim and his wife Jan (Tim Ratcliffe Associates look after over 60 churches across 6 dioceses). The condition of the building has greatly improved over the last 15 years, but specialist reports still need commissioning and a long-term strategy needs formulating.

Illustrations of recent urgent work: non-compliant electrical installation; problems with two downpipes between the Tower and the Nave (sorted using steeplejacks); dangerous asbestos in the boiler room.

Money promised by:

The Conservation Trust - £105,000

Shropshire Historic Churches £7,500 (just notified of)

Also important to record the historical importance of the building a Conservation Management Plan that encapsulates all the information about the building in one document (It reconciles modern-day usage of building while maintaining its historical significance it must understand the spiritual role of the building as well as its practical role). The PCC has agreed to the plan and SW will be working with EC this year towards compiling this. It has 4 parts:

- 1 A recording of the place of the church in the community its development
- 2 A recording of the historical importance and significance of some parts of the building
- 3 Assesses the threat to the building
- 4 The management

SW then went on to talk about the 3 phases of work phase 1 now, phase 2 2009 onwards and phase 3 2014 onwards.

It s our responsibility to leave this building in a fit state for the next generation . . . We need a common consensus from the community of Ludlow to conserve the building that we all love. And I have a little warning if you don t think this is for you this is what fell off the building 2 weeks ago. This is the top of one of the pinnacles on the chancel; it is incredibly heavy. If you look from the pathway outside this looks incredibly small but you can now see the size of this; this fell off probably during the wedding a couple of weeks back. There was a huge thud during a thunderstorm and that landed on the lady chapel roof. If it had fallen two feet further east it would have fallen near the bench into the memorial garden.

EC introduced Don Beattie to talk about financial facts.

Don Beattie (Hon. Treasurer) introduced himself by pointing out that the evening was not fundamentally about finances or fund-raising but about the future of StL and how it can best be positioned to play its 21st century role.

StL costs about £200,000 a year to run and operate ongoing operational costs, not major projects. It has cash reserves of about £50,000 and no significant endowment, and

no government or central church funding from the Church Commissioners or the Church of England or anything like that. The Conservation Trust helps enormously.

The PCC is responsible for the operational costs of StL which embrace minor fabric repairs, maintenance, running costs, utilities and the Parish Share (what we pay to the diocese to fund our clergy – the diocese pay the clergy).

Forecast expenditure of £198,000 next year, we expect an income of about £181,000 therefore a budget imbalance. We have a high level of fixed costs.

We are:

Encouraging our congregation to give more, trying to make StL even more attractive to visitors, encouraging bequests, gift aid, trying to use the church more extensively for events, running special fund-raising events. All these will help but it is quite likely that the buffer we have will be exhausted in the next 5 years on operational spend.

Solutions will need to consider how to create a significant endowment fund and to make the church a more usable and adaptable space so that it can play a broader role in the community.

EC introduced Andrew Mottram – may be known to some in his previous incarnation as vicar of All Saints, Hereford when that church was saved from its various problems, and is now flourishing both spiritually and as a visitor attraction in its own right today – now talking in his new capacity of Director of Ecclesiastical Property Solutions.

Andrew Mottram – Not going to put a café into StL!

I have been working with Ecclesiastical Property Solutions for 4 years – we have helped over 300 churches round the country, most of which have been Anglican – many church communities face similar problems only StL is a much bigger building with bigger costs. A group of well-meaning volunteers are looking after an asset that is probably worth, in terms of rebuild, in excess of £30-40 million – a responsibility that many people don't want to face and expect that a fairy godmother or the Government or someone else will take over the problem. The CofE is capital asset rich and cash poor; every parish is responsible for its own building. Can get English Heritage and other grants but ultimately every parish is responsible for its own church building and that responsibility is legally vested with the PCC, the vicar, the church wardens and the elected members. It's very easy to stand on the sidelines and snipe – but if you are ignorant on how the CofE works advice can be more wrong and depressing than helpful.

A Vision for the Future – the building is the umbrella as the servant for the mission of the church in Ludlow. Only the servant – the church community would probably be better in a vegetable warehouse on the edge of town, converted into a nice, warm, comfortable, easy accessible building, with all the necessary facilities. And many church communities over the country are thinking it's time to get rid of their medieval monster and relocate. But what the PCC is trying to do is see that this building goes on to serve the people of Ludlow and the wider community right through the 21st century – so not looking back to olden days (could go back to diphtheria, scarlet fever, no central heating, horrible food, death at the age of 50), but want to look forward and move forward. We need to be a people with a vision. So the church community has got quite a bit of work to do to understand this vision – what do they want to do.

Recently in another church in the country who were convinced that their 200,000 visitors annually to their building (5 times more than StL) were just a pain in the neck they had to be disabused of that view and told that the building is here to serve a far wider constituency and so, too, is StL. There are church members who will want and need certain things, but also the residents of this parish. In the CofE every resident of the parish has a voice when it comes to decide what to do or what could be done in relation to the life of the church, have to be on the electoral roll to have a vote, but all residents have a voice and can be consulted and this is the beginning of a very long process of consultation. There are also huge numbers of visitors and this building means a lot to people across this country and abroad; also the heritage lobby and interest who want to conserve what we have. Some of the heritage lobby and interest are great and will be of enormous amount of help and support and encouragement, training, education, to conserve valuable historical artefacts and valuable historic monuments and buildings that are all part of the fabric of this country. Also the over my dead body brigade who are not always that helpful reason, wisdom and the ability to listen goes out of their mind sets and all they want is what they want and they can't hear what is needed.

PCC have a big task dealing with a building that is of interest to people the world over, and therefore approaching this task with care and caution as they fulfil their legal responsibility to ensure this asset does not depreciate, degrade or get lost through neglect or ignorance. Maintenance, adaptation, accessibility and the enhancing of the aesthetic appearance and experience of that wonderful building.

I'm not very good with people who object, I don't listen to them. We need to know where we're going and pay no attention to those who stand on the sidelines and say 'you can't do that'. Anybody who tells me I can't do something, it's like a challenge, All Saints Hereford would not have happened if we'd listened to the objectors.

The PCC must be commended, because they have started a hugely important part of this process. A process about gathering the data and establishing the facts. For 4 years I've advocated that churches develop asset management plans for the maintenance of the building, a schedule of works that not only lists the work that needs to be done and anticipates what's going to go wrong for the next 25 years rather than reactive fire-fighting management, also provides costs and budgets so can start saving, plus conservation management plan. Be fully informed before they make any decision. Fact gathering essential to any process of development and change.

It's essential we speak from the point of view of knowledge and understanding. You can only sort out a mess by being in full possession of the facts.

Building is medieval the way it was used is very different from that of today only have to look at the interior to see that the furniture, fixtures and fittings (including the organ), are in constant state of flux, change and alteration; while the medieval walls might not have changed much, the interior of StL is very different there are layers of history. Vital to understand this when looking at what may be touched and what may be altered or adapted.

StL is facing a normal hugely expensive repair bill. Also facing a marvellous opportunity. Although the heating might be failing and the floors are wearing out, don't see that as a disaster, see it as an opportunity it's an opportunity to rethink how that building is configured. To replace one or the other you're going to have to rip up the floors and

move all the furniture out and then think about what will go back in its place and how the floor is to be constructed. An opportunity to see how the church can serve Ludlow and the wider church and world in the 21st century. Most of what we have is a remnant of the Victorian period when we had to get people into church to sit up straight and face the front and listen to good instruction – the established church's reaction to the threat of revolution and civil unrest. This is not what kids of the 21st century do, it's not what 40-year-olds do. Only have to look at how we used space to realise that the building could work better in a slightly different way.

PCC have got to do something and are very anxious to see that what they do is the right thing.

All the questions are there for the asking, and all the answers are there for the seeking (BC said this). The Fabric Committee, this small working party, the PCC and even I don't know what to do with the building yet, it's far too soon. We know there's some repair work to do but actually how it is to be configured is a much slower process and it has to involve a great deal of consultation. Consultation with those who are interested in the building, who are stakeholders, churchgoers, people of the town, civic societies, the heritage forum, anybody who has an interest in StL will need to be consulted and they will all have a chance to make their contribution. The process is no quick fix – most church projects of this size will take 3–5 years and sometimes even longer.

The easy option would be to put it all back just as it is – but would that meet the needs of the 21st century, and the needs of the people of Ludlow who want to use it for so much more than just a place of worship?. StL is the largest auditorium in the town – and it serves as concert hall, auditorium, exhibition space, meeting space, place of refuge, space of sanctuary, a market hall, sometimes with stuff for sale, sometimes to look at, for all sorts and conditions of people – believers and non-believers. All sorts of things go on in StL. PCC is exercising its duty to ensure that the building is fit for purpose. But they need to know what its purposes are – far more than worship, just the assembly of the baptised. All manner of things used to go on in a medieval church: (passage from a book called *The People of the Parish* – Katherine L. French).

In 1379 the Kings Court called upon 9 parishioners in the parish of Walton in Lancashire to remember the baptism of John, the son and heir of Robert Walton. Their memories served to verify John's age and whether he was old enough to receive his inheritance.

Of the people in attendance:

John de Southwork was there for a loveday, to witness an assignation between 2 people.

John de Twist was at the church to hear mass before going to buy fish at Bootle.

Robert de Eld was at the church to hear news from Ireland.

Henry was at the church to buy corn.

Henry de Twist was at the church to hear mass before going to Kirkdale to buy 2 oxen.

William Lanccock was at the church to hear mass before going to see a corpse and a wreck upon the seashore.

John de Hay was at the church to see John de Heth

John de Andon was at the church for a cock fight.

John was at the church to see a man from Liverpool

Only 3 claimed that had come to church to hear mass; they were there for other non-religious reasons but they all testify to the centrality of the parish church in their lives.

We've lost that over the centuries, partly because of the Reformation, when everything was taxed. Brewing was controlled by the church and very often the church was a pub and a brewhouse as well as the town hall, the court, the schoolroom, the place of safety, the workshop, the storehouse and the market. Pre-Reformation churches were busy places where lots went on, a building into which people took their everyday life for it to be hallowed by God – there was no separation between sacred and secular. All was under the supremacy and sovereignty of God. And that was depicted by the rood screen – the threshold between heaven and earth, the chancel – the priests' responsibility on one side of the rood screen, removed from the nave where all manner of life was going on. It was a busy place. And while you might not want to make complete bedlam in StL there may be ways of making it serve and enhance what you want to do far better. One of the greatest losses has been that medieval understanding that the spiritual and the secular were not separated but completely mixed up. With the loss of the revenue from brewing etc the churchwardens hit upon the idea of selling the best seats in the house to guarantee an income for maintaining the church – lasted to Victorian times.

The PCC have no pre-conceived ideas of what they will do and neither should anyone else – what will drive the process at the moment is the need to replace the heating and the floors.

Various pictures were shown of what can be done:

Cirencester – with the floors cleared – a new floor put in. A vast empty space with nothing in it.

Bilston – before and after – new furniture, repositioned font, new lighting.

St Peter's, Plymouth – a huge building – an anglo-catholic shrine. An extraordinary space, including a huge font.

All Saints, Hereford – the deal struck with English Heritage is that it had to earn its keep. It's now so busy and so full of people that it is almost too cluttered. Worship goes on at the same time as the café

Reading – it had no congregation but was a grade 1 building that had to be kept. So turned into a youth space where it acts as the chill out zone during club nights from 10pm to 4am at weekends and on Sunday has worship designed for families.

There is significant action required. The PCC has to begin by understanding the needs of the community. Over the next few months there will be various stages of consultation and investigation. It's very easy to make assumptions about what people want, or what people need. The best way is to engage in dialogue and do the research. It needs to be accessible – not just wheelchairs but an accessibility that allows people to understand what the building is about. How to make it comfortable and economic to run – having it warm is essential but also having the facilities we need in the 21st century – one loo might not be sufficient; need to be able to serve refreshments in a way that works. How to make it economic to run – get it used lots. Busy buildings are sustainable. Medieval church people knew what they were doing. An archdeacon said to me – you can do what you like as long as it's not immoral – and remember drunkenness and gluttony are immoral .

EC – summed up – the beginning of an on-going process. Need to complete the conservation management plan involving specialists; we need to create a project team

under the PCC, with consultation from the church, the town and the surrounding area, representatives of the people who have an interest in StL s future. We need to communicate regularly with all those who have an interest.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

The first opportunity for questions and comments.

(All present notified that notes were being kept to enable communication)

MARY PERKS

A long comment. I agree that spiritual and practical belong very much together but I'm rather concerned that in doing that we might be in danger of allowing the spiritual aspect of this actually to be swamped by the practical. I was very interested in the long list of reasons why people go to church but I think that a surprisingly large number of people actually go to church because they are looking for alternative values to materialistic values. A lot of people go because they are searching for meaning in their lives. A surprising number go actually because they are desperate and they are looking for some kind of hope and I think in the case of those people they are attracted not so much by the fabric, the beauty of the building or the beauty of the liturgy, important and valuable though those are, as by the spirit of the place, the spirit of the community. Whether there is a spirit of love, compassion and acceptance, whether there is a devotion to preaching the gospel above everything else and I think that a church that is going to thrive has to be a church that gets its priorities right.

I'm not a fundamentalist and I'm by no means a physical literalist but I do think that the Bible and other spiritual writing as well from all the different spiritual traditions contain deep truths about the universe and I think that it's true to say I think that Christ's words that if we seek first the heavenly things then everything else will be provided, are absolutely true and it's not just hindsight airy fairy stuff, it actually does work. It is practical and I think that we are in very great danger of presenting church membership at StL as part of a lifestyle package in this great town of Ludlow. I think we are in danger of going too far down the road of pride in the building and in looking too much at the image and not at the substance of what we are doing. And I think really we need now to put our house in order we really need to look inside our hearts and see what we're actually doing, and what we have done, and what we are continuing to do. Much of it is valuable but we have to put our priorities in order because the only way the church is going to thrive is if we have those priorities in the right order.

EC in essence the balance between spirituality and the secular.

AM what you've raised is actually a very important point unless the church community has done its work on its priorities about mission and purpose then all you're doing is propping up a wonderful building. It does, therefore, involve the whole church community to do this. I would commend the whole church community of StL Ludlow to engage in the Healthy Churches Handbook which is something which we, as a company, recommend as part of this process for the church to learn and look itself to discover how it measures in the mark of being a healthy church.

I think another thing is, of course, to research why people come into the building and that means engaging with them and asking them. And it might be a very interesting that if 90%

come in because they are looking for health and spiritual council and guidance well by golly you must make sure you can meet that need.

A fascinating fact from All Saints in Hereford is that there are 500 visitors a day 200 of whom just come into the building, use the loo and go out again. It burns 500 candles a week on the prayer stand. 25 people a week on average come through the door and engage in a significant conversation with one of the stewards a conversation about the meaning of life and what they re doing.

I would also suggest that by keeping our eyes on the heavenly things we will get the perspective right. I ve tried to keep my eye on the heavenly things for the last 30 or so years; I still had to go out and earn my living because the money doesn t drop into the bank account by the benefit of the angels. Now I do think that you ve got to be good householders and yes it would be possible for the church community to decamp and go a much simpler building and be saved all that worry but as a church at the moment you are committed to StL and looking after that building will take wisdom, courage and commitment. But isn t that what the gospel also tells us when it comes to building towers that we work out before what we are going to do and we finish the task.

Yes keep the spiritual star very much in mind. I don t think you ll forget it.

JEAN BROWN Steward, parents were active members of StL, a Methodist. Would like to back up what AM has said. It was a marvellous challenge, I think discussions about our Methodist Church were going on for 20 years and our project , took 5 years to complete. It brought the community together; we re now very accessible to the whole community. It has brought the membership together. It has been the most fantastic, positive experience. It wasn t easy along the way but it s been amazing. Best of luck to StL.

EC thank you for encouraging and supportive comments.

JULIAN MORGAN

obviously going to take a long time. Unease about the leadership of this and how it will be managed, in that the PCC changes, the churchwardens change every 3 years, the Clerk of Works is a young man and may want to move on in 5 years, the Rector will retire at sometime. We need a good leader so it s not all abandoned in 5 years time.

AM You re right, it s absolutely essential, leadership is key. This project will need a project driver. I don t mean an enabler or facilitator, I mean a driver. Somebody who is slightly unhinged, who is determined to see it happen. The thing is, if wait to start the project until we ve got the right person, we will never start. So it has to be set up in a way that if there are changes in personnel, the brief, scope and definition of the project is so well sorted that another person can take that role over as driver. We ve already recognised that the formation of this project group is going to be absolutely essential that it s the right people and that the terms of reference are correct. It is also essential that this project group is under the authority of the PCC, it doesn t go off on its own somewhere. That it is accountable to the PCC and the church community and that it reports regularly to the PCC and the wider community. This is not impossible, I ve been involved in a number of

church projects and the leaders have always come from somewhere. It might be that you've already got an idea who that person could or should be, they might yet need to be identified. But it cannot, must not be dependent on the clergy or elected people already elected to an office – they've got enough to do. The challenge of finding that leadership and that group is one of the next tasks.

DAVID LLOYD

Congratulate the PCC and those involved in this evening. Think it's been one of the most inspirational evenings that I've been to in Ludlow, and I've been to many. All the speakers have been competent and lucid, but I was inspired by Andrew. I've rarely heard better (applause). The question I think we all have at the back of our minds – Where do we go from here? Please can you outline the kind of consultation process that you have in mind. I just like to remind many people here of the work that was done 20 years ago to produce these Assembly Rooms from a grotty nightclub. Many people were involved and I think the key to the success of that was a system of widespread consultation and every house in Ludlow was approached by a very active Town Council and 80% responded. I suggest you consider something like that – many organisations here. I hope we will involve all these

EC – Thank you – particularly the use of the word WE. It is our collective project. It is vital that we do communicate regularly. If you have an email address let us have it so that we can provide you with regular bulletins. We use all available media – the radio, the local press, we will talk with groups, we will provide invitations, we will have other forums such as this. This is just the first step. I think it is important that we show right at the beginning that we want to engage and offer people the opportunity to comment, question and to contribute because out there in the community there is expertise that we must tap into to ensure that this project goes forward.

RICHARD WALKINS – lives in Craven Arms

Wanted some sheets of paper to jot down ideas and those with internet access and email could communicate ideas.

EC – want all the ideas we can muster – by having ideas and brainstorming that we can move forward. There will be paper and pencil for you this evening and we will regularly ask people for their views.

BRIAN HEATLEY

Would like to know a little bit more about exactly what Ecclesiastical Property Solutions is and what AM's future role in this project is.

AM

EPS is a registered company, a limited company; it is not a charity. It was a company with a turnover of £120-130,000 with 3 members of staff. It's been de-registered so have had to bring the turnover below £65,000, the reason being that we have to charge fees, I have

to earn my living. I used to have a stipend. I don't any more so I have to labour truly to get my own living in that state to which Almighty God has called me. (You might remember that prayer book catechism). I earn my living. I actually earn less at the moment than I did when I was a stipendiary priest but when you're passionate and it's a new company, that's how it is. We offer a consultation service. EPS at the moment is myself and John and then if we need other people it goes through another process to recruit other experts but they all tend to come VAT registered and there's a whole issue about VAT and churches. You can claim back VAT on repair works but on consultation you cannot so that's why we've deregistered, to make it cheaper for churches. I'm still, what is now called, a self-supporting minister (used to be called non-stipendiary minister) and our fee rates are relatively modest. At the moment it's based on £50 an hour, £350 a day – that's what the company charges, it's not what I earn (and those of you who've been to your solicitors recently know they charge £150 an hour and something like £200 in your own home). So get that into perspective.

My future role is really down to the church community and particularly the PCC to decide. I've been asked to do a very specific thing which was to prepare for tonight to make a presentation and we're having a follow up meeting on Friday for a debrief but after that I haven't got any views. Some people think am I making a profit – I don't think I'm making a profit. Profit is a very bad word in the church; they don't understand that word do they? Every business has to make a profit to reinvest.

Mentioned that it costs 106% in addition to salary to employ somebody in terms of insurances, employer's contributions etc. So when people think it's a lot of money to charge, running a business is no small thing. I don't want to get involved in all that. I just want to allay your suspicions that I'm here raking fat fees and driving around in a Porsche.

JOHN NASH – Civic Society (but not to do with the Civic Society)

Thinking of multiple-use buildings, in Ludlow we have the Assembly Rooms, the Methodist church and many other buildings. Clearly they are competitors to any thoughts of expanding the use of the church other than as a giant auditorium. That must limit multiple usage

EC – it's true that there are more venues than used to be the case 100s of years ago. Really exploring and seeking to exploit those things which StL in its adapted more accessible form is best suited. Clearly a large concert (CBSO isn't going to fit into the Assembly Rooms or the Methodist Church); we have a very fine organ and we are in the process of building a series of organ recitals, there are plays (eg mystery plays) some of which we will see again being enacted next year, which are well suited to those sort of building. So it's a case of thinking through what really are the opportunities that are specific to StL. Clearly the Methodist Church, The Assembly Rooms, Oscars are well suited to particular kinds of events so it's seeking to grow opportunities for Ludlow. We don't want to be in competition but to generate new business, new opportunities and in that way grow StL.

PAUL RENSHAW – member of the PCC

I understand that the local newspapers did not publish this meeting, is that correct? If it is correct, can pressure be put on them.

EC It's partly true and partly untrue. There was coverage in the press. There was not coverage, unfortunately, in the freebie, The Ludlow Journal, but, of course, the editor's decision is always final. There was coverage today on Shropshire Radio who announced this meeting and, I believe, broadcast a conversation BC and EC had with one of their reporters this morning. There will be a brief follow up on Shropshire Radio tomorrow morning. We will communicate as far as it is within our power to.

MARTIN TAYLOR-SMITH

A word of caution – the 2 youngest people in this audience are people who have actually come from the press. This may be indicative of one of the core problems, we probably have an average age here of about 60. We need to be reaching out and doing something that appeals to the future generation – looking at this audience here we may not be around when this project is completed. (laughter).

AM This is a very difficult one to get right. What church represents in terms of formal worship – being quiet and orderly – doesn't instantly appeal to the younger generation. In its public face the church can be represented as an organisation that's always more ready to say NO you shouldn't do that, that's wrong, rather than encouraging people to be fully human and take responsibility for their lives. There's a whole lot of issues there. I speak as someone with 3 children, (27, 25, 23), none of whom will go near the Anglican church anymore – one of them describing it as full of humbug and hypocrisy in its treatment of people who are different, in its attitude to people who don't perhaps, completely live the moral guidelines. They don't want to know. They go to places like Taize where there's 40 minutes of worship, 3 times a day, including 10 minutes silence; where the whole message to the community is – come and tell your story and listen to others. Don't try and groom the arguments or convince others of your point of view but listen and speak with respect. I have to say I knew I had to resign as stipendiary minister from the CofE after the treatment of Jeffrey John – I could no longer take money from an organisation that I found so difficult.

I think if we want to get young people into church we've got to have our root and branch changed. Now that, I think, is perhaps more than this project's scope but good luck. (applause)

EC asked for more questions, reminding people that we are talking about StL in the parish of Ludlow.

BARBARA ATKIN – Children's Committee

Do find one of the greatest difficulties in encouraging young people into our special services and into the church. And if we don't encourage them then all the things we are doing are pointless if there's no future generation to enjoy it.

EC yes I think that is a point that has been made. We have to find ways of engaging on the terms which are acceptable to those future generations. We cannot impose our values as AM said.

HANNAH COSTIGAN one of the youngest people in the room, work for the South Shropshire Journal, St Laurence Choir

One of the things that could be done to engage with younger people is our society is a lot more secular these days and children just aren't be raised Christians so it's all very well saying we should have special services for children, if they don't really believe in God that's not what they want from the church. It doesn't mean there's nothing for them in church but maybe services for children are not what we should be doing for children, youth groups, outings to theme parks, things like that, but saying we've got a special service for kids, if God isn't the first thing they think of when they want to get together and have fun, then a special service is not going to attract them.

EC probably come to the end of questions. Outlined that this is the beginning of a process and we're talking about gathering data across the parish of Ludlow so that we can see what the needs are in relation to the whole of the parish of Ludlow. We will engage with you on a continuing process and provide you with opportunities to contribute. General thank you to speakers, especially AM, and all for coming and contributing. There will be pencil and paper.

Rosemary Wood also has details of a Conservation Trust event taking place next week which will provide a few more pennies to, perhaps, repair one of the pinnacles.

BC thanks to all. Would also like to add experience of the young educational opportunities young groups who are brought in who are awestruck, excited, and who have more questions than they can ask. We have a gift of a most extraordinary resource. It's easy to give answers, what we have to do, in many regards, is wait upon the questions that others will pose for us.

Closed with a prayer

EC Gave the email address (office@stlaurences.org.uk) and we look forward to receiving many contributions over the coming weeks and months as we provide you with information.

Close of meeting 9.30pm.