

Report from St Leonard's Church for Grendon Underwood Parish Council

A regular congregation of about 20 worship weekly at St Leonard's, usually supplemented by other villagers who come occasionally, but on the bigger occasions such as Remembrance Sunday or for the Crib Service around 150 people gather.

There have been several village weddings and funerals in the past year, and our clergy (Team Rector David Hiscock and Team Vicar Angela Mann) have been particularly busy as the third post in the Team, based at the Claydon parishes, has been vacant for a year now.

Angela Mann will be retiring this summer with her last service with us on 1st September and many villagers will be sad that she is leaving us as she has been there for them and their families at significant moments in their lives. It is 800 years since Grendon Underwood got its first Rector and so we thought it would be a good excuse

to try to re-generate some of the village community events that were lost due to Covid; we are delighted that a group from across the village representing different groups or none have come together to work on what we hope will be an engaging series of events this summer and autumn.

The stone-work on the church building is in need of restoration, and the Edwardian vestry at the side of the church is in bad repair. We have generously been given a large gift from the sale of the Kingswood Chapel which, together with some legacies, we hope will be able to pay for much of this work. One legacy is also paying for a new sound system and induction loop, to be installed this month.

Last year we launched "St Leonard's Larder" and this has been well used by members of the community who have struggled to provide food for their families. It is a privilege to be able to offer this

to everyone without the need for them to sign up in advance.

? Why are you always trying to raise money? What's it for?

It's an old church building and we as a village are responsible for keeping it in good shape

? Can't the Government or National Trust or something pay for it?

No, there's no national body that looks after active church buildings. By law the government and council can't provide for them and they are the responsibility of the people in the Parish.

? What does the money go to then?

Well, the annual costs include our contribution towards the ministry of the Team Rector and Team Vicar and also maintaining the building. We don't raise enough through our own giving or our fundraising events to do more than that each year unfortunately

? What more would you like to do?

There are some big issues that come up (like the new roof a few years back) and some restoration would be good. Thankfully we do get given legacies and special gifts that are going to make possible some of the things that have been needed to be done for several years now.

? So you've got enough then?

I didn't say that. The legacies are usually given for specific tasks, we still have to pay for the ministry and protecting the woodwork and deal with flaking paint and...

? Okay, I get it. That's why you keep asking for money!

To be fair, we don't. We always try to provide something fun in return. You give us money for a barbecue or raffle and we provide something back. We have rarely asked for straight donations.

? Until you pass the plate round every time I go to church!!!

Ah yes, but for those who come to church there is another reason for giving which is because it's part of what we are told to do in the Bible to show that we love God. If you don't want to put anything in the plate (or tap the card reader!) there's no-one forcing you to.

? ...but the roof might fall on me if I don't

Nah, we've got a new one of those



Our fund-raising events last year included a summer garden party, quiz, barbecue and 'Madvent', a day with a lunch for the older members of the community, Disco for the younger and an Auction in between.



We need just over £30,000 each year to be able to pay for the clergy, pay the bills and do routine maintenance on the building. 30% of this comes from events such as these.



Our main need is for members of the community to join a Building Committee to help us to look after the building, any one with an interest in historic buildings or experience in this area would be welcome.



Geoff Lumley
Church Warden