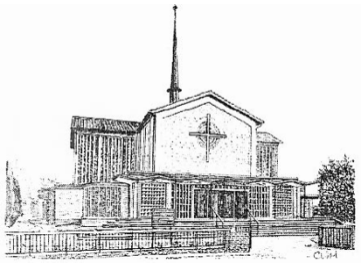
The Parish of Our Lady, Lillington: a vision of our future



Our Mission

The Parish of Our Lady, Lillington, aims to be a thriving and growing Eucharistic community, formed in **missionary discipleship** to bring the love of Jesus Christ to those around us, and to help draw them closer to him.

Our Vision

We aim to be a **vibrant community of faith**, whose knowledge and love of Jesus Christ is visible both in our life of shared worship, and in our commitment to reach out in love to all those around us in need.

We try to make this most evident in our worship: our celebration of Sunday Mass aims to be welcoming, accessible and alive, faithful to the Church's vision of renewal in the Liturgy. Our Lady's has long been noted for its musical traditions, like our liturgies themselves firmly rooted in the spirit of active participation emerging from the Second Vatican Council, and fitting for such a beautiful church building, whose design was grounded in that same spirit of renewal. Its architectural significance – especially the stunning *dalle de verre* windows by Charles Norris OSB – is recognised nationally by its Grade II listing.

Our programme of sacramental preparation in the Parish for the Catholic children in our parish school, joining with those children who are not in Catholic schools, enables us to catechise parents as well as children and has encouraged many school families to return to Mass and become active members of the Parish community. There is a strong and collaborative school/parish link which provides increasing opportunities for us to reach out and welcome new and returning families. Our thriving weekly Children's Liturgy also helps to draw young families in. Ever since the upheaval of the pandemic, numbers attending Our Lady's have been rising steadily, and the age profile of our worshipping community has been falling. We will work hard to nurture this growth in order to build for the future.

As missionary disciples we aim to exercise faithful **co-responsibility** in sustaining and guiding the life of our parish. Our Lady's has been an example for many years of responsible lay management in happy collaboration with successive Parish Priests, especially in the context, as now, of our Parish Priest residing in our neighbouring parish of St Peter's. Much of the day to day care of the church building and contents and its surroundings is entrusted to lay parishioners, and there is lay leadership for the catechetical programme, and for some of our worship activities: for example some of our regular celebrations of sung Morning and Evening Prayer, and the Stations of the Cross during Lent. All of this, we believe, represents a model for the future: as our valued priests become ever scarcer in the future, a thriving parish can subsist without the need for routine hands-on management by a Parish Priest. Rather, it can be cared for by its lay members, as long as its vital sacramental life can be sustained. In this area too, we will work hard to preserve and expand the role of a co-responsible laity. Change need not be decay: building on nearly a decade of experience, we can serve as an example for the Archdiocese of how a parish of the future can prosper.

Above all, at Our Lady's we aim to be **joyful in service** for others, and this too we will strive to preserve and promote. Kindaid, a lay-founded organization in the parish which has recently celebrated its 28th anniversary, raises thousands of pounds each year for charitable purposes at home and abroad through a programme of enjoyable social events. These well-attended gatherings work wonders in sustaining our parish's strong sense of community. A particularly active conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society strives tirelessly to allay poverty and loneliness in our local area. Such groups are part of the lifeblood of the parish, and with the Spirit's help, will continue to be.

Resources

Integral to our Mission are the parish halls and other facilities associated with the church. They are frequently in use: Children's Liturgy of the Word; sacramental preparation both for children in the wider Catholic Leamington & Warwick area who do not attend Catholic schools, and enhanced preparation for those attending the parish school, Our Lady & St Teresa's; choir practice; social gatherings after most (if not all) worship in Church – Mass, Liturgy of the Hours, Rosary, Stations of the Cross; and regular fundraising & family-oriented events such as family breakfasts and craft workshops.

Opportunities are opening up, moreover, for new ways of engaging with the local community, with the opening of the Lillington Health Hub next door. Both the Council and the NHS have identified our halls as a venue where they could offer health and wellbeing activities. A weekly 'Armchair Exercise' session already takes place in one of them. Interest has also been shown by the national SVP regarding a community café.

The current condition of the halls, although usable, limits capacity to meet our Mission long term and does not lend itself to hiring the space commercially, as a supplementary form of income. Subject to professional advice, both halls could be demolished and replaced with one larger, multi-functional facility that would not only enable us to realise our Mission over the long term but would be sustainably financed through the repurposing or sale of the former presbytery and its grounds.

With renewed and updated facilities, the parish would be able to offer an ever greater welcome to community groups in search of a home.

The Future of the Parish

Our Lady's Parish exists for the same reason the Church does: Our Lord's command to *go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations*. **Fidelity to this mission** is, in the final reckoning, the thing we strive for, and pray for. It is the foundation for our confident hope that the Parish will continue to grow and thrive, summoning people to experience and share the love of Jesus Christ, and welcoming all into his house.