

# Newsletter

Church and Community: a new perspective in sharing

## Aims & Objectives

To promote and develop the use of the Church and its facilities as a community asset.

To form partnerships with local affinity groups encouraging them to use the Church for meetings and events in return for their support in maintaining the fabric of the church.

To restore the secular role of the Church as a dynamic centre for a vibrant local community, encouraging today's 'new' Chorley to relate to its past roots.

Obedying Christ's command to care for the poor and needy has always been one of the strengths of the bond between Church and local community.

From the Middle Ages through to Victorian times such provision was carried out by a body called the Vestry. This was a meeting of parish ratepayers chaired by the Incumbent and originally held in the church vestry from which it got its name. The Vestry at St. Laurence's Church was the focal point of providing for the poor of the growing town of Chorley and the surrounding rural area.



John Bird: Street Scene in Chorley, Lancashire Cica 1875

Although not established by any law the Vestry assumed many secular tasks, including the appointment of officials, responsibility for keeping the peace, the mending of roads, the destruction of vermin and the enforcement of religious and moral discipline.

Most important among these tasks, however, was the obligation to support the poor of the local area and administer Poor Law relief through the payment of cash or the provision of bread, clothes or other necessities. Finance was raised for such provision by taxes levied on rate payers. In some areas alms houses were built for the aged. This system continued until 1834 when the new Poor Laws introduced a system of workhouses.

For further information concerning the Friends and their activities visit our website [www.friendsofstlaurencechorley.org](http://www.friendsofstlaurencechorley.org) or email [friends@stlaurencechorley.co.uk](mailto:friends@stlaurencechorley.co.uk)

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# Bonding Church and Community together

This is an exciting new experiment in sharing, bonding together Church and a community which already has its roots deep in the area's history.

Hopefully readers of this leaflet will be intrigued enough to want to discover more about Friends of St. Laurence's and explore the possibilities offered by such a proposal.

We encourage you to find out more about the Friends and support our crowd funding appeals, perhaps joining us as members or associates.

You will discover a very warm welcome for members and supporters who will help us to achieve our objectives.

Whilst such responsibility has been subsumed by various social service departments, St. Laurence's Church, today, continues to be mindful of the needs of the poor through discipleship and outreach.

Volunteers at St Laurence's Church have established a venture called Open Table which, every Monday evening, provides a hot meal for the needy citizens of Chorley.

Led by the founder of the scheme, Betty Kelly, six teams of four decide on a menu, source the ingredients and cook the meal in their own homes before bringing the food to the refectory. Some of the food is donated by local retail sources and other organisations.

A typical Monday will see around 25 guests, mainly men but with a few women and occasionally children. A stash of emergency food is available should the number rise above 25. The record to date is 48.



Such a scheme has many additional benefits. It not only provides hot meals for those to whom this is often a luxury but offers the opportunity for the guests to interact with each other and with the volunteers. For many of them loneliness is an ever-present feature in their lives and their Monday evening at St. Laurence's Church is the highlight of their week. It is also a chance for the volunteers to point them in the right direction towards obtaining assistance with practical problems and, whilst not pretending to have the expertise of organisations such as Citizens Advice, they can at least very often show them the way.

As we try to demonstrate in all these newsletters, the connection between Church and community is rooted in history but is still very much alive today providing care and concern for the citizens of Chorley.

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