

## **Our Lady's & St. Joseph's AGM 24<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

### **Agenda item 10 (vi)**

#### **Access Group**

In 2016 an Access Audit was carried out to identify ways in which Our Lady's Church and church hall could be made more accessible to disabled people. It was recognized that a lot of work had already been undertaken such as ramping entrances to ensure that people using wheelchairs could get in and out of the building. However, the church is challenged to do better. In 2017 Lynda Corker, formerly of Parents and Children Together (PACT) gave a talk to the PPC about access improvement. She highlighted the church as one of a few remaining areas where people from all kinds of groups get together. In her talk, she drew attention to less visible problems facing people coming to church. For example, parents and carers with autistic children often bring them for baptism but have said that they feel uncomfortable about bringing them back to church again because they are stared at if the child becomes noisy or disruptive. In other words, raising awareness is as important as adapting the built environment.

Making the church and hall accessible to all remains a work in progress. Lynda pointed out that often, if asked, disabled people can provide their own solutions to enable them to use a church.

The PPC therefore decided that it would be helpful to bring together a group of people who could be contacted about access when planning issues come up. If people are consulted at the beginning of a particular project, successful access is a more likely outcome. It also saves the need for expensive alterations later on or missed opportunities to make access possible.

People with experience of disability issues including mental health issues and their parents and carers are invited to join this group in order to give their views and opinions when plans or projects are being considered. This will ensure that access is always taken into account. People may want to make suggestions of their own to improve access.

The response to each consultation is voluntary, you do not have to respond to a specific consultation if you do not want to. Ways of contacting people will be user-friendly.

**Rosemary Phizackerley**