

The Parish of St. Laurence, Stroud

THE TOWN

Stroud is at the hub of the Five Valleys on the edge of the Cotswolds. Originally made prosperous by the woollen trade, it has in more recent years become known for its individual freethinking style, its variety of alternative therapies and flourishing art scene. It is one of the more affordable areas of the county which is, as the estate agents say, “much sought-after”.

The Parish comprises three separate areas, the church being sited in the middle one. The large portion to the east is almost entirely fields, with very few houses – but maybe some sheep.

St. Laurence church, easily identified by its landmark 14th century spire, stands in the centre of the town which is continuing to gain vibrancy and energy. The main commercial activity is literally at its gates. This area is pedestrianised and on Fridays and Saturdays it is the location for Stroud’s nationally acclaimed open-air **Farmers’ Market**.



Because St Laurence is a town centre church, it strives to strengthen connections with the busy town life around it.



Next door to the church is the municipal car park, a great advantage for any activities taking place in the church, or the church hall, during the evenings or on Sundays.

THE PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH

A result of the church’s siting is that only a handful of church members actually reside inside the Parish boundaries.

The current regular attenders are involved in many roles not only in the services that are held but also in the cleaning and maintenance of the building, including the floral decorations in the church, tending the flower beds outside, and keeping the Garden of Remembrance in good order. Others provide and serve coffee after the Sunday morning service with monetary contributions being sent to various missions. On the same basis coffee is served in the hall to the public on Wednesday mornings – with assistance from volunteers from other Parishes – again in aid of missions.



PATTERN OF WORSHIP

Gloria

Christopher Boodle

♩ = 120
(Organ)

Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and

The principal service at St. Laurence is the **Sung Eucharist at 9.30 a.m. each Sunday**, using Common Worship. The pattern of worship avoids the (extreme) characteristics associated with both the “high” and the “low” ends of the spectrum.

Midweek services include a well-attended **Eucharist at 10.30 a.m. on Wednesdays**, after which there is the opportunity to meet over coffee in the hall.

Every week, members of the congregation take an active part in the service assisting the celebrant in a number of ways. An efficient system of rotas of people is in place to be sidesmen, to read lessons, to prepare and lead prayers, to administer the chalice, and to clean and polish.

Major Festivals are celebrated appropriately including **Harvest**. The arrangements at Christmas comprise on **Christmas Eve** a **Crib Service at 4:00 p.m.**, a **Carol Service at 6.30 p.m.** and on **Christmas Day** a **Eucharist at 9.30 a.m.** There is not a Midnight Mass at St Laurence as there is one at All Saints, Uplands.

“Wide Open Space” is a family activity under the Faithnet banner held each month in St Laurence with support from members across the Stroud Team Ministry.

Sometimes St Laurence’s hosts services on behalf of the whole **Deanery** e.g. Ascension Day. On such occasions the proximity of a large car park and the adequate seating capacity of the church are advantageous.

More informal services are usually connected with particular activities, e.g. the end of the **Christmas Tree Festival**.

Services of this kind are one way in which we strive to keep up our relationships between church and town.

A number of local schools hold their carol services in St. Laurence’s, and one of the Primary Schools arranges for its infants to come into church one morning in term time to hear the Christmas story without the razzmatazz that is associated with Christmas in the commercial world.

MUSIC

Music is very important in the spiritual life of the congregation and we are fortunate to have the internationally acclaimed **Christopher Boodle MA ARCM FRCO** as **Organist and Music Director**. He is excellent whether playing a hymn tune or a voluntary. His postludes on Sunday mornings are worth an entrance fee to hear!



He is also a composer, and one of the five settings of the service that are used in St Laurence was written by him.

He often deputises when an organist is needed at Gloucester Cathedral and he gives recitals at various venues or accompanies local choirs. He has never allowed these activities to take precedence over his whole-hearted commitment to the needs of St. Laurence.

Hymns are taken either from *Hymns Ancient & Modern New Standard*, or from *Hymns of Glory, Songs of Praise*.

OTHER ACTIVITIES IN THE CHURCH

The major regular activity is the **Community Christmas Tree Festival** held annually. It is organised by members of the congregation and involves many of the businesses and organisations in the town and district, as well as individuals. It is good to see so many people coming into the church while it is on. [Click here for details of this year’s Christmas Tree Festival](#)



The Christmas Tree Festival

The location of the church, its ability to seat a large number of people and the availability of car parking makes it attractive for a variety of **community activities**. It has hosted concerts and exhibitions. The removal of the pews has created a large open space so enabling a variety of uses and activities to take place.



A visiting group of singers

Until recently, the schools of the Stroud area held a two-week exhibition of the pupils' work in the church. It is hoped that they will wish to resume this popular event.



The schools' exhibition

The Church tower holds ten bells and is popular with visiting teams of bell ringers. Our small but regular band of ringers rings on two Sundays each month before the 9.30 a.m. service – but not on all ten bells.

THE CHURCH BUILDING



The date when the first church in Stroud was built is not known but there was certainly one here in the 14th century. In 1866 the church was deemed too small so it was completely taken down, except for the 14th century tower, and rebuilt. The current building was consecrated in 1868 and is now listed as Grade II*. It is a bright and airy space, surprisingly wide, with some lovely 19th century glass. Services are conducted from the nave altar and the Lady Chapel for smaller mid-week services. Some of the monuments were saved from the "old" church and placed in the "new" one, mostly at the west end.

St George & St Martin : Bewsey : 1913

17th century memorial to Thomas Stephens



The building is generally in sound condition, although the architect strongly advises that the roof should be re-tiled – when funds are available! We continue to seek donations for this project. However, we have been able to undertake the re-roofing of the choir vestry in 2010, and of the clergy vestry in 2012 and slype in 2015.

The electrical system had a major upgrade in 2011-12.

CCTV operates in the church, and in 2012 a roof alarm system was installed on both the church and the hall, supported by Ecclesiastical Insurance.

In 2014 all the 19th century oak pews were removed from the main body of the church and new chairs were installed. This was Stage 1 of the scheme to create an open space that is more suitable both for worship and for community activities. The altar has been brought forward into the nave much closer to the congregation.

Over the next few years it is hoped that a new floor will be laid to give a brighter appearance to the church.

Also envisaged for the long term are a better heating system and new lighting.

Maintenance of the churchyard, which is closed for burials, is undertaken by Stroud Town Council, apart from the Garden of Remembrance which is currently used for the interment of ashes, and remains the Parish's responsibility. Enquiries about the memorials in the church or the churchyard should be made through the Church Office in The Shambles. [Click here for the Office contact details](#)

The policy of keeping the church open as much as possible during the week is appreciated and respected by many of the general public. One frequently finds a visitor in prayer or viewing the building.

THE PARISH HALL



The Parish Hall is sited in the Shambles Conservation Area some twenty metres from St. Laurence Church. As well as the main hall on the ground floor, with toilets and kitchen area, there are three smaller rooms on the first floor. The two at one end of the building contain the **Church Office** and the **Deanery Office**. At the other end is the **Lounge** which is used as a venue for smaller groups to meet and includes a small kitchenette.

Apart from church related events, the hall and lounge are regularly used for

weekly indoor markets (Friday and Saturday)	Stroud Choral Society rehearsals
an Antiques Fair (monthly)	the Rainbows and Brownies meetings
Blood Donor sessions (monthly).	U3A monthly meetings
dog training	the Video Club meetings
<i>Tiddlywinks</i> venture for between 60 and 100 parents, babies and toddlers (weekly)	