

St Andrew's Church, Bedford



# **Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

Celebrating the Life  
of our Church

Sunday 23rd April 2023

11:30 am

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**THE ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS**  
to be held on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2023, at 11:30 am  
in the Main Hall of St Andrew's Church, Bedford

**AGENDA**

**Opening Prayer**

- 1. Approval of the Minutes of the last meeting held on Sunday 1st May 2022**
- 2. Election of 2 Parochial Church Wardens**
- 3. Chair's Closing Remarks**

## **Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners**

held on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022, at 11:30 am  
in the Main Hall of St Andrew's Church, Bedford

The Revd Lucy Davis chaired the Meeting and led the opening prayers. She welcomed 70 (plus 9 children)

**Notice of the Meeting** - due notice of the meeting was admitted by those present.

**1. Minutes of the last meeting** held on the 25 April 2021, as contained in the Report and Financial Statements booklet, had previously been circulated and it was proposed by John Thynne, seconded by Mike Tarr, agreed by those attending the meeting that they be confirmed and signed as a true record.

### **2. Election of Churchwardens**

It was reported that two names together with nomination forms had been received for the roles of churchwarden, namely:

Mr Ian Smith - proposed by Carol Wood, seconded by Alan Colley

Mrs Carol Wood proposed by Hugh Johnstone, seconded by Ben Clackson

and in the absence of any additional nominations Ian and Carol were elected en bloc as churchwardens for the coming year.

### **3. Chair's Closing Remarks**

Thanks were recorded to the wardens' team, Diana and Ian as Churchwardens and Carol and John Deputy Churchwardens, for their diligence and work in covering these roles especially as 'superhumans' during this most difficult period of COVID restrictions. Diana and John were now stepping down and their services to St Andrew's over this period was recognised.

### **4. Statement of the JA & EC Hall Trust Fund:**

*(administered by the Incumbent and Churchwardens)*

The Vicar stated that it has been the practice at this meeting to report on the Hall Trust, although not anything to do with this process, but the accounts have not yet been independently examined, so this will not be the case today. Please ask the Vicar or Churchwardens if you do not know what the Hall Trust is.

This concluded the business of the meeting of Parishioners.



**THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**  
to be held on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2023, at 11:30 am  
in the Main Hall of St Andrew's Church, Bedford

**AGENDA**

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
- 2. Approval of the Minutes of the last meeting held on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022**
- 3. To receive**
  - a. The Electoral Roll**
  - b. A Report on the Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council**
  - c. A Report on the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod**
  - d. The Annual Report and Financial Statements 2022**
  - e. A Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments**
  - f. A Report on Safeguarding in the Parish**
  - g. Mission Action Plan**
  - h. Reports from Church Groups**
- 4. Election of 6 Representatives to the Parochial Church Council, 1 for two years and 5 for three years**
- 5. Election of 4 representatives to Deanery Synod**
- 6. Appointment of an Independent Examiner to the PCC**
- 7. A Report of the Ministry and Witness of the Church throughout 2022**
- 8. Questions**
- 9. Closing Remarks**



## **Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

held on Sunday 1 May 2022, at 11:30 am  
in the Main Hall of St Andrew's Church, Bedford

**Present:** The Revd Lucy Davis - in the Chair                      Vicar  
Mrs Diana Whittemore    Churchwarden  
70 Parishioners (plus 9 children)

**Apologies**      7 Parishioners including Mr Ian Smith Churchwarden

**Notice of the Meeting** - due notice of the meeting was admitted by those present.

**1. Minutes of the last meeting** held on the 25 April 2021, as contained in the Report and Financial Statements booklet, had previously been circulated and it was proposed by Diana Whittemore, seconded by Sandra Curtis, agreed by those attending the meeting that they be confirmed and signed as a true record.

**2. Matters Arising** - there were no matters other than those indicated on the agenda.

### **3. To Receive**

#### **a. Electoral Roll**

This year saw a revision of the Church Electoral Roll which involved adding new members and subtracting those who had died or moved away. The legal notices had been displayed and the appropriate dates worked to.

Sue Smith (Electoral Roll Officer) reported that last year the roll stood at 236 but this year on the 3 April 2022 the roll stood at 241, a gain of 5 members, the gain is arrived at by the removal of 10 members, 2 of which have died and the addition of 15 members. Of the 241 members on the Roll, 92 live in the Parish, 149 live outside the Parish. Last year the corresponding numbers were 95 in and 141 outside the Parish. The regulations require that the Electoral Roll Officer should notify the Annual Meeting of the numbers on the Electoral Roll to the Annual Meeting and this year are those notified up to 3 April 2022. This report was received. Sue was thanked for all her work as St Andrew's Electoral Roll Officer and it was noted she had agreed to continue in this role for another year.

#### **b. A Report on the Proceedings of the PCC**

The Honorary Secretary, Mrs Christine Garrett, presented her report covering the Parochial Church Council for the year. It provided a summary of the activities of the PCC, it reflected the business, the role of its members, and the Council's discussions, deliberations and actions made on behalf of members of St Andrew's. The current PCC members were thanked for their attendance at meetings and input. Thanks were also expressed to all who had supported her in this role, those who had written and submitted the reports to illustrate the life of our Church. Christine was thanked for covering this role. This report was received.

### **c. A Report on the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod**

This statutory report provided a full account of the role of Deanery Synod and its members, St Andrew's has four representatives, all of whom are also PCC members and report back to PCC, this gives an insight into the life of other churches in Bedford. As part of the process beginning with Parochial Church Councils, there is Deanery Synod (Bedford), Diocesan Synod (St Albans) and General Synod of which Sheila Bissell is a member and therefore St Andrew's PCC members are fortunate to be informed of the whole process. This report was received.

### **d. The Annual Report and Financial Statements**

To receive the Honorary Treasurer's Financial Report and the Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council for the year ended 31 December 2021, incorporating the Financial Statements of the Kathleen Plumbe Trust Fund 2021, which had been independently examined. The documents had been included in the booklet containing the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements published prior to the meeting and had been displayed for the statutory period.

The honorary treasurer, Mr Lionel Mayoh, presented his report and the financial statements and began by saying he hoped those present had studied them and he was prepared to take questions. He referred to the financial review on page 3 stating that it provided a commentary on the major changes between 2020 and 2021 with a few additions on specific happenings in 2021, he continued by highlighting specifics in the financial statements. A considerable amount had been spent this year on capital schemes £68,845, some monies from the Hall Trust and some from our own budget, covering AV Screens and improvements to the church lighting and new lights in the main hall. Total income was £394,343, total revenue expenditure was £347,989, giving an overall surplus of £46,354.

At the beginning of the year we had been looking at a deficit of £9,500 plus to £16,000, the 'plus' being created by the reduction in loose plate and lettings income due to the most difficult year of COVID and lockdown but thankfully this was reduced as we applied for and received grants from Bedford Borough Council Resilience Fund (grateful thanks to Lionel for taking on the extra work in applying for these grants).

He wished to note and record his thanks to those who participated in the Planned Giving Schemes which provides the Church with a regular income and acknowledged with gratitude where we had been recipients of legacies.

In conclusion Lionel wished to record his thanks to Jim Dawson, Planned Giving and Gift Aid officer, the cashiers who counted and banked the weekly monies, Kelly Agler Good for the stream of invoices to hirers of our premises, Gill Lake for examining our accounts again, and finally to all who make a financial contribution to support the life of St Andrew's.

Lionel was thanked not only for his 'humour' in presenting the accounts but for the huge amount of skill, time and patience he puts into overseeing the financial dealings of St Andrew's Church.

The Financial Statements of St Andrew's Church for the year ended 31 December 2022 were adopted.

**e. A Report the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church**

This was presented by the Churchwardens, Ian Smith and Diana Whittemore, stating that they have the responsibility to keep a watching brief on all matters connected with the Church, to carry out an annual revision of the Terrier and Inventory (Goods and Ornaments), to support the Vicar, and to ensure the Church is kept in good order, the latter falling under the expertise of the Church Centre Management Committee with its chairman, Alan Colley, who do a brilliant job and grateful thanks are to be recorded to this group. This report was received.

**f. A Report on Safeguarding in the Parish**

This highly important aspect of life is overseen for St Andrew's by Sheila Bissell, St Andrew's Safeguarding Officer, and a huge amount of thanks is due for Sheila's skill, expertise and time in overseeing this, as an active church many volunteers need to complete various levels of training and require DBS clearance. This report was received.

**g. Mission Action Plan**

Ian Smith had presented this report as Chairman of the Mission Action Plan Group and covered the next stage of our Vision at a Church, together with our achievements to-date, which had been widely advertised on e-news and also display boards at the back of church. Ian thanked everyone for their responses to the recent survey and the giving of their time and prayer to this process.

**h. Reports from Church Groups**

Groups which are so vital and corporate to the lifestyle of the Church, thanking those who have written the reports and all those involved in any of the many aspects: Altar Guild, Bereavement Group, Centenary Committee, Children and Families Ministry, Choir and Music, Church Centre Management Committee, Church Centre Office, Coffee and Company, Communications, Concerts at St Andrew's. Contemplative Fellowship, Creation Care, Events, Fairtrade at St Andrew's, Friends of St Andrew's, Meditation Group, Mission and Outreach Team, Money Advice, Mothers' Union, Pilgrim House Group, Planned Giving, Thursday House Group, Telephone Link Carers, Tower Bells, Worship Band to name but some, thank you.

**5. Election of Representatives to St Andrew's Parochial Church Council**

The number of vacancies per year for the Church Council are calculated on the size of the church electoral roll and in accordance with the Church Representation Rules, five members for the Church Council for the three-year term 2022-2025. Anyone standing for election has to meet the criteria for the Church Electoral Roll, be a PCC Trustee and complete first level of the Safeguarding Courses.

Thanks and appreciation was recorded to the retiring members for their contributions to the Parochial Church Council and to the life of the Church in general during their current term of office, namely: Kelly Agler Good, Tim Retout, Alistair Sutcliffe, Andrew Thomas.

Four Nominations had been received for five places, each of a three-year term of office, for the Parochial Church Council, namely: Lionel Mayoh, Tim Retout, Alistair Sutcliffe, Andrew Thomas, and as there were no other nominations from the floor these four people were voted en masse.



## **6. Appointment of Independent Examiner to the PCC**

It was proposed by Pat Rogers, seconded by Liz Toogood, and agreed by all those present, that Gill Lake re-appointed Independent Examiner for the forthcoming year. Thanks were formally noted to Gill for fulfilling this role. This resolution was carried.

## **7. A Report of the Ministry and Witness of the Church throughout 2021**

Usually, over the last decade or so of ministry, my reports to APCMs have followed a similar pattern. I have told the meetings about the number of Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals the Church has seen, the pastoral visits and children's ministry and soup lunches. Maintenance of the building. Fetes and Concerts and Activity Mornings and Assemblies. I'd have told the meeting about the pattern of worship, the services over Christmas and Holy Week, the number of attendees on a Sunday. I'd dress it all up really nicely in some Bible verses and throw in a few gags for good measure, but basically it was always a list of what we'd done and what we'd achieved.

You may be glad to hear that I'm not going to do that this year. I'm not going to do that for three reasons:

Firstly, I'm not going to do that, for the very good reason that I haven't yet been here a year – in fact it was on the Sunday of your APCM last year that my appointment was announced. Since strictly speaking the Vicar's report to the APCM should cover the calendar year 2021, I'm unqualified to speak about half of it!

Secondly, and following on from that, because I haven't yet been here a year, not only would there be things I'd forget to mention, there would be people I would forget to mention and to thank. The reports in your booklet reflect the full range of mission and ministry expressed in this Church, and I'd like to thank every single person mentioned therein by name or role.

Finally, the reason I am not going to give you a list of what we have done and what we have achieved in the past year is because of the question I have asked so many times since I arrived here. What is the purpose of this meeting? Or rather, what is the purpose of this report? That list of activities I could reel off are recorded on our pew sheets and on our website. They are explored in the reports section here, our PCC minutes, the Parish Profile. There is no legal or Diocesan requirement to reiterate them here. What, then, is the purpose of the Vicar's report? Hmm. Shall I simply stop talking now and let you all get on with your Bank Holiday weekend.

No, not just yet. I think the purpose of this report is to reflect on where we are as a Church with God and where we have travelled in the last year.

Let's go back then to January 2021. The country was in lockdown. Our children were being home schooled. The vaccination programme had barely started. COVID was on the rampage. Church was closed and we were worshipping online. The choir were doing virtual rehearsals. The Wardens were writing endless risk assessments. Christmas had been cancelled along with weddings and birthdays and operations and holidays. We were beyond weary. St Andrew's was in vacancy, the job ad for your new Vicar ready to go.

Without becoming maudlin or self-pitying, I want to mark just how difficult that journey of COVID has been, not only for the country in general but for this Church family in particular. Psychologists would tell you that we have suffered a collective trauma, and collective trauma has deep and long-lasting impacts. St Andrew's saw everything we knew stripped away; our means of worship, fellowship, communication. Everything. And St Andrew's rose to the challenge phenomenally well, with livestreamed worship, pastoral phone calls, Fairtrade deliveries, Out of the Ark, and meetings and all age worship on Zoom. This response was the achievement of the whole Church family, but especially of the Warden Team: Ian and Diana, John and Carol, the Office Staff Karen and Kelly, The Ministry Team: Diana, Elisabeth, Duncan, Ian, Belinda, Peter and David, and those who take a lead in our worship: Gareth and Paul.

Reflecting on our Gospel reading this morning, for me there are striking parallels between the then and the now. The disciples too had been through a collective trauma, the collective trauma of Holy Week and Easter. They must have been reeling emotionally, physically, spiritually. Yet at this point, when they were so vulnerable, Jesus charged Peter, the leader of the new Church, and in the power of the Spirit, to feed his sheep and tend his lambs. And that's exactly what St Andrew's did during COVID. Through worship and word and sacrament. Through phone calls and emails. This Church family fed and tended, and that's why so many people have returned as COVID has receded.

In many ways, however, opening up has been harder than shutting down. The adrenalin of crisis took us all a long way. But for us, there was no revelation of the empty tomb, one moment of release and new life. Instead there were a whole series of tiny resurrections, signs of new life. Each incomplete, each an echo of the great resurrection. Reopening for worship, renegotiating social distancing and how to administer the Eucharist. Beginning to sing once more in Church. Sharing coffee together. Restarting Children's Groups. Each of these things and many more had to be risk assessed, pondered, prayed over, prioritised. At this point I'd like to thank the PCC and Staff Team for the work they did on our behalf leading this process. I'm sure that more than one heart must have dropped when you saw the item 'COVID precautions' on the agenda - again. After all that corporate effort, it is natural, like the disciples, to want to go back to where we started, to return to the safety of our boats and our nets. And indeed, the Gospel of John leaves the disciples on the lake shore, in the presence of this risen Christ. But that is not the end of the story. Peter does not stay in the boat to feed the sheep and tend the lambs that are already on board. In the power of the Spirit, the disciples leave their nets once more and go on to spread the Gospel of Christ to the ends of the Earth.

That part of the story is of course what we know as the Acts of the Apostles, the story of the early Church. That extraordinary story of faith and passion and risk taking which saw the Jesus movement explode, from a few frightened men in an upper room, to transform the lives of people across the known world. A story of how a handful of disciples came through their collective trauma and used a life changing experience to change the world. Now, that makes it sound straight forward and easy and seamless, but reality was far from that. The story of the early Church is one of persecution from outside, but also of conflict from within. New followers of Jesus, not present in Jerusalem that first Holy Week, were viewed at best with suspicion, at worst with antagonism. There were arguments about who was in and who was out, about what you could eat, how you should behave, how resources should be used. Yet, despite all these challenges, the Church was united by a single vision and single purpose, so compromises were made, ground was given, and after some very long meetings, change was eventually accepted for the greater, global good: namely spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Church today is part of that same story, we are still writing the story of the Church, in this time and in this place. We are not a social club, we are agents of the Good News, and together this Spring we have discerned our common Vision, what we have called the '5 Ships' of worship, discipleship, fellowship, kinship and stewardship. These values are deeply rooted in Scripture and the tradition of the Church, and I hope will help unite and focus the St Andrew's family in the same way that the early Church was united and focused. But I'll say it out loud. If St Peter and St Paul could come into conflict in their time, it's almost inevitable that there will be conflict in our time. We are individually flawed and failing, and members together of an earthly Church that is by definition flawed and failing. What is important is not that there is conflict - after all conflict is a sign of passion, commitment, caring - what is important is how we deal with the conflict that does emerge. I believe that this Church is strong enough to stick with it, to stick together, to find creative ways of working that will bring us through the stormy waters of COVID so that we can set off united, together into the deep

waters of mission and ministry. Mission and ministry that is recognisable from what has gone before, but renewed and fit for the new waters we find ourselves in as the world outside our door changes too.

To close, some more personal reflections if I may. I believe absolutely that God has called me to St Andrew's. That God called me out of a boat that I loved and where I was loved, to jump ship and land here with you. In St Andrew's I have found people of profound gifting who leave me breathless at their ability and ministry. I have found people with vast depths of spirituality who have watered the dry ground of my post COVID soul. I have found people with that hardest of ministries, the ministry of turning up when not to turn up is the easier path. I have found people who will listen and advise and correct me as I have learnt the ropes and made mistakes. For all of you, I am grateful beyond words. And I believe that God has brought me here for a reason too; I have my own small part to play in this particular stage of our journey. I am here simply to steer, to fix my eyes on what is ahead and to steer our ship. To plot the course we have discerned together and to make the adjustments to the tiller that keep us on that course. Through the grace of God, in the presence of the risen Christ, and with this extraordinary crew, that is exactly what I hope to do.

#### **8. Questions were invited, none were received.**

#### **9. Closing Remarks**

Diana Whittemore as the outgoing Churchwarden rose with a short response on behalf of the congregation - this year we have achieved the Bronze Eco Award, our Centenary Celebrations coming to a close with a reunion supper on 21<sup>st</sup> May, those who have/are using their time and expertise to the AV System and Zoom, those who serve on committees, all this wealth of talent amongst the congregation have kept us moving on. Diana ended with 'thank you Lucy, thank you all, for your care in the community, for each other, and for our mission to this parish'.

**The meeting closed at 12.25pm.**

## REPORTS TO THE 2023 APCM

### ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT

The Electoral Roll this year, 2023, is a revision of the 2022 St Andrew's Electoral Roll. Last May the Electoral Roll stood at 241 which was a net gain of 5 from the previous year.

This year the 2023 figure on 26 March was 253 which is a gain of 12 members, this gain is arrived at by the removal of 11 members, 7 of which have died and the addition of 23 members. Of the 253 members on the Roll, 89 live in the Parish and 164 live outside the Parish. Last year the corresponding numbers were 92 in and 149 outside the Parish.

The regulations require that the numbers on the Electoral Roll reported to the Annual Meeting are those notified this year up to 26 March 2023. It is the job of the Electoral Roll Officer each year to report to the Annual Meeting and I would ask this meeting to accept this report.

*Sue Smith*  
*Electoral Roll Officer*

### A REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

**Our Vision, God's Future:** (owned by the congregation and measured - MAP (Mission Action Plan))

Setting out together into deep waters

Our values and focus as St Andrew's Church family are summed up in our 'Five Ships'

**Worship:** Loving God through praise and prayer

**Discipleship:** Growing as God's family, developing as followers of Jesus

**Fellowship:** Welcoming radically: encouraging inclusion and embracing diversity

**Kinship:** Engaging deeply with local and global community seeking justice and establishing peace

**Stewardship:** Caring for God's creation, and using our resources courageously

The Parochial Church Council, working with the Vicar and Churchwardens, is responsible for identifying, reviewing and discussing matters affecting church life, our mission and worship, our buildings including 5 St Minver Road, arriving at decisions and communicating with the congregation. The PCC meets on a Tuesday evening alternate months with the Standing Committee meeting the month in between. As indicated above the PCC is committed to affirming the above and living out our five values, assisted by Sidespersons and Welcomers who enable and provide a welcome to all who come to worship at St Andrew's

#### PCC Membership

The PCC members are Trustees of St Andrew's as a charity.

PCC consists of:

- Vicar, 2 Churchwardens are statutory members
- 15 PCC representatives of the laity one third of whom retire annually
- 4 Deanery Synod representatives
- One member, Sheila Bissell, as an elected representative of Deanery Synod, Diocesan Synod and General Synod is also a member.

Vicar	Revd Lucy Davis
Churchwardens	Ian Smith, Diana Whittemore ( <i>until 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022</i> ), Carol wood ( <i>from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022</i> ) ( <i>Deputy Churchwarden until 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022</i> )
Reader	Diana Stretton ( <i>until 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022</i> )
Deanery Synod	Sheila Bissell, Gareth Burrows, Ann Mason, Elisabeth Thorne, Carol Wood.
Laity	Christine Garrett ( <i>honorary secretary</i> ), Angela Huddart, Jenny Tomlinson, Nneka Williams, Sally Coleman, Viki Evans, Hugh Johnstone, Valerie Littleford, Susan Smith, Tim Retout, Alistair Sutcliffe, Andrew Thomas, Lionel Mayoh ( <i>elected member from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022, honorary treasurer</i> ).
Co-opted Members	Lionel Mayoh ( <i>until 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022</i> ), Roseanne Kinvig-Love ( <i>from 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022</i> ), Ian Riches ( <i>from 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022</i> )

The following officers and policies are in place to meet our statutory and legal duties - Safeguarding Mrs Sheila Bissell, Diversity Mrs Sheila Bissell, Health & Safety Mr Phil Kino, Data Protection (GDPR) Mrs Kelly Agler Good, Finance Lionel Mayoh Honorary Treasurer, Church Electoral Roll Mrs Susan Smith.

Our November 2022 PCC meeting was attended and led by the Bishop of Bedford, who was attending the PCC meetings of churches around the Deanery. The Bishop led his session by reading St Matthew's version of the 'Feeding of the Five Thousand'. He asked members to reflect on this passage and to tease out individually word or words that made an impact upon us; this led into discussion. He also asked if there were any questions we would like to ask him and what were the 'signs of hope' for St Andrew's. Further, he wanted to know more about St Andrew's what projects/initiatives we had been doing and our plans for the future, which again led into dialogue. This ended a very thought provoking and interesting session, with the Bishop staying for the remainder of the meeting. He was thanked for his attendance.

Major initiatives included the reviewing of our Mission Action Plan (MAP) with a questionnaire, group discussions, on zoom and in person, each with a member of MAP, in order to obtain responses from as many members of the congregation as possible. There was a good response and every single response was reviewed by MAP, feedback gathered and assimilated. The result being a working document falling in line with our vision of the Five Ships, as illustrated at the beginning of this report.

A review of our Committee Structure was put into place, resulting in a reduction in the number of PCC committees. Much of Church business is handled by these four committees - Church Centre Management, Honorary Treasurer and Finance Committee, Mission and Outreach Team, Mission Action Plan now under the direction of the Standing Committee, and this information is incorporated in the reports contained in the Reports Booklet. With a slimmed down structure the PCC is able to allocate additional time to discuss current issues. Alongside these Committees we have working groups, teams, limited term project groups, again reports can be found in the booklet. A current important group is Creation Care reviewing how we can improve our facilities to reduce our energy costs and address environmental issues. We established a 'warm room' for those members of our church and community struggling with the 'hardship' issues of current times. Safeguarding is an essential and important subject and is always on the PCC's agenda to be kept up-to-date, particularly with current legislation. This all assists with the work of the church's day to day operations/concerns, worship, mission and fellowship.

I would like to close this report by thanking all PCC members for their insights particularly their involvement with questions and discussions and valued individual contributions of the life of St Andrew's, its ministry and mission.

*Christine Garrett  
PCC Honorary Secretary*

## **A REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF DEANERY SYNOD**

Under the Chairmanship of the Area Dean the Synod met four times during 2022. In addition there was a social occasion to which churchwardens from all the parishes in the Deanery were invited. This took the form of a BBQ at St Mark's and this was held on one of the few showery evenings of the summer, resulting in some dodging in and out. However, an enjoyable evening was had by all attending.

In March we met at the Church of the Transfiguration at Kempston. We received a detailed Diocesan Synod Report which included the serious financial challenges the diocese is facing. This was followed by an update of changes in the Deanery, mainly what was involved in the Elstow Team Ministry Implementation which involves the parishes of Wilstead and Houghton Conquest. After completing the business items on the agenda, the Revd Andrea Maffei, Vicar of the Transfiguration, gave a personal account of what was developing in the parish after her arrival, less than a year before.

The May Synod was held at St Peter de Merton when we were given an update on the new Safeguarding Guidelines which Sheila Bissell has doing her best to implement at St Andrew's. This was followed by a presentation by the Area Dean entitled "Bedford Deanery, its demographics, churches and challenges". This gave us helpful information about how the Deanery is asked to contribute to the Diocesan Parish Share, that there are 23 churches and it is home to 175,000 people (estimated in 2,020) as well as giving an outline of the history of the area. This was followed by an introduction to the new Diocesan Secretary, David White. He gave us a very refreshing insight as to how he sees his role. He is passionate about youth and children's work. He wants to see a reduction in the funds available for the Diocesan Office so that more money can be given to support work at parish level.

In June we met at the Church of the Transfiguration at Kempston. The business items included a report on the June Diocesan Synod when the Diocesan Environmental Policy was adopted. Sam Cappleman reported on a recent meeting of the Diocesan Board of Finance at which the Diocese of St Albans was described as asset strong and cash fragile.

This was followed by two short presentations, the first of which was given by the Revd Kate Peacock, Deputy Director of Mission and Ministry. She explained that the Diocese had received funding from the Church of England Strategic Development Fund and this had been used to launch Reaching New People. Most people now have a MAP for their parish. She then gave illustrations of God at work in people's lives, one of which was how a church in Royston collect still edible food from supermarkets and distribute it to those who live locally. She concluded by emphasising the importance of prayer. The second presentation was given by the Revd Marcus Ottaviani, Assistant Curate at St Mary's, Goldington. He has helped set up Dwell Well which provides packs containing bedding, crockery, cutlery and utensils and other household items for people who have been homeless and are being rehoused. There is a partnership with St Paul's, Priory Methodist Church and Putnoe Heights.

As you can see from the above that members have received interesting and informative meetings which have given us a wider view of the national church and the Deanery. In October members were looking forward to meeting the Dean of St Albans but unfortunately a few days

before the Synod we heard that she was unable to come but It is hoped that the Dean will find an opportunity to come on another occasion.

After completing the business items on the agenda members were informed about the St Albans Diocese Environmental and Net Zero Carbon Strategy Initiatives. The members of the Synod were encouraged to discuss and share what is happening locally.

*Ann Mason*

## **A REPORT ON THE FABRIC, GOODS AND ORNAMENTS**

In 2022 the Centenary of the St Andrew's Church building was commemorated by the installation in the Chapel of a worked glass cross, created by Jane Campbell, the artist who created the Spirit of St Andrew installation in the Centre foyer. The new cross was fully funded by generous personal donations and we are grateful to all involved. The cross takes on different tones in different lights and draws the eye forward to the Nave and on to the Rose Window.

The brass Crucifix in the Chapel, which came to St Andrew's from St Mary's, the then Abbey Church of St Albans, has found a new home on the pillar above the lectern.

The Garden of Rest is now lit at night and the West wall of the Church has become a focal point on Kimbolton Road, brightening what was a very dark area.

These additions were made to the Church Property Register, known as the Terrier and Inventory, when we did our annual check of the Church and Centre. Happily everything recorded on the list was counted and accounted for. We are fortunate indeed at St Andrew's to have so much which enhances our Church and our Centre and allows St Andrew's to function so well. We are ever grateful for the generous resource of the JA and EC Hall Trust Fund, donations from The Friends and regular personal giving.

But of course buildings are bricks and mortar, and the real heart of St Andrew's is in its people. We are cognisant of the many members of our community who care for the Church and Centre. We particularly thank the Church Centre Management Committee, chaired by Alan Colley, who demonstrate a wealth of practical knowledge in addition to rolling up their sleeves and doing jobs! The rolling maintenance programme keeps the buildings fresh; last summer the Vestry and Robing Room benefited from being redecorated. Thanks also to our Verger, Gareth, and to Kelly and the Church Centre staff.

There are many people to whom we are indebted, too many to mention by name, but this year we wish to thank David Rogers who is relinquishing mowing duties after about 35 years! Thank you David for all that you have done and continue to do, and for keeping the lawns surrounding the Church in such good order.

To everyone who helps to look after our Church, thank you! So many of you have taken ownership of the Church by contributing your skills, be they changing light bulbs, dusting and polishing, washing and ironing, arranging flowers, gardening, welcoming, AV support and many more gifts which go to make up the whole for the benefit of the Church family and community.

*Ian Smith & Carol Wood*  
*Churchwardens*

## **A REPORT ON SAFEGUARDING IN THE PARISH**

The Safeguarding Team at St. Andrew's comprises the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), deputies Ian Smith and Christine Garrett. The Safeguarding Policy and Policy for the Recruitment of ex-offenders were readopted at January PCC 2023. It is supported by the Church of England Parish Safeguarding Handbook which is available for anyone to read in the Church Centre Office. St Alban's Diocese has a very active Safeguarding Officer, Jez Hirst, and two assistants who organise training forums for PSOs in the diocese to keep us fully aware of all the guidance that is available to keep us safe.

We follow recruitment guidelines for volunteers in the church community; currently seventeen people hold Basic certificates and fifty - one people hold Enhanced certificates from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). These are processed through thirtyone:eight as part of the recruitment process and are renewable every three years.

In the words of Diocesan Secretary David White: 'Creating a safe church, welcoming to all and especially children, young people and vulnerable adults, is central to showing God's love to others'. Training is one of the key elements for good safeguarding. Safeguarding modules C0 Basic Awareness and C1 Safeguarding Foundations are available online on the St. Albans website under Safeguarding.

All PCC members received Diocesan Safeguarding Learning News - July 2022. This guidance superseded all previous guidance in newsletters and the training requirements came into effect from January 2022. PCC have agreed to follow the guidance and ensure that individuals holding certain roles within our church community complete appropriate levels of training to comply with the Safeguarding Training and Development Practice Guidance. All members of PCC must complete:

C0 Basic Awareness,  
C1 Foundations and  
Responding Well to Domestic Abuse

The guidance also states that all volunteer and paid roles in churches must complete Basic Awareness (previously known as C0). Certificates are valid for three years and must be renewed if postholders wish to continue to hold positions in the church community. To aid renewal Revd Lucy Davis and myself ran a C0 training course in the Church Hall on October 10th 2022. We were delighted that the course was attended by 16 people who all successfully completed the course. Currently we have sixty people holding C0 Basic Awareness certificates and eight holding C1 Safeguarding Foundations certificates. There are also ten church officers holding C2 Safeguarding Leadership Course certificates. C2 Safeguarding Leadership Course training is through Zoom training sessions.

Elisabeth Sutcliffe and I have agreed a recruitment procedure for volunteers with children. All volunteers with children's groups must have DBS clearance and complete Basic Awareness and Foundations Safeguarding training. All are required to read the Safeguarding policy and specific sections of the Diocese Safeguarding Handbook. At present Elisabeth is on maternity leave and her role is covered by Roseanne Kinvig-Love.

I thank everyone who has taken the time to participate in the training and comply with the Diocese requirements. The PCC are confident that we are doing as much as we can to ensure St. Andrew's is a safe church for all who work and worship here.

*Sheila Bissell*  
Parish Safeguarding Officer



## MISSION ACTION PLAN

In Spring 2022 St Andrew's undertook a whole Church exercise to discern our vision for God's future for us. This process, designed by the Mission Action Plan Committee, involved prayer, preaching, and reflecting on three areas, namely:

1. As St Andrew's Church family we are....
2. As St Andrew's Church family we hope to be...
3. As St Andrew's Church family we are here to...

Conversations in groups and committees were facilitated by members of the MAP committee, and we invited individual responses both on paper forms and via an online questionnaire. In total more than 100 responses were received, and the MAP group set about reading each one, and reflecting on the whole to discern our direction of travel.

After further prayer, discussion and reflection, in July 2022, the PCC approved a MAP with five priorities, termed our '5 Ships':

**Worship:** Loving God through praise and prayer.

**Fellowship:** Welcoming radically, encouraging inclusion and embracing diversity.

**Discipleship:** Growing as God's family, developing as followers of Jesus.

**Kinship:** Engaging deeply with local and global community, seeking justice and establishing peace.

**Stewardship:** Caring for God's creation, and using our resources courageously.

In the pages of this APCM booklet, you will find reports of a wide variety of actions which have emerged from the MAP, which include:

- A PCC resolution to reach net zero carbon by 2030
- Turning the thermostat in Church down to 11oC
- The creation of a Warm Room
- 'Toastie Club' to help nurture the faith of our younger people
- The formation of St Andrew's Visitors to extend our ministry of Pastoral Care
- An Inclusive Church study group
- Producing a new welcome pack
- A congregational vote to select three mission partners for the next three years
- Training new servers
- Revising our committee structure to encourage participation

Our MAP is just that, a map to guide our journey together for the next three years. Having finished their work of guiding the development process, the MAP committee was dissolved, and the Standing Committee and PCC have oversight of the only going actions, which involve all areas of our common life.

*Lucy Davis*

## REPORTS FROM CHURCH GROUPS

(Arranged Alphabetically)

### BOOK CIRCLE

*MAP Strand: Fellowship*

In June last year we held our first meeting since the Lockdowns. We read:

'The Enchanted April' by Elizabeth Von Arnim, a cheerful and wholly delightful tale involving four women, a medieval Italian castle and solitude as needed.

'Old Baggage' by Lissa Evans. Mattie Simpkin had been a militant Suffragette, and by 1928 is frustrated by continuing injustice to women. She works to make a better future possible.

'Cold Comfort Farm' by Stella Gibbons. A witty, earthy and dynamic novel, now a modern classic.

'Moon Tiger' by Penelope. Lively spans the time before, during and after the second World War

'The Loved One' by Evelyn Waugh. A short satirical novel about the funeral business in Los Angeles, the British expatriate community and the film industry.

'The Poisonwood Bible' by Barbara Kingsolver. A very long saga about a fiercely evangelical Baptist minister's efforts to convert the natives in the Belgian Congo and the effects on his family.

Our discussions are always lively, diverse and stimulating. Our opinions vary widely which makes for interesting debates. We have some challenging 'reads' planned for the rest of this year, you are welcome to join us.

*Valerie Johnston*

### CENTENARY COMMITTEE

*MAP Strand: Fellowship, Kinship*

The Centenary Celebrations for the building of St Andrew's lasted from 2 July 2021 to 22 May 2022. Some of the activities were reported on in last year's APCM Report. However, the final activities occurred post-APCM. This brief report is to bring to a close the Centenary Celebrations.

The activities that took place within the last church year were:

Concert by Carolyn Sampson

Burying of a new Time capsule

'St Andrew's through the ages' exhibition

Parish Communion with the Bishop of Bedford

Festival Choral Evensong

Come and Sing 'Creation' by Haydn

Songs of Praise with Bedford Town Band

Tree planting at Keysoe

Unfortunately some of the events that were planned for 2022 had to be cancelled (because of the continuance of Covid) but we were able to hold a very successful **Pet Blessing Service** conducted by Lucy, a **St George's Day Progressive Meal** around the church centre which was very much enjoyed, a final **Reunion Party** to which many past ministers and parishioners came from far and wide, and a **Thanksgiving Service and Parish Communion with the Bishop of St Albans**.

The lasting physical reminder of the centenary is the new **Celebration Cross** which was commissioned from glass artist Jane Campbell, the same artist who designed the 'Spirit of St Andrew's' in the entrance lobby to the church centre. It was funded by a small number of individual donations in thanksgiving for or in memory of St Andrew's connections or special life events. Sadly, due to significant manufacturing problems, the cross was not ready for the final service with the Bishop of St Albans but it was ready for and dedicated by Lucy at our St Andrew's Patronal Festival in November 2022.

Finally, enormous thanks goes to all those who contributed in any way to the celebrations and especially to those who served on the small committee that master-minded the whole year of events. May St Andrew's Church be flourishing as well in another 100 years time!

*Ian Smith*

*Churchwarden and Chair of Centenary Committee*

## **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES MINISTRY**

*MAP Strand: Discipleship, Fellowship, Worship*

### **Sunday Worship**

During regular Sunday morning worship, our children have thoroughly enjoyed returning to their groups during the service, to share the liturgical theme for the day from the wonderful ROOTS children's ministry resource.

The number of children at the groups has grown steadily over the year, and now two groups run concurrently for our older and younger children. The small team of incredibly gifted leaders have used songs, plays, puppets, crafts, stories and games to really engage with our young people and help them explore and engage with scripture and step along together on their own discipleship journey.

In the main service itself children are being invited to take part in more and varied ways, with some becoming servers, doing readings, welcoming others, or role playing the eucharist in their small group together. Children have been invited to share the contents of our Whispering Booklet during Holy Communion too, sharing thoughts and questions about the rite with their families.

### **All Age Services**

Our All Age Service on the first Sunday of each month is a wonderful chance for children to be front and centre during our worship gathering – literally! Children's songs, interactive activities and multiple opportunities to be involved with the business of the service continues to strengthen the place of our young people at the heart of our church family. Some of the physical worship collaborative pieces created during the service have also been displayed at the back of church for the rest of the month, creating a way for children to share their thoughts and ideas with the whole church throughout the week.

### **Christmas Crib Service and Christingle**

After the restrictions of Covid it was a joy to be able to return to the full interactive experience of the Christingle Service this year – the Guides of the St Andrew's unit generously created over a hundred Christingles which were shared and lit as the congregation gathered around the darkened interior of the church. In the pre-service activity session the children and families loved creating their own DIY Christingle themed Christmas decorations for the church tree, which then remained to bring delight to all over the rest of the Christmas period.

The Crib Service on Christmas Eve was another seasonal highlight, with contributions from all ages to the interactive telling of the Christmas story, with a special appearance from the children and families of Noah's Ark, who were invited to present their own choral rendition of 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star'. For some families it was the first time they had been invited to and experienced any kind of service at St Andrew's, and feedback afterwards was overwhelmingly positive, which was a great encouragement to all those who gave their time and efforts so generously to make these special services happen.

### **Noah's Ark**

Our Monday morning stay and play group for pre-schoolers and their families has been steadily growing over the year, with around 30-35 children attending each week during term time. Being able to enjoy time together with young families from our community is a great blessing to all those who attend and help out, as is the opportunity to share stories from the bible and pray together.

### **Messy Church**

Messy Church on Saturdays throughout the year are yet another opportunity to connect with young people from our community, with a wide range of ages attending and enjoying activities, worship and food together. Run by a large team of helpers from the whole church family, it is a chance for those who do not worship regularly with us on Sundays to come together, experience fellowship and discipleship with one another, as well as experiment with new and inventive ways of exploring scripture.

One of the challenges that faces Messy Church at St Andrew's is the sometimes unexpected clashes with family events in Bedford, and 2022 was no exception. In November, it was discovered that Messy Church was planned on the same day that the Christmas lights switch and Market were going to be happening in the centre of town. Undaunted, the Messy Team decided to cancel Messy Church at St Andrew's so that our young people would not miss out on this joyful beginning to the Christmas season and instead, Messy went to Market! The St Andrew's stand ran free activities for children throughout the day, providing a generous and joyful contrast to the usual market stalls, as well as embedding the Church firmly into the centre of the community, bringing hospitality and hope to the heart of Bedford.

### **Events**

Whenever we come together as a church family to worship or celebrate, we do our best to ensure that the youngest members of our community feel included and welcomed. Over 2022 we helped our children explore the story of Easter with a special all age Good Friday service, had focussed activities available at our Harvest supper, and blessed schoolbags before the start of term in September.

### **Future Thoughts**

Our young people contribute so much to our church family through their sense of wonder, fresh ideas and unique wisdom, that nurturing them on their discipleship journey with us is never a one-sided experience. My most heartfelt thanks go out to all those who support our children's ministry so generously, sharing ideas, time, talents and skills in so many varied ways - none of this could happen without you. And for those who are considering getting involved in this essential and exciting aspect of church community, get in touch and join in - our vision of faith for the future begins through the eyes of child.

*Roseanne Kinvig-Love  
Children and Families' Minister (Maternity Cover)*

## **ST ANDREW'S CHOIR AND MUSIC**

### *MAP Strand: Worship*

Looking back at the last year it is hard to believe that this has been the first full year we have been back in church as a choir since Covid restrictions applied. So we might be excused for imagining that, after all the weird musical things which we were forced to pursue during that time - virtual choir practices, recording individual vocal parts at home etc. - life has become musically humdrum. However, those who have attended church services regularly may, or may not, have noticed that the choir has sung over fifty different anthems, six different Canticle settings at evensong with three sets of responses, plus Advent Carols, the service of Nine Lessons and Carols and will be singing the Maunder Olivet to Calvary in a few weeks' time from current writing. The congregation will also have noticed that they have assisted the choir in singing a new setting of the service in Advent and Lent by a composer whose modesty forbids to name!

So the choir has not been idle and recognition of their skill and dedication should be fully acknowledged. There have been a few comings and goings: Oskar has left the trebles as his voice changed, Cecilia has left us to take up a music scholarship at Oundle School and we wish her every success - she has been a magnificent Head Chorister and we miss her immensely. She has, however, managed to join us again on several occasions when she has been home. As replacements for her, we now have a Head Girl Chorister Hannah, and Head Boy Chorister Lucas, who are both showing good leadership skills. Two sopranos have joined us in the last year, Caroline Riches and Ann Collins, and Vicki Edwards has rejoined us after a break, so we are very well-endowed with upper voices in the choir. I remain hopeful that some of the strong male voices I hear in the congregation might feel inclined to join us!

Miriam Reveley continues to go from strength to strength in her organ career, and she came to give a recital at St Andrew's last autumn. She returned to give another recital as part of a series featuring organists with associations with St Andrew's, namely Paul Edwards, Miriam and the current Director of Music. It is a while now since we had a similar series and, gratifyingly, attendances have been very good, with a wide variety of music.

*Paul Searle-Barnes  
Director of Music*

## **CHURCH CENTRE OFFICE**

### *MAP Strand: Fellowship, Kinship*

During 2022, the Church Centre continued to be an outreach of community ministry of St Andrew's Church. As we entered post pandemic and then into endemic Covid, community bookings began to grow in the Centre. We are happy to report that we have regular bookings that now service the community in a variety of ways. We not only have various baby and toddler groups, ELFT NHS training days and Tibbs Dementia Foundation, but have also gained a physiotherapy group who work with those who have lost use of their upper limbs, Bedford Rotary Club's English classes for refugees, a support group for those who grieve the loss of loved ones due to suicide, an infant loss bereavement group and Neville Funeral Directors bereavement group entitled 'Talking Elephants' regularly use the Church Centre.

As we were hosting the Goldington Avenue Flu Clinic in October, some in our community sought to seek shelter from local flooding. We were able to be on standby to help Airedale Nursing Home after their facilities were flooded. With the help of the GPs and nurses from Goldington Avenue, we quickly laid a plan to help evacuated residents if needed to the Church. In the end, this was not needed but they did use our kitchen facilities to cook meals for their residents, as well as borrow plates, bowls and cutlery after their kitchen become

flooded and unusable. We were also able to provide a space for the Friends of Higgins to hold their educational gatherings after the Higgins had also succumb to flood damage.

One of the most well-known ministry initiatives that was undertaken in the Centre was the inception of the Warm Room. This was held in the Consulting Room. With great thanks to all of the amazing volunteers, the Warm Room became a space that was not only used to keep warm and have a cup of coffee but also a space to have a good chat. The Warm Room has become a very welcoming community space not only for wider community but for our church parishioners as well. We look forward to how this ministry of the Church evolves over time.

From day to day, our Church Centre engages in ministry that we never imagined. From aiding a person by finding them a French translator, quickly contacting those who could provide financial advice for individuals, caring for more vulnerable Centre users when something goes amiss with their transport plans, keeping the coffee machine going for the Warm Room, supporting church groups and community groups with their activities, and engaging with the family of St Andrew's Church when a listening ear is needed.

I would like to end this report by taking an opportunity to thank Giovanni and Karen as we work together to attempt to meet every need that comes in through our Church Centre. They are both tremendous assets to the Centre and the ministry of St Andrew's Church. They both tirelessly work to ensure that the ministry of St Andrew's Church Centre continues.

*Kelly Agler Good*

## **CHURCH CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CCMC)**

### *MAP Strand: Stewardship*

CCMC's role is to maintain the fabric of the church, Church Centre and Curate's house, 5 St Minver Road, which is let on a fully managed basis until April 2023 pending the arrival of our new curate, in conjunction with the Vicar and churchwardens in whom 'legal possession' of the buildings is vested.

Our aim is to ensure that our buildings are well maintained and resourced in order to offer a welcoming and safe environment for all users. There are 12 members of CCMC who meet every three months.

The 'Quinquennial' inspection of our buildings took place in June. No urgent remedial work was identified by our architect, Laurane Bubbins. Some significant expenditure will be incurred on replacing the coping on the gable end of the chapel, repainting the facias and soffits around the church and Centre (there is no record of when these were last repainted), drainage and tree work. We held a work week to repaint the vestry and robing room and a workday to cut back the laurel in the car park - again! The floodlight was installed in the Garden of Rest to illuminate the 'west' wall. Solar panels on the Centre are scheduled to be installed in March 2023.

We are working in conjunction with Creation Care on the heating, lighting and electrics to make the buildings as energy efficient as possible. The Church Office arranges regular servicing of the boilers and fire equipment.

For many services we need to employ outside contractors, though we try to do as much work 'in house' as possible - there is often some minor repair to be done. We are grateful for all the work done behind the scenes by Kelly and Karen in the office, our caretaker, cleaners and members of the congregation to keep the buildings of St Andrew's shipshape.

*Alan Colley*

## **COFFEE AND COMPANY**

*MAP Strand: Fellowship, Kinship*

Coffee and Company has continued to meet on the first Friday of the month, except for January 2022 when covid was rife. Coffee, tea and cake are served by a team of twelve volunteers in the Church Centre Foyer.

Blue check tablecloths and cafetières transform the foyer into a cafe environment where people come and go, enjoying conversation and company, and cake! Visitors from church and the local community mingle, providing an opportunity to bring people together and develop friendships.

Donations are invited towards the cost of the coffee and tea. However, through the generosity of our visitors, we have collected nearly £900. This has been divided between The Children's Society, Foodbank, Salvation Army and Ukraine Red Cross.

A huge thank you to the Coffee and Company Team who welcome and serve our visitors so warmly.

*Diane Barlow*

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

*MAP Strands: Discipleship, Fellowship, Kinship*

We continue to develop our communication in to reach as many people as possible, both members of the congregation and those yet to join, with the aim of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, as well as the practicalities of our common life as Church family. To be effective in today's complex world, communication demands a mix mode approach including verbal notices, printed material, emails, and other online media.

St Andrew's produces weekly email newsletters, with the aim of keeping our Church family informed of upcoming events. The number of subscribers to the main Church contact list stands at 278, and the 'open rate' of the emails is high; twice the average for religious organisations. In parallel to this, we continue to print a weekly pewsheet (notice sheet) for those attending Church.

Our website provides an open, welcoming insight into our Church community. It is a source of up-to-date information for anyone in our Parish and beyond, including those who worship with us, visitors, and anyone wishing to arrange a life event such as a Baptism or a Wedding. The website is updated on a weekly basis, but small changes can easily be made at any time. We have seen a welcome rise in people contributing articles to the blog this year. These blog posts are shared through the e newsletter and also reproduced in print form in the 'St Andrew's Digest' available free of charge at the back of Church and in the foyer. The calendar section of the website sees high traffic, and again we produce a monthly printed dates sheet for those who are not online.

We continue to engage through social media, posting on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. This is a great way of keeping in touch with people in the broader community who may attend services less frequently, but are still interested in what goes on at church. News about our Warm Room and Soup Lunch for Lent have reached thousands of people by these means.

This year has seen the introduction of our first parish newsletter 'Centred,' delivered to every household in the parish thanks to our wonderful volunteers. The Christmas issue had a very positive reception, with many of those attending our Christmas services commenting that they

had come because of receiving it. Also at Christmas, and following on from an idea during COVID, our Church family Christmas card was well used, as people exchanged seasonal messages by way of a communal 'card' in the foyer, saving both paper and piles of abandoned cards at the back of Church!

*Kelly Agler Good*

## **CONCERTS AT ST. ANDREW'S**

*MAP Strand: Fellowship*

It has been a busy year with a varied programme of music. We began the 2022 series later than usual, as the early part of the year was still affected by Covid restrictions, but happily things were almost back to normal by the summer. The disruption of the last year or so has also proved to be an opportunity to try a few different things, such as hosting of the Bedford School Prize Winners' Concert in 2022 (and again in 2023). It has been great to be able to hear some extremely talented young musicians perform at St. Andrew's, and to give them experience of taking part in a public concert.

Following a wonderful 'pop-up' recital by Miriam Reveley in June 2022, we have been able to arrange a series of organ recitals in 2023, featuring some very gifted performers who need no introduction to our audience: Paul Edwards, Miriam Reveley (who had now taken up the post of organ scholar at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle) and our own Paul Searle-Barnes. We decided to hold our annual pre-concert Quaver reception in July, and it was wonderful to see so many old friends chatting over some delicious food and drink in the summer sunshine. Joanna Reveley and Simon Gilliver gave us a wonderful concert of flute and piano music to complete a perfect evening. September saw a return of the popular Corporation of Musick, including the playing of an impressive theorbo! The annual Come & Sing was Britten's delightful 'Saint Nicolas' fascinatingly introduced by Dr Lucy Walker. In November there was a superb chamber music concert featuring Dvořák's Piano Quintet Op. 81.

2023 has already seen the above mentioned organ recitals and a fantastic concert featuring works by Monteverdi and Purcell, with some beautifully sung duets. As I am writing plans are advanced for a charity concert in aid of Emmaus in March. The programme devised by conductor Christopher Ridley is typically inventive and exciting, with works from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-first centuries. Looking ahead, we have some great events to look forward to with a piano trio group in May, a classical sitar player in September, Faure's Requiem as the Come and Sing in October, and the very welcome return of Kitty Whatley and Joseph Middleton, with a concert specially devised to coincide with the season of Remembrance, and featuring poetry read by a surprise guest!

Concerts at St. Andrew's are only possible because we have a dedicated team of volunteers who give up their time to plan and stage events, and I would like to publicly thank them for their commitment. I also wish to thank our Patron - Carolyn Sampson - for her continued support in the course of her very busy and demanding schedule. Lastly, I would like to thank the Quavers, who make it possible to attract top quality performers through their donations. If you would like to enjoy the benefits of becoming a Quaver please do speak to me.

*Stephen Rogers*

## **CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER: MONTHLY FELLOWSHIP GROUP**

*MAP Strand: Worship*

The purpose of this group is to provide a space in which to explore and engage in silent prayer. We draw on different prayer techniques including those inspired by the St. Ignatian



tradition such as the examen and lectio divina, but also use poetry and art as inspiration. We meet virtually on Zoom on the last Thursday of the month at 8.30pm for about forty-five minutes of which up to ten minutes is silent prayer. We had hoped to meet in person/offer a hybrid offer but due to childcare responsibilities, this has not yet happened. However, we did manage a face-to-face prayer walk round Bedford Park in the summer attended by five people, followed by an ad hoc trip to the pub!

The group is in its Sixth year and membership of a linked WhatsApp group has risen to twenty-five (an increase of five new members in the last year). Of this wider group, there are about eight regular attendees to the Zoom meetings. However, the WhatsApp group has grown into a supportive forum where people share events of interest to members and respond to prayer requests for one another. People from the group have attended a quiet morning and a Taizé service as a result of this and members who have been bereaved have been well supported by prayer.

During Lent, members of the group have prepared guided prayer walks for the wider use of the church and a weekly meditation which goes out in the weekly email. We remain open to new members who can participate as much or as little as they choose.

*Roz Thomas*

## **CREATION CARE**

MAP Strand: *Stewardship*

One of the main 'ships' in our MAP is the care for God's Creation. In fulfilment of this aim the Creation Care team have been undertaking a lot of necessary preparatory work. We are looking initially at saving energy and reducing waste but in the long term we have undertaken, as a church, to be net zero carbon by 2030. This will incur a lot of investment, but will lead to longer-term savings in energy costs. Therefore a lot of the work currently being undertaken is in preparation for this in order that we make best use of all our resources, including money, and avoid unnecessary expenditure.

To set the team in motion we have held two larger meetings for any members of the congregation who are interested in order to garner ideas. The smaller group which is undertaking the more detailed work has also met on a number of occasions and begun work. The stages so far have been:

- To set the agenda
- Develop the concept
- Undertake proof of concept
- Learn from initial mistakes and take feedback

So what we have done so far:

Begun monitoring the energy we are using and how it affects the building by monitoring electricity, gas and water usage in a more detailed way

Made small but significant 'quick win' changes such as

- Turning the church heating thermostat for background heat down
- Installed recycling bins in all rooms
- Stopped using plastic as much as possible
- Using recycled paper in the office
- Making more use of electronic communication to reduce paper usage
- Changed a number of light bulbs for more efficient ones
- Installed temperature and humidity monitors to track clearly our usage to enable us to preserve the fabric and extend control

Attended the 'Future Build' Exhibition to glean further ideas

The next stage is to integrate the trials into our systems. We hope that, once more developed, we will be able to provide a model for other parishes and so achieve a wider effect than just for ourselves.

Alongside the detailed work on energy use reduction we have also been working towards our ECO Church Award. So far we have achieved the Bronze Award and are now actively working to achieve the Silver Award by the end of the summer. We then move on to working for the Gold Award. However, to achieve the Gold Award we will need to develop a culture change in the whole congregation as many of the Gold Award targets reach beyond the church walls. We are confident that we can achieve this by careful suggestion and exemplar action.

Most importantly we need to achieve the spirit of care for our environment. We know that many people already do their 'bit' towards this but it may require a wider culture change from some so that everyone is doing what they can and sharing their tips. We hope to be making regular suggestions for what families can do themselves to support the overall drive to care for God's creation.

*Ian Smith*

## **EVENTS TEAM**

*MAP Strand: Fellowship*

Although no longer classed as a sub-committee of the PCC we continue to meet regularly with a Chairperson and Secretary and, in between, keep in touch online. We have been pleased to get back to most of our normal activities since Easter 2022.

We have enjoyed being able to join with other groups in events such as the Church Centenary celebrations, the Platinum Jubilee, Pajule Picnic, as well as with Lucy and the Toastie Club in a cake & biscuit making session to provide refreshments for Andrewtide. Harvest Supper was provided at an earlier time on a Saturday (6pm) making it more popular with younger families and was very successful. December was busy with a Christmas Lunch for the Wednesday congregation, Christingle tea, and mince-pies and mulled wine following Nine Lessons & Carols.

We look forward now to serving Soup Lunches throughout Lent 2023. We are grateful, as ever, to all those who volunteer to assist us on an ad-hoc basis and are always ready to welcome extra offers of help, especially on the bigger occasions. Do come and join in the fun!

*Pat Rogers*

## **FAIRTRADE**

MAP Strand: Kinship, Stewardship

I can't believe a year has gone by so quickly and it's time for the Fairtrade annual report. We have had a successful year in view of current times. Sales were up on last year's figures to a total of £28,600. We've continued to offer a delivery service thanks to our loyal "deliverers", so please feel free to place orders.

I am sure you will have read about Traidcraft going into administration. However, this does not mean the end of Fairtrade - the shop and fairtrade will go on!

Amongst our expenses we sent a donation to the charity called Transform Trade, which until last autumn was called Traidcraft Exchange.

We are always open to suggestions and will encompass them if feasible, but we only have limited staff. It would be lovely if more of the congregation would volunteer to join us. This would spread the load which really falls on a few of us now that Lynn, our shop manager, has resigned. We are having a collection to express our thanks to her for all her hard work, and a card will be in the shop for signing.

We have managed to continue with all the outside events we usually attend throughout the year, and to spread the Fairtrade message of producers receiving a fair price for their products. We want to encourage customers to buy the fairly traded, ethically sourced and green goods with which the shop is stocked. In other words, the shop is fair to people and planet.

*Pauline Crane*

## **FILM NIGHTS**

*MAP Strand: Fellowship*

We are now back to normal again after Covid. We have a full programme for 2023. Fish and chips at 7pm, bring your own drink. The film lasts approx. 2 hours or less, not any longer, and all the films have subtitles.

All orders for fish and chips by phone must be ordered by Wednesday prior to the Film Night as our fish man orders in a special size fish, as most of his day to day fish sizes are too big. The evening at present costs £6.50 per person.

My thanks go out to David and Barbara Hargreaves who help set up for the evening, also Ben Clackson who shows the film and others who help clear up at the end of the evening.

At present we have about 35 people who come, some from St Andrew's and some not attached to St Andrew's.

*Gareth Burrows*

## **FLOWER ARRANGING**

*MAP Strand: Worship*

The past year has proved slightly more challenging in our attempts to keep up with the floral decoration of the Church. It has been very much a case of spirits willing but flesh weak, however despite our incapacities the team has managed to supply weekly flowers in both the Sanctuary and Chapel throughout the year. A special mention and thanks to William for volunteering to step in and help out when needed, often at short notice.

We are very aware of the current issues over the use of Oasis along with the cost both environmentally and financially of imported flowers. Although we have continued with a pedestal in the Sanctuary, we have replaced our Chapel pedestal with smaller, principally Oasis free, fresh flowers in varying containers and have reduced the number of pedestals at festivals.

We should love to welcome more people coming forward to help with the flowers, there are many opportunities for involvement, and guidance can be given for those who would like to try hands on. Experience is not necessary, and you might be surprised what you can do. We decorate all the windowsills, each with 3 bays, for festivals and these can prove a starting point for those who do not feel they can commit to the weekly rota.

Many thanks to everyone who has helped in any way over the past year, including Gareth whose willing assistance with tables, bins, moving pedestals etc. has been much appreciated.

*Jenny Coggins*

## **FRIENDS OF ST ANDREW'S**

### *MAP Strand: Fellowship*

Very little has changed since our last AGM in October 2022, but we hope to have news of some new events for 2023 very soon. The Tea Dances have, of course, continued and been a vital source of income. In August we held a 21st Birthday Tea for the Friends, which was well attended and much enjoyed. In December we held a Surprise Christmas Quiz instead of the Regency Christmas Talk as the speaker was taken ill at the last minute. In January, we were treated to a very amusing talk by Rev. Kelvin Woolmer about his transition from a policeman to a vicar, and in February a talk by The Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust (Bike N'Hike). If you look at the noticeboard in the corridor by the Hall, you will see further 2023 events advertised as below:

- Visit to Peacocks Sales Rooms
- Trip to Bedford School Observatory
- Our annual trip to Toleshope
- Our annual trip down the Ouse on the John Bunyan with supper

There are some possible new events we are currently investigating but have yet to confirm:

- Visit to Military Intelligence Museum Chicksands
- Talk about Armenia
- Trip to Emmaus Village Carlton
- 'Light Display' at Wimpole Hall (or similar)
- 'Carols at Christmas' from The Royal Albert Hall
- Wisbech Rose Fair
- National Arboretum/Lichfield Cathedral
- Talk about recycling plastics by Beds County Council

At our AGM in October 2022 we were fortunate to recruit Zoe Browne and Pat Skelton to replace Eunice Hall and Ursula Pearson who retired from the Friends Committee after 35 years of combined service. At our AGM in March 2023, we still had a vacancy for a Deputy Chairman, plus the expected vacancy due to the retirement of our Secretary after 22 years of service.

*Jenny Pegg*  
*Secretary*

## **MISSION AND OUTREACH**

### *MAP Strand: Kinship*

The work of the team has progressed rapidly in 2022-3, beginning with the election by the congregation of our three outreach partners 2022-4. These three charities initially received £2,000 and then, later in the year, a further £1,000. Our new way of working involves active partnership. We have been in touch with the charities concerned throughout the year and keep abreast of their situation, trying to respond to their needs. It is much more personal, and, we hope, more rewarding for St Andrew's, allowing the congregation to understand and to pray for our outreach partners and to feel involved.

## **World Vision, Pajule project**

At the launch of this initiative in 2022 we had video presentations by our representative, Crystal Nnoruke (as we were still emerging from COVID restrictions) and we have been in touch regularly with WV, hearing of their work and receiving requests to pray for them, particularly when the threat of Ebola in the area was high.

MOT organised a breakfast for Pajule in March and a very successful African-themed lunch in June, with help from the Events Committee. At the lunch we were blessed by beautiful weather, sitting in the shade of the vicarage garden. John Orchard from WV (standing in for Crystal who was on maternity leave) joined us and spoke briefly, but eloquently, about the focus of WV's work in Pajule. These two events, boosted by some generous individual donations, raised a further £1,000.

The children's groups at St Andrew's have recently started to prepare some pictures and notes to send to Pajule, in response to the video clips sent by the staff in Uganda.

## **Trussell Trust**

As this is a huge national organisation, we have a less personal relationship with them, though we know, of course, how vital their work has been during the current economic crisis.

However, we are able to be in touch with our local Food Bank, originally seeded by the TT, but now running independently. Our collection box in the church foyer is being filled regularly and volunteers from the congregation take its contents up to the foodbank warehouse in Brickhill.

We organised a Reverse Advent Calendar collection at St Andrew's, to which many people contributed most generously. Jim Gorringe has forged a good relationship with Andrea, manager at the foodbank warehouse. She thanked us for the £300 in donations and the 485+ kilos of food which we collected, estimating that this weight of goods will provide 1155 meals.

## **Emmaus, Carlton**

All members of MOT plus Lucy went out to visit Emmaus in June and this enabled us to better understand the work that they do to support their Companions.

In addition to the grants provided, we have responded to a request to support the two teenaged children of the Ukrainian family currently living at Emmaus. We paid for bus passes to enable them to attend English lessons at Bedford College and later for some fees for one of the English teachers.

## **Other grants**

In addition to our support of the three outreach partners we have been able to provide small grants to three charities with which St Andrew's has strong historical links. £1,000 each was sent to Swaziland School Project, UMEED and Impact. We were able to top up the red bucket appeal for the DEC Pakistan Floods Appeal by £275, bringing the total sent by St Andrew's to £1,000.

I would like to thank the congregation for all their support and participation, but, especially, the other members of MOT for their hard work and enthusiasm. We work cooperatively and collaboratively.

*Angela Huddart*

## **MONEY ADVICE**

MAP Strand: Kinship

Money Advice at St Andrews has provided a good service for residents of Bedford Borough since 2010. Sadly, in January 2023 we took the very difficult decision to close the service, to take effect on 31 March 2023.

### **Reasons**

We have had concerns about the service for some time and have reported those concerns to the PCC before. We have struggled to recruit volunteer debt advisers for some time, and this has been a serious impediment to the service. We were able to keep going through the pandemic seeing clients via zoom or via telephone, but this was not very satisfactory and we were pleased to return to face to face working in the second half of 2022. We expected an influx of clients, but this never materialised and the two new advisers we recruited and trained have not seen sufficient clients to maintain their skills and knowledge.

We spent the second half of 2022 considering options to enable us to continue the service and to broaden it to provide a wider range of advice. We secured some additional funding from the Hall Trust to give us time to consider the shape of a broader service and to see if there would be an improvement to the numbers of clients seeking help. At the Management Group meeting on 12 January, we reluctantly concluded that despite several different approaches, we had exhausted all possibilities for the core service. Very few clients came forward between November and January. Our wonderful team of volunteers was depleted and demoralised and the situation was very fragile. In addition, there was insufficient capacity to establish the need for a redesigned service within a reasonable timeframe. After a lengthy debate, a formal vote was taken according to the terms of the Constitution and was carried unanimously.

We are at a loss to explain the lack of clients coming forward for advice but there are other services available in the borough and people increasingly rely on the array of online services available.

### **Current Situation**

We are working with the CMA to ensure we fulfil all our obligations as we wind down the service. The website has been closed and all local organisations we have worked with have been advised of our closure. We have two remaining clients, and we fully expect their cases to be closed down by the end of March.

The church formally employed our paid administrator and redundancy terms have been agreed with her. She is continuing her employment until the end of March.

### **Finance**

All MASA assets and any remaining budget will be returned to St Andrews Church at the end of March.

### **The Future**

It is possible that queries may arise from clients or their creditors for some time. A message will be left on our phone and email advising people to contact the CMA, who will handle these on our behalf. We are required to keep client records for six years (electronic or physical). Electronic records will be maintained on Catalyst. There are some boxes of old client notes in the loft and the dates for their destruction will be added to them.

We are also required to obtain 'run off' professional indemnity cover for the six years following closure of the service and we are arranging this via Advice UK.

## **Finally**

We plan to hold an event to celebrate the service and all the amazing volunteers who have worked in it. Date to be advised shortly.

*Carol Madden  
Chair of the Management Group*

## **MOTHERS' UNION AT ST ANDREW'S**

*MAP Strand: Fellowship, Kinship*

The Mothers' Union group meets on the third Monday of each month and did so throughout 2022. Our programme varied - from speakers through discussions on topical matters to a craft afternoon and social events - we enjoyed each other's fellowship and friendship and raised funds to support MU projects. The Wednesday communion service in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of each month was kept as our Corporate Communion. There were also regular opportunities to meet with MU members from across the Diocese at services and Sharing Days.

Although our group is small - and has sadly decreased in size in 2022 with the deaths of two long-standing and much valued members, Ron Stringer and Margaret Buckingham - we are mindful that we are part of worldwide Christian membership movement active in 84 countries. The 2022 MU theme was "Transformation - Now" and the organisation at all levels discussed new approaches to increase membership, improve our outreach and financially sustain MU into the future - a vital transformational agenda as MU approaches 150 years since its foundation by Mary Sumner.

Transformation continues as our theme for 2023 and we would love to see an increase in our membership. If you are interested in joining an organisation which seeks to strengthen families and advocate for change, and which campaigns on issues such as gender-based violence, poverty and injustice, then maybe MU is for you. It's about far more than tea and cake - all are welcome to come along and find out more.

*Karen Parrott*

## **PILGRIM HOUSE GROUP**

*MAP Strand: Discipleship*

We are a friendly informal group who meet on the third Monday afternoon in the month in a member's home, to explore, share and deepen our faith.

We use a variety of Bible Studies like the York Courses and SPCK Stand Alone Bible Studies by Penelope Wilcock. During 2023 we explored the York Course 'Caring for Creation', an ecumenical course in five sessions (The Environment, Global Warming and Climate Change, The Age of Humans, Coming out of Denial and Facing Crisis, Face, Hope and Love), a topical subject, interesting and very challenging, as we listened to the CD, read the script and sought to answer the questions. If interested, please do ask for the resources, suitable for groups or individuals. We are now embarking on stand-alone Bible Studies for this year.

A Quiet Day at the Chellington Centre, Carlton, Bedford (Monday 12 June 2023 9.45-3.30pm), and a couple of bring and share lunches/afternoon teas completes our annual programme. If you would like to join us for any of the above, please contact the Church Centre Manager who will pass on your details.

*Christine Garrett, Ann Mason, Alison Belding*

## **PLANNED GIVING**

### *MAP Strand: Stewardship*

Thank you to all who gave financial support to St Andrew's Church during 2022, whether it be by the Parish Giving Scheme, standing order, weekly envelopes or by casual donations on-line, cheque or cash. After 2020, when there was severe disruption to services and attendance at church, 2021 saw an improvement and in 2022 we were back to a more normal pattern of attendance at services.

Although 2022 was a year of financial challenges on all fronts and we were never allowed to forget that by the media, our planned giving income for the 2022 financial year was almost £101,000; a little over £10,000 up on the previous year.

There was also an increase in casual giving with loose plate (cash and cashless giving via the card machine), Christmas Collections and Sundry Donations all up on 2021. The Yellow Gift Aid Envelopes are still used by a few regular members of the congregation and are a useful source of funds from visitors, although the card reader is being used more frequently for cashless donations.

Each year we lose members due to death or moving away and so any increase is always welcome. Thank you all for your contributions and in particular the new members and those who have increased their regular giving or made extra donations during the year.

The most popular method of regular giving is by monthly standing order, an easily managed method of supporting St Andrew's and is preferred by us as it provides a regular income stream and assists budgeting. If you would like further information about setting up a standing order please contact me or the Church Centre Office. I claim the Gift Aid on these donations if given permission by the donor.

Another method of regular giving is by the 'Parish Giving Scheme' (PGS) which is administered externally at no cost to us. This is a direct debit scheme where your contribution is debited from your bank account each month and received by us about ten working days later with gift aid (if applicable). The donor can also agree to automatic annual increases in line with inflation. Further information about this scheme can also be obtained from me or the Church Centre Office.

Income tax recovered via the Gift Aid Scheme is an important source of income for us; this amounted to a little over £24,000 in 2022 an increase of just over £1000 on 2021. If you are a tax-payer and we are not claiming on your contributions please consider authorising us to do so by contacting me for a simple declaration form. It is essential that all gift-aided donations are recorded by us as we must be able to identify donors and the contributions they have made in any tax year.

Thank you for your support!

*Jim Dawson  
Planned Giving and Gift Aid Recorder*

## **SILENT MEDITATION GROUP**

### *MAP Strand: Worship*

The Silent Meditation Group meets on every Friday except the first in the month at 10.30am to spend just 20 minutes in silence to make space and time to meditate in the company of others on a short passage from the Bible. We meet in the Chapel in St Andrew's Church which gives a peaceful and beautiful setting to aid meditation.



The recent addition of the glass cross above the altar is helpful as the flickering sunlight or passing clouds changes the way the light falls on it mirroring the way our moods can alter beyond our control.

Ghandi once said *'Speak only if it improves the silence'*

And Thomas Merton, a Christian monastic contemplative wrote *'It is not speaking that breaks the silence, but the anxiety to be heard. The words of the proud person impose silence on all others, so that they may be heard while the humble person speaks only in order to be spoken to.'*

The Dalai Lama XIV said *'Silence is sometimes the best answer'*

These three quotes give a perspective on silence which challenges us to question our outward response to the world and our relationship within it. They also invite us to consider entering more deeply into the gift of silence to find a balance between our inner and outer sense of being within the gift of God's peace in our contemporary world.

Silent meditation is a way of getting more in touch with what may be holding us back in our spiritual life and helping to free us as things come to the surface in our thinking and being. To meditate in the company of others is a very different experience from simply sitting in silence at home. Every meditation made is a different experience; sometimes it may be peaceful and sometimes thoughts come clamouring to the surface which can be revealing. Whatever our experience may be the most important aspect is the fact that the meditation takes place in an atmosphere of Christian prayer. It is in this way that each meditation is offered into the loving care of God's grace, mercy and peace which can bring new creative life to whatever has been experienced.

Jesus himself often withdrew from the hubbub of everyday life to meditate and draw closer to his Creator to find spiritual refreshment and new energy.

You would be most welcome to join us, you simply need to arrive in the Chapel at about 10.25am. No-one is an expert at meditating as within the spiritual life there is always more to discover. It is an adventure.

*Belinda Searle-Barnes*

## **ST ANDREW'S VISITORS**

*MAP Strand: Fellowship*

In January 2022 we said farewell and thank you to Sandie, our Parish Nurse, after 10 years of ministry amongst us. Just one of the aspects of Sandie's work was pastoral care for members of the congregation who were unwell, in hospital, or valued a visit at home from a friendly face.

Recognising the importance of pastoral care, and the inevitably limited number of visits the vicar can offer to such a large Church family, St Andrew's Visitors were born. To those who already offered home visits and home communions on behalf of the Church, we recruited a number of others who feel called to this ministry. St Andrew's Visitors are DBS checked and receive safeguarding training, inline with Church of England guidance.

If you, or someone you know from the Church family, would like a visit, whether as a one off or an ongoing basis, please do let Lucy know. Our Visitors always enjoy their visits just as much as the person being visited.

*Lucy Davis*

## **TALKING ELEPHANTS - BEREAVEMENT**

*MAP Strand: Kinship*

'Talking Elephants' provides the opportunity for the bereaved to overcome reluctance to talk about bereavement (the elephant in the room) and to exchange stories with others experiencing similar feelings of sadness and loss. They find comfort in being able to do so freely knowing that others are in the same situation.

At St Andrew's we meet at 2pm the first Thursday of the month in the Church Centre, a board is displayed as 'Talking Elephants!' and all are very welcome. We are lucky as the group at St Andrew's consists of Sheila, Henry, Pat, Jenny, Carol, Steven, who chat to the clients, and some of the new people come to Coffee and Company and now come to the services. This 'Talking Elephants' is also supported by members of St Andrew's Bereavement Group and is one of nine organized by Neville Funerals local to Luton. They provide a friendly informal welcome, laughter which helps with the sadness, alongside tea, coffee, biscuits and encourage conversations. We started about seven months ago with two or three present, the number has grown steadily to ten at our last meeting.

All are appreciative of the opportunity to talk and most say they will come again. They find it very therapeutic to talk about the elephant in the room. Please contact the group, through the Church Office, if you feel this service will help you.

*Sheila Bates and Henry Griffin*

## **TELEPHONE LINK CARERS (TLC)**

*MAP Strands: Fellowship, Kinship*

The Telephone Link Carers (TLC) service continues to provide weekly telephone calls to people who have little contact with others. Our calls range from two or three minutes to fifty minutes plus and if appropriate, we end the call with a prayer. The volunteers make the calls from their homes, which allows for more relaxed calls. We now have seven volunteers making calls and would welcome more volunteers. No particular skills are necessary apart from being a friendly voice willing to chat with the person we are calling, allowing them to lead the call. Please let me know (via the Church Office) if you would like join our team.

The main problem we have is finding enough people to call, which seems odd when we know there are many lonely people out there. Sandy, the Parish Nurse, recruited many of the people we call. We have offered to support Age UK's local chat line, but, although they have high demand, they seem to have enough volunteers at present. I have been to the Wednesday service to remind people of what we can offer.

If you know of someone who would welcome a weekly call, which can be as short or as long as the person would like, please let the Church Office know or complete one of the forms on the shelf in the Foyer.

*Fiona McLeod*

## **THE THURSDAY GROUP**

*MAP Strand: Discipleship*

Our Group continued to meet in person twice a month throughout 2022, studying with the Bible Reading Fellowship notes 'New Daylight'. We especially enjoyed learning more about 'Unfamiliar Voices of the Old and New Testament' such as Pharaoh's daughter, Rizpah, Zebedee, Pilate's wife, the poor widow and Barnabas, amongst others. Our studies are wide ranging and often challenging.

However, after 7 years of Bible study, mutual group support and much prayer, it was with mixed feeling that we stepped aside in December 2022. As with any group, it has a life cycle, and we both knew it was time to stop.

It's been an absolute pleasure for both of us to lead this group, borne out of an inspiration from Joy Wakeling back in 2015. For many years we met in her home, and our thanks to her for her generous hospitality. Our rapid transfer to Zoom was not without its frustrations and hilarity - almost in equal measures. Latterly we moved to the Quiet Room - an oasis of peace and prayerfulness.

With Lucy's encouragement we ended our study group with an intimate service of Holy Communion in the Chapel. Each of us had the opportunity to pray and light a candle as our time together drew to a close. Our mutual support continues socially, as firm friendships have been formed. We also outreach to one former member of the group in a local care home.

*Jenny Tomlinson and Diane Barlow*

## **TOASTIE CLUB**

*MAP strand: Discipleship*

Toastie Club emerged out of a one off event in July 2022, when we invited members of our Church family of Junior School age to an afternoon of faith, fun and fellowship in the vicarage garden. That afternoon saw 12 young people gather, and Toastie Club was born.

We now meet once a month late on a Sunday afternoon, under the leadership of Kelly and Lucy, and have 18 young people on the books, most of whom come along every time we have a session. In the Autumn Term we focused on the questions of who Jesus is, what he did and why he came, culminating in a memorable superhero themed Nativity Presentation in Church (ably facilitated by Kathryn Rose.) Toastie Club members also had a joint baking afternoon with the Events team, making cakes to sell at our Patronal Festival in aid of Emmaus; the children were rightly very proud to have raised £112.

The vast majority of Christians first came to faith aged under 18 years, and in Toastie Club we aim to nurture the faith of our young people to form a strong foundation for life. A typical session sees us enjoy food, games, a God slot, and each other's company, with a definite Youth group feel.

It is wonderful to be able to spend time with our young people, to see them grow in confidence, ask questions and form friendship.

Finally, if you are wondering where the name comes from, that's simple - we make and eat Toasties for tea together at each session!

*Lucy Davis*

## **TOWER BELL RINGERS**

*MAP Strand: Worship*

Many people describe church bells as 'the church's outside choir'. As such the bells are rung as a call to the principal services of the church, Sunday by Sunday, Festival by Festival. We aim to carry this out when we have sufficient ringers to make a joyful sound.

Bells and their ringing also have a role in the lives of members of the church family and are rung by invitation for weddings and funerals. We also mark celebrations in the life of St Andrew's itself and last year a Quarter Peal was rung to celebrate the centenary of the church

building.

Bells also play a part in marking significant occasions in the civic life of the country. Last year we tolled the tenor to mark the death of Queen Elizabeth II and it was tolled again on the day of her funeral. As ringers we also assisted in the ringing of the bells of St Paul's Bedford before the Proclamation of King Charles III.

We intend to 'Ring for the King' on May 6th and would welcome returning or visiting ringers to assist us.

*Barbara Woplin*

## **FROM THE VESTRY**

*MAP Strand: Worship*

Most of the servers have returned after Covid although we are still under some restrictions with masks until hopefully Easter. The ladies who prepare the elements and silverware on Fridays for the Sunday services have started again and some of the chalice assistants have also come back. Covid did throw a spanner in the works but we managed to keep going.

My thanks go to the members of the Vestry team who after Covid felt it was time for them not to come back. Many thanks for their service over the years to myself and St Andrew's.

I also want to thank my wife Marie who washes each week the altar linen we use at every service. Also my thanks to Barbara Hargreaves who washes and generally maintains the servers' albs.

My thanks also to Alan Colley who as assistant vergger is a great support to me. St Andrew's is a very active church and it sometimes takes the two of us to keep on top of things. There is a lot of background work which members of the church do not know about.

I would like to thank most sincerely all who are connected to the Vestry and give me their support and always say yes when I ask for their help. They are all dedicated and a pleasure to work with and love St Andrew's as I do.

*Gareth Burrows  
Vergger*

## **WELCOMERS**

*MAP Strand: Fellowship, Worship*

The Welcomer team has been established for several years (despite a hiatus during the Covid Lockdowns). The Welcomers aim to identify anyone new to the Church at the 10am service and make them feel comfortable and 'at home', even if they are just visiting that week.. We work closely with the sidespeople and Church Wardens. It is not unusual to identify two or three people who are new, and if they are quite new to our type of service we will find someone for them to sit beside to guide them through. Several new people have commented recently on the open welcome they received when they first came to the Church.

I hope over time that all the Welcomers have become competent in identifying the needs of the newcomer without overwhelming them with information and enthusiasm. If they are likely to continue to come to the Church, or are trying it out, we will offer them a Welcome Pack with details of the different Church activities. Ideally, if they are able to stay after the service we will take them through to coffee and introduce them to more people, as feels appropriate.

We can always do with a few more Welcomers so that there is someone to cover for holidays and someone extra to help out at busy Sundays like Easter and Remembrance Day. If you

would be interested in being a Welcomer, please speak to one of the Welcomers or myself.

*Fiona McLeod*

## **WORSHIP BAND**

*MAP Strand: Worship*

The worship band continues to enjoy being a part of worship at St Andrew's. The band has had to continue to provide the music on the first Sunday of each month. We are also pleased to be continuing to provide the music for the Sacred Space services that happen on a Sunday evening bi-monthly. In the morning service we usually include a children's song, which we try to choose carefully so that all ages can get involved! We continue to introduce new songs, and the evening Sacred Space service gives us an opportunity to teach new worship songs and hymns often taking a more contemplative style. We have recently purchased a Taizé hymn book to give us even more variety in choosing the hymns.

We are grateful to the supportive congregation at St Andrews who encourage us with praise and enthusiasm and we hope we are able to offer the opportunity for people to feel comfortable worshipping God in a variety of styles.

*Sam Rick*