

St Andrew's Church, Bedford



Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Celebrating the Life
of our Church

Sunday 21st April 2024

11:30 am

The Main Hall

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 2	Table of contents
Page 3	Agenda for Annual Meeting of Parishioners 2024
Page 4	Minutes of Annual Meeting of Parishioners 2023
Page 5	Agenda for Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2024
Page 6	Minutes of Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2023
Page 13	Electoral Roll Report
Page 13	PCC Secretary's Report 2023
Page 15	Deanery Synod Report
Page 15	Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments
Page 16	A Report on Safeguarding
Page 17	Mission Action Plan
Page 19	Book Circle
Page 19	Church Centre Management Committee (CCMC)
Page 20	Children and Families' Ministry
Page 21	Toastie Club
Page 22	Choir and Music
Page 22	Church Centre
Page 23	Coffee and Company
Page 24	Communications
Page 25	Concerts at St Andrew's
Page 26	Contemplative Prayer Group
Page 26	Creation Care
Page 27	Events Team
Page 28	Fairtrade
Page 28	Film Nights
Page 29	Flower Arranging (Altar Guild)
Page 29	Friends of St Andrew's
Page 30	Meditation Group
Page 30	Mission and Outreach Team
Page 32	Mothers' Union
Page 33	Pilgrim House Group
Page 33	Planned Giving
Page 35	Servers and Sacristans
Page 36	St Andrew's Visitors
Page 36	Telephone Link Carers (TLC)
Page 37	Tower Bell Ringers
Page 37	Welcomers
Page 38	Worship Band



THE ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS
to be held on Sunday 21st April 2024, 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 23rd April 2023**
- 2. Election of 2 Parochial Church Wardens**
- 3. Chair's Closing Remarks**



Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners

held on Sunday 23rd April 2023, at 11:30 am
in the Main Hall of St Andrew's Church, Bedford

Present: 88 adult parishioners and 12 children.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the last meeting held on the 1 May 2022

The minutes had been circulated and were proposed by Brenda Mayoh, seconded by John Thynne, agreed by those attending the meeting that they be confirmed and signed as a true record.

2. Election of Churchwardens

Two names nominations had been received for the roles of churchwarden:
Mrs Carol Wood - proposed by Suzanne Clackson, seconded by Sue Smith
Mr Ian Riches - proposed by Ben Clackson, seconded by Jenny Coggins

In the absence of any additional nominations Ian and Carol were elected en bloc as Church Wardens for the coming year.

3. Chair's Closing Remarks

The Vicar stated it had been a privilege over the last eighteen months to work with the two churchwardens Ian Smith and Carol Wood. The Vicar thanked them for all their diligent work and personally for holding her hands in the beginning, they were both wonderful to work with.

Statement of the JA & EC Hall Trust Fund:

(Vicar and Churchwardens Trust)

The Vicar stated that everyone had a sheet of paper on their seats about the Hall Trust Fund which was administered by the Vicar and churchwardens, she wished to remind everyone how blessed we are with this Trust. More will be heard about the Hall Trust in weeks to come as the accounts have still to be audited.



THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

to be held on Sunday 21st April 2024, 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 23rd April 2023**
- 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 2023**
 - 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 one year and 5 for three years**
- 5. Election of 1 representative to Deanery Synod**
- 6. Appointment of an Independent Examiner to the PCC**
- 7. A Report of the Ministry and Witness of the Church throughout 2023**
- 8. Questions**
- 9. Closing Remarks**

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

held on Sunday 23rd April 2023, at 11:30 am
in the Main Hall of St Andrew's Church, Bedford

Present: 88 adult parishioners and 12 children

1. **Apologies:** Apologies were received from 13 parishioners
2. **Minutes of the last meeting** held on the 1st May 2022, had previously been circulated and it was proposed by Pat Rogers, seconded by Fiona McLeod, agreed by those attending the meeting that they be confirmed and signed as a true record.

3. **To receive:**

a. Electoral Roll

2023 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 followed. The electoral roll for 2023 stands at 253, a gain of 12 members. Sue Smith (Electoral Roll Officer) stated she had nothing further to add to her report. 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 Parochial Church Council

The PCC Secretary, 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 taken on behalf of members of St Andrew's. The current PCC members were thanked for their attendance at meetings and their integrity. This was Christine's last annual meeting as PCC secretary and the Vicar thanked her for her fellowship collegiately over the last couple of years. This report was received.

c. A Report on the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod

Ann Mason was thanked for writing this statutory report providing a full account of the role of Deanery Synod and its members, St Andrew's has four representatives, plus Sheila Bissell who is a General Synod member, all of whom are also PCC members, and report back to PCC, which gives an overall picture of the Church of England and an insight into the life of other churches in Bedford. This report was received.

d. The Annual Report and Financial Statements 2022

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 treasurer, Lionel Mayoh, began with a quick run through of the Financial Statements for the 2022 accounts followed by an explanation of how things look for 2023. Highlighting some of the facts that the unrestricted net expenditure was £16,512 after adjustments gave a net surplus of £5,704 on the unrestricted fund. We began the year looking at a deficit of £4,900 but with an increase in planned giving, lettings, rental income from 5 St Minver Road etc improved the position and resulted in a deficit of £3,000. We should acknowledge the significant support afforded by the Hall Trust in assisting God's work here at St Andrew's.

Lionel wished to record his thanks to Gill Lake for once again examining the accounts and to the large group of people that assist him throughout the year, in particular Jim Dawson our Planned Giving and Gift Aid Recorder and to Kelly for managing the lettings.

Lionel was thanked not only for undertaking taking this considerable role on behalf of us all and his generosity with his time, thanks also to Brenda.

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

e. Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church

This was presented by the Churchwardens, Ian Smith and Carol Wood, explaining they have the responsibility to keep a watching brief on all matters connected with the Church. An annual revision of the Terrier and Inventory (Goods and Ornaments) and the new projects, changes and maintenance during the year were been included in the report. It was also in their brief 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. Safeguarding Report

This highly important aspect of life has been overseen for St Andrew's by Sheila Bissell, St Andrew's Parish 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, and Sheila thanked the relevant volunteers for undertaking, but emphasised that 'safeguarding is a job for everyone in church.' Sheila had nothing to add to her report but stated that she was now stepping down from this role. This report was received.

g. Mission Action Plan

This report covered the progress during the year on the five priorities 'Five Ships' Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, Kinship, Stewardship, with further information included in item 7 on the agenda 'A report on the Ministry and Witness of the Church throughout 2022'.

h. Reports from other Church Groups

A collection of reports on many aspects of church life illustrating a vibrant colourful church caring for one another showing the faith that drives us and representing the Ministry and Mission of this Church.

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

Thanks and appreciation was recorded to the retiring members for their contributions to the Parochial Church Council during their current term of office, namely: Christine Garrett, Angela Huddart, Jenny Tomlinson, Nneka Williams, some of whom were re-standing.

Five nominations had been received for five places, each of a three-year term of office, for the Parochial Church Council, namely: Roseanne Kinvig-Love, Andy Redfearn, Josephine Newton, Angela Huddart, Christine Garrett, and as there were no other nominations from the floor these five people were voted en bloc.

5. Election of Representatives to Deanery Synod

Thanks and appreciation was recorded to the retiring members of Deanery Synod for their contributions during their current term of office, namely: Gareth Burrows, Christine Garrett, Ann Mason, Elisabeth Thorne, some of whom were re-standing.

Three nominations had been received from Gareth Burrows, Elisabeth Thorne, Jenny Tomlinson, leaving one vacancy which would be possible to fill during the year if a nomination was received. These were adopted en bloc proposed by Alun Jones, seconded by Angela Huddart.

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner to the PCC

Gill Lake has expressed her willingness to continue in this role. It was proposed by Julia Routledge, seconded by Jim Dawson, and agreed by all those present, that Gill Lake be 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 2022

Offered by Revd Lucy Davis

You probably know that Anthony and I were away last week on our post Easter break; we had a glorious week in Norfolk, with blue skies meaning we could walk 10 to 12 miles each day without getting cold or wet. Some of those walks were new, but most we had done before in some form. The wonderful thing is that each time we walk favourite routes they are different - the blossom is out, or the tide is in, or the leaves change colour, or the broad Norfolk sky has a completely different character.

Don't worry, this is not going to turn into a 'what I did on my holidays,' rather, it is my job to reflect today on the road we travelled as a Church with God in 2022. Which brings us straight back to our Gospel reading this morning about the encounter on the road to Emmaus. One of my favourite images of Church, one I return to again and again, is the image of a walk in company. Essentially, for me,

that is what Church is: a walk in company. A journey of faith in the company of each other and of God.

As the disciples walked the 7 miles of road from Jerusalem to Emmaus that first Easter Day, the route would have been very familiar to them, the old familiar landmarks passing in and out of view. But that familiar walk was transformed by the presence of the risen Christ. No one route is ever the same twice, but this time it was transformed beyond recognition. And do you notice, even the final destination is not the end. Having got where they thought they were going, Clopas and his wife immediately get up and start walking, no running, back to Jerusalem again, to proclaim the good news.

After the strange terrain of COVID, it was wonderful in 2022 to return to familiar roads. It wasn't all easy to navigate; January saw restrictions back in place because of the Omicron variant, and some of our planned Centenary events had to be flexed. What an immense joy, then when finally in Holy Week we felt confident enough to take off our masks in worship and sing Alleluia at the top of our voices! The number of people coming back to attend worship in the building grew steadily during the year, and we are indebted to those who continue to operate the livestream, thereby enabling the dozen or so households who join us live, to continue to worship from home.

In the Spring term the Church family undertook a vision exercise to help us map the road ahead. 100 responses were collated from groups and individuals, and were carefully considered by the Mission Action Planning group and PCC, discerning our 5 priorities, or 5 ships: worship, discipleship, fellowship, kinship and stewardship. The accompanying Mission Action Plan maps possible developments in each of these areas, which are reflected in the reports in your booklet. I'd like briefly to pull out just a few things under each priority which have been particular markers on the journey of 2022, things that illustrate the road we travelled and the direction we are heading.

1. Worship

Worship of the living God is the foundation of everything we do; it is the road beneath our feet as we walk together. We are indebted to the small army of people who offer their ministry in ensuring our worship always offers our best to God week by week at St Andrew's.

During the year, after an initial service in March, we received permissions for a Romanian Orthodox congregation, led by Fr Ioan, to worship regularly at St Andrew's. They now gather in our building twice a month on a Tuesday evening, facilitated by Gareth and Alan. If you are ever free, it is well worth joining the Orthodox worship, with its wonderful beauty reflecting the transcendence of God. Of particular significance in 2022 was of course the visit of Bishop Alan for the celebration of our Centenary, and soon afterwards the wonderful Choral Evensong in June to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, both accompanied with appropriately celebratory refreshments. Sadly, of course, this was followed a few short months later by the death of Her Majesty, and services were held in thanksgiving for her life.

In July a number of us travelled to St Alban's Abbey for the ordinations of Diana Stretton and Anthony Davis. It was a wonderful occasion, and we look forward to returning this Summer as our new curate Joseph Barnes takes up his ministry as Deacon with us.

How fantastic was it to have a full round of Christmas services in 2022 after the restrictions of COVID! Christingle, handbells, 9 lessons and carols, a superhero nativity, crib service, Christmas Eve carols and midnight mass, all reflected the incarnation of God in Jesus, and we raised our voices with the angel choirs to welcome him.

2. Discipleship

The road all of us travel is that of discipleship, as we learn and grow individually and together into the likeness of Christ. I hope this is a Church that nurtures and holds the faith of people of all ages and stages. One of the most memorable moments for me this year was at Sam's Baptism in August, when he shared his moving testimony. And of course, we each have our own story with God; it's my privilege to hear many of these week by week in the privacy of sitting rooms and my study, as people share the ups and downs of life and faith.

However, the most visible sign of Discipleship at St Andrew's is perhaps our children's ministry, with a seemingly ever-increasing stream of young people making their way out to their groups on Sunday morning. These numbers have been swelled by the arrivals of baby Lucy Lees and James Sutcliffe, but childbirth is not the only source! Our children's work flourishes because of the ministry of huge numbers of volunteers, lead and guided by Elisabeth, and during her maternity leave by Roseanne. It's easy to forget just how blessed and unusual St Andrew's is. Across the Church of England, the number of children being disciplined in faith is plummeting year on year; we are bucking the trend here, and that is reason to rejoice, but also to take extremely seriously our responsibility to the young people in our midst. This is the vocation of the whole church, not just those who volunteer, and I am so grateful to those who quietly flex and adapt to welcome our families. Young people continue to serve us with their contributions to worship, especially in the choir and serving at the altar. And if you ever want a really good theological discussion, just engage one of our Toastie Club in conversation!

3. Fellowship

With the retirement of Sandy, our parish nurse, in January, and with a growing congregation, it became apparent that as a Church family we needed to expand our capacity for Pastoral Care. Coffee and Company, TLC and those already undertaking pastoral visits are now supported by St Andrew's Visitors, a group of individuals who have felt called to the ministry, have been trained and DBS checked, and visit people at home or in hospital on behalf of the Church. A reminder that you can contact me or the office if someone is unwell and needs a call or visit - we'd always rather hear seven times than not at all. Kelly and Karen are the heartbeat of the fellowship of St Andrew's, and their diligent work in many unseen areas makes our common life possible; GDPR may not be glamorous or exciting, but for example by making sure that permissions are in place the office makes pastoral ministry possible.

As we seek to become an ever more welcoming, inclusive Church, study groups were held in Lent and in the Autumn to look theologically at these themes. I would add that one of the reasons that people who visit St Andrew's for the first time and return to become members of the Church family is because of the quality of our welcome; my thanks therefore to those whose ministry it is to welcome on the door or behind the coffee pots, and also to those who offer a smile and a conversation to the angels we entertain unaware.

4. Kinship

A significant portion of our engagement with the community is through the Parish Centre, and the groups who use us week by week, so many of which are doing Kingdom work. It's important for us as a Church family to understand the immense value of this ministry undertaken on our behalf, and Kelly's ministry in particular to those who pass through the Centre in so many, often unexpected ways.

It was good to be able to extend this ministry when, with the help of some 30 volunteers, and Sheila in ensuring they all had DBS checks, we opened our Warm Room in the Autumn. The room saw over 200 visitors over the cold winter months, and offered not just warmth, but safety, companionship and dignity to those who came.

I also recognise this action of looking outwards and engaging more deeply with those outside our fellowship in the important work of the Mission and Outreach team in leading us into new partnerships with WorldVision in Pajule, the Trussell Trust and Emmaus Carlton. There is also emerging work with Citizens UK as we add our voices to those across the town to make changes to housing policy and support those moving out of homelessness.

5. Stewardship

Our Creation Care group, under the leadership of Ian Smith, has been working behind the scenes during 2022 to make significant inroads into both the Eco Church Awards and moving the Church towards net zero carbon. The group has people of mindboggling skill and talent, as is the case for so many areas of our common life, and we are indebted to them for the trail blazing work they are doing. A significant moment came in July, on the hottest day on record, when the PCC passed a resolution that the Church should become net zero carbon by 2030. This will not be an easy task, but is one which is demanded by our faith in a God who is of creation and God of the vulnerable.

All of these things that we did in 2022 reflect who we are. In the end, for me, they are all side effects. Important side effects, but side effects none the less, side effects of who we are, the people of God in this place walking together, with God, in company.

Words cannot express how much I value your company on the walk, each one of you. My thanks especially go to my ministerial colleagues and the Church Wardens who support me so much in my walk. But please know that the most valuable thing to me in this journey of faith is those I walk alongside, though ups and downs and changing landscapes and storms and broad blue skies, you - the family of St Andrew's.

8. Questions

A question relating to finance and possible changes to PCC expenses over the next two years was raised. The Treasurer responded, referring especially to gas prices which he hoped may have reached their peak.

9. Closing Remarks

The APCM is a time for change and today we thank several people who are handing over the baton of particular roles, following their years of service to St Andrew's and to furthering God's work in this place, though they all continue to serve the community in other ways.

David Rogers for years as a sidesperson and the countless miles David has walked behind the lawn mover maintaining the grounds around the Church so beautifully, and for his work maintaining a record of the history of this place which he is continuing with.

Nneka Willians and Ann Mason stepping down from PCC and Ann as a Deanery Synod representative/Deanery Synod secretary, thank you both. Nneka a quiet voice offering thoughtful pearls of wisdom and Ann has done many roles and sterling work with the Deanery.

Sheila Bissell in her role as Safeguarding Officer a very necessary position in these changing times.

Ian Smith whose term as Churchwarden comes to an end after six years of leadership and the huge task of bringing us through a vacancy. Ian has put a huge amount of energy and time into this role for which we are most grateful and for his commitment and guidance.

Christine Garrett - this took some research to work out how long Christine has been PCC secretary, it looks like twenty-nine years! Christine has been a mainstay of PCC and a wonderful support to the Vicars and Churchwardens, her knowledge of church matters, both at St Andrew's and the wider church community has been invaluable. Thank you.

Then we come to Lucy our Vicar, leading the Church out of the pandemic was not the easiest of tasks, but she has taken us on as her flock and led us through to new pastures. Lucy's vision and commitment to God's work in this place is total and she has embraced us kindly, bringing new insights and ideas. We thank you Lucy for your continuing care for each of us, as you pray for us we continue to pray for you.

The meeting closed at 12:35 with the Grace.



St Andrew's Church,
Bedford

REPORTS TO THE 2024 APCM

ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT

The Electoral Roll has been revised this year in accordance with the Church Representation Rules.

- In April 2023 there were 253 persons on the electoral roll.
- On 23rd March 2024 there are 264 persons on the new Electoral Roll.

Of these, 175 live outside the parish.

Sue Smith
Electoral Roll Officer

PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT

The PCC of St Andrew's Church is charged with the responsibility to conduct the business of the church in pursuit of the aims and values of the Mission Action Plan, and in 2023 the PCC consistently conducted this business with patience, prayer, reflection, discussion and respect, as well as an abundance of good humour and forbearance! The members of the PCC are a balance between statutory members, and those elected from the Electoral Roll of the church family. Each year all church members are encouraged to consider serving on the PCC to enhance a diversity of opinions and perspectives, and promote a culture of openness and inclusion.

The PCC met 7 times in 2023, and are tasked to:

- enable the church to play its part in God's mission to the world.
- co-operate with the Vicar in sharing leadership.
- ensure legal compliance with charity and ecclesiastical law, including:
 - Safeguarding
 - Finance
 - Employment
 - Appointments
- care for the buildings and churchyard so that they best support the church's mission and ministry.
- be a channel of consultation within the wider church through its synodical structures on matters that affect the church nationally and locally.

The Standing Committee of the PCC met 5 times in 2023. They set the agenda for PCC meetings, transact the business of the PCC between meetings, and have oversight of governance including HR.

CCMC, Mission and Outreach and Finance Committee are delegated subcommittees of the PCC.

PCC Membership

The PCC members are Trustees of St Andrew's as a charity. Membership of the PCC is decided by canon law, and consist of:

The Vicar

The Curate

2 Churchwardens. Elected for a one-year term.

Up to 15 PCC representatives of the laity. Elected for a three year term, with a rotation of one third (5 members) being elected each year.

Up to 5 Deanery Synod representatives. Elected for a three-year term.

Up to 3 co-opted members. Elected for a one-year term.

Elected members of General Synod.

In 2023, the membership was as follows:

Statutory Members

Revd Canon Lucy Davis	Incumbent	
Revd Joseph Barnes	Curate	(from 1 st July 2023)
Ian Smith	Church Warden	(until 23 rd April 2023)
Carol Wood	Church Wardens	
Ian Riches	Church Warden	(from 23 rd April 2023)

Representatives of the Laity

Sally Coleman	
Viki Evans	
Christine Garret	(PCC Secretary until 23 rd April 2023)
Roseanne Kinvig-Love	(PCC Secretary from 23 rd April 2023)
Angela Huddart	
Valerie Littleford	
Lionel Mayoh	(PCC Treasurer)
Tim Retout	
Sue Smith	
Alistair Sutcliffe	
Jenny Tomlinson	(until 23 rd April 2023)
Nneka Williams	(until 23 rd April 2023)
Sam Pitkin	(co-opted May 2023),
Jo Newton	(from 23 rd April 2023)
Andrew Thomas	
Natasha Vaughan	(co-opted May 2023)

Deanery Synod Representatives:

Sheila Bissell	(member of General Synod)
Elisabeth Thorne	
Gareth Burrows	
Jenny Tomlinson	(from 23 rd April 2023)
Ann Mason	(until 23 rd April 2023)
Carol Wood	(until 23 rd April 2023)

Other dedicated members of the church family who assist in specific areas of care and support include Phil Kino (Health and Safety), and Kelly Agler-Good (Deputy Recruiter and Data Control Officer).

Over 2023 the PCC has met the challenges and changes of the year prayerfully and purposefully and would like to thank all of the members of St Andrew's Church for their contributions and support.

*Roseanne Kinvig-Love
PCC Secretary*

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

Deanery Synod met through 2023 in the usual format - gathering for refreshments prior to a more formal meeting, giving opportunity for representatives across the deanery to meet informally. The meetings take a formal format in the first part, with reports from finance and policies - safeguarding is a regular agenda item underpinning the message of importance for all churches. The second part of the meeting offers opportunity for an invited speaker to present to the synod members, on a range of topics that are key to the deanery and diocese, developed from the MAP. These presentations for 2023 included an engaging and emotive presentation from prison chaplains and how the deanery can positively engage with ex-offenders; a Diocesan let presentation from the communications director talking about his role in supporting mission and ministry; and most recently a passionate presentation and discussion led by young people from one of the deanery churches - they spoke about how adult leaders can actively engage with young people and the environment in the church.

Deanery Synod affords its members the opportunity to develop lines of communication between parochial church councils and discuss collective concerns to be brought to Diocesan Synods. Looking forward to 2024, deanery synod will be looking at how better to utilise this lateral and vertical communication to best serve the needs of the church on the local and regional level.

*Elisabeth Thorne
Deanery Synod Representative*

REPORT ON THE FABRIC, GOODS AND ORNAMENTS

At the beginning of each calendar year the Church Wardens spend quite a few hours completing the Church Property Register, known as the 'Terrier and Inventory'. In this there is a full listing of the fabric, goods and ornaments of the Church and Church Centre. Hymn books and kneelers are counted, contents of cupboards checked, and it is an opportunity to inspect basically everything, to ensure they are in good condition and that nothing is missing. Whilst doing the check we also learn more about the history of St Andrew's and about the generosity of parishioners, past and present. We are fortunate to be so well resourced both in the Church and in the Centre. Happily, all items were accounted for in January 2023 and January 2024.

We are also fortunate to be so well resourced with people. We are grateful to our Verger, Gareth, to the Centre Manager, Kelly, to Alan Colley and the Church Centre Management Committee and to everyone, employed and volunteer, who gives so generously of their time, expertise, and talents to maintain and support the fabric of our property in the furtherance of the mission of St Andrew's Church. We always find a cheerful welcome in Centre Office, and we thank Karen for her generous support of us and of St Andrew's as we wish her a happy and fulfilling retirement.

2023 saw the Creation Care team, under the Chairmanship of Ian Smith, introducing changes which have led to St Andrew's being awarded the Silver ECO Church Award. Subtle changes to light bulbs, monitoring of energy usage, and other initiatives have been introduced with much of the work going on behind the scenes. Thanks are due to Andrew Love for many hours spent making these changes, and thanks also to Gareth Burrows who saw through the project to introduce solar panels on the Centre roof.

We take this opportunity formally to thank each one of you, across the generations, who support the week-by-week ministry and mission of St Andrew's - to each of us God has given differing gifts and it is wonderful to see them being shared and offered within and beyond our Church and parish.

Ian Riches & Carol Wood
Churchwardens

A REPORT ON SAFEGUARDING

The PCC has a legal requirement to report on safeguarding progress and include a statement as to whether they have complied with their duty to have 'due regard' to the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance. We can confirm that the PCC has complied with this duty.

The Safeguarding Team consists of Lucy, Joseph, Jo Newton (Parish Safeguarding Officer and Lead Recruiter), Carol Wood (Deputy Parish Safeguarding Officer and Churchwarden), Sally Coleman (Safeguarding Administrative Support), Elisabeth Sutcliffe (Deputy Parish Safeguarding Officer and Children and Families Minister) and Kelly Agler Good (Deputy Recruiter and Church Operations Manager). We are extremely grateful to Sheila Bissell for her work as Parish Safeguarding Officer over many years and to Christine Garrett for stepping in to hold the fort in the interval between Sheila standing down last spring and me taking up the role in September.

Much of our focus this year has been on developing our use of the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard and Hub, a tool produced by the Diocese that enables us to

- keep a record of our safeguarding policies and procedures.
- list and regulate church activities approved by the PCC that involve children or vulnerable adults: the PCC has approved 10 such activities.
- create role descriptions for both volunteer and paid roles within the church.
- keep a record of DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks and safeguarding training undertaken by our volunteers.

The Dashboard and Hub automatically flags up when safeguarding policies need to be reviewed and creates a Safeguarding Action Plan for us. Actions highlighted in the Plan currently include updating risk assessments for some church activities, creating role descriptions for volunteers, and checking that all church volunteers have up to date DBS checks and safeguarding training that is appropriate to their roles. We are gradually working through these actions.

Risk assessments recently reviewed include those for Coffee and Company, St Andrew's Visitors, and the Church Choir, while work on role descriptions is still ongoing. Our focus as far as DBS checks and training are concerned has been initially on our children's ministry volunteers. I am so grateful to the leaders of activities who have assisted with these tasks as well as to those volunteers who have responded to emails, renewed their DBS certificates, and refreshed their safeguarding training. I am aware of how time-consuming this can be, but it is vital not only for keeping our young people and vulnerable adults safe but also for protecting the volunteers themselves who generously give up their time for the church community.

On a less administrative note, we celebrated Safeguarding Sunday on 19th November 2023. At the 8 and 10am services, Lucy commissioned the safeguarding team, while, in his sermon, Joseph reminded us that safeguarding issues could affect any one of us. One startling statistic he gave us was that the most common form of abuse currently is financial abuse of older people.

I look forward to continuing to work with the team and to getting to know more members of the congregation as we work together to make St Andrew's a safer church environment.

*Jo Newton
Parish Safeguarding Officer*

MISSION ACTION PLAN

The current incarnation of St Andrew's Mission Action Plan was first created in July 2022, after a whole church consultation exercise including prayer, preaching and reflection. This was then followed by review and refining by both the MAP Committee and the PCC, where the focus areas of the church were distilled into 5 'ships'; Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, Kinship and Stewardship. These areas of development are supported by aims and actions encapsulating the work of the whole church, and reviewed and updated at each PCC meeting.

In July 2023 the PCC undertook a further reflective discussion exercise to identify the main priorities of the church as a whole for the year ahead, of which there are three:

- Children's Discipleship
- Community Engagement
- Culture of Inclusion

The MAP values define the heart of the work at St Andrew's, and some highlights in 2023 included:

- Worship - Further opportunities for prayer at the back of church with a prayer tree and pebble bowl, to encourage corporate and multi-sensory prayer.
- Discipleship - Courses over the seasons of Lent and Advent with study and discussion open to all. Over the year, more people have also begun to discern a call to licenced ministry with the support of church leadership. Expansion of the Children and Families ministry staff team has seen an increase in young people joining and getting further involved in church activities and furthering their own discipleship journey.
- Fellowship - In January, after a successful series of inclusive church study groups, St Andrew's officially became an Inclusive Church. As Inclusion is now one of our top mission priorities, the inclusive church study sessions will continue to develop our understanding of what it means to live and love inclusively.
- Kinship - St Andrew's became a major supporter of the Bedford Winter Night Shelter, providing both financial assistance and volunteers from the church family. Volunteers also supported the St Paul's Warm Room, and together these initiatives provided care and aid day and night to the local community in need.
- Stewardship - Under the leadership of the Creation Care group, and the commitment of all groups and members of the church family, St Andrew's achieved a Silver A Rocha Eco Church Award, practising and promoting stewardship in both the church and wider community, particularly with the Autumn Green Fair.

The entire church family has been encouraged to continue engaging with the MAP, and the PCC and church leadership continue to ensure that all we do and all we are is focussed on building God's Kingdom heading into 2024 and beyond, and we thank everyone for their contributions and support.

*Roseanne Kinvig-Love
PCC Secretary*

REPORTS FROM CHURCH GROUPS

(Arranged Alphabetically)

Book Circle

MAP strand: Fellowship

We have been meeting monthly in 2023. We have read a great variety of books, some more popular than others, both fiction and non-fiction, but always producing an animated and lively discussion. To mention a few of these books:

'I Capture the Castle' by Dodie Smith is about an eccentric family struggling to live in genteel poverty in a decaying castle, narrated by teenager Cassandra.

'The Road Home' by Rose Tremain - a wise and intriguing story about a contemporary migrant's experience.

'Small Things like These' by Claire Keegan - a good, honest man works hard to provide for his wife and five daughters but his past is still with him. He must confront the truth of one of Ireland's infamous Magdalene laundries.

'The Island of Missing Trees' by Elif Shafak is a heartbreaking tale of belonging, identity, love and trauma involving a Greek Cypriot boy and a Turkish Cypriot girl, with a very unusual fig tree!

'The Road to Wigan Pier' by George Orwell - a searing account of working-class life in the bleak industrial heartlands of Yorkshire and Lancashire in the 1930s.

Valerie Johnston

Church Centre Management Committee (CCMC)

MAP strand: Worship, Stewardship

CCMC's role is to maintain the fabric of the church and Church Centre in conjunction with the Vicar and churchwardens in whom 'legal possession' of the buildings is vested, as well as the Curate's house at 5 St Minver. 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 and we meet every three months.

We completed a number of projects in 2023. The solar panels were installed on the Centre roofs; the eaves and soffits of both the church and Church Centre were repainted; the path to the church porch was renewed; there were a number of other minor fabric repairs (e.g., roof tiles replaced, gullies repaired); workdays were held at church and at 5 St Minver - thank you to all who took part; wheels were added to the choir stalls - they make such a difference to the frequent reorganisation of the choir area; a further rack for publicity material was installed in the Centre foyer and the main side wall at 5 St Minver was repointed. Work is ongoing to replace the fluorescent lighting in the Centre - this work has been completed in the church - and working out what needs to be done to the four boilers and heating systems is ongoing.

I am very grateful for the help in particular of Andrew Love and David Routledge who will set their minds to any task that needs doing and to Gareth Burrows for his persistence in bringing projects to fruition.

We have a number of projects on the boil for 2024 which will keep us busy. I am grateful for all the work done behind the scenes by members of CCMC, Centre Staff and the congregation to keep the buildings of St Andrew's shipshape.

Alan Colley
Chairman

Children and Families' Ministry

MAP strand: Discipleship

Sunday Morning Groups

On Sunday mornings, we have continued to run two children's groups, and numbers of young people attending has increased: we now have more than 20 children most Sundays. To meet the needs of our families, we have begun to run groups on Sundays in the school holidays too, sometimes bringing all the children together as one group. We use the ROOTS materials as a resource, but each leader draws on their own gifts and skills to lead the groups. For the younger group, the leaders met in the autumn to plan together. We now have a consistent pattern for how the group runs which is important for these younger children, whilst still leaving room for everyone's own creativity. In 2024, with these growing numbers of children, we will consider how we can organise the groups to best journey alongside our young people as we explore our faith in God together.

Noah's Ark

Noah's Ark continues to run on Monday mornings in school term times. It's a place where toddlers and parents/carers can meet, be listened to and be refreshed with drinks and a snack. But also, through our welcome and our story time and prayer, they are given the opportunity to meet with God, sometimes for the first time. A highlight this year was our toddler nativity where parents were delighted to see their young children dress up as some of the people and animals from the story!

This is a place in our church life where we reach a little further out into our local community and it is really valued by those who come; our numbers peaked at nearly 50 children attending some weeks in the autumn. We hope we can continue to build links with families from here.

Messy Church

Our Messy Church gathers six times a year and we always welcome families we know as well as those who are new. We take a range of themes and stories about God and a small team plans crafts, activities, worship and food for everyone to enjoy. At our Messy Church about Jonah, our memorable 'climb in' whale and 'spewing pompom whale cups' went down a storm!

Messy Church involves lots of resources and many volunteers giving their time and energy but is a great stepping point for welcoming families from our wider community to join us for worship. Next year, we will consider how we can reach out to these families more often, to help build community.

All Age Worship

Our monthly all age service continues to develop and welcome people of all ages, including families who come regularly and those who are beginning their journey of faith. We have continued to see an increase in the number of families attending this service - we have sometimes welcomed over 30 children. We see faith deepening too, and it was also a delight in December to prepare and welcome four children to receive communion for the first time.

It is a service where, despite being planned thoroughly and carefully with a range of people from our congregation, we never quite know what is going to happen. That is part of its joy, and it offers the chance to meet with God in new ways. It has also been a pleasure for our young people to lead more and more of our all age worship.

Thanks

Many thanks must go to Roseanne Kinvig-Love for all her work during my maternity leave, and it has been wonderful to welcome her back since November as our Children's Worker. Her time and talents will help us to continue growing and developing our ministry with children and families.

Nurturing the faith and spirituality of our children is something that we do as a whole church family, and of course our young people help lead us on our journey of faith too. However, our children and families' ministry could not flourish without our Children's Ministry Volunteers who offer their time and gifts, and who walk closely alongside our young people - thank you.

*Elisabeth Sutcliffe
Children and Families' Minister*

Toastie Club

Toastie Club meets once a month on a Sunday afternoon, under the leadership of Kelly and Lucy, assisted by Elisabeth and Joseph. More than 20 children have come over the course of the year, with many of these coming to every session. A typical session sees us enjoy food, games, and a God slot, with a definite Youth group feel. If you are wondering where the name comes from, that's simple - we make and eat Toasties for tea!

The significance of Toastie Club is the joy of belonging, the importance of friendships outside school, and the commitment of adult Christians to the well-being of our young people; these are the foundations in which faith can be explored and rooted. Our young people offer incredibly insightful reflections on everything from Biblical authority to the nature of forgiveness, and their theological understanding is astounding.

This year has seen Toastie Club take on wider leadership within the vision of St Andrew's. As well as writing and leading the Christmas nativity presentation, they did a sponsored sleep out for Emmaus Carlton and led a service for Homelessness Sunday, which helped the Church to take the step of seed funding Bedford Winter Night Shelter. At the suggestion of one of our members, we have also done a litter pick in Bedford Park, bringing some willing adult volunteers with us.

If you feel called to help journey with the young people of St Andrew's, do speak to Kelly or Lucy about helping to facilitate Toastie Club.

Lucy Davis

Choir and Music

MAP strand: Worship

Once again music at St Andrew's worship has been very diverse. Librarian Pat Quickenden has been kept very busy as the choir has sung 57 different anthems, only repeating 5 during the year, has sung 8 different service settings at evensong and 6 sets of Responses. All of which points to the immensely hard work which takes place on Friday evenings at choir practices, preceding for some the following relaxation at The Park (!). There have been some comings and goings in the choir: Head Chorister Lucas' voice has descended below treble pitch and sister Izzy has also departed, and Rosie has left to pursue more sporting activities. However, Charlotte has recently joined us and Phoebe is also at the time of writing about to become a treble. This gives us therefore currently a girls' treble choir, but we remain hopeful that boys will embrace the prospect of singing with us! And in other news, Cecilia Kilpatrick, former Head Chorister, has just been offered a place at Murray Edwards College (formerly New Hall), Cambridge. We all wish her well.

No doubt the congregation will have noticed the new choir look with the addition of surplices in the adult choir, brightening the landscape in the chancel. Among the adult choir we are delighted to welcome Wendy back after a long absence, Sandra has joined the sopranos and Ruby-Louise and, more recently, Roy have both joined the altos. Henry Vann (with son Frankie) has been a most welcome addition to the basses. The choir thus numbers a nominal 27, though does not often appear in its entirety. It does however appear in greater numbers, often between 35 and 40, (providing Pauline Newberry with many statistical problems in the robe department) for Choral Evensongs and other occasions - Advent Processional, 9 Lessons and Carols and on Palm Sunday the Cross of Christ which will include choruses from Handel's Messiah and Bach's St John Passion with other Passiontide anthems. We also sang Handel's Zadok the Priest in our celebration of the new King's Coronation.

As well as the other great concerts promoted by CASA there has been another mini organ recital series during the winter months, given by Ian Runnells, former organist of St Paul's Church, Justin Waters, well-known in this area and a frequent accompanist to our evensongs, and the St Andrew's Director of Music. These have been very well attended, and the audiences have been most generous in their donations, enabling the church to pass on much-needed funds to charities.

*Paul Seale-Barnes
Director of Music*

Church Centre

MAP strand: Kinship

I feel like we always say the same things in these reports. In some ways, this is how it is meant to be. It can be quite comforting to know that things tick on. It is reassuring that nothing drastic has happened. We are doing what we are meant to do. Which is what we always do. So, with this introduction I will say that the Church Centre continues to do what the parishioners of St Andrew's feel is an important ministry and aspect of this Church. The Church Centre continues to be an outreach to the community and support to the church family of St Andrew's Church.

The Church Centre has seen an increase in community bookings for the 2023 year. I was pleased to hear that we are a preferred booking venue by more than one of these community groups. This is not entirely due to cost effectiveness. Many community bookers cite our incredible staff who are happy to greet them, help with IT, set-up and tear down and sometimes have a bit of time for a friendly chat. It can mean a lot when a booker has just lost a family member, and those in the Church Office are able to connect with that person before they chair a meeting.

We continue to be a place where the NHS, Goldington Avenue Flu Clinic, Tibbs Dementia Foundation, Baby College, Bedford Academy of Dance and various U3A groups come to ensure their meetings, programmes, classes, and training days all go according to plan. This is by no means the full breadth of what we have coming into the Centre. Let us not forget the yoga and Pilates groups, birthday parties, community fundraisers...well, I should stop there. There are many more types of bookers that we see through these doors. We do our best treat all of them as part of the St Andrew's family.

The Centre would not exist if it were not for St Andrew's Church. I am pleased that we are also an invaluable resource to our own Church community. Lent lunches, film nights, Christmas lunches, children's activity mornings, music presentations...here I go again. This is by no means an exhaustive list of what occurs in the Church Centre. No matter what we have in our Centre, our staff will always try to show whatever is in, from church function to NHS away days and everything in between, the same care and support to ensure a successful event.

While I hope to convey that the Centre is flourishing, I must impress upon you that this is not possible without the staff that we have here in the Church Office and Centre. To say this has been a difficult year for me personally would be a massive understatement. I could not have got to the end of 2023 without our administrative assistant, Karen Parrott and our Caretaker Giovanni Esposito. I would like to take this time to thank them for all their incredible hard work in our Centre and Office, lunch time practice test sessions with me as I prepared to take the UK citizenship test, the supportive conversations as I navigated grief, and for giving me the grace to make more than one mistake. Finally, I would thank St Andrew's Church. 2023 has been one heck of a year but I look forward to 2024 when I can write that everything is ticking on as usual. With maybe some changes here or there, but ministry as usual keeps going on.

*Kelly Agler Good
Operations Manager*

Coffee and Company

MAP strands: Fellowship, Kinship

Coffee and Company is exactly what it says! It is a monthly coffee morning that provides opportunities to chat with friends and make new ones. It is for all ages and attracts folk from church and the local community. Some stay from 10 till 12 while others drop in for half an hour or so.

During 2023 the number of visitors has gradually increased to near pre-pandemic levels. Most Fridays we serve between 50 - 60 people. Tables are set in the foyer, community room and up the stairs into the library area. In the summer a few tables are set outside under the porch.

There is no charge for the coffee/tea, and cake, but donations are invited towards running costs. Due to the amazing generosity of our visitors, we have been able to share £750 between The Children's Society, The Salvation Army and Foodbank. Thank you very much indeed.

None of this would be possible without the Coffee and Company Team giving joyous and gracious service so generously. Whether your choice is coffee or tea, it will be brought to your table with a slice of cake and a smile. In addition, behind the scenes, we have the kitchen crew washing up and packing away. Thank you very much for all your hard work which is much appreciated.

Most grateful thanks also go to Kelly and Karen for the notices and flyers, and to Giovanni for putting out the tables for us, sometimes very early in the morning!

Diane Barlow

Communications

MAP strands: All

Communication is an ever-evolving entity in our world and St Andrew's aims to continue to improve how we affectively communicate with not only the Church, but the surrounding community as well.

St Andrew's continues to produce weekly email newsletters to keep parishioners informed of Church events, community events, programmes, and news. Last year our contact list was 278, however this year we saw an increase to 295 subscribers. We continue to print a weekly pew sheet (notice sheet) for those attending Church that not only gives information regarding the services but notices about Church events and news.

We continue to update our website with news, informational articles on the blog, and Church events. We endeavour to update the website on a weekly basis, but minor changes can be made at any time. This year we have seen a visit rate on our website of 2.5k visitors. The most visited areas of the website are the *What's On* page, the monthly calendar, our blog full of information and news related articles written by parishioners and clergy, and the *Who's Who* page. We are always looking for more articles from our parishioners to put on our blog so please do send in your pieces for our blog. These blog posts continued to be shared through the e newsletter and reproduced in print form in the 'St Andrew's Digest' available free of charge at the back of Church. The calendar section of the website sees high traffic, and again we produce a monthly printed dates sheet for those who are not online or who would like a paper copy. These are available at the back of Church and in the foyer.

We continue to engage through social media, posting on Facebook. This is a wonderful way of staying connected with people in the broader community who may attend services less frequently but are still interested in what goes on at church. By the end of 2023, our Facebook page had reached 125k people. This number is comprised of different people and not repeat viewers.

Our parish newsletter, *Centred*, continues to be delivered to every household in the parish thanks to all our amazing volunteers. We see continued fruit of all your efforts as people tell us that they have heard about functions or events from reading *Centred*.

The communication in our Church and to the wider community cannot happen without all our parishioners. Your contributions, your time and volunteering to ensure communication goes out is greatly appreciated. We are all in communications together. Thank you for continuing to partner with us as we ensure the Church and community are aware and up to date with all that we are doing in St Andrew's Church.

*Kelly Agler Good
Operations Manager*

Concerts at St Andrew's

MAP strand: Fellowship, Kinship

It has been another year of exciting and entertaining concerts at St Andrew's. We continue to attract people through the doors who may not otherwise come into a church, and we are known in the community for providing high quality live music at an affordable price.

The last year has seen the establishment of a very successful series of organ recitals on Sunday afternoons in January to March, featuring Paul Edwards, Miriam Reveley, Paul Searle-Barnes, Ian Runnells and Justin Waters. In 2023 we again hosted the Bedford School Prize Winners' Concert, which demonstrated the musical talent that surrounds us if it is given the encouragement to develop. In May we hosted Symphonia Academica with a piano trio playing Haydn, Fauré and Beethoven. Opus 18, a community choir directed by Evelyn Sutherland, had a very successful concert in June, raising lots of money for charity (they will be returning this summer). The distinguished sitar player Jonathan Mayer and Denis Kucherov (tabla) entertained us with the fascinating sound of traditional Indian music in September. The Come and Sing in October broke all records proving very popular with singers from a large area with Fauré's Requiem. The series ended with the very welcome return of Kitty Whately and Joseph Middleton with a recital which celebrated English song, and particularly those composers associated with Ralph Vaughan Williams, many of whom had experienced the years of the First World War. Kitty read Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen' in tribute to those who had suffered in that war and all others since.

We have already had a very successful beginning to 2024, with The Silvana Duo proving extremely popular with arrangements of works which, while widely known, were given a new twist through the unusual combination of flute and classical guitar. The most recent concert featured Paul Turner (piano) and Julian Metzger (cello) in an evening devoted to women composers' - music which is at last deservedly becoming more widely known. Look out for the rest of the 2024 series, which includes Paul Searle-Barnes' Orion Trio, the classical saxophone, Rossini and jazz!

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 take this opportunity to thank them for their commitment. I also wish to thank Carolyn Sampson OBE, our Patron, for her continued support. And of course I would like to thank again the Quavers, who make it possible to attract top quality performers through their generous donations.

Stephen Rogers

Contemplative Prayer Group

MAP strands: Discipleship, Worship

The purpose of this group is to provide a space in which to explore and engage in silent prayer and contemplation. We use different prayer techniques including those inspired by the St Ignatian tradition such as the examen and lectio divina. This year we have drawn on liturgy from the Iona Community, used the poetry of Nicola Slee and Mary Oliver, considered the concept of wintering as written about by Katherine May and participated in Centering Prayer. We meet virtually on Zoom on the last Thursday of the month at 8.30pm for about 30 minutes of which 5-10 mins is silent prayer but have met in person once to explore different kinds of prayer including the use of a small labyrinth.

Members of the group have also taken up the offering of half day retreats privately led by Jen Goodyer, a spiritual director and member of St Andrews who opens up her home to give people space and time to rest and recuperate. Whilst these retreats are not directly linked to St Andrews or this group, they build on the offer we provide in this group, for people to further explore their spirituality through silence and contemplation.

The group is in its seventh year and there are 26 members of a linked WhatsApp group.

Of this wider group, there are about eight regular attendees to the Zoom meetings. The WhatsApp group continues to be a supportive forum where people share events of possible interest to members and respond to prayer requests for one another. We remain open to new members who can participate as much or as little as they choose.

Rosemary Thomas

Creation Care

MAP strand: Stewardship

During 2023 there has been great progress made in St Andrew's approach to Creation Care thanks to the hard work of a large number of people and I would particularly like to thank the members of the Creation Care Steering Group.

Significant achievements this calendar year have been:

- The replacement of the majority of light bulbs with LED lamps
- The installation of Solar Panels on the roof of the Hall
- The purchase and use of compost bins to recycle all food waste
- Monitoring of our energy use to identify areas where savings can be made
- Participation in the October Green Fair
- Production of a Progress Booklet in November
- The awarding of the ECO Church Silver Award in November
- Recycling bins in all rooms in the Church Centre
- A meeting with the Diocesan Energy Advisor
- Developed a Church Heating Strategy

- Initiated "Sustainability Journey", a year-long series of monthly studies on aspects of sustainability, including discussions following the 10am service
- Took part in the "Big Garden Birdwatch" established by the RSPB

The results of some of the above initiatives have resulted in savings as follows:

- Bulb replacement - between 11% and 93% reduction in power use (depending on which lights)
- Solar Panels - generating approximately 8MWh in the first year of operation - a welcome improvement on the 6.9MWh anticipated in design. We use half of this ourselves and sell the remainder back to the grid
- Compost Bins - almost no food waste is now put in the weekly Black Bins

We are now working on the next, and more difficult, stage of development. In order to achieve our ECO Church Gold Award we need to encourage members of the whole church family to undertake some of the savings (if they do not already do so) and demonstrate that these are happening. In order to reduce heating costs we need to investigate new heating systems, which will be expensive. Work has already started on this but there is still a lot more to do before we can make any tangible progress.

If anyone has any further ideas which we do not appear to have considered then please do talk to any member of the Steering Group.

*Ian Smith,
Chair, Creation Care Steering Group*

Events Team

MAP strand: Fellowship

The Events Team had an enjoyable but busy time during 2023 providing and organising the catering for many church occasions. During the early part of the year the church had opened a warm room as a refuge for anyone struggling with the rising cost of heating their homes. With this in mind we offered our soup lunches during Lent as usual with a donation box in aid of the local Foodbank, but without any obligation to pay! We welcomed some very grateful newcomers and still made a healthy profit for the charity due to everyone's generosity!

Throughout the year we covered Lent, Easter, Baptism Anniversary, Confirmation, Picnic Lunches, the Coronation, Harvest Lunch, Bereavement tea, Andrewtide and Christmas festivities! The biggest event on our agenda was The Green Fair in the autumn when we served food and drink non-stop for 3 hours over the lunchtime! This was very successful but completely exhausting! Making this last comment brings me to sincerely thank all our very dedicated helpers, many now pensioners and some well into their eighties, and to appeal from the heart for more younger people to join us when and wherever you are available. Remember that we do have fun which was evident on Shrove Tuesday this year as Ian Smith joined us in tossing the pancakes-all successfully caught in the pan and enjoyed by all!

*Pat Rogers
Chair*

Fairtrade

MAP strand: Kinship

As we reported this time last year, the shop's manager had resigned and Traidcraft, our largest supplier, went out of business. But Daily Bread in Northampton has now assumed that role and supplies us with fairly traded, ethically sourced and green products to support our mission of being fair to people and planet.

Our sales in 2023 of over £20,000 was encouraging against the backcloth of the cost-of-living crisis. But now we really do need new blood to carry the baton and bring fresh ideas, enthusiasm, and energy into running the shop. There are lots of interesting and fulfilling jobs, eg serving in the shop, ordering stock, pricing it, keeping the shop display eye-catching, delivering orders, running outside events to spread the word, and, of course, someone to co-ordinate and oversee all of these.

We support the charity Transform Trade, which helps to develop fairtrade producers and ensures they receive a fair price for their products. Fairtrade at St Andrew's is part of a large network of outlets providing the market they need.

So please, search your minds and hearts to see if you feel called to become part of this vital, exciting, and rewarding work. Hopefully, by the time you read this, there will have been some positive responses to the Fairtrade Shop questionnaire.

The Fairtrade Team

Film Nights

MAP strand: Fellowship

Film Nights have been going on for many years, and attendance is increasing as it becomes more and more popular, with between 30 and 40 people regularly attending. Film Night is usually the last Saturday in the month, starting at 7pm with a fish & chip supper, followed by the film. The food is ordered specially for the Film Night, hence all attendees are asked to confirm attendance by the Wednesday lunchtime prior to the Film Night.

My thanks must go to Marie Burrows, Barbara and David Hargreaves, Ben and Susan Clackson and all other members who help to wash and clear up afterwards.

Gareth Burrows

Flower Arranging (Altar Guild)

MAP strand: Worship

We have continued to provide floral decorations for the Church over the past year, albeit with some changes. We have had to take into consideration the increasing cost of flowers, reduction in the use of Oasis and last but not least the dwindling number of arrangers. We have thus had to cut down on pedestals both on a weekly basis and for Festivals due to limited resources. At the beginning of the year a decision was made to maintain a weekly pedestal in the Sanctuary and place a smaller basket or vase of fresh flowers in the Chapel, which could be done at home if necessary. This has worked well and will be continued for the coming year. However, we have still managed to fulfil additional floral requests for anniversaries, baptisms etc and hope this will still be possible in the year ahead. Grateful thanks to everyone who has supported the Guild over the year including Gareth and Alan for their willing assistance.

Jenny Coggins

Friends of St Andrew's

MAP strand: Fellowship

The Committee managed an excellent programme of events in 2023, this despite being without a secretary and members short. We had the good fortune of Janet Connelly join us as Secretary, and this brought much joy and enthusiasm. A full calendar of events was achieved. Trips included Chicksands Military Intelligence Museum, the Tolthorpe Theatre, the John Bunyan Fish & Chip supper boat trip, and the Bedford School Observatory and Planetarium. There were also four afternoon talks and a Christmas Social at the end of the year. As well as servicing all the 2023 events, the Committee also managed to produce a full programme of events for 2024.

We ask that you continue to support our plans in 2024, because by having a variety of social events we can support the Church family at St Andrew's, and any profits made from events help fund Church projects.

Finally, if you have any ideas for trips, talks or social events, please come forward and speak to one of the Committee members, or leave a note with the Church office - we are here for all the church family.

*Ralph Hall
Chair*

Meditation Group

MAP strand: Worship, Discipleship

The Group meets on Fridays at 10.30am in the Chapel in St Andrew's Church. Julie Hibbert hosts the meditation and begins by invoking the Trinity and reading a short extract from the Bible to help give a focus. Following that comes 20 minutes of silence. At the end of the period of silence there is a prayer of thanksgiving followed by everyone joining together in the words of The Grace. The session is followed by refreshments in the Quiet Room. Altogether the morning offers a lovely and peaceful experience.

The following extracts and prayer are offered by members of the Group to give an insight of what it means to them and each other. Anyone is welcome to come along on a Friday morning and join with the group. You do not have to come every week and you are welcome to dip in when you feel it would be helpful.

'Although one can always meditate at home, there is something indefinable about coming together with others-especially in the light-filled Chapel. And if anyone is new to Christian meditation, a group can be supportive. Paradoxically, the silence seems to augment and there is real power in this. In a life of doing, the opportunity to "just be" alongside others without any expectations, is a blessing. I also like to think that the peace we share seeps out into the community.' *Julie*

'Calming and centring. Grateful for an undemanding space at church. It provided a safe space for me to try St Andrew's initially. Time to focus on God without distractions of making conversation or in any way performing.' *Caroline*

'Sharing the silence with a group of people, trusted over time, deepens the channel to God and holds me in times of distress or difficulty.' *Suzanne*

'A time for quiet contemplation with like-minded people who bring such peace and positivity to the group.' *Cass*

'It is spiritual to be in a group and be able to feel the presence of God in the Chapel quietly all together. It distracts my thoughts of worries or concerns and focus on God and pray quietly in my mind.' *Claire*

'Aafke and I have had the discipline of meditation in our own lives personally for many years. However, there is something quite wonderful in having a shared spiritual experience of meditation with others. When we all 'pause' together in silent contemplation there is a sense of something deeper and more reflective taking place in our mutual love of the divine God.' *Michael*

Mission and Outreach Team

MAP strand: Kinship

MOT has met 9 times since the last APCM. Under the leadership of Angela Huddart, who for many years has been involved with MOT and its predecessor the Outreach Committee, this committee has developed a new way of working. Once the congregation had voted in 2022 to support three charities, MOT has engaged enthusiastically with the international charity World Vision, national charity The Trussell Trust and the local charity Emmaus at Carlton.

At the end of summer 2023, Angela gave notice of her intention to stand down as Chair of MOT and was thanked publicly for her loyal and devoted service. In September 2023 Joseph Barnes was elected unanimously.

Grants of £3000 are made to each of the three charities annually for 3 years from a budget allocation within the PCC budget.

World Vision's: the community of Pajule in northern Uganda.

St Andrew's dedicated the 11 June 2023 as World Vision (WV) Sunday. Our contact, Crystal Nnuroke, came and spoke about Pajule, sharing with us during the morning services how our grant and donations are helping to provide clean water projects, support education including health education, promoting animal husbandry including growing food, facilitating reconciliation projects and more. Once again, an African themed lunch was held in the Vicarage Garden and £500 was sent to WV as a result.

In October Joseph received an update from WV work about their humanitarian support in Gaza and the West Bank. This was circulated to everyone via the e-newsletter.

Half of the Christmas collection was sent to support World Vision and their aid to Palestine.

In January 2024 John Orchard and Nnuroke came once again to St Andrew's. John's talk was inspiring and rooted in scripture and he outlined the 15-year commitment of World Vision to the community of Pajule (currently in year 6) and that the supply of fresh water was making the biggest difference to improving the health and well-being of the community. John and Crystal had both commented that they feel engaged and connected with St Andrew's Church and that our involvement was not just about money.

The Trussell Trust

The grant from St Andrew's is sent to the national association to support setting up new foodbanks and helping with administrative costs. MOT has not been proactive in liaising with the Trussell Trust nationally but there continues to be a collection box in the foyer for donations to Bedford Foodbank, and we have an active relationship with them.

St Andrew's supported the Bishop's Harvest Appeal and included, on this occasion, requesting donations for the Ethnic Foodbank in Bedford. Generous donations were made for this which were appreciated by the organisers. It's recognised that the food provided by Bedford Foodbank is not necessarily ethnically diverse.

In Advent 2023 we once again organised the Reverse Advent Calendar. Boxes were provided for collections, and these were brought to the All Age Service in January. Our donations weighed 195.59 kg which provided around 465 meals.

In reviewing our Succession Plan for 2025 onwards MOT feels that it's time to stop supporting the Trussell Trust nationally. The collection box in the foyer will remain, but an alternative national charity is being sought for a 3-year grant from January 2025 onwards. The congregation will be invited to select a theme from a list in summer 2024.

Emmaus at Carlton

MOT has continued to actively engage with Emmaus. Requests were made for additional funds to support a family from Ukraine, in addition to their annual grant, so a contribution was made to enable two students to attend an ESOL course at Bedford College, including assistance with transport.

In October 2023 MOT supported the Green Fair by organising Emmaus to have a stand. Donations were invited and Emmaus brought clothing items to sell as well.

One member of MOT attended the Stomp in de Parys Avenue where about 60 people come on a weekly basis. It is staffed by Companions and volunteers.

Two new members of MOT visited Emmaus for an official tour and their feedback has been publicised concerning what goods to donate to help them the most.

Other Activity

- 'Topped up' donations raised for specific charitable causes such as the Red Bucket appeal for the earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria, and Christingle donations to the Children's Society
- Helped with Christian Aid Week in May
- Actively engaged with volunteering at the Winter Night Shelter, including cooking meals, and with the Warm Room at St Paul's Church.
- Made grants of £800 each to Impact, Umeed and Swaziland Schools Project which have a long association with St Andrew's
- Supported by the Events Team to organise the Pajule Lunch and helped them to organise the Harvest Lunch.

Who's Who:

Chair: Joseph Barnes

Secretary: Jenny Tomlinson

Members Jim Gorringe (until July 2023, and thanked for his input over 3 years), Valerie Littleford, Tim Papworth, Caroline Riches, Rebecca Stockman, Michele Swales, Emma Wilson-Bourne.

Our budget allocation is £14,000 for 2024. Many thanks to Lionel for keeping our budget up to date and providing information at each meeting.

*Joseph Barnes
Chair*

Mothers' Union

MAP strands: Fellowship, Kinship

On the 3rd Monday of each month the St Andrew's Mothers' Union group gathers, usually in the Holt Room, although we also enjoy a summer and a Christmas outing for a shared meal. In addition, there are regular opportunities to meet with MU members from across the Diocese for shared services and other events. The Wednesday communion service in the 2nd week of each month is also kept as our Corporate Communion.

Our 2023 programme varied - with a mix of speakers, discussions, social and craft afternoons and fundraising events. A new initiative for our group in August 2023 was a fundraiser for the MU Summer of Hope appeal - this saw us offering afternoon teas in the Main Hall together with a range of stalls for visitors to browse and buy. We invited MU members from other groups across the north of the Diocese to join us, as well as members of the congregation. It proved a success and so we plan to repeat this in June 2024 and hope that more people will come along. The now traditional raffle at the Wednesday service Christmas Lunch proved popular as ever, raising funds for the MU Away From It All project, which offers holidays to disadvantaged families in need of a break.

We would love to welcome new members to our group and all that Mothers' Union has to offer. It is a global Christian movement, whose 4 million members are active in 84 countries, seeking to build a future where everyone can thrive - a future free of violence, poverty, and injustice. Female or male, married, or single, with or without children, all are welcome - it's not just for mothers! If you would like to find out more, please do take a look at the Mothers' Union website www.mothersunion.org, speak to me or come along to one of our meetings.

Karen Parrott

Pilgrim House Group

MAP strand: Discipleship

Pilgrim House Group is 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 conclude each meeting with a short time of prayer and fellowship with tea/coffee.

The content of our programme is usually aimed at Lent or Advent and we use a variety of Bible Studies like the York Courses and SPCK Stand Alone Bible Studies. This year we undertook a five session Lent study written by Penelope Wilcox. We also enjoyed a Bible study with Lucy as we looked at the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids.

A Quiet Day at Chellington led by Revd Guy Buckler and a bring and share afternoon tea in the summer and a bring and share lunch at Christmas completed our annual programme.

Anyone can join us for one session or the whole programme, please contact the Church Operations 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 2023, whether it be by the Parish Giving Scheme, standing order or by casual donations on-line, cheque or cash. Our planned giving income for the 2023 financial year was slightly above £124,000; about £24,000 up on the previous year. This was due to the planned giving campaign held in the first half of the year during which we gained some new members and many existing members increased their giving.

However, casual giving (cash and cashless giving via the card machine) was down by just over 20% in 2023. The Yellow Gift Aid Envelopes are still used by a few regular members of the congregation and are often used by 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. The Planned Giving Campaign was successful in recruiting new members with numbers increasing by 23 to 118, many joining the Parish Giving Scheme.

The 'Parish Giving Scheme' (PGS) is our preferred option for regular giving and 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 and I would ask those still giving by monthly standing order to please consider moving to this scheme.

Giving through the Parish Giving Scheme is very straight forward. The scheme can be accessed online at parishgiving.org.uk. When prompted, enter our postcode MK40 2PF at which stage St Andrew's will appear with our parish code 320632278. Further information about this scheme can also be obtained from me or the Church Centre Office where a paper application pack is available.

Monthly standing order is another easily managed method of supporting St Andrew's and also provides a regular income stream. 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.

At the time of writing the numbers are evenly balanced with each scheme listing 59 members.

Income tax recovered via the Gift Aid Scheme is an important source of income for us; this amounted to a little over £30,000 in 2023 an increase of just over £6000 on 2022. If you are a taxpayer, and have not already done so, please consider authorising PGS, or me in the case of standing orders to make the necessary claim.

Thank you for your support!

Jim Dawson
Planned Giving and Gift Aid Recorder

Servers and Sacristans

MAP Strand: Worship

Life continues with all sacristans, servers and chalice assistants, all of whom do a marvellous job, always offering to do duties at the various services we have at St Andrew's.

This report is mainly a thank you from myself for their support both to me and the whole Church, including the people on Fridays who wash and prepare the silver we use at the altar. There was a shortage of purificators, and as the cost of replacement was high, my wife Marie made twelve new ones from waste material, and Kathy Johnston embroidered crosses onto each one. Marie also made more towels for handwashing at the altar. For this, and all of the washing of the altar linen, I give my thanks.

We have 12 servers not including the 8am ones who offer their services when I send round request dates. Some of those have been serving for many years, and I thank them all for their support. I also thank all of the chalice assistance for their continued support.

I must also thank Alan Colley who is my assistant as a vergers and a great help to me, and has now joined the Guild of Vergers. The role of vergers at St Andrew's has increased a lot since I started 14 years ago as the church has become more active over the years, bringing more work behind the scenes in the vestry.

I also thank the clergy of St Andrew's, Lucy, Joseph, Belinda, David and Peter. We are told in training that a vergers's main role is to look after the clergy, and they are a joy to look after.

Finally, a sincere thankyou to my wife Maie, without whose great help I could not do the job.

The vergers also supported the worship of the Romanian Orthodox community twice a month during 2023.

*Gareth Burrows
Verger*

St Andrew's Visitors

MAP strand: Fellowship

St Andrew's Visitors do exactly what it says on the tin; we visit members of St Andrew's family at home or in hospital on behalf of the Church. Recognising the importance of pastoral care, and the inevitably limited number of visits the vicar and curate can offer to such a large congregation, St Andrew's Visitors help to share this vital ministry. Some of our visitors are authorised to take Home Communion, and all of us take out with us the love and prayers of the Church, and the ability to listen well while drinking a cup of tea!

St Andrew's Visitors are DBS checked and receive safeguarding training, in line 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

Telephone Link Carers (TLC)

MAP strands: Fellowship

The TLC Service has been operating for about nearly six years and it was set up specifically to offer a friendly weekly telephone call to people in the local community, who might be housebound or lonely. The service is part of Pastoral Care offered by the Church, along with the Pastoral Visitors.

Sandy, our Parish Nurse made many of our early referrals. Despite our best efforts to find people to call, we have had no new referrals in the past two years and reluctantly we have decided to wind down the service. Several of the people we called have, sadly, died and several have moved away. Our volunteers still call 11 people each week, with calls lasting from a few minutes to over an hour. The people we call seem to appreciate the service and our volunteers enjoy the conversations they have, but we are not taking on any new people to call.

I am very grateful to our seven volunteers who have continued to make the calls on a rota basis.

*Fiona McLeod
Organiser, TLC*

Tower Bell Ringers

MAP strand: Worship

Keen listeners may have noticed that there are often far fewer than our potential eight bells ringing on a Sunday morning. This is because of a shortage of ringers and we would be very interested to hear from anybody interested in learning to ring or indeed returning to ringing.

On May 6th we were able to 'Ring for the King' to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla. Gail Shreeves and Ian Smith took part in the ringing, along with more experienced members of the ringing band, having learnt in anticipation of the occasion.

We hope to ring prior to each Sunday morning service and some of the Christmas services and practice on a Thursday evening.

*Alex Nash
Tower Captain*

Welcomers

MAP strand: Fellowship, Worship

Dedicated Welcomers work alongside the sidespeople at each 10am service, identifying new people, who may be visiting or may be 'trying out' the church.

They will offer guidance through the service and a friendly face to take them through to coffee to meet other congregation members. The Welcomer will find out a little about the new person and give them a welcoming pack with all the different Church activities, and if appropriate explain what is offered for children. If the new person returns, the Welcomer who originally welcomed them will try and maintain the relationship.

We have six Welcomers. Recently, three of our original Welcomers have left -thank you, Henry, Hugh and Ann - and we have ourselves welcomed three new Welcomers to our ranks - Sue, Neil and Martin.

Several new people have commented on the welcome they received, which certainly makes our role feel valued, but of course it is not only Welcomers who 'welcome' , it is the role of all congregation members, so if you find yourself sitting beside someone you don't recognise, introduce yourself and ask if they are new and, if it seems appropriate help them with the different hymn books and going up for communion. If the Welcomer has not already offered, suggest you take them through for coffee. Do not worry that they might have been coming for years, but you did not recognise them. Most people will be delighted to have and additional 'welcome'.

Please contact me if you would like to know more about being a Welcomer and what the role entails.

*Fiona McLeod
Organiser, Welcomer Team*

Worship Band

MAP Strand: Worship

The worship band continues to enjoy being a part of worship at St Andrews. The band continues to provide the music on the first Sunday of each month at the all age service. 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 give us an opportunity to teach new worship songs and hymns, often taking a more contemplative style. We have recently purchased a Taize 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