

St Andrew's Church, Bedford



Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Celebrating our
Common Life

Sunday 11th May 2025

11.30am

The Main Hall

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THE ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS
to be held on Sunday 11th May 2025, at 11.30am
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 21st April 2024**
- 2. Election of 2 Parochial Church Wardens**
- 3. Chair's Closing Remarks**



Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners

held on Sunday 21st April 2024, at 11.30am
in the Main Hall of St Andrew's Church, Bedford

The Vicar opened the meeting in prayer.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the last meeting held on the 23rd of April 2023

The Minutes were proposed as an accurate record by Natasha Vaughan, seconded by Christine Garrett, and unanimously agreed.

2. Election of Churchwardens

Two nominations were received for the roles of churchwarden:

Michele Swales - proposed by Carol Wood, seconded by Jenny Tomlinson.

Ian Riches - proposed by Sheila Bissell, seconded by Jenny Tomlinson.

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

3. Chair's Closing Remarks

On this third APCM for Revd. Lucy Davis, she communicated her joy in working with such gifted Church Wardens, and thanked Carol Wood in particular for her valued assistance during the vacancy, and her wonderful presence amongst the church family.



THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

to be held on Sunday 11th May 2025, at 11.30am
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 21st April 2024**
- 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 2024**
 - 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. Appointment of an Independent Examiner to the PCC**
- 6. A Report of the Ministry and Witness of the Church throughout 2024**
- 7. Questions**
- 8. Closing Remarks**



Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

held on Sunday 21st April 2024, at 11.30am
in the Main Hall of St Andrew's Church, Bedford

- 1. Apologies:** Apologies were received from Paul Searle-Barnes, Ursula Pearson, Andy Thomas, Pat Quickenden, Sue Ambrose, Claire Pleasants, Liz Lacey, Pauline Newbery, Gareth Burrows, Diana Whittemore, Sheila Bissell, Diane Barlow.
- 2. Minutes of the last meeting:** After noting a small amendment required on page 7 to correct the year of the accounts to 2023, the Minutes were proposed as an accurate record by Jenny Tomlinson, seconded by Sue Smith, and unanimously agreed.
- 3. To receive:**
 - a. Electoral Roll**

The Electoral Roll was revised by Sue Smith, Electoral Officer, in accordance with current electoral roll regulations. Legal notices had been displayed, and appropriate dates adhered to. The electoral roll for 2024 stands at 264 persons, representing an overall increase of 11 persons. With nothing further to add to this report, The Vicar noted with sadness those from the roll who had died during the year. The Electoral Roll was subsequently received. LD thanked Sue Smith for all her dedicated work, and Sue agreed to continue in the role of Electoral Roll Officer for the coming year.
 - b. A Report on the Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council**

This was presented by PCC Secretary, Roseanne Kinvig-Love, who added thanks from the PCC for Lucy's Chaining over the past year, and the report was subsequently received.
 - c. A Report on the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod**

This was presented by Elisabeth Thorne with nothing further to add. Elisabeth and all the members of Deanery Synod were thanked by the Vicar, and the report subsequently received.
 - d. The Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023**

This was presented by the Treasurer, Lionel Mayoh, who thanked everyone for playing their part in the jigsaw of life at St Andrew's, being generous in many different ways, including with time, talents and financial commitment. Lionel then presented three Bible verses to frame the report:

Genesis Ch 1 v 13 *"And God saw that it was good. Evening came, and morning came, a third day"* There is so much is good in the world, and at St Andrew's, for which we should give thanks. But we also need to look after the world and all the people in the world by whatever means we can.

Numbers Ch 11 v 3 *"They then named that place Taberah (that is, burning) because the fire of the Lord had burned among them there."* This was a

rebuke in reaction to the Israelites complaining to the Lord, but we could think of the fire within us to undertake efforts for the Lord.

Acts Ch 1 v 13 *“Entering the city they went to the room upstairs where they were lodging.”* This is after the Ascension of our Lord, where they are sad to lose their friend and teacher, as we also have lost members of our church family this year, but our perspective gives us hope for the next part of the story.

Lionel then invited questions relating to the accounts as presented, before noting the following:

Looking ahead there are predicted deficits between 2025 and 2028, but a plan is currently being developed to address them. The greatest areas of variance include planned giving, salary costs, the Parish share, and repairs and maintenance.

The Vicar thanked Lionel and the finance committee for their grace, commitment and skill, noting that where God leads, resources always seem to follow.

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

This was presented by the Church Wardens, with a general summary being that everything is present and correct. The Wardens thanked CCMC and Alan Colley for all their undertakings for the care and maintenance of the building and fabric on behalf of the Wardens and St Andrew’s, and for being so generous with their time and talents.

f. Safeguarding Report

The report was presented by Jo Newton, PSO. The Vicar invited the whole Safeguarding Team to stand to be acknowledged and thanked by the meeting, who in turn thanked the church family for all their support in embedding safeguarding into the culture of the church and making it a whole church activity.

g. Mission Action Plan

The MAP was presented by the Vicar, with nothing further to add.

h. Reports from other Church Groups

These were presented, and the Vicar noted the extraordinary diversity from the mosaic of the common life of the church, which we are delighted to celebrate.

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

The PCC diligently conducts the business of the Church, and all members need the ability to disagree well and be visionary.

Sally Coleman and Valerie Littleford made the decision not to re-stand for election, and the Vicar thanked them both for their dedication and service to the PCC.

6 nominations were received to fill the 6 open places on the PCC:

- Carol Wood - proposed by Sam Pitkin, seconded by Angela Huddart
- Martin De Graft Johnson - proposed by Kelly Agler Good, seconded by Elisabeth Sutcliffe
- Sue Smith - proposed by Diana Whittemore, seconded by Diana Smyly
- Viki Evans - proposed by Jenny Tomlinson, seconded by Angela Huddart
- Sam Pitkin - proposed by Carol Wood, seconded by Ian Riches
- Natasha Vaughan - proposed by Ann Collins, seconded by Jenny Tomlinson

All were unanimously appointed en bloc by a show of hands.

5. Election of Representatives to Deanery Synod

One nomination was received for election;

- Tim Papworth- proposed by Peter Brawn, seconded by Mary Brawn

Unanimously appointed by a show of hands.

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner to the PCC

Gill Lake expressed her willingness to continue in this role, proposed by Emma Wilson-Bourne, seconded by Jim Dawson, unanimously carried.

7. A Report of the Ministry and Witness of the Church throughout 2023

This was presented by Revd. Canon Lucy Davis:

There are some moments in Church life which become like icons for me, richly painted and full of meaning, moments which portray much more than a casual observer may see, moments which become icons of what God has been up to at St Andrew's.

One such moment happened this Good Friday, and seemed to sum up, to embody and encapsulate so much of what the Holy Spirit has been doing among us this past year. It happened at our All Age Worship; if you weren't there, I'll paint the picture for you.

Imagine 60 people gathered the Chancel of our wonderful building. 60 people from the very young to the very old. 60 people come to meet with God, to worship God, to enter into God's story together, in company. Imagine them in a whole range of wonderful diversity, not just of age, but of gender, ethnicity, social background, neurodiversity, sexuality. Among them, adults about to be baptised and confirmed. Among them, children taking on leadership. Among them, the seeker and the certain, the grieving and the joy filled. Present were members of our pastoral visiting team, and mission and outreach team. Present were people who care for our building and sing in our choir. Present were those who join morning and evening prayer every day, and those who come to services just a few times a year.

Imagine those precious, precious people gathering and raising their voices in song. Imagine them listening to words from scripture, retelling the story of the Last Supper. Imagine then the chaos and community and profundity of them crowding to wash each other's hands in basins of water, or kneeling and drawing round each other's feet, as we remembered and enacted Jesus' commandment to love one another.

Hold that image, that icon, as we look for God in the layers.

The first, fundamental, thing here is an act of worship. Everything that we do as St Andrew's originates in and emerges from the worship of God. In our worship we meet with God; in word and sacrament and prayer and music our faith is nurtured. In worship we are challenged to see the world as God sees it, to question what we think we know, and to be re-formed as we grow to know God better. In worship we receive the Holy Spirit, we are topped up so that we can go out and transform the world to resemble the Kingdom of God ever more closely. Our worship is not accidental or incidental, it is at the heart of all we do. And what you see on the surface of any act of worship at St Andrew's is the result of a myriad of people working and planning and praying: sidespeople and welcomers, the office staff and vergers, flower arrangers, cleaners, sacristans, Church Wardens, bell ringers, servers clergy, all age planning group, musicians, choir, Director of Music, AV and sound desk operators, intercessors, readers. Who have I forgotten? Our thanks to all of them.

As Church, as Christians, our relationship with Christ comes first, and everything else is simply side effect. We forget that at our peril. Coming back to the five ships of our Mission Action Plan, if we ever, corporately, spend less time and effort and energy on Worship and Discipleship than we do on Fellowship, Kinship and Stewardship, then we have gone seriously adrift, lost direction, and need consciously to pause, reset and come back to God.

Returning to our icon of St Andrew's and the worship on Good Friday. What else was going on there? Where else did that scene reflect where God has been at work among us?

One of the things people have remarked about to me is the growth in numbers of worshippers at St Andrew's over the last couple of years, and that was certainly reflected at the Good Friday service - we had to plan differently from previous years to accommodate growing numbers. Almost every Sunday here it feels as though we need to add more wafers to the ciborium at the altar, and the procession of children going out to groups during the first hymn just gets longer and longer. In 2023 we saw a wonderful Confirmation in Church, with 5 candidates from St Andrew's of incredibly different backgrounds, and it is noticeable that our Church family is getting increasingly more diverse, beginning to reflect more closely the diversity of the Parish. This diversity adds hugely to the richness of our corporate life.

Back in January 2023 St Andrew's PCC formally signed up to become an 'Inclusive Church.' This means that we are part of a network of churches which celebrate and affirm every person and do not discriminate on grounds of disability, economic power, ethnicity, gender, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality. It means that as a Church family we continue to examine how we need to adapt, to change, to become a place not just of welcome, but of active inclusion, where the whole diverse people of God can find a home, are truly valued and enabled to contribute. While there is much to celebrate, there is still much to be done to ensure that the gifts and skills of every member of the church family are recognised, celebrated and utilised for the building up of the body of Christ.

I must pause here and mention one particular new arrival in 2023, and that is Joseph Barnes our curate, whose gifts and skills have been recognised by the Church in ordination as Deacon and offered and enjoyed in such full measure by us here. Joseph, it has been a joy to have you ministering among us.

The next layer in the icon of the Good Friday service, another place God was particularly at work among us in 2023, was in our engagement with the local community. There has been a subtle but deliberate shift in the way we view ourselves and St Andrew's relationship with the community, moving from inviting people to come to us for help, to joining in where God is already at work in the world. In Autumn 2023, St Andrew's PCC felt clear nudges from the Holy Spirit which could not be ignored, and in faith gave £25,000 to seed fund Bedford Winter Night Shelter. Rather than setting up the shelter ourselves, we joined with other Churches, agencies and charities to meet the very real and urgent needs of the people of our town. By the time the Winter Night Shelter closed its door this Spring, it had seen 130 different people find a safe, warm space to sleep. Among those worshipping on Good Friday were members of the PCC who agreed the funding, people who had cooked meals for guests at the shelter, those who had worked shifts, those who had staffed the associated Warm Room at St Paul's Church, and staff from the King's Arms Project itself. As we remembered Jesus' last meal with his friends, and his commandment to serve, somehow all those who had shared meals at the shelter were made present and real too.

A Culture of Inclusion and Community Engagement were two of three priorities the PCC identified at our MAP review meeting in July. The final priority was Children's Discipleship. This does not mean that other things are not important in our corporate life, far from it, but that these are the three areas where the PCC discerned developing charisms at St Andrew's, areas for development, places we need consciously and deliberately to lean in.

Attending our Good Friday worship were 21 children under 16. They were not observers of that act of worship, and nor was it a children's service. At that service children read and adults read, children prayed and adults prayed, children were moved to tears by the saving act of Christ on the cross, and adults were too. Yes, toddlers wandered around, but they also knelt and drew round stranger's feet. Yes, children lost concentration and needed a cuddle, but they also placed the hard coldness of their own sadnesses with Jesus in the tomb. Do not underestimate the faith of our young people. Those of us fortunate enough to be in the sessions for preparation for first communion, or Sunday children's groups, or Toastie Club, know what a lively, engaged, engaging and questioning faith our young people have. This is due to Elisabeth's extraordinary leadership, but also to Roseanne, Kelly, Christine and all of those who offer time and gifts to our children and families' ministry. Our young people are among the most regular attenders at worship, and are leaders of mission and evangelism. They are not the Church of tomorrow; they are the Church of today. St Andrew's is bucking every national trend in the numbers of children who are part of our Church family, and we must take that responsibility seriously. We must lean in.

Finally, if I may, a personal reflection on the icon we have painted together this morning. During that act of worship on Good Friday it was me who messed up. Me who ended up in the wrong place, me who said the wrong words. Me who had forgotten to do stuff. Me who was poorly prepared. I'm not being self-deprecating here, it's simply true. And I tell you this for three reasons.

One. None of us is perfect, only God is that. So, thank you all for your grace and patience with my innumerable imperfections as I minister among you.

Two. At that service, my own imperfections were carried and covered by the team. And I am beyond grateful for everyone here who constitutes team St Andrew's as we build the Kingdom together.

Finally. Despite the depths of imperfection, God turned up, and turned up palpably among us. As St Andrew's we should not and must not strive to be perfect. Perfection is not an icon – it is an idol. Instead, together, in community, in chaos, in profundity, in faith, we seek only to paint within our Church an icon of Christ which the world can see and wonder at.

8. Questions

Ian Smith enquired after the Hall Trust accounts, which Lucy confirmed have not yet been submitted for the previous year.

Joseph Barnes thanked Jenny Tomlinson for all her work putting together the MOT report for this year.

9. Closing Remarks

Carol Wood, as outgoing Church Warden, gave the closing remarks with a reflection on 40 years of APCMs, noting that if a church stands still then no progress can be made, and that taking stock is a good thing. St Andrew's Church has evolved through changes in leadership and strategy, and is still flourishing.

The APCM for 2025 will be held on the 11th of May 2025

The meeting closed with the Grace.

REPORTS TO THE 2025 APCM

ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT

The Electoral Roll this year, 2025, is a completely new revised St Andrew's Electoral Roll. Last April the Electoral Roll stood at 264. This year the 2025 figure is 242 which is a reduction by 22.

The loss of 22 is arrived by:

- The removal of 41 members for various reasons: having moved away, unreturned forms, and deceased (6).
- The addition of 25 new members

Of the 242 members on the Roll, 78 live in the Parish and 164 live outside the Parish. Last year the corresponding numbers were 89 in and 175 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 14th April 2025.

This year we have one person who will be added on her 16th birthday as allowed by the Church of England.

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*

PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT

The PCC of St Andrew's Church are an elected group representing the wide diversity of our church family and have the responsibility to conduct the business of the church within the framework of the aims and values set by the Mission Action Plan. In 2024 the PCC fulfilled their task with respect in disagreement, fortitude in adversity, wisdom in times of challenge, and good humour throughout all things!

Every year all church members on the Electoral Roll are encouraged to consider serving on the PCC as it aims to represent a diversity of opinions and perspectives and nurture our culture of openness and inclusion.

The PCC met 7 times in 2024 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 2024. They set the agenda for PCC meetings, transact the business of the PCC between meetings, and have oversight of the Mission Action Plan and of governance including HR.

CCMC, Mission and Outreach and the 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 consists of:

The Vicar

The Curate

2 Churchwardens, each 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 4 Deanery Synod representatives, elected for a three-year term.

Up to 3 co-opted members, each elected for a one-year term.

Elected members of General Synod.

In 2024, the membership was as follows:

Statutory Members

Revd. Canon Lucy Davis	Incumbent	
Revd. Joseph Barnes	Curate	
Michele Swales	Church Warden	(from April 2024)
Ian Riches	Church Warden	
Carol Wood	Church Warden	(until April 2024)

Representatives of the Laity

Sally Coleman	(until April 2024)
Martin De Graft Johnson	(from April 2024)
Viki Evans	
Christine Garrett	
Angela Huddart	
Roseanne Kinvig-Love	(PCC Secretary)
Valerie Littleford	(until April 2024)
Jo Newton	
Lionel Mayoh	(PCC Treasurer)
Sam Pitkin	
Andy Redfearn	
Tim Retout	
Sue Smith	
Alistair Sutcliffe	
Andrew Thomas	
Natasha Vaughan	
Carol Wood	(from April 2024)

Deanery Synod Representatives:

Sheila Bissell	(ex officio as member of General Synod)
Gareth Burrows	
Tim Papworth	(from April 2024)
Elisabeth Thorne	
Jenny Tomlinson	

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) and Jo Newton (Parish Safeguarding Officer).

Throughout 2024 the PCC has risen to the challenges and adapted to the changes of the year with prayer, purpose and dedication, 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

The Deanery Synod met three times during 2024. Each one of twenty-one parishes elects members for a three-year term of office. St Andrew's currently has four lay members, as well as the Vicar and Curate, and Sheila Bissell (ex-officio as a member of General Synod).

The Deanery Synod met on 13th March 2024 at St John's Bedford, on 20th June 2024 at All Saints Church, Renhold, and on 17th October 2024 at St Peter's, Bedford. Meetings began by gathering for refreshments prior to a more formal meeting, giving opportunity for representatives across the deanery to meet informally. Sheila Bissell chaired the March and June meetings, Revd. Sam Cappleman the October meeting.

In the March meeting Sheila Bissell produced a report on the 23-27th February General Synod, speaking of the importance of the Love Matters report from the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households. There was a significant input (on YouTube) made by Baroness Brinton, highlighting the importance of understanding the lived experience of disability, to focus not on what is wrong, but what is needed. Elections to Diocesan Synod took place, with the new Synod taking office on 1st August 2024.

Representatives were reminded that Deanery Mission Support Grants are available and anybody wishing to apply should send an e-mail to the Area Dean. Suzanne Clackson and Amanda Young provided input on the Diocesan Dispute Advisory Service, which offers a safe and confidential process that helps to resolve disputes in a broad range of situations within the church community.

At the June meeting Roy Lambert, Churchwarden at All Saints, reported from the Diocesan Racial Justice Action Group highlighting the 'From Lament to Action' initiative. There was a discussion about statistics, and whether there is the same level of focus as with Safeguarding - has there been an appropriate response to slavery and monuments? Parishes can improve Justice Awareness by increasing active participation, as well as better education and training.

At the October meeting Sheila Bissell produced a report on the General Synod held in July. She had highlighted the Private Members Motion from Robert Thompson about safeguarding failures at 'Soul Survivor'. She also highlighted two debates on (i) the Human Dignity of Disabled Children (every person is unique and precious and made in the image of God), and (ii) Food Banks, highlighting the dire statistics about poverty and those with the least resources often have some of the most complex needs. Becky Guynn and Jane Spencer of Impact spoke of their work in 60 schools in the Bedford area with only two staff. A video was shown outlining their activities. There was a great need for volunteers, establishing prayer spaces and need for 'Church Champions'. Meetings in three different churches (Bedford, Ampthill and Henlow) had been arranged for any who were interested.

Tim Papworth
Deanery Synod Representative

REPORT ON THE FABRIC, GOODS AND ORNAMENTS

One of the important annual tasks of the Churchwardens is updating the "Terrier." This is a full listing of the fabric, goods, and ornaments of the Church and Church Centre, including everything from hymn books to silverware. I am pleased to report that all items were accounted for, made available for inspection at the March PCC meeting, and duly signed.

Our five "ships" all play their part in implementing our vision here at St. Andrew's. Our building is core to our times of worship together and to many of our expressions of fellowship. It also provides a space for discipleship for both children and adults. Our kinship means engaging deeply with the local community, and the building provides a base for these activities seven days a week. Our stewardship is centred around caring for all we have been given, including our building and its environmental impact, and courageously using our resources to further God's kingdom.

Therefore, we would like to thank all of our staff and everyone else who generously give their time, expertise, and talents to maintain and support the fabric of our property and thereby further the mission of St Andrew's Church.

Since the last APCM, various upgrades and enhancements have been made to our building. These include:

- The lowering of the ceiling in the Holt Room, made possible through the generosity of the Friends of St Andrew's.
- Repairs to the stonework on the Chapel Gable End.
- Smart thermostat control of our heating system.
- The provision and installation of a book of donors.
- Preparations for repairs to some of our stained glass.

Such improvements do not happen on their own. We are very grateful for the expertise of many people, including those in the Church Centre Management Committee and Creation Care team for their hard work.

We are also thankful for the generosity of those past and present, who, via the Hall Trust, the Friends, and regular donations, allow us to keep our building in good repair so that it can be used by so many people throughout the week.

*Ian Riches and Michele Swales
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.

In 2024, St Andrew's Safeguarding Team consisted of Revd. Canon Lucy Davis, Jo Newton, Carol Wood, Sally Coleman, Elisabeth Sutcliffe, Kelly Agler Good and Revd. Joseph Barnes, and we meet roughly three times a year to consider parish safeguarding issues. There are currently just under 100 volunteers at St Andrew's whose role requires them to undertake either a DBS check or safeguarding training or both. I am immensely grateful to all the volunteers who have complied with these requirements this year with such good humour and efficiency.

In October, Kelly, Sally and I led a Basic Awareness group training session which was attended by 7 members of the congregation. It was good to discuss safeguarding issues together, as well as to enjoy tea, cake and one another's company. Lucy and I are planning a similar session for May 2025, this time focusing on Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse, which has since January 2025 become a mandatory training module for any volunteers working with children, young people or vulnerable adults. This training module is also available online on the Church of England Safeguarding Training portal for those who would prefer to undertake it in their own time.

Much of our focus this year has been on carrying out the safeguarding audit required by the Diocese. This comprises a three-year rolling analysis of our safeguarding culture and practice, with the focus this year being on the two strands of Culture, Leadership and Capacity and Prevention.

To this end, in 2024, we;

- used a tool provided by the Diocese to conduct a review of our people management and safer recruitment practices and to identify areas for improvement.
- carried out a Culture, Leadership and Capacity survey of PCC members, and followed it up with discussion at PCC.
- Planned focus groups made up of members of the congregation, including our young people, inviting them to share their thoughts on the safeguarding culture at St Andrew's.

We marked Safeguarding Sunday on 17th November 2024, only days after the publication of the Makin Report into the Church of England's handling of allegations of serious abuse by the late John Smyth. Revd. Joseph Barnes' sermon warned of the twin dangers of worshipping the institution of the Church and of worshipping charismatic leaders in place of worshipping God. This has been a difficult year for the Church of England regarding safeguarding, reminding us that we can never be complacent. Nonetheless, I feel fortunate to be supported by the safeguarding team here at St Andrew's and by so many volunteers who recognise the importance of safeguarding and who give up their time to make sure our young people and vulnerable adults are kept as safe as possible.

Jo Newton, Parish Safeguarding Officer

MISSION ACTION PLAN

Our Mission Action Plan was developed following a whole Church consultation in the Spring of 2022, when we identified our '5 ships', areas for development of mission.

These are:

- Worship
- Discipleship
- Fellowship
- Kinship
- Stewardship

Particular areas of progress in 2024 were:

Discipleship: Increasing from two to three children's groups on Sunday mornings to better meet age-appropriate needs.

Fellowship: Observing Racial Justice Sunday with a guest preacher and a celebration over coffee 'beyond biscuits.' Holding an inclusive church study group on racial justice.

Kinship: Helping to meet the needs of families in our community by running children's holiday activity sessions. Supporting Bedford Winter Night shelter by volunteering and providing meals and helping to staff the Warm Room at St Paul's.

Stewardship: Working towards Achieving the A Rocha Gold Eco Church Award by introduced composting for kitchen waste in the Church Centre and developing a 'sustainability pathway', with information and discussion groups for the congregation.

The Mission Action Plan will be reviewed and revised in 2025.

Revd. Canon Lucy Davis
Vicar



REPORTS FROM CHURCH GROUPS

(Arranged Alphabetically)

Book Circle

MAP strand: Fellowship

We meet monthly on the first Monday of each month; details of venue and time are available from the Church Office if you are interested in joining us.

Our book selection is very varied and eclectic, covering all genres and usually is based on a recommendation or review.

The twelve books we have read this year have included:

The Kindness of Strangers by Kate Adie: an autobiography detailing the demanding life of a woman reporting from the front line in Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Tiananmen Square and the Gulf War.

A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khalea Hosseini: a deeply moving story about family and friendship set in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, where despite the brutality and fear of the regime, love and heroism can overcome all.

Steeple Chasing by Peter Ross: a road trip around the UK's religious buildings, celebrating not only their beauty, meaning and history but the weird and wonderful tales they tell and the people who love and care for them.

During Advent we read An Advent Manifesto by Martyn Percy, which provided daily readings, prayers, poetry and reflections based on the Magnificat and Benedictus.

More recently we have read Rory Steward's The Places in Between, a remarkable and humbling true story based on his walk across Afghanistan following the route once taken by a Mogul Emperor.

We would welcome new members and any good book recommendations or personal favourite reads.

Sue Ambrose

Church and Centre Maintenance Committee (CCMC)

MAP strand: Worship, Stewardship

Have you noticed the change in our name? From 'Management' to 'Maintenance'? 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 to offer a welcoming and safe environment for all users. There are eleven members of CCMC, and we meet every three months.

2024 kept us busy. You will have noticed the refurbished porch door of the church (no Blutac on the door, please!). The cycle rack in front of the Tower was extended. A new soakaway has been installed next to the Hulbert room. Seven 'work mornings' were held to keep the grounds neat and tidy. The ceiling in the Dent Room has been lowered, with improved lighting, insulation and sound deadening, thanks to the Friends of St Andrew's. You may have noticed the gaps in the ceiling in the Centre corridor. We haven't yet identified fully where the intermittent leaks originate - it's most frustrating. The five-year electrical test was done, and we passed. The work on the chapel gable end, replacing the coping stones, will, hopefully, be completed and the scaffolding removed by the time you read this report.

I am very grateful for the help of the Committee and all who participated in the work mornings who make my task much easier. I would like to thank in particular David Routledge, who has kept the grass areas regularly and neatly mown, and Andrew Love, for his dedication to unravelling the complexities of the electrical systems and other tasks.

Alan Colley
Chairman

Children and Families' Ministry

MAP strand: Discipleship

Our children and families' ministry continues to grow and flourish. We've been blessed with growth in numbers across our worship and activities: this is such a joy, but of course it gives us challenges! We continue to think about how we prioritise across the different areas of our children's ministry, and to look for more volunteers to offer their time and gifts for our young people. We also will be considering the changes we need to make as more of our children are becoming 'youth'! But for now, we can celebrate all we've done this year.

Sunday Morning Groups

The numbers of young people attending each Sunday continues to rise, and we often have over 25 children in church. In September, we increased from running two to three children's groups. We have also continued to hold one children's group for all ages during the school holidays, which means families can be confident there will be something for their children whenever they come.

We use the ROOTS materials as a resource, but each leader draws on their own gifts and skills to lead the groups. During Lent, we chose to look at the Lord's Prayer in more detail, using Godly Play style resources to think more deeply about the different parts of the prayer.

Noah's Ark

On Monday mornings in term time, Noah's Ark continues to welcome toddlers with their parents and carers from our local community. We often have 35-40 children and so the hall is busy with toddlers and preschool children exploring and playing, whilst parents and carers also have the opportunity to meet and talk to others. After our snack time (apparently legendary in Bedford!), we share songs and tell a story about God. It is wonderful opportunity to share seeds of faith with local families and to build connections into our community.

Messy Church

Messy Church continues to run every other month through the year, welcoming both families who come regularly and those joining us for the first time. Our team plans carefully so that crafts, activities, worship and food are all linked to a theme or story about God. Particular highlights this year were knocking over a huge cardboard Goliath and, in the summer, exploring the family connection between one of our volunteers and a 1924 gold medal winning Olympian!

Activity Mornings

We felt a growing awareness during 2023 that families in our local community needed a place to come with their children in the school holidays. In response, 2024 saw us holding more activity mornings on Mondays during the holidays, including four mornings over the summer and some half terms. At least 50 children and their families attended each Monday in the summer. At our last activity morning, one mum, coming for the first time, told me how grateful she was to find a safe space she could bring her neurodivergent son. It has been great to offer something so clearly valued in our community.

Thanks

Our young people are wonderful members of our church community and I love how we continue to discover more about God through their ideas and their leadership. It has been wonderful to see them continue to grow in confidence and faith over the past year.

However, our wonderful children and families' ministry is only possible due to the number of committed volunteers who continue to give their time, their gifts and their care for our young people. I am also very grateful for all the work Roseanne Kinvig-Love has done in so many areas of our children and families' ministry. We wish her well as she leaves St Andrew's, and are delighted she will be continuing her ministry with children at the cathedral.

*Elisabeth Sutcliffe
Children and Families' Minister*

Toastie Club

Toastie Club continues to keep ticking on. During the past year we have seen an increase in youth attending. This year, we have hung out with the Bishop and taught Kelly what a coconut shy was. (Kelly still has questions, throwing around coconuts???) We went for an outing at Putt Putt Noodle and bonded over how many swings it took some of us to sink a putt. We also braved the weather and sang around a campfire, with smores for the taking at Mollivers with the Routledges and some seasoned Guide friends.

I am sure the youth would say these were the highlights of last year. But for us, the highlights were listening to their insight into this God that even we don't understand at times. Seeing them embrace the fact that they are a part of a bigger community here at St Andrew's as they made parcels of sweets for the Church Harvest Lunch for the community to take away with them and Christmas cards for the Wednesday Christmas Lunch. We were amazed as we got their ideas on the nativity play and seeing them understand that all are welcome to the crib of Jesus regardless of who that person is. These are the things that we treasure. It is our prayer that these amazing youth will continue to question unwaveringly in their faith, love fiercely and be ever gentle to one another when hearts are on display. Thank you so much for allowing us time with your youth. This is not something we do lightly, and we cherish seeing them grow.

Kelly Agler Good

Choir and Music

MAP strand: Worship

The choir has gone from strength to strength this year, partly in terms of numbers, but also in their collective ability in depth, so that, even when illness has deprived us of individuals, the choir has always produced beautiful music. We have been much encouraged by positive feedback received from the Mission Action Plan. We have been joined by Bryony, Ellie, Harry and Emily (now married - congratulations to them!) and Carolyn has often joined us on Sunday mornings as well as Evensong, giving a whole new meaning to the upper register of the sopranos. Carolyn's daughter, Mathilda, has become the new head chorister after Hannah, head chorister for two years and previously a treble for more years than anyone can remember, retired due to pressure of work in her new environment at Kimbolton School. We all wish her well. Vicky Edwards is taking some time out from the choir, but we hope to see her back again. Phoebe has joined the trebles, as expected last year and is making good progress. As the number of trebles has reduced this year, we are currently not having a separate treble practice on Fridays - instead they are staying for a longer full practice. Of course, if more trebles were to come and join us.....

Meanwhile, seven of the choir proved their prowess as choristers by passing the Royal School of Church Music Bronze Award, a publicly examined award and by no means easy to pass. Those who passed were Caroline Riches (Highly Commended), Jenny Tomlinson, Viki Evans, Vicki Edwards, Tim Retout (all these Commended), Suzanne Clackson and Pat Quickenden.

Later in the year some members of the choir went to St Albans Cathedral to sing in a celebration of Stanford's music with other members of the RSCM, conducted by David Hill, at which the successful candidates were presented with their awards. We have sung our usual varied repertoire of music: 49 different anthems, 8 service settings, 5 different Responses, Advent Carols, 9 Lessons and Carols, Stainer's Crucifixion, and a joint Evensong with Bedford School Choir at the school. Now that we have 3 basses in the choir regularly, we are looking to increase the tenor section, so if there are any tenors out there, dying to exercise their voice, please get in touch!

Once again, we have welcomed visitors to sing in our Choral Evensongs when we sing an often more challenging repertoire with choir numbers increased to between 30 and 35. There has been a third mini-series of organ recitals under the auspices of CASA, this year featuring John Witchell, an old friend of St Andrew's, Samuel Kemp, an up-and-coming organist in his first year as organ scholar at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, who gave an excellent recital, and the St Andrew's Director of Music, of which no comment. Once again, we were able to pass on to charities the generous donations of the audiences.

*Paul Searle-Barnes
Director of Music*

Church Centre

MAP strand: Kinship

The Church Centre and Office see a lot of comings and goings. From bookers bustling here and there, parishioners going about the ministry that God has called them to, and us in the office attempting to get the work done that keeps everything ticking along. But at times, some of the goings are bit more tearful than we like.

In 2024, the Church Centre and Office sadly said 'see you later' to our long-standing administrative assistant and friend, Karen Parrott. Karen has become a great friend and was (and I like to think, still is) an invaluable part of the team here at St Andrew's. Thankfully, Karen pops her head in now and then to make sure that we behave - or to help us cause a bit more mischief. Either way, it is always nice to see friends.

With Karen leaving, we needed a new arrival in the office to keep an eye on us. In March of 2024, we welcomed Caroline Iles as part of the Church Office team. Caroline has continued the tradition of another friendly face and indeed another person to call a friend. We look forward to Caroline continuing here with us at St Andrew's and becoming a part of our work family.

The Church Centre saw more arrivals with those who do vital work in our community. We welcomed an all-inclusive mental health support group that meets every Thursday night called BPositive. We have seen Baby College add more to their repertoire and offer more classes to support families with baby development and baby massage. Diabetes Prevention groups came back to us and continue to book more classes, as well as their one-on-one remission clinic for those who accept this help via the NHS. We were delighted to continue to help the Friends of the Higgins as they needed a home after continued flooding disrupted their regular meeting place.

Our relationship with the Tibbs Dementia Foundation and the mental health wing of the NHS continued to grow over 2024, and we are proud to say that the Diocese has been using us for training days for lay ministers. All in all, it was another year of being present and accessible to our community and providing spaces for various community groups.

As we look to 2025, I hope that we continue to be seen as friends to the community. The church can be seen as just a building, but it is so much more when communities are present. When all types of communities are present in a church, that church has an opportunity to grow. We hope that we continue to uphold the work of Christ and that all that come into St Andrew's Church Centre have an opportunity to grow as well.

*Kelly Agler Good
Operations Manager*

Coffee and Company

MAP strands: Fellowship, Kinship

On the first Friday of the month, Coffee and Company meet in the Church Centre Foyer to enjoy coffee, cake and conversation. It is a very sociable occasion and everyone is welcome. Some people join us for the whole morning from 10am till 12 noon, while others drop in for 30 minutes or an hour. Numbers vary from month to month but usually there are between 40 - 50 visitors from St Andrew's and the local community.

The Coffee and Company team is made up of 12 volunteers who provide a cheerful welcome, delicious coffee in cafetières and a range of tasty cakes all served at your table. The Community room is also used and, when the weather allows, tables are set outside. The kitchen crew are always kept busy and do an excellent job washing the cafetières and china crockery.

Due to the generous donations of our visitors, we have been able to support three charities this year with The Children's Society receiving £315, the Salvation Army £200 and the Valerie Taylor Trust £200. Thank you very much for your donations.

There have been some changes to the team this year. Sadly, Raynor Crow, a long-standing volunteer and much loved, died in the summer and has been greatly missed. Also 3 more volunteers have had to step down because of health issues. I would like to thank Mavis, Sheila and Stephen for their considerable contributions to Coffee and Company. Their commitment and hard work is much appreciated. Fortunately, we have welcomed some new members to the team but there is always room for more. So, if you would like to join the Coffee and Company Team, please have a word with Lucy.

After 8 years coordinating Coffee and Company, I have decided to step down and my last coffee morning was on 7th December. It has been an honour and a privilege to work with the Coffee and Company Team to provide hospitality and a regular meeting place for the community. I am delighted that Sue Ambrose will be coordinating the monthly coffee mornings in the future, and I wish the team every success. Thank you to all the team for their hard work and to Kelly, Caroline and Giovanni for their generous support.

*Diane Barlow
Co-ordinator*

Communications

MAP strands: All

For the past year, we have continued to engage with our community to ensure that all are informed regarding the goings-on at St Andrew's Church. 'Centred,' our parish newsletter that is delivered to all in our parish has continued to go out at Easter, Harvest and Christmas. In these issues we highlight services, upcoming events, and theological reflection from the clergy. These have been successful at bringing people to worship and events at St Andrew's and we look forward to continuing them.

The online blog posts and the printed version of the quarterly collection of the blog posts in the St Andrew's Digest has been successful at highlighting key initiatives that are taking place in St Andrew's. Through these media, we have brought particular focus to all that the Creation Care team have done for our Eco Church initiatives, and ways that those at home can be more eco-friendly.

As the way we communicate continues to evolve, we regularly assess our ways of communicating and what can be improved upon. This year, we updated the contact card to include information about our data protection consent so that people are better informed on what happens to their data that they allow us to hold. Caroline, our administrative and communications assistant, also created a new planned-giving leaflet which now includes details about the parish giving scheme.

As well as continuing our regular communication through the e-newsletter, pew sheet, website, the many posters and Facebook posts, Caroline has also created a new e-newsletter that is specific to the Friends of St Andrew's group. This goes out as often as we can and provides members of the Friends with vital information regarding their organization.

*Kelly Agler Good
Operations Manager*

Concerts at St Andrew's

MAP strand: Fellowship, Kinship

Concerts at St Andrew's was founded by Joseph Middleton (then Director of Music) and Isabel Burrows in late 2004 with the support of the PCC and is now celebrating its twentieth anniversary. Christopher Dent, who was the vicar when it began, has recently noted that 'CASA continues to make a significant contribution to the life and outreach of St Andrew's'.

The 2024 series included a superb evening of music with our own Paul Searle-Barnes performing with his Orion Trio. On a warm evening in July, Opus 18 entertained a large audience with popular songs and was able to raise a significant amount for locally based charities. Dom Childs, a classical saxophonist, and his accompanists, provided an inventive evening of music in September. The 'Come and Sing' was a chance to get to know an unfamiliar setting of the mass by Rossini, and the experience was a revelation to many.

The final concert of the year was a very welcome return to St Andrew's of jazz with Nikki Iles and Karen Sharp's Quartet, featuring the celebrated veteran Dave Green on double bass. A large and knowledgeable group of fans made for a vibrant evening.

As always, I must thank the dedicated team of volunteers who give up their time to plan and stage events. I also wish to thank Carolyn Sampson OBE, our Patron, for her invaluable support. We are very grateful to the Quavers, who make it possible to attract top quality performers through their generous donations.

Do look out for the remaining concerts in 2025 and you are invited to the 20th Anniversary Concert on 8th November, which is a recital by Carolyn Sampson and Joseph Middleton, including the premiere of a new song cycle by Deborah Pritchard - with a setting of John Clare's poem Song's Eternity which has been funded by CASA.

*Stephen Rogers
Chair*

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. We continue to draw on liturgy and prayers from the Iona Community and prayers from the Sacred Space website (www.sacredspace.com) to structure the sessions. We meet virtually on Zoom on the last Thursday of each month at 8.30pm for about 30 minutes, of which 5-10 mins is silent prayer. We have met in person once this year, where we were led through a summer-themed meditation by Jen Goodyer, one of our members.

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

The group is in its eighth year and there are 28 members of a linked WhatsApp group. Of this wider group, there are about 8 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
Co-ordinator*

Creation Care

MAP strand: Stewardship

The Creation Care Steering Group met on 5 occasions in 2024. Some members also made a presentation to PCC in July and gave a talk entitled 'Recycling for the Planet' to The Friends of St Andrew's Church in October. Both the PCC and The Friends found the presentations very useful and interesting.

Following the awarding of the Silver ECO Church Award in October 2023, work undertaken this year includes:

- Completion of further LED lighting, including Holt Room, kitchen, car park and church centre lobby
- Improved heating control for the main part of church, reducing gas use and enabling closer monitoring
- Consideration of destratification fans in the Nave/chapel (to keep warm air from drifting upwards)
- Starting to prepare a Land Management Plan to ensure we consider nature when tending our outside spaces
- Use of Bokashi bins in the kitchen and improved food waste management
- A Bike maintenance morning
- Additional bike racks to the front of church
- Quote for repairs to the West Window to improve insulation at the West End of church
- Draught-stripping the main church entrance doors to reduce heat loss at the rear of the nave.

The major initiative this year was the introduction of the 'Sustainability Pathway' with a monthly blog in the 3rd week of the month, and the Creation Care Corner on the following Sunday. Here all members of the church who were interested could meet over coffee in the hall after the 10am service to discuss the latest blog post and how they may implement some of the suggestions. We were also grateful to two congregation members for preparing and delivering one of these sessions.

Many suggestions for further work have been put forward including:

- Better dissemination of ideas
- Sharing our experiences with other churches and organisations
- Involvement of children's groups to produce posters/ideas

During the year the criteria for ECO Church awards changed. This has meant that we have had to defer our target of achieving the Gold Award to late 2025 rather than summer 2025 to meet some of the new criteria.

Future work now includes:

- Improved in-house recycling
- Water usage
- Another Bike Maintenance morning on 26th April 2025
- Another Green Fair in 2025
- Consideration of more solar panels
- Replacing gas boilers with heat pumps

We are very encouraged by how the St Andrew's community have supported our initiatives over the year, in some cases making changes to how they have undertaken particular activities for many years (in many cases seemingly unrelated to sustainability). The aim of Creation Care is to empower our community to live more sustainably and to influence those around them, and we are delighted by the feedback and stories we are hearing about how this is taking place far beyond the bounds of our building, our parish or even our town.

A considerable amount has been achieved but there is still a lot to do!

*Ian Smith,
Chair, Creation Care Steering Group*

Events Team

MAP strand: Fellowship

The team have catered for an impressive range of church festivals and occasions - more than a dozen in all throughout 2024. These started with the Beetle Drive/ Pancake Supper on Shrove Tuesday and carried on through Lent with Soup lunches every Thursday. The Good Friday service was followed by coffee & hot-cross buns as usual! We enjoyed being able to show our appreciation of the work of the Sanctuary Guild at the Corpus Christi Eucharist with a cold evening buffet in church. All who contribute to the upkeep of our services are welcomed on these occasions. We have been pleased to share in some events with the Friends of St Andrew's and the Mission & Outreach Committee in their Fund-raising activities.

The biggest annual undertakings have been for occasions when lunches have been prepared such as for Harvest Festival and the traditional Christmas Lunch on a Wednesday in December. Last September we were especially pleased to provide a good afternoon tea to welcome members of St Alban's Guild of Vergers on their annual outing. Their numbers are declining in the diocese, so we feel especially blessed to have the benefit of a such a good vergers' team here! Other cakes have been made to mark several other special occasions over the year which have been much appreciated, particularly for our patronal festival - St Andrew's Day in November.

Our team has formed a WhatsApp group to keep in regular contact with one another so that fewer face to face meetings are held. As always, we take this opportunity to acknowledge our gratitude to all of you who have stepped in to augment our small team in anyway throughout the year. We continue to believe that eating together is essential for the maintenance of friendship and support throughout our church community.

*Pat Rogers
Chair*

Fairtrade

MAP strand: Kinship

£19,191 worth of goods from across the world were sold in 2024; meaning a total of sales of almost £700,000 since November 1989. As some items were sold prior to that date maybe a total £700K was actually achieved?!

Many thanks to all those involved in buying, selling and purchasing these products over those decades. Watch out for information as to where you can access Fairtrade products, either locally or via the internet.

The Fairtrade Team

Film Nights

MAP strand: Fellowship

The Film Nights in 2024 have continued to be enjoyed by a regular group of between 30-40 people, who also appreciate the accompanying fish supper.

As of 2025, the current team including myself, Marie, Barbara and David Hargreaves, Ben, Suzanne and Antonia are handing over the evening to 10am congregation member Martin De Graft Johnson, who currently works in the film industry. The outgoing team have run the event for 13 years showing 130 films, and due to advancing years have decided to pass on the night to a more youthful person, who could expand the event into daytime showings to attract a wider age range of attendees.

My thanks go to all the team members mentioned, as well as all those who have provided help in other ways, such as setting up and packing down, and washing up at the end of each evening.

Gareth Burrows

Flower Arranging (Altar Guild)

MAP strand: Worship

Despite a decrease in the number of arrangers we have managed to keep up with floral decorations in the church over the past year. We shall continue to do arrangements fortnightly instead of weekly in both the Chapel and Sanctuary which eases the load for the few currently on the rota and considers the rising cost of flowers. With our carbon footprint in mind, we have also cut down on our use of Oasis and are looking to other options for arranging the flowers.

We have welcomed extra help on occasions such as festivals and Mothering Sunday and were very grateful to the members of the Mothers' Union who kindly stepped up to assist with the harvest arrangements. We come together as a team to decorate for the festivals, and anyone is welcome to come along and join us on these occasions and have a go. Thanks to all who have contributed in any way over the year, also to Lucy, Gareth and Alan for their support.

*Jenny Coggins
Co-ordinator*

Friends of St Andrew's

MAP strand: Fellowship

The year of 2024 was one of the most successful, with a wide range of activities. The talks included two by our own members of the church - it must be noted that a lot of talented people are within our midst. We managed theatre trips and attended the Thursford Christmas Spectacular show, the largest Christmas show in the country, which I felt was a great success. The year finished with our now Christmas social which included festive food and drink, a quiz, a singer, a raffle and teas. The Committee work tirelessly to make the events first-class and to your taste. This year 2025 has a full calendar, as well as the most important developments of a new member's email site. So why not join and enjoy regular newsletters and have the opportunity to attend some wonderful events.

*Ralph Hall
Chair*

Meditation Group

MAP strand: Worship, Discipleship

Meeting every Friday at 10.30am except the first Friday in the month.

Whether is it termed Centring Prayer or Contemplative Prayer, Christian Meditation is ultimately a form of prayer. And while it is simple in its technique, it is not always easy to practise. That chattering mind of ours is difficult to still.

St Andrews offers a sacred, silent space to step into, and the fact that there is a group that meets together means that any newcomer can gain support from others. The average attendance tends to be 7, but it is frequently never the same 7 which illustrates the relaxed, drop-in nature of the group. It is also ecumenical, with attendees coming from churches other than St Andrews.

The group gathers a little before 10.30am. The facilitator commences with a piece of scripture before the 25 minutes of silent mediation. It is closed with a prayer. For those who wish to socialise, tea/coffee is served afterwards in the Quiet room.

*Belinda Searle-Barnes
Co-ordinator*

Mission and Outreach Team

MAP strand: Kinship

The Mission and Outreach team met 8 times in 2024 under the leadership of Revd. Joseph Barnes. The committee focused on our 3 charities, providing financial support, prayer, shared information, and building relationships. The charities supported during 2024 were World Vision (International), The Trussell Trust (National), and Emmaus Carlton Village (Local).

During the year, the team decided to replace The Trussell Trust as the National charity, as the three-year support commitment was due to end in January 2025. The congregation voted on themes such as Climate Change, Mental Health, Young People Leaving Care, Cost of Living and Financial Poverty, and Racial Justice. The majority voted for supporting young people leaving the care system. Consequently, Home for Good was adopted as the new National Charity starting January 2025. In 2025, we will be looking for a new international charity as part of the ongoing rotation of support.

Revd. Joseph Barnes served as Chair until December, supported by Jenny Tomlinson as Secretary throughout the year, and Rebecca Stockman is currently the Interim Chair.

Grants were made to each of the 3 charities from a budget allocation of £14,000 within the PCC budget. Additional fundraising efforts also took place.

World Vision focused on the community of Pajule in northern Uganda. John Orchard and Crystal Nnoruke visited in January, noting that fresh water is significantly improving wellbeing there. They reflected that the relationship feels like a partnership. A congregational lunch in September, supported by the Events Team, focused on Pajule. Crystal represented World Vision by reading at Nine Lessons and Carols.

The Trussell Trust concluded the Christmas 2023 Reverse Advent calendar appeal in January 2024, with many boxes and bags of donated food items taken to Bedford Food Bank.

Emmaus Carlton Village had a tour in January by Tim and Caroline, who encouraged donations of goods. Jenny and Tim attended the AGM in November, and a Christmas collection of donations was facilitated through the church in December and January. Emmaus was also represented by reading at Nine Lessons and Carols.

Other Activities included topping up donations to the 2024 Christmas charities, World Vision in the Middle East, and the Winter Night Shelter at the Kings Arms Project. The team also topped up the Bishop's Harvest Appeal for Leprosy Mission, reviewed their Terms of Reference, and supported the Events Team for the Harvest Lunch in October.

The Team for 2025:

- Interim Chair: Rebecca Stockman
- Members: Jenny Tomlinson, Valerie Littleford, Tim Papworth, Caroline Riches, Michele Swales, Emma Wilson-Bourne, Doreen Nyakato

The budget allocation for 2025 is £14,400. Many thanks to Lionel for keeping the budget up to date and providing regular information.

*Rebecca Stockman
Interim Chair*

Mothers' Union

MAP strands: Fellowship, Kinship

Mothers' Union is a global Christian movement, approaching the 150th anniversary of its creation. Its 4 million members are active in 84 countries, seeking to build a future where everyone can thrive - a future free from violence, poverty and injustice.

Here at St Andrew's, our Mothers' Union group enjoyed a varied programme during 2024 with talks from a range of interesting speakers, social and craft afternoons, fundraising events and church services marking key dates in the MU/church year. The year started with us hosting the Epiphany service for members from groups across the north of St Albans Diocese. Lady Day (March) and Mary Sumner Day (August) were similarly marked with services at Potton and Sharnbrook respectively. Our group's Summer of Hope appeal event held in the Main Hall in June raised £379. Visitors enjoyed chatting over cream teas with an opportunity to browse and buy from the stalls or try their luck on the raffle and guessing games. The traditional raffle at the Wednesday service Christmas Lunch added further to our fundraising efforts to support MU projects both in the UK and internationally.

The end of 2024 was tinged with sadness for our group as three former members passed away - we will remember with affection Sheila Sunley, Dorothy Yerrill and our former Branch leader, Edna Stringer.

We would love to welcome new members to our group and all that Mothers' Union has to offer. We meet on the 3rd Monday of each month, usually in the Holt Room, at 2.30pm. The Wednesday communion service in the 2nd week of each month is also kept as our Corporate Communion. Do keep an eye on the weekly email for more details and feel free to join us, even if it's just for one meeting because the speaker would be of interest to you - all are welcome: it's not just for mothers!

*Karen Parrott
Co-ordinator*

Pilgrim House Group

MAP strand: Discipleship

Pilgrim House Group is a friendly informal group meeting on the second Monday afternoon in the month to explore, share and deepen our Christian faith.

We study and reflect on a variety of bible study courses, using the SPCK Small Group Web Site as a guide. During this year we have covered a video course 'The Gift of Christ' covering the generosity of God and discovering our gifts and responding. We have also covered sessions on stand-alone bible studies - Mercy, Barnabas, and Revd. David Powell led a session on 'My life and Ministry'. This was balanced with social occasions - a Midsummer Afternoon Tea and Christmas lunch.

A Quiet Day entitled 'We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our Song!' led by Revd. Joseph Barnes was held at Chellington Centre, Carlton, Bedford on Tuesday 21st May.

We would love for new members to join us, and you are welcome for one session or regularly. Please contact the Church Office and your details will be passed on.

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 2024, 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 2024 financial year was slightly above £150,500, about £26,000 up on the previous year.

However, casual giving (cash and cashless giving via the card machine) was down again in 2024 by about 15%. This follows a similar trend in 2023. The Yellow Gift Aid Envelopes are still used by a few regular members of the congregation and are often used by visitors - the card reader is also useful for cashless donations.

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 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 provides a regular income stream. If you would like further information about setting up a standing order, please contact the Church Centre Office. We claim the Gift Aid on these donations if given permission by the donor.

In January 2024 there were 59 members giving by standing order and 60 had joined the Parish Giving Scheme making the total 119. A year later in January 2025 there were 52 giving by standing order and 72 by the Parish Giving Scheme, a total of 124 members.

Income tax recovered via the Gift Aid Scheme is an important source of income for us; this amounted to a little over £36,200 in 2024 an increase of just over £6,000 on 2023. If you are a taxpayer, and have not already done so, please consider authorising PGS to make the necessary claim.

Thank you for your support!

*Jim Dawson
Planned Giving and Gift Aid Recorder*

Servers and Sacristans

MAP Strand: Worship

Every Friday throughout the year four members of St Andrew's spend time on a rota basis in the vestry washing and preparing the silverware for the Sunday services, counting wafers and filling wine bottles, and replacing the water bottles in church. I am very grateful to them so that I can arrive at 6.30am on a Sunday morning to lay up for the services, and all is ready. In 2024 Kathy Johnstone decided to retire - she has been helping for too many years to count, and my thanks go out to her. To fill her place, Zoe Brown has joined us, and I thank her for offering to take on the role, as it is a very important job. My thanks also go to all those who assist, including Sue, Hilary, Christine and of course Zoe.

St Andrew's has twenty members who serve at the services, all of whom are dedicated to serve in a professional role. Their support is wonderful, and they almost always say yes to assisting whenever they can. During 2024 Barbara Hargreaves retired from the 8am service but is still doing the washing of the servers Albs - Liz Lacey has stepped in to serve in her place. Ralph Hall has also retired from the 8am service, and Elizabeth Fitch has joined in his place. My thanks go out to both for their many years of service to St Andrew's and myself. It is sad that Alun Jones has had to retire on health grounds from preparing the incense used at Festivals - he has been undertaking the role for many years, and we are grateful for his service in this role. William Morton, a member of the 8am congregation who had been acting as a reserve, will now take on this role.

I also look after the Chalice assistants for both the 8am and 10am services, and they are all dedicated members of St Andrew's - I thank them for their support and the professional way in which they undertake their duties.

I also thank our assistant vergger Alan Colley, who stood in for me as I underwent cancer treatment during most of 2024.

I am so thankful for them all, and it gives me great pleasure to look after them. My thanks also to my wife Marie, without whose support this role would be much more difficult. She tirelessly does all the day-to-day washing from the vestry, as well as the altar cloths and linen.

My sincere thanks to all.

*Gareth Burrows
Vergger*

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 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 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.

Revd. Canon Lucy Davis

Telephone Link Carers (TLC)

MAP strands: Fellowship

The Telephone Link Carers service, originally set up in 2019, continues to provide weekly telephone calls to nine people, those remaining after our decision two years ago to stop offering the service to new people. The seven volunteers have interesting and often lively calls with the people we call, some as long as an hour, and the people we call are very appreciative of the weekly contact.

In future it may be felt helpful to expand the service again or to start it afresh but without the surety of finding people, both from within the congregation and across the Borough who would welcome regular calls, for now the volunteers will just continue to provide weekly calls to our current group of people.

*Fiona McLeod
Organiser*

Tower Bell Ringers

MAP strand: Worship

We continue to be short of ringers and we would be very interested to hear from anybody interested in learning to ring or indeed returning to ringing.

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

We hosted a District Quarterly Meeting in October and members of the local band are also involved in ringing activities elsewhere. The only quarter peal rung at St Andrew's during the year was by a visiting band.

Alex Nash, Tower Captain

Welcomers

MAP strand: Fellowship, Worship

Everyone is a welcomer!

The team of six Welcomers work alongside the sidespeople at the 10am service, specifically to identify and welcome any newcomers to the congregation; people who may be visiting, perhaps with family members, or wanting to find out about the style of worship at St Andrew's or just wanting to know what goes on in a church!

The impression the person will take away from that initial encounter is significant, as it can be what encourages them to return or never to come back. The Welcomer may also develop a longer return relationship with the people they have welcomed. The value of the Welcomers was commented on by several people responding to the MAP questionnaire, for example: 'Excellent welcoming team who encourage the whole church to be more open to visitors, and the congregation and community has grown in diversity and acceptance.'

Nevertheless, welcoming is not just for the people who have a badge saying 'Welcome to St Andrew's' - every congregation member should be prepared to welcome newcomers. If they find themselves sitting next to someone they don't recognise, they can introduce themselves and offer help with the service booklet, hymn books and with going up for communion. If, as may well happen, the person has been coming for years, it is still good to receive that unexpected 'welcome'!

This recognition of new people is also important at coffee time after the service. It may have taken a person considerable courage to venture into the Hall alone, but then to be left sitting alone will discourage them from ever returning. An invitation to join a table of friends is a very welcoming gesture and will ensure a person meets several others.

Thank you to the Welcomer Team, Diane, Pamela, Sue, Neil and Martin and for your contribution to the life of St Andrew's.

Fiona McLeod, Organiser, Welcomer Team

Worship Band

MAP Strand: Worship

Not many churches can boast that they've introduced a song on ukulele or harp, or accompanied the cross as it makes its way back up the nave with the winning UK entry for the 1997 Eurovision Song Contest, lead singer resplendent in exactly the same clothes as Katrina (of Katrina and the Waves).

We are the worship band and we offer an opportunity for all to offer their instruments or voice in worship. There is no audition required, and we cater for all levels of experience and expertise. We accompany the all-age service and the more intimate Sacred Space evening worship. The repertoire is mixed - from traditional hymns to Iona, Taize and 'world' music, to contemporary worship songs. This is intentional, to enable a diversity of individuals to connect with the worship.

During 2024 we welcomed several new joiners covering a diversity of instruments, including ukelele, harp, trumpet, trombone and clarinet. We've experimented with new repertoire and led the congregation in rounds and chants in simple harmony, following a short whole-congregation practice before the service. These have felt particularly poignant; the congregation surprising themselves with what they can achieve.

Our thanks to Sam Rick, who continues to co-ordinate the band for Sacred Space, offering informal, moving music at these services.

*Andy Thomas
Co-ordinator*