



ST ANDREW'S CHURCH
BIGGLESWADE

**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL
CHURCH MEETING**

**Sunday 28th April 2024
at 11.30 am.**

**Reports of the Church Activities and
Organisations.**



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CHURCH FABRIC AND GROUNDS.

This past year has been dominated by the replacement of our very outdated heating system, however the regular pattern of upkeep of our buildings and grounds continues.

Heating Project

The work on the Heating replacement project began in September, which meant that the church had to be closed during the week, in order to allow work to continue. The contractors, however, did a really good clean up each Friday to allow Sunday services to continue.

The work began with the removal of the pipework and boiler from the old system that probably dated back to the 1960's and even older with regard to the pipework. The boiler room received a good clean and decoration, to make ready for the new boiler equipment and control equipment.

The big 'heating coil' pipes that ran through the ducts in the aisle and provided much of the heat from the old system were removed to make way for new supply pipes that make their way along the old ducts to the new radiators, positioned around the church.

Although many heating ducts existed around the church, there were still places not served and so new ducts had to be created beneath the flag stones to allow the pipes to reach all the radiators.

The new boilers were installed within the boiler house and a new flue liner threaded up through the existing chimney. There was some delay to this as it was found that lighting cables from the installation of the church lighting had been routed through the chimney, these had to be diverted before the liner could be installed. Also new regulations, with regard to emissions required that a short chimney stack also be added.

Work on the replacement was completed by mid-December in time to allow Christmas services. The new system has a sophisticated control mechanism that allows it to work out to optimum time to bring the system up, ready for services based upon the difference between inside and outside temperatures. The new system radiators expel warm

air to heat the immediate environment and based upon the control system these begin vigorous, but gradually reduce in output as it approached service time.

Snagging work continues, mainly with regard to building works that were associated with the project, including the vestry toilet that is currently undergoing a full refurbishment. We are very grateful to those who have worked hard to install the system and those who have worked on the associated building works to complete such a major project.

Other Work.

We are pleased that as part of the heating project the Trinity Altar was repaired, following the investigations of the heating pipes and detection of leaks.

Repairs have been carried out to the lead on the North Aisle roof, following the detection of several leaks. Some of the leaks were identified and repaired, however one or two remain that reveal themselves in heavy rain. We are not far off now from the lead on this roof needing to be replaced.

We are currently working with our Architect to identify a number of replacement heating grates, to replace previously broken units. Following one of these failing before Christmas, protective flooring has been laid in the main aisle until replacement units can be sourced.

We have also continued to keep pace with the five year programme of recommended works from our 2021 quinquennial inspection.

Work parties.

We continue to be very grateful to everyone who turns out for Saturday work parties, over the year these have:

- Re-painted the lines on the car-park and created a new accessible bay.
- Started installing metal posts on the west side of the car-park, to protect our neighbour's fence.
- The repair of loose tiles in the nave.

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- Leaf clearing and grounds maintenance spring and autumn.
 - Pruning of trees.
 - Clearing and cleaning of all rainwater hoppers, pipes and underground traps.

Gardening.

Particular thanks to Jan, Ros, Paul, Ruth, Neptune Cub Pack, Vaughan and Hilary for regularly tending to their designated flower beds and borders and all those who work to keep our grounds looking beautiful.

Our Garden of Remembrance continues to be a much used place of rest which is cared for by a small group of volunteers and we are looking to improve the signage to this shortly.

Eco Church.

As we strive to be responsible custodians of our buildings and grounds we continue to look for support from agencies like Arocha and as part of this support, the team have introduced an area on the south side of the church, which has been excluded from regular mowing. Also during the year, a 'bug hotel' was created and sited on the northern boundary of the churchyard and bird boxes have been erected in many of the trees. A composting area has been created within the cordoned off area on the south side.

Many thanks to everyone who has given their time, talents and resources to the upkeep of our church, this past year has seen a major achievement with the introduction of a new, much more efficient heating system.

Chris Parker and Rob Butcher

HOME COMMUNIONS.

It is always a privilege to receive requests from individuals and families for Home Communion. Throughout 2023 we not only visited some parishioners regularly, but also responded to occasional requests for those who were receiving medical interventions, or palliative care.

Monthly services continue at both Penrose Court Care Home, and Mantles Court Residential Home; residents enjoy hymn singing in addition to receiving the bread and wine, and it is also good to be able to visit those who are too frail to worship together in lounges or cinema rooms. Some residents also meet together to watch our Sunday Zoom services and enjoy seeing the progress of the children and young people, in addition to seeing familiar faces at St Andrew's Church from home.

We continue to encourage further parishioners to join the team ministering in care residences, and to individuals in their homes; please contact the Vicar or churchwardens if you wish to be involved in training for this important aspect of ministry. Likewise, we welcome notification of the names and contact details of the sick, or increasingly frail, who would value the opportunity to receive Home Communion, or a pastoral visit.

Rosemary Bentley

SAFE GUARDING.

Thank you to Vaughan Johnson for all his previous work in the role of safeguarding officer.

I am completing my training need, to fulfil the role and ensure the ongoing safer church for all our congregation and visitors.

Everyone has a role in this to ensure we have a safe church. Please raise any concerns with me, the Vicar or the Church Wardens.

I can be contacted by phone – 07985 378472 or email. All concerns will be looked at:

Email: safeguarding@standrewschurchbw.org.uk

Nicola Woodward

CHURCH CHOIR.

2023 was another busy year for the choir and we sang at all the main church services and festivals.

In the summer we were pleased to welcome other choirs to join with us for a festal evensong. This was part of a successful fundraising afternoon for the new heating system project. A combined choir of 43 singers made a joyful sound!

Members of the choir also contributed too, and organised the production of a community recipe book which was sold in aid of the heating system project.

The heating works brought us challenges because the choir stalls and organ were out of action. We were also unable to process. We were able to use the challenges as an opportunity to experiment with seating. I felt it was especially good to have the choir singing in the nave and received many positive comments about that.

The choir continues to rehearse most Friday evenings, although due to circumstances we sometimes need a short practice before the Sunday morning service.

We were pleased to welcome Mrs Sue Thorn to help when she can with playing the organ and taking choir practice while I was away on holiday in 2023 and more recently because of my illness.

We always welcome new members. Previous experience of choral singing and being able to read music are desirable but by no means essential. The choir collect which is said before each practice sums up our approach.

Loving Father we thank you for the gift of music and the opportunity to sing your praises. We pray that you will be with us in all that we do. Guide us in our desire to offer you our voices in your service, Amen.

Rob Butcher Organist and Choir Director

SIDESPERSIONS AND WELCOMERS.

During the past year the team of Sidespersons and Welcomers has continued to fulfil the essential role of greeting comers to our services at church, and offering assistance, if necessary, to newcomers. We now have a team of 15 Welcomers and 14 Sidespeople, with many individuals fulfilling both roles.

It is essential that we provide a warm welcome to all at St Andrew's and this is being fulfilled by our present volunteers, but there is always room for new people on the rotas. Both these duties run from 9.30 am until the commencement of the 10.00 am Sunday services, and for half an hour before services at other times. The sidesperson also needs to put books away and check that nothing has been left in the pews after the service.

A heartfelt thankyou to everyone who is already filling one or both of these important roles.

Mary Dominey

SERVERS.

The small, but dedicated team have continued to support and enhance worship throughout the year. Their commitment and mutual support is greatly valued. Being able to provide a full serving complement for the major festivals has been a particular highlight.

Now that Alice is at university, we have welcomed support from Rachel Smith when needed. We have been delighted to welcome Ezra Shannon to our merry band, showing that this rewarding service is an opportunity for all ages. If anyone is interested in joining the team, please come and talk to us.

Richard and Jenny Blackford

PA.

Our PA system in the church is an important part of our worship in that it makes the service accessible to all. Not only the fact that people can hear those leading our worship but it also assists those who use hearing aids as well as those that join the service via zoom.

The PA team will assist at most services as well as at weddings and funerals. But the team go beyond that and assist at outdoor events like the Nativity Tableau, Country Fayre, and Good Friday service on the market.

I would like to thank all the PA operators for their continued support during the year.

The operators would really welcome new volunteers to help share the load. Full training and support will be given.

Nick Gurney

BELLRINGERS.

The band continues to meet regularly on Sundays for service ringing and Wednesdays for practice. In general we have enough to ring six bells on both occasions but rarely do we manage to ring more which is a great shame. It was pleasing to welcome some visitors at Christmas enabling us to ring all 10 bells at least some of the time.

As always we are very grateful to a number of ringers in the local area who help us out for wedding ringing and also a recent funeral.

During the year several visiting bands have come along to enjoy some ringing on our bells and are very appreciative of their tonal qualities and ease of ringing.

In June 2024 we are honoured to be host for The Ridgman Trophy which is a 10 bell ringing competition for teams from the East of England. They are county/diocesan teams plus a team representing Cambridge University. There should be some good ringing to listen to, so come along on June 8th and enjoy the sound and maybe some cakes!

Should you wish to learn to ring, do ascend the tower stairs and see

what it entails. Our recent young ringer would love to see another school aged recruit.

Charlotte Smith

RONALD J SHARP RINGING CENTRE.

During 2023 we continued to make good use of the Ringing Centre facilities with monthly learner practices and also hosting an ART Module 1 – Teaching Bell handling course in January.

Owing to its popularity the second Saturday learners practice has now been divided into two parts, the first between 10.00 am – 11.00 am concentrates on handling skills with one-to-one sessions. The second, between 11.15 am – 12.30 pm is aimed at those who can handle a bell competently and so moving on to rounds and plain hunt whilst also improving their listening skills.

These sessions do not happen without the support from experienced ringers and the ‘technical team’, so a big thank you to all who have helped in any way during the year.

We would also like to say a big thank you to those who provide the excellent refreshments in the Chapter House during these sessions. The social part of the morning is just as important as the ringing part.

Sue Silver & Chris Williams

CHILDREN’S SOCIETY REPORT.

The Children’s Society has always been a popular charity that our church family supports. The charity does tremendous work by providing specialist support that empowers young people to make positive changes and rediscover their hope. The charity works alongside young people, their families and the community with an aim of building a society built for children.

At St Andrew’s we support in two very different ways. Firstly our annual Christingle service encourages many to come together and build a circle of light around our church as we stand together for hope.

Secondly we offer people, mantelpiece collecting boxes that allow us to donate our loose change to the Society in support of the children.

In 2023, Christingle raised £640 with an additional £140 being donated from Burns Night. Our box opening raised a further £617.

If you would like a box to put on your mantelpiece please speak to Rob Butcher. Thank you to everyone who supports the Children's Society.

Rob Butcher

FRIENDS OF ST ANDREW'S.

The Friends continues to support the PCC in the task of maintaining, preserving and restoring our parish church of St Andrew. Whilst the Trustees have met a number of times over the last year, we have not held any significant fundraising events to avoid conflicting with the appeal to replace the church's heating system, to which the Friends donated funds to purchase one of the new boilers for the scheme.

However, we did hold a renewal Sunday in June last year, where ten new Friends joined our number; and we again plan to have a similar event this coming summer, with a reminder that anyone with an interest in the church can become a Friend (Annual subscriptions are only £10 for adults and £2 for children). The Trust has continued to pay for the maintenance of the roof alarm during the year; and provided funds for new signage, markings and posts for the car park.

Whilst the Trust has a positive outlook for the future, the past few months have seen significant change and sadness; the passing of one of our Trustees, Sylvia Rutt, alongside Philip Rutt's decision to stand down as Secretary to the Friends, will leave an irreplaceable void. Sylvia's legendary marmalade making; garage sales; hosting and organising catering for events leave a long-lasting legacy; and Philip was the last remaining serving Trustee from the original members of

the Tower Appeal Committee, which led to the founding of the Trust and the Friends.

Those sentences, however, do not do justice to the dedication, commitment and hard work that both Sylvia and Philip have given over the last four decades to enable the Trust to raise hundreds of thousands of pounds towards the maintenance and preservation of St Andrew's. It is not an understatement to say that without their effort, drive and enthusiasm the Trust, and indeed the church, would not be what they are today; they both deserve our thanks and recognition for all that has been achieved by the Friends.

Date for your Diary: the next AGM of the Friends will be on Friday 4th October, including a social evening and a speaker.

John Dilley

BRASS CLEANING.

Since Covid and the new heating installation, we have a new rota for cleaning the lectern, and I am very grateful to Ruth for managing the brass items which are locked away.

As always I would be very pleased to have more volunteers, but currently I would like to thank Sue, Jan, Ros and Ruth for their excellent polishing.

Rosemary Jopson

SOCIAL MEDIA.

After launching our social media initiative in 2021, we have been able to see a steady growth with regular engagement from many members of our Church community and local community through both our Facebook and Instagram pages – what we hope is a great outreach to those within our local community.

I am very pleased to say that the feedback that we have received continually throughout this year has been hugely positive (although more always welcome – whether positive or not) and we have been successful in reaching many members of the town. With over 415 followers on our

Facebook page and over 245 followers on Instagram the growth has been continuous and a joy to watch over the past 12 months. We have been also able to raise awareness of fundraising that we are currently completing as a church as well as marking special days throughout the year. Within the last year we have had the biggest support on posts featuring The Bigg Loo Push by Neptune Cub Pack as well as our Christingle 2024 post.

Like many other things, this does take up an awful lot of time and although it is thoroughly enjoyable there are many things you can do to help us.

- Let us know if you have anything you would like us to share.
- Send any pictures of any events, services or just the beauty of our churchyard to us so that we can share them.
- Volunteer to become a 'personal spotlight' – answer a few short questions about yourself and your relationship with St Andrew's Church.
- Share our pages and posts to your friends and followers encouraging them to like our pages.

We are very excited for all that is to come for the social media initiative in the coming years, we hope like us, you enjoy seeing the work of our Church spread across the social media platforms.

*Oliver Dilley and Jessica Mephram
socialmedia@standrewschurchbw.org.uk*

SHOEBOXES.

We have now been sending shoeboxes to the Rotary Shoebox Appeal for four years, and the scheme is running very smoothly. Although the boxes are on the small side and the categories are slightly different, we still use the Operation Christmas Child model for the assortment of items we include in the children's boxes, i.e. something for hygiene, some school stuff, a couple of toys, a ball, a hat and, of course,

the essential cuddly toy. Being able to choose the exact age of the child a box is for, has meant that really appropriate items can be included.

The two extra categories, 'Baby' and 'Family' box have also given extra choices. Baby boxes can include new and good second-hand clothing, wipes, rattles, baby cutlery, bibs and, of course a cuddly toy. Family boxes can include any small useful household item, and particularly disposable items such as scourers, dishcloths, string etc. But please NO liquid in any category of box.

This year the number of individual boxes filled was about the same as the previous year, namely 70 boxes. The breakdown was 4 boxes for 2-4 year olds, 28 boxes for 5 – 9 year olds and 30 for 10 – 14 year olds with 21 of them being for girls. As usual the youngest children do the least well, and that is understandable, as toys for that age are often bulky, but hopefully this imbalance could be addressed in the coming season. They were also 4 baby boxes and 4 household boxes filled.

The original intention was to fill 180 communal boxes, but due to huge success with buying cheaply at Boot Fayres and the amount of items gifted for the boxes, the eventual number filled was 205, comprising 66 for children aged 2-4, 62 for children aged 5-9, and 62 for children aged 10 – 14, 10 baby boxes and 5 household boxes. I am hugely indebted to people who gave me cash donations, which totalled £232. Money was also raised at my 'At Home' – £403, Jigsaw sales – £30, Sale of books to Ziffit – £23, Cartridge recycling – £30 and the Christmas Stall – £97. Selling at Boot Fayres also raised £171.

I was concerned at first because the flat pack shoebox price had risen from £2 to £3 with no discount for bulk as before, but despite the huge increase in costs, the number of boxes filled in 2023 was exactly the same as in 2022. Well done to everyone who contributed in any way to last year's success.

Our boxes were collected on the 13th November and I have now been informed that they went to Romania.

I have, of course, already started buying for this year's communal boxes and expect to order the flat pack boxes from Rotary during the summer term. My hope is that we can fill even more boxes this year.

Thankyou to all those who have continued to support the project by filling a box and to all whose generous donations helped to make last year's project such a success.

Mary Dominey

COUNTRY FAYRE

The Country Fayre took place on Saturday 23rd September and we were blessed with lovely sunshine on the day, which helps in so many ways. An amazing £5,000 was raised! The two worthy recipient charities from the Country Fayre were 'Tibbs Dementia Care' and 'Save The Children', who both were extremely grateful for these much needed funds to enable them to continue with their good work.

The Country Fayre has been taking place for nearly forty years now and along with being an important outreach opportunity, we know so many local people who enjoy coming to what has become an important annual event in the town. The Country Fayre was slightly different this year as we were unable to host an exhibition within the church due to the replacement heating works taking place, however the exhibition will be back in 2024!

The Country Fayre opened with the 'Music for Memory Choir', which consists of people who are supported by the Tibbs Foundation. They sang (and danced) some of their favourite songs in the arena, which was a delight to see and appreciated by many people who were sitting around the arena. Other participants in the arena were from local schools, and community groups giving us a great selection of entertainment throughout the day.

There were the usual array of stalls where people could spend their money and with the lovely weather, people seemed to appreciate sitting and enjoying something to eat and drink and take in the atmosphere.

Following this event and building relationships with charities, 'Tibbs Dementia Care' have now used our facilities at church for a

Biggleswade group that has previously not run, so a great spin off for our community here in Biggleswade.

So another fantastic event which as a committee we are grateful to all who support it in any way. We always welcome more help and support so please do consider if you feel you may be able to help out this year in some way – we all have different gifts to use. 2024 Country Fayre and Exhibition takes place on Saturday 21st September.

Lucy Dilley, Country Fayre Committee

MOTHERS' UNION.

Our Mothers' Union group is of Diocesan Members, as many branches have now become. We're a small group and not all have opted for membership, but you don't have to be a member to join in with us. We meet once a month in the Ivel Room, usually on the first Wednesday of the month at 2 pm. It's very informal. We occasionally have a theme or a speaker, but always time for a chat with tea and cake. We also had pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. In the summer we hope to meet at the Sandy Bird Lodge and other locations out in the fresh air.

Mothers' Union has a basic aim of supporting family life, which we interpret as spotting a need and trying to fill it. At the moment we try to help out with parish activities when requested and do the Coffee Shop on the second Saturday of the month, which is when bell ringers visit our belfry. On the third Thursday of the month we hold a lunch, with soup when it's cold and a ploughman's in the summer. We don't have a set charge but ask for a donation. This gets older folk out and chatting, making new friends, and the atmosphere is a delight. Through donations at both coffee shop and lunches over about 12 months we have fulfilled our pledge to raise £2,000 for a radiator in the church.

Mothers' Union is a faith based organisation and we have joined in the June 'Wave of Prayer' and the celebration of Mary Sumner Day (the founder of Mothers' Union), a quiet day in Harpenden, an Advent Carol service at St Neots with Elizabeth Sibson's branch, and an Epiphany service at St Andrew's, Bedford. We prepare intercessions for the Thursday morning service about once a month.

Going forward we would like to join in with other groups and branches, particularly Upper Caldecote and St Neots. We're planning a celebration tea for the 30th anniversary of the ordination of women, especially because we have Revd Barbara Ebeling and, of course, Revd Liz active in St Andrew's.

If you might be interested in what we do please ask – as I said above, we're very informal and you don't have to become a member. Mothers' Union welcomes all to join in, not just mothers and not just women, all are welcome.

Maggie McLoughlin and Rosamund Drakes

GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE.

It continues to be an important place in for our church where relatives and friends visit where the ashes of loved ones have been interned, but also where people sit to contemplate in the peace and quietness of the garden.

In 2023 there was one interment in the Garden, which is lower than normal, and there continues to be plenty of space for any who would like ashes interred there.

A small team continues to maintain the Garden who regularly mow the lawn, clear away dead flowers and remove debris. They could always do with more volunteers, so if you can help out please let the building and grounds team know. We could also do with volunteers for digging plots, which can be quite rigorous when the ground is dry, if you can support please let me know.

Peter Giles

PRINTING.

We continue to print notices weekly for those who don't have internet access or prefer a 'hard' copy; family service sheets and those for special occasions and festivals are also down to us. Having used up the old stock of coloured paper, we now limit ourselves to yellow and orange for festivals (and red for Christmas). We decided a new folding machine was

too expensive for the number of occasions it's needed, and if you come to the Saturday coffee shop you may see the 'team' of volunteers folding and collating for the Sunday service. A huge thank you to Pat Sherwood-Saunders and Christina Lawrence for their efforts (the latter also for keeping us entertained) and to those whose hands on a Saturday make light work. The choir recipe book was a challenge to which they rose magnificently!

We do need someone who can print for me on occasions when I'm indisposed. There are people who can do this, but they tend to be involved in other church activities. If you might be able to help, please speak to me.

Maggie McLoughlin

CHURCH WEBSITE.

The church website is visited by around 460 unique users each month, with the News Sheet and Calendar being the most visited sites, followed by What's On and Contacts. As with previous years, the Holiday Club is the busiest period for website usage, followed by the Christmas Period.

The company who hosts the website changed their software this year which led to a lot of the design of the website being lost. This did not affect content but has meant the website now has a less professional look to it. The team are working on restoring the design.

We are always looking for content for the website, particularly up to date photos of church activities. If you would like to contribute images, please speak to Peter Giles. Additionally, the Magazine section of the website gives a timeline of what the church has been up to, as this is where you can find the short term articles about individual events and activities in the church. Links to the latest articles appear on the homepage.

Peter Giles

FOOD BANK.

The need for Food Bank donations continues to rise. Ours go to Preen which doesn't get supermarket collections only items, or cash, taken there directly. Many thanks to those of you who continue to donate in the church. The 'Reverse Advent' collections were magnificent. Harvest gifts also went to Preen – and every donation, however small, helps someone keep food on the table. Their page on Facebook highlights particular shortages regularly if you ever wonder what to give. They also welcome cash donations in the warehouse, if you drop in.

Maggie McLoughlin

OPEN THE BOOK.

This is a Churches Together initiative in which a group of us present an Assembly in the form of a narrated and enacted Bible story once a week. We still only have enough people to go to one school, Caldecote Academy, but would love to be able to include local schools. At present I am the only St Andrew's representative, and we have members from Trinity Methodist and Caldecote Methodist churches. The children love taking part in the stories and we hope they will remember the Christian messages for a long time.

Rosemary Jopson

ST ANDREW'S HOUSE – 10 COMPTON MEAD.

The PCC have, for many years, owned a property in the town to provide a suitable working/family home for housing a curate/assistant minister for the parish. In 2017 a recently built house at Compton Mead, overlooking Edward Peake School field, was purchased; with upgraded facilities and based on the east side of Biggleswade. While we currently do not have a training curate the house is being let, both to provide security at the house, and to obtain an income from the property until it is required for its intended purpose.

There is very little to report on the happenings at the property in the last year, the current tenants have been in the house now for more

than three years and have recently requested to extend their tenancy for another twelve months. Our agents reported at their last inspection that the property continues to be well cared for, and the condition was stated to be 'very good'; there have been no significant items of expenditure required during the last year.

John Dilley

FLOWERS IN CHURCH.

After my appeal last year, I did not get enough interest to enable me to get a rota together to provide flowers in church. But, with the help of a few donations I have continued to try and make the church look warm and inviting to parishioners and visitors and will continue to do so.

My thanks go to the dedicated team who provide the wonderful displays in the windows at festival times. Unfortunately a couple of people cannot continue, so if anyone else would like to join the team please let me know.

Jan Gardner

SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE.

Tea, coffee, squash and biscuits are served in the Chapter House following each Sunday morning following the 10.00 am service. The number of people who come through from the service varies from week to week. I personally have always found it great to chat to people and find out how they are, also it's also a great opportunity to speak to people who may be either new to the church; or just visiting Biggleswade and give them both a warm welcome in a little more relaxed (potentially less daunting) environment, but to also to get to know a little about them and what brings them to St Andrews that day.

There is a small dedicated team of people who help set up, serve and clear up after serving the refreshments, new helpers would be very much appreciated. The rota means that helpers are 'on duty' once a month and have a dedicated Sunday of the month. There are donation dishes out and monies raised go in to the Church General Funds.

Thank you to the team who do give up some time for what I believe to be an important part of our outreach ministry here at St Andrew's. If you feel this important ministry is something you would like to help with I would love to hear from you!

Lucy Dilley (07800 577)

SUNDAY LUNCH.

Monthly Sunday lunches have continued throughout the last year. They have been very well attended with up to 100 people some months. These lunches take an informal format, of a three course roast dinner served to all for a small sum of £8. Any monies raised are then put back into church funds usually or on occasions they are given to an agreed designated charity.

Over two thirds of those who come to the lunches are people who do not attend regular worship but may either be on the fringe of the church or friends or family of those who do. This is a great opportunity for outreach and we often see some of these people support other events at church, both social but also worship. At the beginning of each meal Grace often incorporates some theme from the worship that has taken place that morning in church. The appreciation for this activity is demonstrated by many of these people also helping out with setting up the tables, which is great. The core people who help in the kitchen has reduced and therefore more support would be VERY much appreciated. Help is needed from vegetable peeling, setting up, washing up or taking tablecloths to launder or making a dessert, PLEASE do consider what small way you could help this much valued activity.

We endeavour to cater for many allergies or preferences including vegetarian and vegan. This initiative has now been going for over a decade and the kitchen team get some lovely comments from those who attend. PLEASE do sign the sheet prior to the weekend to enable effective planning for the meal. Please do consider if you attend the lunches how you may help to ensure things run smoothly and the workload is shared. With thanks

Lucy Dilley 07800 577106.

PARTNERSHIP WITH HANDS AT WORK AND THE COMMUNITY OF MAFAMBISA.

We continue our partnership with 'Hands at Work' and the community of Mafambisa and 2022 was particularly special as we were again able to send a team to Mafambisa who spent valuable time connecting with both the Care Workers and also the Children. Unfortunately though, due to capacity issues in Africa, the number of teams allowed to go was seriously reduced and as we had been the year before, we did not send a team in 2023.

Alice and Chris Parker, however were able to go and take greetings from St Andrew's to the children and the care workers. During the week that they spent at 'Hands at Work', they were able to visit the care-point three times, help the Care Workers prepare food and go on several Holy home visits.

The Mafambisa care point now supports 75 vulnerable children from the community. This support takes the form of three Essential Services, namely a nutritious meal each day, access to education and access to basic health care.

Each year that we have been out as a team we have been challenged to go deeper with the Care Workers, to share our faith, to understand more about them, to offer words of encouragement from the bible and to relate these to their context. This is an important part of any visit and this year we took a banner with a blessing printed on it together with pictures of Mafambisa. This really encouraged the Care Workers and we were able to fix the banner to the wall as a reminder.

The ties that we now have with Mafambisa have grown and deepened, the partnership is working to the benefits of both communities. Our partnership changes lives. It gives comfort, brings safety, and brightens futures. Mafambisa is a community fractured by poverty and cycles of broken families and illness. This partnership has the ability and potential to break these cycles, to be radical in the love and security for the most vulnerable children of Mafambisa, and to transform lives and futures. Families are transformed, children are given opportunities that are only possible because of the financial support

given by St Andrew's. These children are a wonderful investment. They are kind, passionate, enthusiastic about education, dreamers, and are extraordinarily grateful for everything and nothing.

Visiting Africa and visiting Mafambisa has a profound and long last impact of those who have made the journey, not least on our young people. The trips that we have made have often strengthened their faith and they have grown closer to God.

We are also fortunate that our church schools, Edward Peake and St Andrew's East and West also support this partnership. Pupils have fund raised for Mafambisa through non-uniform days and even a fun run at St Andrew's East which raised in excess of £4,500. Previous years efforts at Edward Peake contributed to the building of the new children's shelter.

We are also really grateful for the efforts of Neptune Cub Pack who also raised funds through a sponsored walk to help fund the Children's Shelter. 'The Big Loo' push that took place early in 2024 raised huge funds for toilets at the care point.

As a Church we currently support 15 children through our annual mission payments, but this rises to around 45 children when individual donors from the congregation, from our church schools and others with a connection are added. We are very grateful for this, and we know that it makes a significant difference in Africa.

There is always opportunity for more people to contribute to the community by sponsoring a child and there is also opportunity for others to visit Mafambisa and obviously we can all continue to pray for the community, the Care Workers, the children, the care givers and the 'Hands at Work' community that support them.

Oliver Dilley and Chris Parker

BIBLE READING FELLOWSHIP – DAILY NOTES.

Members of our congregation continue to benefit from using the 'New Daylight' study notes on a regular basis. This particular series is one

of several published by Bible Reading Fellowship all of which are prepared with the object of enabling us as individuals to 'make time for God' and Bible Reading especially, in our busy lives.

Bible Reading Fellowship are indeed passionate about offering bible study materials which can enable us to become better disciples of Christ. We can do this by making time to listen prayerfully to Him and most importantly, to discover (or be reminded!) through reading the Bible how we can best become shining examples of His love and convey that love to all we meet.

New materials have been added to the range of resources available – one of these is entitled 'Bible Reflections for Older People'. I have a sample copy should anyone wish to consider an alternative to 'New Daylight'. Do have a word with me if you would like to receive Bible Reading Fellowship booklets on a regular basis.

If you would like to receive a copy of the Bible Reading Fellowship notes, please speak to me or one of the Churchwardens - who can pass your request on.

Derek Whinnett

SUNDAY @ 6.

As its name suggests the Sunday @ 6 service is held at 6.00 pm on a Sunday evening; this short, monthly service is informal and usually lay led. It focuses on themes from the Bible and everyday life; sometimes following the churches calendar, sometimes topical events in a relaxed atmosphere and style. Each service consists of hymns and songs; time of confession and prayer; and often a thought or reflection.

The last year have included services of simple praise – for Easter, with many popular Easter songs and hymns and a 'Sing to the Lord' evening where a number of people introduced their favourites and explained why they meant so much to them. We have hosted services for 'Christian Aid' and the 'Week of Prayer for Christian Unity' with our brothers and sisters from the other local churches of the town. We looked in depth at why bread is important in our lives and our faith... and explored Jesus as the 'bread of life'.

Autumn services took on the themes of Faith, Hope and Love, how they link and form key elements of our beliefs; and Advent encouraged us to 'Follow the Star', looking afresh at different characters in the Christmas story.

Each service is followed by an opportunity to share and chat over refreshments in the Chapter House and get to know one another a little better.

John Dilley

BIGGLESWADE COMMUNITY CHOIR.

The Biggleswade Community Choir was originally formed circa 2010 under the leadership of Yvonne Gray. Following Covid, the choir reformed and with the engagement of a new Musical Director, Simon Berridge, has over the last couple of years performed concerts throughout the year.

During 2023 the choir gave a concert in July at All Saints, Upper Caldecote together with two other local choirs, sang at the Country Fayre in September, and performed in a joint Christmas Concert at All Saints, Upper Caldecote.

The choir rehearses on a Wednesday evening from 7:30 pm until 8:30 pm in St Andrew's Church. New members are always welcome (SATB) and you don't need to be able to read music – just enjoy singing! If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Simon on 07958 472310 or at readysteadysing@gmail.com.

Ruth Marshall-Jones

LEPROSY MISSION.

Having recently taken on the role of the Parish co-ordinator for the Leprosy Mission, I would like to thank Gill Whinnett for her support in collecting funds and providing regular updates from the Leprosy Mission for many years.

A talk given by a Leprosy Mission speaker to members of the Anglican Guild, many years ago, kick started support. Collection boxes were distributed for collecting loose change and were opened annually.

For those that are hearing about the Leprosy Mission for the first time here are some facts:

- Every two minutes, someone is diagnosed with Leprosy.
- There are more than 200,000 new cases each year and the countries mostly affected are – Africa, Asia, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Mozambique, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Sudan.
- Although curable, the effects of the disease cause physical, mental health issues, poverty and discrimination.
- The Leprosy Mission is a global Christian organisation which seeks to change the lives of those affected and research has continued for more than 50 years. It aims to provide modern advances in prevention, treatment and diagnosing the disease early.

Support can be given in either of two ways – via their website please see; www.leprosymission.org.uk or if you would prefer a collection box and up to date literature please speak to me. I will be exchanging filled boxes for replacement boxes from the 1st July.

Sue Oldroyd

ZOOM

During the pandemic we were introduced to ‘Zoom’ technology that allowed us to stream our services ‘Live’ into people’s homes and onto their laptops. For many weeks this was our only way of worshipping together.

Following our return to worship in our church building it became apparent that Zoom had found a place in our worship. We are grateful to Rob Lakey and others who operate Zoom on a Sunday morning and stream our worship out to a regular congregation of ten to twelve homes.

We have now fitted new cameras in church, so that those joining via zoom can see more of our services from different angles.

Chris Parker and Rob Lackey.

YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S GROUPS.

St Andrews continues to offer a wide variety of groups for our children and young people.

On Sunday mornings during our 10.00 am worship we run our Sunday School which caters for children virtually from birth until early teens and our band regularly plays for the family service on the first Sunday of the month.

We currently run three youth groups for young people; two on a Thursday evening and one on Sunday evening, for young people aged from the age of about nine through to 18+. These groups are programme-based youth groups and give our young people and those from the community a chance to meet together in a Church setting with Christian leaders to do a variety of activities. At the end of each term, these youth groups meet together for a youth activity, which is followed by a disco, BBQ or wide game depending upon the time of year. These groups currently cater for a total of about 30 young people.

St Andrew's now supports five uniformed groups of Rangers Guides, Brownie Guides and Rainbows who meet regularly during term time and occasionally attend services like Christingle and remembrance.

In the summer for four days, we run our Holiday Club which operates for about 160 children and gives a variety of activity, games and crafts wrapped up with singing and learning about characters and stories from the Bible. The theme in 2023 was 'The Restoration Station' which followed characters from the bible on their restoration journey. The week concluded with a Sunday Service of Praise, which brought together around 200 people for a service followed by a BBQ.

You will find reports within this booklet for most of these groups. Obviously to be able to run this level of youth and children's activities requires a large number of children and young people's workers. I would like to express on behalf of St Andrew's my thanks for all the hard work that these people put in for this vital work.

Chris Parker – Youth Co-ordinator

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

We have had a good time in Sunday school this year and we are now able to begin our worship in church. We start each week altogether with prayers and enjoy a story based on the Bible reading for the day. This is usually a busy but joyful twenty minutes.

After our all age worship the children move to an activity based on the Bible reading. All activities are created for all age groups and have involved stories, baking, colouring, games and sports activities.

One of our looked forward to events by the children is the Crib Service. From October we began practising for what was a great Nativity, enjoyed by not only the children taking part but their parents, the congregation and the wider Biggleswade community.

Emma Pallett

10+ YOUTH GROUP.

10+ is our youth group for young people in school years 5&6. The group meets on a Thursday evening, at 7.00 pm and takes part in many activities from playing games watching videos to trampolining and bowling. The group has grown again during the year to seven who regularly attend.

A highlight of last year was a trip to MacDonald's, where we walked from church all the way to the retail park but were then rewarded by being able to eat together a variety of burgers, chips and nuggets.

A firework party for all groups was held at the beginning of November and we concluded 2023 with a disco in the Chapter House.

As we approach the Summer we look forward to some of the group moving up to 12 + and hopefully some new starters arriving from holiday club.

Claire Leeks and Chris Parker

12+ YOUTH GROUP.

The 12+ Youth Group continues to meet every Thursday and now has 10 members. They engage in a range of activities including walking, games nights, bowling and baking. The young people are lively and polite. They have been involved in reading prayers at the Family Service. The group could do with more volunteers to help out on Thursday evenings, if you are interested in helping, please speak to Chris Parker or Peter Giles.

Peter Giles

THE KITCHEN.

The Kitchen meets regularly on a Sunday evening. The group enjoys regular games of 'CORKS' and other not so competitive games. We have also been able to venture further afield this year and enjoyed nights bowling, playing adventure golf and go karting. Most of our evenings involve food in some way, from pizza, baking contests or just extensive chocolate tasting! A number of the group took part in the Easter Monday Pilgrimage, walking the whole way from Biggleswade to St Albans including our traditional stop over at Kimpton for the night.

During the summer they played a crucial role in helping make the church's Holiday Club the success it was. Creating the stage and bringing everyone together with their singing and acting ability.

Emma Pallett and Chris Parker

HOLIDAY CLUB.

We welcomed 160 children into our church for a week of fun, learning and activities. Under the 'Restoration Station' theme the programme focused on awesome accounts from John's Gospel.

The group leaders created programmes of activities for all the children, from making candles to building their own boats and everything in between. The children were taken on a journey of discovery through a variety of stories.

We again decided not to run the trip this year so that the children were able to enjoy four fun filled days at church. We started with all the children together in church for group worship which was met with the usual enthusiasm especially when singing all the favourite Holiday Club songs. The children then spent the rest of the day in their groups exploring further the theme of the day, finally all coming back together at the end of the day to hear more about what the teams had been up to and share their experiences and work from the day.

We also welcomed a number of outside companies to come and entertain the children, from a climbing wall, birds of prey, theatre groups and Lowland Rescue. All the children enjoyed these activities. Each group took part in the activities at specified times through out the week and some groups showed excellent climbing skills and all enjoyed watching the birds flying through the church.

The week was rounded off with the Holiday Club service and barbeque on the Sunday; this was well attended by both those who attend church regularly and the family and friends of the children who took part in the week. It was an opportunity for the children to share their week with others and involve them in God's team. The sausages and burgers offered at the barbeque went down well and over 200 people shared in this.

We are well into planning this year's Holiday Club entitled 'Deep Sea Divers'. We are always looking for new volunteers to help with the week, if you feel you would like to join in the fun please speak to Chris Parker, Emma Pallett or Sally Wells.

Emma Pallett

1ST BIGGLESWADE ST ANDREW'S RAINBOWS.

1st Biggleswade St Andrew's Rainbows have had a wonderful year. Our unit has grown in size to 18 girls who are aged 5-7 years old and we meet for one hour every Wednesday evening.

Over the last 12 months we have enjoyed lots of craft activities, including: painting, bracelet making, card making and creating our own Christmas decorations. We have had themed evenings for sports night, science experiments, bonfire night and children in need. We had a special party celebrating the King's Coronation last May making our own bunting, flags and decorating Coronation cakes!

Last June we took part in the Biggleswade Carnival when 12 girls from our unit dressed as Monopoly pieces and walked the full Carnival route. In November we took part in the Biggleswade Remembrance Parade and in December we had a trip to Gulliver's Land in Milton Keynes. In January nine girls from our unit enjoyed taking part in the St Andrew's Christingle Service.

The girls have earned lots of badges and have had fun every week.

Liz Fulcher

2ND BIGGLESWADE ST ANDREW'S RAINBOWS.

We started 2023 working on our 'Lead Skills Builder' where the girls had to lead their own planning, games and activities for the term. We learnt about different coins, making our own marble runs and had a pizza party too. We had four new girls who all made their promises. In the summer term we celebrated the Kings coronation and had our own tea party. We took part in our annual sports day and although we came third we still had a great time and can't wait for next year.

We participated in the Biggleswade carnival for the first time as part of the District and over 100 girls took part and dressed up as Monopoly pieces, houses, hotels and squares on the board. It was one of the best events we have done and are so proud of Girl Guiding in

Biggleswade. Seven of our girls ended the summer with their Gold Awards and moving onto Brownies.

Our Autumn term saw us welcoming lots of new Rainbows whilst working on our First Aid badge. One of our parents kindly came in to talk to the girls about being a paramedic. We took part in the Remembrance parade and despite the rain the girls did a fantastic job of representing Girl Guiding. We finished the year working on our Pumpkin badge and Trefoil creations. Six of our girls also received their Silver awards.

2024 has seen us working on a Unicorn badge as well as our Network Skills Builder and working more with our community. We attended the Christingle on February 4th and thank the church for a lovely service. We took part in our Thinking Day event in February with 175 girls exploring the RSPB nature reserve in Sandy and taking home seeds to plant. Our topic was Our World, Our Thriving Future. We hope to be a part of St Andrew's Church Country Fayre this year and have fun whilst raising money for the chosen charities.

We continue to grow as a unit and we are extremely grateful for the help from volunteers, parents and the Church community.

Joanna McMurray, Hedgehog Leader

1ST BIGGLESWADE ST ANDREW'S BROWNIES.

1st Biggleswade St Andrew's Brownies started the term by icing gingerbread men and playing parachute games, to get to know our new starters, Ada, Paige, Imogen, Ava, and Lilly.

We learned about our Promise and talked about our feelings and how facial expressions can change the meaning of words.

In February we enrolled our new Brownies, and learned about different customs in different countries. We also thought about Girl Guiding around the World on World Thinking day on 22 February.

We created our own family flags, showing what is important to our own families. We made gifts for Mothering Sunday and made our

own pizzas. We also made Easter crafts and said a sad farewell to Jennifer, Maisie and Lyla, who retired from Brownies.

After the Easter holidays. We held a parents evening in readiness for our Pack holiday during May in Wymondley Wood. We talked about recycling, reusing, and reducing plastic use, and made fashions out of bin bags.

In June We learned about money and shopping for a family, paying bills, thinking of menus, savings and all things money wise. It was a real eye opener for some of the girls. We enrolled our new Brownies, Amelia and Mia. We played games, to show the need for a referee to keep things fair and we made Father's Day gifts. We talked about careers and what sort of jobs the girls want to achieve in the future, which ranged from vets, doctors, scientists, dancers and beauticians.

We learned about the Country Code, how to look after our feet, and walked from Jordan's Mill. We finished the Summer term with a party.

In Autumn, we welcomed Sophia, Eloise and Bella. We had a catch up badge evening and invented a sport, making all the equipment out of newspaper.

We learned how to light matches safely and melted marshmallows to make smores – this time well away from the smoke detectors. We made a Nativity scene out of toilet rolls, and each Brownie made a character for it. The Scene was on display at the Church's Nativity festival.

In November we took part in the Town's Remembrance Day parade, and we made towers out of spaghetti and marshmallows, plastic cups, newspapers or toilet rolls to see which worked best, and which team could make the highest tower.

We ended the year making decorations out of lolly sticks to make Christmas trees and we had a party to end the year. We said a sad goodbye to Sophie, Isabella, and Amber who gained their Gold Awards and Darcey and Bella who will be sadly missed.

I would especially like to thank Jackie, who spends hours keeping all the records up to date, so we make sure the girls complete all the unit activities to get their award badges, and also thanks to Clare and Maria for being amazing leaders. Sadly Maria has stepped back from Brownies, but we are hoping she might be able to visit us from time to time.

Thanks also to all the parents for their support and to all at St Andrew's for their kindness and the use of such a lovely hall and extra special thanks to all the girls, for making it all worthwhile.

Babs Gurney Brown Owl

1ST BIGGLESWADE ST ANDREW'S GUIDES.

1st Biggleswade St Andrews Guides have had a great year. Our Unit now has 31 girls who are aged 10-14 years old and we meet for one and a half hours every Wednesday Evening.

We took a group of girls on our first overnight trip last summer when we went to a Girl Guiding organised event called 'Wellies and Wristbands' for three nights, the girls stayed in tents and enjoyed a huge range of activities from abseiling to relaxing in hot tubs!

Other highlights have been going climbing, going to the cinema, taking part in the Biggleswade Carnival and most recently going to an event at the RSPB.

We have covered many topics and themes this year including: putting up tents, cooking outdoors, making pancakes, yoga and meditation, internet safety, camp fire songs and a pamper evening. The girls have all earned loads of badges, we have made loads of things and played a huge variety of games.

Every evening has been different but equally filled with fun and laughter.

Liz Fulcher

DEANERY SYNOD .

There were three Deanery Synod meetings during 2023 in March, July and October.

The March Synod was held at Dunton and commenced with the Eucharist and was followed by a report on the last meeting of the General Synod. This centred around the discussion on the Blessing of same sex marriages and reported on the very strong divisions in the Synod about this. The Finance Report showed that the Deanery finances are in a good position. 90% of the Parish share for the Deanery had been collected in 2022. The Deanery Mission Action Plan (MAP) was last updated four years ago and therefore needs to be revised. As the end of this triennium approaches, members were asked to encourage people to stand so that all Deanery Synod places should be filled.

The July Synod was held at Potton and began with a talk from Revd Paul Davies, the Church Growth Officer. He spoke about the importance of MAP's as they helped parishes to see where they are now and to have a vision of where they are going in the future. Without a vision, things can stagnate. These are living documents and will necessarily change over time as some things are achieved and others change according to circumstances. Rosemary Bentley was re-elected as Lay Chair, Graham Daniels as Secretary and Ken Ebbage as Treasurer. The Deanery Project to support CHUMS was voted on to be extended for another year and members were asked to bring ideas for an overseas project for 2025.

The October Synod was held at Biggleswade and opened with a talk from Gillian Kern, Church of England Chaplain at Mount Prison who spoke about the Welcome Project. She explained her work as a prison Chaplain and how prisoners become Christians and about the support they need on leaving prison to maintain and grow their faith. The Welcome Directory was set up to help with the transition from prison to a church in their locality. Each church is encouraged to appoint a link person to enable this transition. There is a very good website to support this. A report was given on the last meeting of the General Synod which

centred around the Prayers of Love and Faith. The new deanery website is up and functioning at Biggleswadedeanery.org.uk.

Jane Gogarty

DIOCESAN SYNOD.

There were three meetings of the Diocesan Synod in 2023 in March, June and October.

At the March Synod Bishop Alan welcomed Bishop Jane, the new Bishop of Hertford. His address centred around the work of the General Synod on Living in Love and Faith and the next steps towards preparing the Prayers of Love and Faith and the deep divisions that this process still reveals. He also spoke about the upcoming coronation and the opportunities this gave to bring communities together. The Synod was then given the opportunity to discuss the progress of the General Synod's Living in Love and Faith work. Jacob Kurien gave a report on the work of the Racial and Justice Action Group which is on track with its three-year Action Plan and is developing its policy. David White spoke about four grants that were available from the dioceses explaining what they were and how to apply for them. Tim Lomax and Dan Drew gave a talk on the Growing Younger and More Diverse project explaining the areas it covered and the initiatives it is promoting.

I was not present at the June Synod so can only give an outline report. There was an address from the Bishop of Belize, the Rt Reverend Philip Wright who was visiting for 'Windrush 75'. The annual report for the Diocesan Board of Finance was given. There was a brief update on Living in Love and Faith. The very Reverend J Kelly-Moore gave a presentation 'Pentecost to Advent: Revising our Cathedral's Ministry and Mission. Mrs Jillian Thomson gave a presentation on the Mother's Union. Updates were provided on the Growing Younger and More Diverse project and on Net Zero implementation.

At the October Synod in his opening address Bishop Alan urged everyone to pray for the situation between the Palestinians and the Israelis and for an end to the war. He also called for prayer about the work on the Prayers of Love and Faith and urged everyone to listen to

each other whatever view we may hold. He also talked about the Net Zero Action Plan and that it was important for everyone to do their part. An update was given by Bishop Jane on the Growing Younger and More Diverse project. The Budget for 2024 was presented and accepted. This was the last that the Chair Colin Bird would present before his retirement. A presentation was made by Tom Abraham, the Net Zero Carbon Officer, on his work to identify the position of parishes and urged parishes too use the Energy Footprint tool. He highlighted the way some churches had addressed their heating need to reach net zero carbon. David White gave an update about the Parish Grant Scheme. Jacob Kurien gave a further update on the Racial and Justice Action Group.

Jane Gogarty

**The Vicar and Churchwardens
would like to thank everyone
who has contributed
to this year's Annual Reports.**



CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

Living God you bring us
together in community
and teach us to love one another
as you have loved us.

May we become beacons of your light
in the communities
in which we are set,
that through truth,
justice and action
we may see your kingdom
come upon the earth
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



I can help/join

This booklet of Annual Reports represents the varied life of our church and the wide-ranging talents and skills that people put to use to help others and the service of God.

If by reading these reports you would like to join one of the groups, be involved in some of the activities or volunteer for one or more tasks, please fill in your details below and pass it to the person who organises the activity/group or one of the Churchwardens.

Name:.....

Address:.....

Contact No:.....

Activity/Group/Tasks.....

.....

.....

Visit the Church Website:

www.standrewschurchbiggleswade.org.uk

or



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