



ST ANDREW'S CHURCH
BIGGLESWADE



ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

Sunday 11th May 2025

at 11.45 am.

Reports of the Church Activities and Organisations.



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DIOCESAN SYNOD.

There were three meetings of the Diocesan Synod in 2024 – March, June and October.

March Synod. We were informed that Bishop Alan would be back in office at the beginning of May after his treatment for cancer. The address was given by Richard, Bishop of Bedford, who spoke of a visit to a new church in Sheffield with a new stained-glass window reflecting a diversity of people, including the disabled. He celebrated what the disabled can bring, but also the daily frustrations they face. He also spoke of the diversity of class and the diversity of ecumenical expressions. An update on the Growing Younger and More Diverse project was given. A financial update was delivered by the DBF. The Synod was informed of a governance review which has been started. A report on Living in Love and Faith was presented and all were reassured that there will be no requirement for clergy to opt into the prayers being developed. An update on Safeguarding was given in the light of the closing of the Independent Safeguarding Board. Finally, a talk was given by Baroness Brinton on disability of all types and what churches can do to address the concerns. The DAC has a responsibility to help churches address these.

June Synod. Bishop Alan was welcomed back and spoke in his address about the forthcoming Year of Spiritual Renewal and Wellbeing 2025; he asked for prayers for the upcoming General Election and then spoke at length about the current mental health crisis. The annual reports from the various committees were presented and carried. The annual report and accounts from the DBF were presented and carried. The Diocesan Giving Advisor gave a presentation and is there to support all parishes. A presentation was given on Clergy Wellbeing, Stipends, Pensions and Retirement Housing with the opportunity for discussion. An update on

the Growing Younger and More Diverse project was given. As a result of the Governance Review a new Nominations Committee has been set up accepted by the Synod. A presentation was given about Chaplaincies within the Diocese.

October Synod. Was the first of the new triennium so began with Eucharist and new members were welcomed. This was followed by the elections for the various Chairs and Vice-Chairs. In his address Bishop Alan spoke of the Year of Spiritual Renewal and Wellbeing which will consist of Retreats, Quiet Days and Pilgrimages. Resources and information are available on the Diocesan website. He also spoke of his opposition to the Assisted Dying Bill. Under Safeguarding the Scolding Report was presented and the Diocese is looking at how to respond to it. There is a move to make the Standing Orders gender neutral. The Diocesan Budget and Stipend levels were presented and passed. There is ongoing work in how to use the prayers of Living in Love and Faith and how to support those who do and do not want to use them. There was a briefing about the Parish Grants and Welfare Grants and where they are targeted. Updates were given on the Growing Younger and More Diverse project and the Net Carbon Zero Action Plan. Finally, Jane, Bishop of Hertford presented the Year of Spiritual Renewal and Wellbeing and encouraged all to refer to the Diocesan website for further information.

Jane Gogarty.

DEANERY SYNOD.

There were three Deanery Synod meetings during 2024 in March, July and October.

The March Synod was held at Blunham. Professor John Wood attended as a member of Bishop Alan's group exploring Science and Faith

and spoke about the Light and Life project. He spoke of the Spreading the Light course which showed that science and faith are not incompatible. We were informed that appointments had been made for two vacancies in the Deanery and this means there are no vacancies in the Deanery at present. There was an agreement to wind up the Ivel Group and the necessary process had begun. The Deanery website is now fully functional.

The July Synod was held at Sutton and began with a talk from Malcolm Grant of the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Fund. Applications to this fund can be made for maintenance and restoration projects for churches in these two counties. They are aiming to build up their finances and to invest the money to create funds from the income for grants. We were informed that the winding up of the Ivel Group was still under legal consideration. The Diocesan Synod election results for the new triennium were announced.

The October Synod was held at Biggleswade and opened with a talk from Ruth Dennigan the Diocesan Growing Vocations and Lay Ministry Officer. She spoke about 'being called'. Being called to be involved; to be what God means us to be; being called to particular tasks or roles which may be life-long or just for a season. We need to develop a culture of listening to God and encourage involvement rather than just seeing jobs that need to be filled. £2,600 was presented to CHUMS, the Deanery Project for 2023/2024. Presentations for the 2025/2026 Deanery Project were made and Triumph Heart in Uganda was overwhelmingly voted for, where money raised would be used for the provision of wheelchairs. The winding up of the Ivel Group is still ongoing.

Jane Gogarty

VICAR AND CHURCHWARDENS' CHARITIES.

<u>Investments</u>	
Black Rock	158.06
M and G	530.06
<u>Bank Accounts</u>	
Lloyds deposit	628.34
Lloyds current	487.23
Total funds	1803.69

NOTES:

Funds at 31/12/24

There were no payments requested or made in 2024

Income included in the figures above

From Black Rock £6.68

From M and G £32.40

BANK INTEREST £5.73

The Vicar and Churchwarden's charities are comprised of three small trusts in the names of Elizabeth Jackson, George Herbert and Edward Peake. The administration of them is a responsibility to the Churchwardens not the treasurer. It does create a disproportionate amount of work for the small amounts involved. The remit of the trusts is

broadly twofold, to support religious education and worship within the parish. Requests for financial support or further information should be made to the vicar or churchwardens.

Chris Parker and Nettie van de Weerd

FABRIC AND GROUNDS OF THE CHURCH.

This past year has been a chance to get back to “normal” following the virtual completion of the heating project. The fan convectors that have been fitted are great at providing a warm church for services, but to be complete we need to install the underfloor heating, which will provide warmth directly up through people from their feet!

A leftover from the heating project, was the refurbishment of the vestry toilet, and repairs to the choir vestry wall. These were both completed during the year.

Repairs were 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. To resolve this issue we will soon commence a project to replace the metal on the roof.

Replacement heating grates were manufactured for us following specification by our Architect. This action has now ensured that there are no “repaired” heating grates in our floor.

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 been:-

- ◆ Leaf clearing and grounds maintenance spring and autumn.

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- ◆ Pruning of trees
 - ◆ Clearing and cleaning of all rainwater hopper pipes and underground traps

Gardening.

Particular thanks to Jan, Roz, 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 A Rocha 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. A composting area has been created within the cordoned off area on the south side and this has been managed throughout the year.

A faculty has been applied for to install a water butt on the south side of the church, this will allow for the harvesting of rain water that can be used on the nearby flower beds.

Many thanks to everyone who has given their time, talents and resources to the upkeep of our church and its beautiful grounds.

Chris Parker and Nettie van de Weerd.

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. We continue to value support from Rachel Smith and Rosemary Bentley when needed. The breadth of age ranges within the team show that this rewarding service is an opportunity for all ages. With increasing pressures on the existing team, we would be delighted to welcome new recruits. If anyone is interested in joining the team, please come and talk to us.

Richard and Jenny Blackford.

CHURCH CHOIR.

The choir continues to be an integral part of the regular worship at St Andrew's. In 2024 we had the disruption caused by my illness and major surgery. We were grateful to Mrs Sue Thorn who led the choir at a difficult time in my absence.

The choir has sung at all the main festivals, as well as some weddings, funerals and other events. In July 2024 we joined with the choir of St George's Church, Letchworth to help them celebrate the 60th anniversary of the consecration of their church.

We are always keen to welcome children and adults to join us. There is no formal audition, or a need to read to music, just a discussion with me to decide how a person's voice can fit in. We meet in church every Friday at 7.30pm.

At each practice we open with a prayer;

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. Be with us tonight and guide us in our desire to offer you our voices in your service. Amen.

My heartfelt thanks to the members of the choir who offer their time and talents regularly in this way

Robert Butcher, Organist and interim Director of Music.

SIDESPERSIONS AND WELCOMERS.

Our Mission Statement presents us as a church that welcomes all, and over the past year the Welcoming and Sidesperson teams have been instrumental in fulfilling this role, greeting our regular congregation as they arrive at church, and providing a warm welcome, information and assistance, if needed, to any newcomers.

At the moment our teams comprises of fifteen Welcomers and fifteen Sidespersons, with some members fulfilling both roles, but there is always room for any one who would like to join either or both teams. Both of 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.

My grateful thanks to those who have been part of the teams during the past year.

Mary Dominey.

HOME COMMUNIONS AND PASTORAL VISITING.

Monthly services for Home Communion continue, with worship at Penrose Court, Mantles Court, Beaumont Park residential care homes; and in individual homes, hospitals, hospices, care homes as requested and advised by family and friends.

In early December, Revd Liz and I were also privileged to visit Penrose Court to officiate at a poignant service of thanksgiving, and seasonal carols, remembering the recently departed, and attended by

families, friends and care home staff, followed by seasonal refreshments, and an opportunity for fellowship.

In addition, a significant number of our church family regularly visit former parishioners, neighbours, and associates, who value keeping up to date with life at St Andrew's, within our town and wider community. As new possibilities arise to extend this ministry in our town, you are encouraged 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, lonely, or increasingly frail, who would value the opportunity to receive Home Communion, or a pastoral visit.

Rosemary Bentley.

CHILDREN'S SOCIETY REPORT.

The church continues to specifically support the Children's Society in two ways;

- ◆ The annual Christingle service, the collection from which raised £356 in 2024.
- ◆ The boxes for regular giving which raised £480 when collected by me and opened in July 2024.

Anyone interested in having a collection box can speak to me.

Robert Butcher, Children Society Collection Box Co-ordinator.

FRIENDS OF ST ANDREW'S.

The remit of the 'Friends' is to support the PCC in the task of maintaining, preserving and restoring our parish church of St Andrew's. During the year the 'Friends' renewed their support for the Bike'n'Hike promoting and raising money for the Beds and Herts Historic Churches and our own church. A trip was organised to tour the churches in Cambridge; and we welcomed visiting bikers/hikers to St Andrew's with refreshments.

In early October we held our AGM and social, reviving a format last held in pre-Covid times. After a brief business meeting we welcomed Mrs Ann Banham, who has been a guide at St Albans Cathedral and Abbey Church for many years. Ann, with slide illustrations, talked to us about the history of the building; its use over the centuries; how it had fallen into disrepair and, with huge investment, been rebuilt and renovated to the magnificent place of worship that stands today. It was a fascinating insight into the history, the people and the use of the Abbey; culminating in the recent restorations: the rebuilding of St Amphibalus' Shrine; the High Altar screen figures being renovated and recoloured; and the Medieval wall paintings being enhanced. A reminder that our own church and our diocesan cathedral provide a wealth of stories of years past, as well as being living places of worship and faith.

The annual renewal Sunday in June last year, again attracted new membership, both Life members and annual members; annual membership now stands at 68 people. A reminder that anyone with an interest in the church can become a Friend (subscriptions are only £10 for adults and £2 for children). The next AGM of the Friends will be in early October, including a social evening and a speaker.

John Dilley

BELLRINGERS.

As usual the bell ringers have attempted to ring every Sunday for the morning service and, for the most part, been very successful. Obviously there are Sundays when numbers of the band are on holiday and not so many bells are ringing.

The less experienced members are to be congratulated as they are all making good progress and we run targeted practices for them from time to time. We also arranged a day's outing to visit some other Churches during the school summer holidays which included a pub lunch.

A highlight during the past year was being host to The Ridgman Trophy which is an area ten bell ringing competition comprising county teams adjoining the Ely Diocese. We were very well supported food wise by the Mothers Union. Food is always high on the list when there are bell ringers around! An enjoyable day was made even better by the judges announcing that the local Bedfordshire team had produced the best piece of ringing and so the trophy was presented to them.

On the theme of competitions our school aged youngster is all set to take part in the Ringing World National Competition for Young Ringers which is to be held in July in Birmingham so we wish him good luck.

As always anyone who would like to join us is welcome to come and have a look to see what goes on in the tower, bell ringing is good exercise for both the body and the brain as well as being a very sociable pastime.

Charlotte Smith.

RONALD J SHARP RINGING CENTRE.

During 2024 we continued to make good use of the Ringing Centre facilities with monthly learner practices.

Owing to its popularity the second Saturday learners practice is now divided into two parts, the first between 10.00am – 11.00am concentrates on handling skills with one-to-one sessions. The second, between 11.15am – 12.30pm 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. Due to the high demand it is now essential to book for these.

Such practices do not happen without the support of 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. The social part of the morning is just as important as the ringing part.

Sue Silver and Chris Williams.

ZOOM.

At St Andrew’s church, we have been broadcasting services via Zoom since COVID-19. The decision was taken to keep providing Zoom services after COVID, as some people are unable to attend church in person, and this provides a way for them to virtually attend the service.

The number of people connecting via Zoom, has increased gradually over the last few years, and there are now between ten and fifteen connections each week on average.

Some of the connections serve multiple people, as a couple of local care homes show the Zoom services for residents.

Access Details for Zoom services:

Meeting ID: 861 3500 8616. Passcode: 599753

Rob Lackey.

SUNDAY @ 6.

The Sunday @ 6 service is held at 6.00pm on a Sunday evening, normally on the second Sunday of each month. It focuses on themes from the Bible and everyday life; sometimes following the church’s calendar, sometimes topical events in a relaxed atmosphere and style, and is usually lay led. Each service consists of hymns and songs; time of confession and prayer; and often a thought or reflection.

The last year has included a service of Easter Praise, with many popular Easter songs and hymns; an outdoor celebration for Pentecost, with Churches Together, where three of our younger men retold the coming of the Spirit. July focussed on how we make time for God, and how we make time for rest and reflection, taking a break from the everyday business of life.

The autumn themes were around “Abiding in the Lord”; how God has given us all great gifts – how do we use them in His service; and Peace – particularly thinking about the regions of God’s world which need resolution and prayer, Ukraine and Israel/Palestine.

Advent Hope and Light were the themes either side of Christmas; and in February we held our first Taizé style service for a number of years, reflections and prayer based on Psalm 138 – thanksgiving and praise to God.

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.

MOTHERS’ UNION.

Our Diocesan Members Group has had a remarkable year, and to crown it we have doubled our membership at a time when St Albans Diocese is struggling. We meet on the first Wednesday of the month in the Ivel Room, or occasionally at the RSPB Lodge in Sandy, sometimes with a speaker and sometimes just for a chat – mutual support – and cake (of course). Revd. Barbara Ebeling has spoken on icons, among other things, and we had Kim Wilkinson, former Diocesan President, to give more background to what is a global Christian organisation.

Our regular activities include the Saturday morning coffee shop for the bell ringers, the donations going to the church, and monthly soup and rolls lunch (ploughman’s in the summer) which have raised money for various Mothers’ Union projects, Bedford Prison visitors’ centre, and

various local charities. Our latest venture is making marmalade to help with heating costs (because we feel the cold!).

For the parish we arranged a 30th Anniversary celebration for the Ordination of Women, its being 30 years in the priesthood for Revd. Barbara and 20 years for Revd. Liz. The beautiful cake decorated by Angela Sharp was cut and eaten at the Mulled Wine reception after the Nine Lessons and Carols before Christmas. This may well become a 'new tradition'. We hosted the World Day of Prayer this year and Mothers' Union helped with both welcoming and refreshments.

You don't have to be a member to come and join in. Everyone is welcome – Mothers' Union is not just a women's/mothers/wives group. There are plenty of men who have joined and some areas have teenage groups and evenings in the pub. Our meetings are in the pew sheet. Do join us.

Maggie McLoughlin and Rosamund Drakes.

GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE.

The Garden of Remembrance continues to be an important place 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 2024 there were three internment of ashes, one in March, one in July and one in November. The church grounds team have continued to maintain the area and keep it as a reflective space in our church grounds. We are still looking into how we can provide a regular water supply to the grounds.

Peter Giles.

FOOD BANK.

Due to the dilapidated state of their warehouse Preen no longer operates their Food Bank but pass donations on to another charity. I now take our donations to the Baptist Church and they get the supermarket donations, so that is an alternative to bringing things into church. Harvest gifts and the 'Reverse Advent' boxes were very generous and gratefully received by Biggleswade Baptist Church.

You can keep up with the needs of their food bank on the Bankthefood app.

Maggie McLoughlin.

PRINTING.

Printing continues on Friday mornings this year, again on a much reduced scale. I remain the only 'printer' although there are others who can stand in if I am indisposed. My thanks to the folding team who join me on Fridays and the others who help at the coffee shop on Saturday morning if there's a service sheet that needs collating. That's when we need more hands to make light work.

Maggie McLoughlin.

COUNTRY FAYRE.

The Country Fayre took place on Saturday 21st September and we were blessed with lovely sunshine for most of the day which helps in so many ways with a staggering £5200 being raised for our two chosen charities WaterAid and Noah Enterprise, both being extremely grateful for these much-needed funds to enable them to continue with their good work.

The Fayre has been taking place for nearly 40 years now and along with being an important outreach opportunity we know so many local

people enjoy coming to what has become an important annual event in the town. The exhibition returned back in church, giving more details about the work of the two charities and other local charities that link in with them. The Fayre had another addition this year, with a bath push from the town to the Fayre to promote the event and with the Sea Cadets accompanying and playing in the arena upon arrival.

There were many participants in the Arena, from local schools, community groups including Tibbs Dementia Choir, Kathryn Tappenden Fitness and Emily Thornton School of Dance giving us a great selection of entertainment throughout the day.

There was 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.

So another fantastic event which as a committee we are grateful to all who support 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! 2025 Fayre is on Saturday 20th September, please do put the date in the diary and if you are able to help it would be very much appreciated; this year marks 40 years of the event and we shall be celebrating and marking this in numerous ways

Lucy Dilley on Behalf of the Country Fayre Committee

SUNDAY LUNCH.

Monthly Sunday lunches have continued throughout the last year. They have been very well attended with over 90 people regularly sitting down. Lunches take an informal format, of a three course roast dinner meal served to all for a small sum of £8. Any monies raised are then put back in to church funds usually or occasionally given to an agreed designated charity including Christian Aid.

The majority of attendees are people who do not worship at St Andrew's but may either be on the fringe of the church or friends or family of those who do. This is a great opportunity to outreach and we often see some of these people support other events at church, including worship. The appreciation for this activity is demonstrated by many of these people also helping out with setting up the tables, drying up, washing tea towels which is great. Help is always needed from vegetable peeling, setting up, washing up or taking tablecloths to launder or making a dessert. We endeavour to cater for many allergies or preferences including vegetarian and vegan. This initiative has now been going for over fifteen years 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.

Many Thanks to those who support practically in any way, with what I believe is a great outreach opportunity and a way of following our Lord's example by eating and sharing fellowship with a meal with others.

Lucy Dilley 07800 577106.

FLOWERS IN CHURCH.

It has become more difficult to provide flowers in church as volunteers are getting older and less in numbers.

For this reason, together with the ever increasing rise in the cost of living, more artificial flowers are being used. I know some people do not like this, but remember there is no funding for flowers in church.

My thanks to the team who provide flowers and decorations for the windows during festival times. A couple more volunteers are needed to cover all the windows, so if you would like to take responsibility for a window please let me know.

Jan Gardner.

SOCIAL MEDIA.

Throughout the last year, we have continued to see steady and regular growth across our social media platforms – both Facebook and Instagram – with lots of regular engagement from people across the community, some of those being within our Church Family. Our social media platforms are a great outreach to our local community and significantly aid with the work to promote upcoming events, services and specialist days.

I am very pleased to say that the feedback that we have received continually throughout this year has been positive (although more always welcome – whether positive or not) and we have been successful in reaching many members of the town. With over 450 followers on our Facebook page and 290 followers on Instagram the growth has been continuous and a joy to watch over the past twelve months. This year, our most popular posts have included Easter Day 2024, Country Fayre 2024 as well as information about Holiday Club and upcoming Christmas events.

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 as we continue this voluntary role.

- ◆ 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.

You may be aware that we both currently do not live within the parish and therefore anything that you can do to support us would be incredibly appreciated.

Oliver Dilley and Jessica Mephram.

socialmedia@standrewschurchbw.org.uk

Facebook and Instagram: @standrewsbiggleswade

SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE.

Tea, coffee, squash and biscuits are served in the Chapter House following each Sunday morning 10.00 am service (decaffeinated tea and coffee are available along with many other flavours of tea). The number of people who come through from the service varies from week to week. It's a great opportunity to speak to friends but also 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 environment, but to also to get to know a little about them and what brings them to St Andrew's 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 for your generosity. Thank you also to the team who 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, no technical skills required, please do give me a call.

Lucy Dilley (07800 577106)

ST ANDREW'S HOUSE – 10 COMPTON MEAD.

Since 2017 the PCC have owned a house at Compton Mead, on the Kings Reach development, on the east side of Biggleswade, ultimately to provide a suitable working/family home for housing a curate/minister. 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.

The current tenants again requested to extend their contract at the property for a further year, which we were quite happy to agree to. The agents make regular routine inspections of the property and send us reports and updates, and undertake the necessary work for electrical and gas safety certification. The only real expense incurred since the last report was to replace the fridge/freezer (being integrated into the kitchen we were responsible); but I'm pleased to report that the house remains in good order, both internally and externally. While it provides the PCC with a steady regular income, hopefully it can fulfil its intended use – to give the church a presence among the residents on the east side of the town in the future.

John Dilley.

ROTARY SHOE BOX APPEAL.

We have now been supporting the Rotary Shoebox Appeal for five years, and the scheme had been running very smoothly, that is, until last Autumn, when the importing customs asked to open the container containing the Rotary shoeboxes. On examining a box for a three year old they found items that were not up to standard. As a result, Rotary have put new guidelines in place for 2025. Boxes will **no longer** be accepted for babies, and everything that goes in a box for a two or a three year old will have to be **brand new**, in it's original packaging, and not as new, which has been acceptable in the past. This is going to have a huge impact on our budget if we are going to continue to fill the same number of communal boxes.

Family boxes are still acceptable and can include any small useful household item, particularly disposable items such as scourers, dishcloths, string etc. Also such items as gloves, playing cards, note pads, pens etc. But please **NO** liquid in **any** category of box.

As you know, the Rotary shoeboxes are on the small side, so careful thought is needed about the size of items included. Please make sure that each child's box contains items for hygiene, some school stuff, a couple of toys, a ball, a hat and, of course, a cuddly toy.

In 2024, 72 individual boxes were filled, about the same as the previous year. The breakdown was 8 boxes for 2 – 4 year olds, 26 boxes for 5 – 9 year olds, 32 for 10 – 14 year olds, **most** of those being for girls again, and 6 household boxes. Again the fewest boxes filled were for the youngest children, and that is understandable, as toys for that age are often bulky. Hopefully these imbalances can be addressed in the coming season.

178 communal boxes were filled during the October half-term holiday, 54 for children aged 2 – 5, 58 for children aged 6 – 10, and 62 for children aged 10 – 14, also 4 household boxes. Cash donations totalled £230, for which I am truly grateful. Money was also raised from miscellaneous sales – £130, sale of books to Ziffit – £5, sales to Cash Cow – £29, sales at BQS – £35 and the Christmas Stall – £90. Selling at a Boot Fayre also raised £52. Our boxes were collected on Thursday the 14th November and I have now been informed that they went to Cluj-Napoca in Romania.

Initially, last year, the price of a shoebox was £3, but was reduced during the year to £2.50. I have started this year with a healthy bank balance, but if we are to maintain the number of boxes filled over the past few years, two fund-raising events will probably be needed, in order to embrace the extra cost that filling the two and three year old boxes will bring. Donations of items are always welcome as this will help to stretch the funds.

I have 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 those who helped in **any** way to make last year's project such a success.

Mary Dominey.

LEPROSY MISSION.

We continue to have regular contributors for the charity, who use the collection boxes so that they can save weekly. The boxes are exchanged during summer for empty ones and the saving process starts again. Money sent off is acknowledged by the Leprosy Mission and a poster including the amount raised is put on the notice board in the Chapter House vestibule. Last year £93.96 was collected this way.

We would welcome more supporters so if you would like a collection box or up to date literature please speak to me. Should you wish to support this charity by donating via their **website please go to www.leprosymission.org.uk**.

For those that prefer to support by having a collection box I will be exchanging filled boxes for new from 1st August and I will be available after morning services on Sundays and Thursdays.

Sue Oldroyd

BRASS CLEANING.

Since the departure of Jan, we are now down to four brass cleaners including myself. I would love to have some volunteers. The task now only involves giving the eagle a good rub every few weeks as Ruth looks after the brass which is locked away in the vestry and I clean the hinges and handles in the sanctuary. If you can help please have a word with me.

Rosemary 07951416718

BIGGLESWADE COMMUNITY CHOIR.

The Biggleswade Community Choir was originally formed in 2010 under the leadership of Yvonne Gray. The Choir was re-formed in 2022 under the direction of Simon Berridge and has since then performed at least two concerts a year.

In 2024 the choir gave two concerts, one in July at All Saints, Upper Caldecote, and one in December at All Saints, Upper Caldecote, together with two other local choirs. The Community Choir also sang at the Country Fayre in September and at Wimpole Hall in December for the Christmas Lights.

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 Berridge on 07958 472310 or via email readysteadysing@gmail.com.

Ruth Marshall-Jones

CRAFT AND CHAT.

The Craft and Chat group is open to all and meets on the 3rd Saturday of each month alongside the coffee shop between 10am and 12noon. No extra cost to attend just bring along any handicraft you have on the go and join with like minded people. We are a friendly group and it would be lovely to see some new faces. Any questions, please just ask Anna Rutt or Janet Castle.

EASYFUNDRAISING.

St Andrew's Church has an account set up with easyfundraising to raise funds for the church at no extra cost to yourself when you shop online with many retailers. To join this initiative please register at easyfundraising.org.uk and select St Andrew's Church Biggleswade as

your cause to support. Once registered all you need to do is remember to go via the easyfundraising site when shopping online. Any questions, please just ask me.

Anna Rutt.

HANDS AT WORK PARTNERSHIP.

Having started our partnership with 'Hands at Work' and in particular, the community of Mafambisa, back in 2015 following a youth visit out to South Africa our relationship not only with the charity but with the local people within Mafambisa and other communities has really strengthened; 2024 was an exciting year for our church as we sent out a team to South Africa for two weeks.

Before going into some highlights from our partnership for the past year, a reminder of the incredible work that we are able to support. Mafambisa Care Point in the Clau Clau region of Mpumalanga, South Africa supports 70 vulnerable children from the community. In particular a nutritious meal each day, access to education and to basic healthcare. As a Church we continue to support 15 of these children through our annual mission payments, but this rises to around 45 children when individual donors from the congregation, from our church schools (St Andrew's and Edward Peake) and others with a connection are added. We are very grateful for this, and we know that it makes a significant difference in Africa.

We were very fortunate to be able to send a team out to our partner community last summer – the team consisted of John and Ben Dilley alongside nephew/cousin Harry Hucklesby, the Wells Family (Sally, Chris, Adam and Pippa), father and son duo Mark and Matthew Simmons and were led by Chris and Alice Parker. This was a very special visit for all those that visited, one thing that amazed the team was the welcome they received in all communities but particularly Mafambisa. Ben was moved by the way he was welcomed by name by the children of the community who he had visited two years earlier.

Throughout the trip there were many touching moments, one that stood out was when one of the care workers from Mafambisa confided in Alice about having recently found out she was pregnant, this was before anyone else in the community was aware. Alice felt privileged to be one of the first to know about her pregnancy and solidified this relationship that we have and how much they trust and value our visits in the communities. Continuing relationships throughout their visit – Matthew and Adam forged a friendship with a young man (Emdu). This friendship has continued and Matthew and Emdu are still in touch and regularly update each other on their lives – Matthew has recently heard that Emdu has graduated from High School.

Things are constantly changing within these communities as problems are developing and changing. In recent years, Mafambisa has seen many changes with the building of a new children's shelter which was painted by our team two years ago. This allows for somewhere for the children to gather, worship, pray and eat together. When the team visited in 2024, they were able to support the development of a new toilet block. The original one, which was started by our team (Cupboard2Africa) who visited in 2018, unfortunately did not sit appropriately with the rising water table and therefore they quickly became unusable and therefore it was essential that a new block was built. This has been funded by some fundraising from within our community back in Biggleswade.

Hands at Work are firm believers in the importance of team visits to partner communities and allow teams to really build relationships and see the impact that this can have on both sides of the partnership – as we have seen through the stories shared above. Not only is it good to build these relationships but also to see directly the positive impact that we are having within that community. When the mission partnership was set up by the PCC and 'Hands at Work' – the aim was to go deeper with the charity, to get involved and see the results of not only our giving but our visits and prayers for this community. 'Hands at Work' are allowing us as a community in Biggleswade to really go deep with our connection with Mafambisa through visits, regular updates from other communities, written updates from our partner community and to see

that our monetary giving is being well used by those in desperate need. And as we know, relationships go two ways, it was heartening to hear that the community in Mafambisa have been praying for Chris during his recent hospital stay.

There is always opportunity for more people to contribute to the community through many different ways – visiting is the most obvious but not always appropriate for everyone. So what can you do – sponsor a child so that more vulnerable children in that community can access the essential services (there will always be another vulnerable child, the 71st not yet receiving support), support our teams, and continue to pray for our partner community of Mafambisa – the care workers, the children and the care givers alongside the whole Hands at Work family who support them.

Oliver Dilley and Chris Parker.

OPEN THE BOOK.

Our team continues to visit Caldecote Academy to deliver an enacted Bible story every Wednesday , for five weeks each half term. Unfortunately, we have lost one lady due to ill health, but we have gained two new friends, one I am delighted to say, from St Andrew's. I love the interaction with the children who help us act out the stories, and to watch some of the enraptured faces which makes it all worthwhile. It's lovely to hope we are sowing a few seeds in their hearts about the love of Jesus. We are always very happy to receive new people to our team.

Rosemary Jopson.

NEW DAYLIGHT – BIBLE STUDY NOTES.

The booklets are published three times a year – January, May and September and contain varied selections of readings focusing on biblical themes, characters and seasons of the church year. There is a short

bible reading each day, a thought provoking comment and a reflection or prayer.

The booklets are an invaluable aid to a daily routine of spending time with God and to grow in faith. The cost is £5.25 per copy or £6.50 per copy for large print.

If you would like to receive your own copy I would be pleased to help. A copy can be found in the Church foyer for you to have a look at.

Judith Thatcher.

WEB SITE.

In 2024 the church website was visited approximately 45,000 times. The busiest periods were Christmas, around Holiday Club, Country Fayre and Easter. The most visited sites were the weekly notices (4,600 visits), What's On? (1,100 visits) and Holiday Club (740 Visits).

We also increased the number of articles uploaded to the Magazine section, being able to have weekly updates for some parts of the year. These were typically visited by between 20 and 50 people. The most visited was the Vicar's Letter for Holy Week and Easter with 70 views.

We always welcome new content linked to the church. Where that is articles to upload or simply images or videos for future use when appropriate.

The number of people who are able to upload to the website remains small, which can affect timeliness of uploads and make regular uploading difficult. This task does involve a reasonable amount of IT skills, but nothing too advanced.

Peter Giles

SAFEGUARDING REPORT.

I was appointed as Safeguarding officer in August 2024. I would like to thank Nicola Woodward for all her previous work in her role of safeguarding officer.

I am completing my training needs to fulfil this important role within our Church community and will ensure the ongoing safer church for all our congregation and visitors.

Everyone has a role to play to ensure we have a safe church. Please raise any concerns with me or the churchwardens and clergy.

I can be contacted by phone or email (details on the notice board in the Foyer) and all concerns will be looked at.

Email safeguarding@standrewschurchbw.org.uk.

Helen Tranter.

P.A.

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, the Country Fayre, 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.

ST ANDREW'S YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S GROUPS.

St Andrew's 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 cater for children virtually from birth until early teens. Our band regularly plays for the family service on the first Sunday.

2024 saw the addition of a 14+ youth group to bring our total to four youth groups for young people, three on a Thursday evening and one on Sunday evening, for young people aged from the age of about nine through to 18+, these 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 36 young people.

St Andrew's now supports six 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 that 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 2024 was 'Deep Sea Divers' focused on Matthew's Gospel and covered such events as Jesus birth and baptism, walking on water, all based upon an ocean explorer theme! 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 these people put in this vital work.

Chris Parker.

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

We have had a good time in Sunday School this year. 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 all came together to begin 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 each Thursday evening from 7.00 pm – 8.30 pm.

At the beginning of each term the children agree a timetable of activities which include tie dying, trampolining, bowling, swimming, outside games and movie nights.

A favourite activity during the summer is a walk to MacDonald's and a bike ride around the green wheel.

At the end of each term, we have a joint activity with all youth groups which includes a Firework party, Christmas disco and Easter egg trail.

Group Leaders: Claire Leeks, Mandy Anning and Ian Godfrey.

12+ YOUTH GROUP.

The 12+ youth group runs every Thursday and has eight regular members from the local community.

Peter, Carolyn and Caroline run most evenings with support from Emma, Lucy and Chris. We have a range of activities including games nights, challenge night, trampolining and baking.

Peter Giles.

14+ YOUTH GROUP.

14+ youth group continues to bring much enjoyment to the children who attend. We have enjoyed many activities this year such as cooking, games and crafts along with some nights out bowling, night hiking and town quizzes. This year we extended our Easter pilgrimage out to 14+ and those who came along had a great experience. After walking from church to Kimpton we spent the night in a church hall at Kimpton, playing games and getting to know each other even better before joining in with everyone else on the walk to the Abbey.

Emma Pallett.

‘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 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 'Deep Sea Divers' theme the programme focused on awesome accounts from Matthew'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.

The children enjoyed 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 an inflatable bio dome, a petting zoo, theatre groups and circus skills. All the children enjoyed these activities. Each group took part in the activities at specified times throughout the week.

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 & over 200 people shared in this.

We are well into planning this year's Holiday Club and 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 Emma Pallett or Sally Wells.

Emma Pallett.

1ST BIGGLESWADE (ST ANDREW'S) RAINBOWS.

1st Biggleswade St Andrew's Rainbows have had a really fun filled year. We have a unit of 18 girls who are aged 5-7 years old and we meet for one hour every Wednesday evening. Over the last twelve 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: Mother's Day, Christmas, Chinese New Year, Science experiments, Remembrance Day and World Thinking Day.

We have enjoyed two cinema trips, a visit to Mead Open Farm, Sports Day and a Disco. The girls have earned lots of badges throughout the year and have had fun every week.

Liz Fulcher.

2ND BIGGLESWADE (ST ANDREW'S) RAINBOWS.

2nd Biggleswade Rainbows have had a busy year and our waiting list continues to grow. We meet on a Monday every week for an hour.

Spring 2024 saw our Rainbows celebrate Earth Day and travelling around the world with our Teddy passports. We took part in our District sports day in June, a tour around Jordan's Mill guided by their lovely volunteers and watched a movie at the cinema. During the Autumn we made thank you cards for our community, had a pizza party and took part in the Biggleswade Remembrance parade. We also went to Mead Open Farm where Rainbows took over for the day and met lots of other Rainbows across the counties.

We ended the year drinking hot chocolate and having a party saying goodbye to our girls moving on to Brownies.

We are extremely grateful for the help from volunteers, parents and the Church community.

Joanna McMurray, Hedgehog Leader.

1ST BIGGLESWADE (ST ANDREW'S) BROWNIE PACK.

We started the year with some team building picture drawing and learning about story telling. Orlah and Elsie, two of the older girls, ran activities, (folding frogs and a game), for their Gold awards. Summer ran a dance evening for her gold award.

We attended the Christingle in February and made Super Girls out of toilet rolls, each one with a special super power. We also learned about the World Guiding sites and discussed Thinking Day on 22 February and made fortune tellers, with the guiding sites on them.

We had an evening explaining our Promise, and learning about being helpful and doing a good turn. We made Mother's Day gifts and enrolled our new Brownies.

After Easter, when we made chocolate nests, we played parachute games, iced biscuits and learned how colours mix, in a delicious way.

We made junk model robots, and the girls decided what the robots could do that was helpful. We made friendship bracelets and had a sports evening.

We went to the park and had a great time just playing. We spent an evening making huge bubbles, which was great fun.

We said goodbye to Elsie, Summer, and Orlah, who all achieved their Gold Awards and Ada who gained her Bronze award. We also awarded Bronze awards to Grace, Isla and Sky.

After the Summer holidays, we welcomed some new Brownies, we learned about what makes a top role model and discussed actions speaking louder than looks.

We were very happy to welcome Amy Reed as a new Owl to the pack, but sad to lose Snowy Owl who had to take up Nan duties, but has promised to visit when she can.

We did some science experiments and made a vortex and a fizzy flyers. We learned some sea shanties and some traditional Brownie songs.

We enrolled our new Brownies, and made some wax melt, autumn pictures, some poppy/Remembrance Day bunting and we attended the Remembrance Day parade.

We made wooden Christmas crafts and finished the term making smores, and learning to light matches safely.

I would like to thank Jackie, Maria, Clare and Amy for their friendship, support and being brilliant. Many thanks to our lovely Guide helpers Millie and Kira, who are both a real asset to the Pack. Also extra thanks to Jackie for all the admin, in sorting out all the badges and awards etc.

I would also like to thank the girls for their enthusiasm, and their parents and all at St Andrew's for the support and patience.

Babs Gurney, Brown Owl.

1ST BIGGLESWADE (ST ANDREW'S) GUIDES.

Our unit have 28 girls who are aged 10-14 years old and we meet for one and a half hours every Wednesday evening.

We have enjoyed so many activities this year in and out of the meeting place, including a cinema visit, a trip to Thorpe Park and a recent silent disco.

During weekly meetings we have enjoyed pamper evenings, outdoor cooking, learning life skills and a WW2 themed evening. Recently the girls made afternoon tea for their mums on Mothers Day.

Some of the girls enjoyed helping to run the BBQ at the St Andrew's Church Country Fayre.

The girls have all earned lots of badges, we have made lovely crafts and played a huge variety of games. Every evening has been different but equally filled with fun and laughter.

Liz Fulcher.

2ND BIGGLESWADE GUIDES.

This is a new unit that opened in September 2024. We opened due to the growing demand for older girls aged 10-14yrs on units waiting lists. We have opened the unit with 16 Guides, and have had a fantastic first term.

We meet every Tuesday for 1.5hrs. Our Guides started off with a friendship BINGO to get to know each other, made their own music videos, learnt sign language and took part in the Mixology badge creating their own mocktails. We ended our first term making our promises around the town Christmas tree. We are very excited about what 2025 holds for our new unit.

Lorna and Amanda

The Vicar and Churchwardens

would like to thank everyone

who has contributed to this year's Annual Reports.

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



@StAndrewsBiggleswade



@standrewsbiggleswade

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