



ST ANDREW'S CHURCH
BIGGLESWADE

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

Sunday 23rd April
at 11.30 am.

Reports of the Church Activities and
Organisations.



CONTENTS

Diocesan Synod Report	3	Food Bank	22
Deanery Synod Report	4	Sunday Lunch	22
Church Fabric	6	Brass Cleaning	23
Home Comm/Pastoral Visiting	8	Open the Book	23
Safe Guarding	8	St Andrew's House	24
Church Choir	10	Flowers	24
Sidespersons/Welcomers	10	Sunday Morning Coffee	25
Servers	11	Warm Spaces	26
P.A.	12	Hands at Work	26
Bell Ringers	12	Community Choir	31
The Friends' of St Andrew's	13	Youth/Children's Groups	31
The Children's Society	14	Sunday School	33
Social Media	15	10+	33
Shoeboxes	17	12+	34
Country Fayre	18	The Kitchen	34
Mothers' Union	20	Holiday Club	34
Garden of Remembrance	21	1st Bigg. Brownies	36
Printing	21		

DIOCESAN SYNOD REPORT

There were three meetings of the Diocesan Synod in 2022 in March, June and October.

In the March Synod, Bishop Alan spoke about the challenges facing the church as things began to return to normal after the pandemic both spiritual and financial and the need to encourage all people wherever they are on this journey. Bishop Michael spoke about the emerging crisis in the Ukraine and the rapid response being put in place to support the taking in of Ukrainian refugees. Bishop Richard spoke of the Racial Justice Action Group and the action plan they have been working on to counter racial and religious hate acts. An update was given on 'Living in Love and Faith' and a presentation was made by the Diocesan Environment Officer about the policy and actions plans they are working on towards the Diocese achieving the Bronze Award. Finally, the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance gave a report on the effects of the pandemic on the Diocesan finances and the work they were doing to mitigate this and the long-term effects of the reduction of funds.

In the June Synod, Bishop Alan spoke of the upcoming Lambeth Conference and reflected on the fact that there will be people attending from very different cultures and experiences. This should be an opportunity to listen and learn rather than be daunted by these differences. Bishop Michael gave a further update on the work of the Environment Group, the Policy and action plan. A report was given on the work being carried out on 'Clergy Wellbeing' which included the feedback from a survey of clergy that had been carried out. Bishop Richard spoke about the challenges and opportunities that were being presented by the considerable amount of new housing development that was taking place in various parts of the diocese, The Annual Reports from various boards were presented and accepted and a further update on the financial position of the diocese was presented.

In the October Synod, Bishop Alan spoke about the energy crisis and the response from many churches and the support that the diocese could give to the provision of warm spaces. A further presentation was made by the Environment Group on the progress it had made with the action plan and how they were beginning to make this more detailed. A statement was made of the financial position of the diocese and how this was affecting the budget planning for next year. A presentation was made on the Reaching New People Impact Report indicating where there had been successes. The effect of the pandemic on this project was noted and how a New Pioneer Strategy was formed. Work continues on developing online support and resources for new initiatives.

Jane Gogarty.

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

Deanery Synod met three times, March, July and October 2022. There is always a business element to the meetings, such as Finance, but what follows here are other elements of the meetings.

The March meeting was held at Cople Church when Revd Lynne Sandle, Vicar, presided at a Eucharist Service.

We had a report from General Synod given by Sheila Bissell who was our newly appointed link to General Synod.

It was reported that Revd Matt Phillips would be leaving the Dunton Benefice on 27th March.

The Rural Dean informed Synod members that the suspension of the Riversmeet Benefice was being lifted and that he would be installed soon as Rector.

A reminder was given about the visit of David White, Diocesan Secretary, to the Deanery and members were encouraged to come to Sandy to meet him.

In July, we met at Old Warden Village Hall when our speaker was Keith Williams from an organisation called 'Good News for Everyone'. He explained the history of this new organisation and that it had been created as part of a separation from the Gideon Bible Society. It is entirely UK based and endeavours to be very diverse in its membership. He spoke at length about their remit which included schools, prisons, other organisations and working at street level offering pupils and adults free copies of their publications, a range of which he brought with him for members to peruse in the refreshment break. He touched on some really moving stories of the depths of anguish some people had reached but then, with encouragement, picked up a bible and for many their lives were transformed. They are entirely self-funded and rely on donations and it is possible to join support groups.

Members were reminded about the need to submit nominations for the 2023 Deanery Project.

Our October meeting was held at St Andrew's Church in Biggleswade when we welcomed Ruth Janes, treasurer of the 'Malawi Orphan Fund' through whom our Deanery Project (Home of Hope in Malawi) money was being channelled. She, with her husband and some other supporters, had made a recent visit to Malawi and was pleased to give us an update on the home which was doing well despite economic pressures.

The Rural Dean presented her with a cheque for £2,000 which had been raised over an extended period of time due to the pandemic.

We had a report from General Synod given by Sheila Bissell.

There was only one nomination for Deanery Project 2023 which was for 'Chums Charity' and specifically The Bereavement and Non-bereavement Trauma Services dealing with children and young people. This had been proposed by Sandy and Julia Bickerdike gave a presentation

on behalf of the parish. She used a real Case Study of a young girl suffering anxiety and other mental health issues to highlight the invaluable work Chums were doing. It was both interesting and quite moving.

Synod members were asked to approve a transfer of Revd Liz Lavelle (Dunton Benefice) to represent Biggleswade Deanery on Diocesan Synod.

Graham Daniels. Biggleswade Deanery Synod Secretary.

CHURCH FABRIC AND GROUNDS

It's been a busy year and while the heating replacement project has taken considerable time, the regular pattern of upkeep of our buildings and grounds continues.

With regard to the heating replacement project, we are now at the stage where we will seek DAC and planning approval to allow us to ask for tenders to do the work. At the same time we are now actively considering the fund raising of what will be a £200k project.

There have been some visible improvements:

- ◆ The installation of a curtain to the chancel alcove which originally housed the organ console.
- ◆ The introduction of some red cushioned chairs in the nave and chancel. These were retrieved from a redundant Methodist chapel. They have also been used to replace aged lounge chairs in the Ivel Room.

Work parties have tackled:

- ◆ The investigation of a leak in the heating system under the [Trinity](#) altar leading to a repair allowing the current heating system to get us through another winter.
- ◆ The repair of loose tiles in the nave.
- ◆ Leaf clearing and grounds maintenance spring and autumn.
- ◆ Cleaning of drains and roof gutters.

Particular thanks to Jan, Paul, Ruth, Vaughan and Hilary for regularly tending to their designated flower beds and borders.

Our garden of remembrance has been enhanced with the donation of two new benches and we are looking to improve the signage of this special area.

We have also kept pace with the five year programme of recommended works from our 2021 [Quinquennial Inspection](#).

There are always fresh demands on our time and resources and we will need to prioritise them. In the short to medium term we will need to resurface our car park and further ahead engage with the net-zero-carbon agenda by considering new technologies. We also do face issues with the nave flooring caused by long term rot and the need for repairs resulting from work on the heating system.

Many thanks to every one who has given their time, talents and resources to the upkeep of our church.

Rob Butcher, Churchwarden

HOME COMMUNIONS AND PASTORAL VISITING

Our programme for Home Communion has pleasingly now returned to a pattern very similar to pre-pandemic times, with monthly services at Penrose Court Care Home, and less frequent visits to Mantles Court, and individual homes. Residents enjoy hearing about our Church and parish activities, especially news relating to our children and young people, as well as the summer 2022 group visit to the 'Hands at Work' community in Mafambisa, South Africa. Some former residents of Abbotsbury have transferred to the new Mantles Court location, and it is good to renew contact with several who have been receiving the sacrament from St Andrew's Church members for a significant time.

In addition, a significant number of our church family regularly visit former parishioners, neighbours, and others, who value keeping up to date with life at St Andrew's and within our town and wider community. As new possibilities arise to extend this ministry in our town, further parishioners 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

SAFEGUARDING

At St Andrew's we are very fortunate to have a strong safeguarding team of six, all regular churchgoers and active in a number of areas of church life: work with youth, Sunday School, music, trips and visits, work in the kitchen and outdoors; several have additional professional safeguarding roles and training in other settings. Others not on the team,

but in occupations and professions requiring regular updating on safeguarding matters are also on hand to help and advise if needed. I am reliably informed that in many parishes very few members are DBS checked beyond the Vicar and churchwardens.

We are enormously grateful to Carolyn Marron, who does all of our DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks and updating. Much of this work relates to those who help with Sunday School, Youth work and in particular Holiday Club.

In the last year a sub-group dealt very carefully, sympathetically and positively with one case which needed information to and discussion with our Vicar and Churchwardens. By following our policy, procedures, having good communications with all parties concerned, and applying all the normal appropriate checks, risk assessments and mitigation measures, we were able to continue with activities as hoped and planned.

The PCC continues to make Safeguarding one of its highest priorities. It is a standing item on all PCC agendas, and updated contact information for our team of six is displayed prominently in the entrance hall. Safeguarding information is readily available on our website.

As usual, I conclude by reminding you that **we are all involved in caring for each other's safety, welfare and well-being**. This does mean everyone must be alert! Thank you for continuing to be supportive, compliant, and vigilant!

Vaughan Johnson, Parish Safeguarding Officer

CHURCH CHOIR

2022 was a busy year for the choir as the church continued to come out of COVID restrictions. The choir were able to reintroduce singing to our worship and were glad when the congregation were at last able to join in singing.

We were sad to lose Shirley Williams when she moved house, but were blessed to have some new members; all are welcome!

The choir has supported all the main services of the church year as well as weddings and other life events. The highlight was to participate in the memorial concert for Yvonne Gray our longstanding choir director. The choir learned and performed three anthems that were dear to Yvonne as part of a varied programme from all her choirs and prior students.

My personal thanks to all those who give of their time and talents to attend regular choir practice and services. Our 'choir collect' said at all our rehearsals is:

*'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,
and guide us in our desire to offer you our voices
in your service, Amen.'*

Dr Robert Butcher, Organist and Choir Director

SIDESPERSIONS AND WELCOMERS

When we returned to 'in person' church after the Covid restrictions were lifted, existing rotas had disappeared, so I volunteered to step in and be sidesperson every week, with sanitisation of hands and the minimal

handling of books. Once restrictions were further relaxed, I was asked to take on organising the rotas for both sidespersons and welcomers.

In line with our Mission Statement welcoming is essential in the life of our church and I now have a team of 12 people willing to perform this role. Being a sidesperson is also an essential role, making sure that members of the congregation have the books they need for the service, and offering assistance to newcomers if necessary. This team now consists of 11 people. Both these roles run from 9.30 am until the commencement of the service at 10.00 am, 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.

Thank you to all those already filling these roles.

Mary Dominey

SERVERS

We were delighted when Easter 2022 saw the serving team recommence their pre-Covid pattern of supporting worship. The dedicated team have continued to support and enhance worship throughout the year. Being able to provide a full serving complement for the major festivals has been a particular highlight. With our relatively small numbers we have welcomed support from Rachel Smith when needed. We have been delighted to welcome Oscar Elong and, more recently, Sue Oldroyd 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, Servers Co-ordinators

PA

We welcome Adam Wells to the team, since our last report and we hope he is the first of many more recruits.

The recent purchase of a single CD player with memory stick function, will allow the system to offer another format for receiving music files for weddings and funerals.

Our external equipment has had some robust storage boxes and investment in the new extension reels, to assist the team.

My thanks to Adrian, Chris, Dan and Adam for their continued support and we would encourage new recruits to share the load of a very busy PA team, who provide such an important aspect to many services held in the Church and for the Town.

Our thanks to Derek Whinnett who is hanging up his headphones after many years of service.

Nick Gurney

BELL RINGERS

We have now returned to ringing as usual albeit with fewer people than we had pre-pandemic.

I am pleased to report that the bells have been rung for Sunday service on the vast majority of occasions during the year and we have only missed a few Wednesday practices when too many were on holiday all at the same time.

Thankfully we have a relatively new recruit who has now been ringing for just over the year and is progressing well. Also we have welcomed an experienced ringer who has recently moved into the area and come along to join us. However we are always on the look out for more ringers either new to the hobby or returners from a while ago. It

really is like riding a bike the muscle memory of handling a bell returns very quickly. New ringers need to be about 11 or over with no upper limit if you can climb the stairs!

We have been able to ring the bells for weddings with the help of other ringers from the area. There are the usual visiting bands who like to come to ring on our bells and we are pleased to welcome them.

The Ringing Centre is always well used by novice ringers from the area on the second Saturday of the month and I know they appreciate the coffee and cakes.

Do feel free to visit the tower on any Wednesday 8.00pm onwards or a Sunday morning to see what we do with some of the loudest musical instruments in the world.

Charlotte Smith

THE FRIENDS OF ST ANDREW'S

Membership of 'The Friends' now totals 155, which is a considerable drop in numbers over recent years. This is causing concern to the Trustees, who believe that the enormous contribution 'The Friends' make to the life of the church and the huge cost of keeping our beautiful church in good condition is not fully known.

The Trustees hope that we shall return to happier times when almost every member of the church family including their partners and children were members. Accordingly, in June, a campaign will be launched to achieve that aim.

At this point in time 'The Friends' have raised well over £400,000 for the care of the building. Most recently we made possible the

restoration of the organ with a grant of £24,000 and the installation of alarms of the roof to protect the lead. We have met the cost of a reprint of the booklets entitled 'Our Church Building and its History'. Sales of the first edition totalled £900 which we gave to the PCC. Now we are meeting the cost of the improved lighting both inside and outside the church.

There have been a number of changes to the membership of the Trustees body. Shirley Williams moved away to Somerset and we were all shocked and saddened by the sudden death of Jack Walters. Both gave devoted service in many ways and will be hard to replace. Derek Whinnett has given up his Chairmanship, a role in which he served most faithfully for ten years. Very much on the plus side, the Trustees were glad to welcome John Dille as our new Chairman, the Revd Liz and Rosemary Bentley as ex-officio members, also Archie and Madeline Russell and Sylvia Rutt as elected members.

Philip Rutt.

THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

Despite challenging economic times, our church family have continued to generously support the work of the Children's Society throughout the past year. The work of this charity which supports many of the most deserving children and young people in our nation at a time when poverty and homelessness is sadly increasing. Too frequently the hope and happiness of young people is threatened by abuse, exploitation and neglect. The Society aims to support them through their most serious life challenges, ensuring their safety and offering new opportunities during such difficult times.

In 2022, your generous giving resulting from box collections provided further substantial funds of **£514**, excluding Gift Aid, which will soon be added; thank you.

Our Christingle service at Candlemas, late January 2023, was very well attended and it was good to welcome many members of the uniformed organisations accompanied by their leaders and families. We celebrated the work of the Children's Society with music, readings, and prayer, as well as a poignant encircling of St Andrew's as the candles of the Christingles illuminated the church with hope for the future; some also joined us via Zoom. Ably assisted by Ben, John Dilley reminded us of the significance of the Christingle with a life-sized example during his address at the service! On the previous day, an enthusiastic team of all ages lead by Nicola Woodward, prepared 150 Christingles; not too many sweets and dried fruits were consumed by our young people during the construction process! With additional giving via our parish website, donations for the work of the Society amounted to a wonderfully generous total of **£460**.

Having recently taken on the role of the Parish co-ordinator for the Society, I wish to record our gratitude to Gill Hibbert who tirelessly and faithfully worked to raise funds for such deserving young people over so many years. We are thankful that she continues to support such a deserving charity, and is willing to offer her experience to me as I now fulfil this role.

Robert Butcher, Children's Society Parish Co-ordinator.

SOCIAL MEDIA

With the ongoing effects of Covid-19 being felt throughout the rest of 2022 and into 2023, the use of social media and other outreach opportunities has been very important for our Church community. 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.

I am very pleased to say that the feedback that we have received 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 300 people ‘liking’ our Facebook page and over 210 followers on Instagram the growth has been continuous and a joy to watch over the past 12 months. These platforms have allowed us to share essential information regarding the passing of HRH Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. 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 Holiday Club in Summer 2022, Christmas 2022 and Country Fayre held in September 2022.

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

ST ANDREW'S SHOEBOXES

We have now been sending shoeboxes to the Rotary Shoebox Appeal for three years. 2020 was not a good year to make the change from Operation Christmas Child as the Rotary Scheme runs somewhat differently to what we had been used to. Fund raising was virtually impossible and shopping for items for the boxes a challenge.

However, supporting the Rotary Scheme is now running smoothly, and people have commented favourably about being able to fill a 'Baby' or a 'Family' box as well as being able to choose the exact age of the child a box is for. Although the boxes are on the small side, by careful choice of contents, the boxes are still containing items for all categories, ie. hygiene, school stuff, toys, a hat and, of course a cuddly toy.

The gap Shirley Williams left when she moved from Biggleswade has thankfully been filled. I have two new members on the 'Shoebox Team' and several people already on the team have stepped in to fulfil new roles. Also, thankfully we have found a way to reduce the number of times the shoeboxes go in and out of the Chapter House loft.

I was unable to do my usual official launch last Autumn as it had been scheduled for the weekend that the Queen died, and I did wonder whether the number of boxes filled would suffer. In the event, our numbers were slightly up. Although the number of individual boxes filled remained the same as in 2022, namely 71, the number of communal boxes filled rose from 199 to 210, making a total of 281 boxes sent

altogether. The increase in communal boxes is due to generous donations, which added up to £260, shopping at Boot Fayres and the donation of items for the boxes. Other sources of income were selling at Boot Fayres £185.00, Recycling used Canon and HP ink cartridges £37.00, sale of metal £81.60 and the Christmas Stall £81.00.

Our boxes were collected on the 29th November and I have now been told that they were sent to Albania.

I have already started buying for this year's communal boxes and expect to order the flat-pack boxes from Rotary towards the end of the summer term. My hope is that we can fill even more boxes this year. However, I have just learnt that, due to a huge increase in transport costs, because of the war in the Ukraine, the price of a shoebox has gone up for the first time in 10 years. They will now cost £3.00 each (and I will no longer get a discount for a bulk order as in the past). This will put a huge strain on the making of the communal boxes, as we will have to find at least an extra £300 to fill the same number of boxes. We need to find a way to make this happen if we can.

Thank you 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

St Andrew's Country Fayre took place last year on Saturday 17th September. The event was a huge success and managed to raise over £3600 for our two chosen charities. As a committee we decided to focus on God's people, raising funds for Samaritans branch in Hitchin and Stevenage as well as YMCA, who support young people in need of accommodation, education or anything else they are able to offer. We

were blessed with gorgeous weather for most of the day which everyone seemed to enjoy.

The day was tinged with sadness as we were in a period of national mourning after the loss of Queen Elizabeth II, however with careful consideration we were pleased to proceed. As usual our arena was busy all day showcasing some brilliant talent from across our town and local area. There were many of our popular features who have been present for many years including St Andrew's Lower School Choir, St Andrew's Community Choir and Edward Peake Steel Pan Band. A huge thank you to Nick Gurney who works tirelessly each year to put the arena together.

Inside the church building, we were lucky enough to have an exhibition this year focussed on 'Caring for God's People' where we had a variety of different displays from many local groups and organisations including our local food banks, a rural community charity and a local lady who runs an annual uniform drive – enabling families with little to be able to access good quality school uniform for free (all donated by the community). As usual, we had many of our regular stalls within our grounds with some popular ones being our luxury tombola, cakes and homemade treats as well as some entertaining activities such as go-karting and archery.

We hope you can all mark Saturday 23rd September in your diaries as hopefully it will be another successful day and we would hugely appreciate support from every member of the congregation.

Thank you once again,

St Andrew's Country Fayre Committee

MOTHERS' UNION

Our Diocesan Members group has expanded slightly, I'm delighted to say, with some renewing their membership and some joining us without becoming Mothers' Union members. This is a good way to assess whether membership is right for you (although it's not a complicated commitment) and we welcome anyone who comes to see what we do.

We have held afternoon teas once a month with a steady increase in guest numbers and changed the timing in the winter to provide a soup and sandwich lunch. We don't have a set charge, but donations have been extremely generous and we have sent money to various charitable ventures including £200 to Crisis at Christmas. From March onwards we will be supporting the church heating appeal as well as Mothers' Union. The Saturday morning coffee shop, begun for the warming up of bell ringers once a month, continues and donations for that go into church funds.

Although we haven't had regular meetings as a group we will be trying to hold one in the Ivel Room on the first Wednesday of the month, with either a speaker or a faith based activity, which is usual for most Mothers' Union groups and branches. All are welcome to join us and, of course, we finish with cake.

Our activities are posted on our display board in the Chapter House.

Maggie McLoughlin

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.

This year there have been five burials of ashes in the Garden of Remembrance, Additionally, Paul, who dug the plots for the first ten years, has now moved to the West Country. His work will be greatly missed but we are thankful for what he has done.

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

PRINTING

Very little printing is needed now and we are cutting down in order to save money everywhere (and the website provides information for the majority of us); hence the coloured paper being used for Notices and Family Service sheets to use up our stock. We do need a new folding machine however, as the old one has finally stopped working. As there is no 'team' now folding can take a long time when it's for a service booklet and dexterity is limited (by age and cold hands!). I'm hoping we can get an inexpensive letter folder soon. We did have some problems with the extreme cold weather as it affected the viscosity of the ink. It doesn't recommend temperatures of – 7C.

Maggie McLoughlin

FOOD BANK

The need for the Food Bank has increased quite considerably due to so many factors this year. They often run out of basics and use Facebook to appeal for any immediate needs. Contributions in church vary, but whatever we get goes to these desperately needy people. Our harvest donations were wonderful and greatly appreciated. The reverse Advent suggestion also brought in a large quantity and I would hope we can do that again, but getting it to the Food Bank before Christmas Eve as they shut for the season! Obviously, the food was distributed after the New Year but it might have been better to have Christmas treats on the day.

One major concern is that the Preen premises will soon have to be abandoned. So far they haven't found anywhere large enough in Biggleswade and may have to move away. Should this happen donations will be taken to the Food Bank at the Baptist Church.

Thank you to all of you, who donate to the Food Banks in any way - cash is also a great option as Preen can buy at reduced prices and make the money go further (also buying what they need specifically).

Maggie Mcloughlin

SUNDAY LUNCH

Monthly Sunday lunches have continued throughout the last year. They have been well attended and appreciated by many. These lunches take an informal format, of a three – course roast dinner meal served to all for a small sum of £8 (was £7 during 2022). Any monies raised are then put back in to church funds usually, or on occasions they are given to an agreed designated charity.

Over half 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. I believe this is a great opportunity to outreach and at the beginning of each meal Grace often incorporates some theme from the worship that has taken place that morning in church.

We would very much welcome any help, support is needed from vegetable peeling, setting up, washing up or taking tablecloths to launder or making a dessert, any offer of help would be very much appreciated. We endeavour to cater for many allergies or preferences including vegetarian and vegan. This initiative has now been going for over a decade and we continue to receive many positive comments, please do come along if you would like to. PLEASE do sign the sheet to enable effective planning for the meal, ensuring we either aren't short or have a large surplus of food left! 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

BRASS CLEANING

Since Covid intervened, I have lost several brass cleaners, but I am happy to report that I have one new recruit, and am in the process of drawing up a new rota which will ensure that the lectern will receive regular polishing.

Rosemary Jopson

OPEN THE BOOK

As one of our affiliations with Churches Together, I continue to join with several members of Trinity and Caldecote Methodist churches to

deliver a weekly assembly to Caldecote Academy. We use the Bible Society's 'Open The Book' programme to deliver stories from the Bible very simply dramatised. Our vision was to have enough people to serve St Andrew's School also, but this hasn't happened as yet. However, we remain hopeful!

Rosemary Jopson

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, 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.

Last April the current tenants requested to extend their contract at the property, 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. I'm pleased to report that the house remains in good order, both internally and externally, and while it provides the PCC with a steady regular income, hopefully it can help facilitate ministry within the parish in the future.

John Dilley

FLOWERS IN CHURCH

Now that the church is open during the week, I am looking to try and get a flower rota together. If anyone would like to add their name to it, please contact me on 01767 313124. I would love to hear from you.

In the meantime I will continue to try and make the church look open and inviting to everyone. My thanks to the dedicated team who provide the wonderful displays in the windows for festival times. I hope this can continue but the ever increasing prices, also applies to flowers.

Jan Gardner

SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE

Sunday morning coffee has continued to take place after the 10.00 am service, in the Chapter House. The numbers do vary but overall seem to be on the increase as people chat with friends and fellow church goers. I believe this time is an important opportunity for us to get to know each other better and welcome all to our church community. On occasions we also sing to anyone who has had, or is having a birthday that week which usually goes down well!

May I thank the small team of people who kindly give of their time to set up, serve and clear up, your help is very much appreciated by myself and those who you serve. We have small dishes out for monetary donations and thank those who do, we collect between £5 and £10 each week which covers the cost of the provisions and also makes a small profit which goes in to general church funds. It would be great to have a few more volunteers as it can be quite tight some weeks if anyone is unable to make their shift. It is not difficult and would only be one Sunday a month – could this be you? Once again thank you to those who give of their time, and if you don't normally come through then perhaps give it a try, we do accommodate lots of difference tastes including decaffeinated tea and coffee.

Lucy Dilley

WARM SPACES

This year the Church took part in the national initiative to provide 'warm spaces' where people could congregate for companionship during the cold winter months. Along with other venues within the town a programme of different venues and different times meant that coverage across the town. St Andrew's provided a 'Warm Space' on Thursdays and Saturdays. Whilst we did not experience huge numbers, those who came along did appreciate the hospitality and companionship offered.

Maggie McLoughlin and Chris Parker

PARTNERSHIP WITH 'HANDS AT WORK' AND THE COMMUNITY OF MAFAMBISA

We continue our partnership with 'Hands at Work' and the community of Mafambisa. 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.

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.

Our 2022 team consisted of Carolyn, Jack, John, Lucy, Ben, Alice and Chris. We travelled by plane overnight to Johannesburg and then collected a minibus and drove the four hours across to the 'Hands at Work' hub near to White River. After settling in and our initial orientation at the Hub we went out on our first visit to Mafambisa (approximately 40 mins from the Hub).

We were really fortunate this year that Ben Dilley and Jack Marron joined our team. This is the first time that our team has had teenagers

under 18 and they were a complete blessing to the whole visit. They played continuously with the children, built their own relationships, joined in with the jobs that were needed, and led the singing in all the care points that we visited. Thank you Ben and Jack for making our visit so special.

When we arrived at Mafambisa we were excited to see the new children's shelter that had been recently built with monies raised by both Neptune Cub Pack and Edward Peake school. The shelter is a very large covered building that allows the children to shelter from both the rain and the sun. There is a concrete bench going all around the inside of the building that allows the children to sit and eat their food. The only issue was that it was so new that it hadn't yet been painted. So this was our task for the next two days. We needed to put on two primer coats and then two blue finish coats, on the building both inside and out. It was a big job, it is a big building (see the pictures on the Chapter House notice board).

Jack wrote this in our blog:

*Please do bless us as we paint
So the wall does not look so faint
As we go on our way
We all pray for a good day
So here is a prayer for you to say
Thank you Lord for being here today.
Amen.*

Today we had breakfast at 8 am and then set off to Mafambisa to paint the new shelter. It needed two coats of white paint on the outside before we could paint it blue. The inside had already been started but still needed a number of coats. Some of us (mum and I) were wearing quite a lot of it. The men started with the white paint whilst the ladies prepared spinach and beetroot which we had got the day before from the vegetable patches at Sommersett. The ladies prayed and praised with the

care workers and then all of us were painting. By the time the children started arriving it was clear we wouldn't finish the painting – and we will continue with that tomorrow. After lunch of pap, chicken feet, spinach and beetroot we got the parachute out to play some games. The children laughed and shrieked. Ben and I then sang 'Shine' with the children and taught them 'Brill, Brill' and 'Be Happy' and they picked up the actions quickly. It was then time to go back to the hub, via pick and pay to pick up some bits for Care Workers appreciation day – tomorrow.

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 our visit and this year more than others it gave us an opportunity to re-connect with the Care Workers after the Pandemic.

The pandemic had seen changes in the Care Worker team for a variety of reasons. People having to move away, get different jobs, and other similar reasons, all as a result of the pandemic. So we were faced with some that we knew and had met before, but also new Care Workers, who had not met us, nor actually met a team before, as ours was the first since the pandemic. Each day we would sit with the Care Workers, before the children turned up, we would sing African worship songs, share passages of the Bible and pray together, we would share how we felt that day, any challenges that we had. This would form the basis of our prayer.

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.

Ben wrote this in our blog. – about a visit we made to a house, high up in the hills above Mafambisa.

Today Chris and I went off on a Holy Home visit in Mafambisa. We walked for about two hours up and over a mountain to learn more about this family's lifestyle. We went with two people from 'Hands' called Eunice and Prudence but also Kitsewe from the Mafambisa care-point.

When we arrived at this home we spent time with three of the seven people that live there. These were in their late teens and early twenties (19, 21 and 23). The 21 year old girl explained to us how they have three more siblings which are twins aged 8 years and then another sibling aged 11. The eldest of the three told us how their mum had left to stay with a new partner. She and the family used to live in Eswatini but her old partner was abusive so she left with her three younger kids to South Africa. The three we met had to make a decision of whether or not to stay in Eswatini with their dad – who wasn't taking good care of them or move to South Africa with her. The only problem with this is that they had Eswatini ID papers, so cannot work in South Africa unless it is a 'cash in hand job'. This meant they are now caring for their siblings in a small shack with only two beds for the six of them and sometimes seven when the mother comes home, this may be only once a month though. The house they are currently living in is small and isn't very secure and

safe, especially for two eleven year olds and an eight year old. They don't have a front door, they only have a door to the second room which is the bedroom. This only has enough space for two mattresses and barely anything else. The house isn't made of bricks but made of scrap metal and wood making it unstable and leaving the children and young adults vulnerable.

We pray that this family find safety in South Africa and listen to God in how they may walk their path through these tough challenges. We pray God brings them hope when times are not going well and they use that hope to overcome the hard situation. May we pray they can find a job and continue to work as a family in order to build a bigger house and feel more at home in where they are.

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 most recently a fun run at St Andrew's East which raised in excess of £4500. Last year's efforts at Edward Peake contributed to the building of the new children's shelter.

As a Church we are 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 community that support them.

Oliver Dilley, Chris Parker

COMMUNITY CHOIR

The Community Choir has continued to grow under the leadership of its new Musical Director, Simon Berridge, who became its MD last year. During 2022 the choir performed in a joint concert in July at All Saints Church, Upper Caldecote, sang at the Country Fayre in September, and joined with other musicians in November to take part in the Memorial Concert for Yvonne Gray. In December the choir gave a Christmas concert in the Chapter House. The choir continues to rehearse on a Wednesday evening from 7:30-8:30 pm in the Church. New members are always welcome [SATB]; if you are interested in joining, then please contact Simon on 07958472310 or at readysteadysing@gmail.com.

Ruth Marshall Jones

YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S GROUPS

St Andrew's continues to offer a wide variety of groups for our children and young people. All through the past two years we have taken opportunities that we could to engage with our children and young people via zoom or in-person. As we now come out of Covid we have taken the opportunity to re-align our youth groups.

On Sunday mornings during our 10 am worship we run our Sunday school which caters for children virtually from birth until early teens. 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 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.

During the autumn of 2022, a group of young people met each week on a Sunday after church to follow the Youth Emmaus course in preparation for confirmation. We also had one young person who wanted to be admitted to Communion who also followed a course. We were pleased to welcome Bishop Richard to a service of both acceptance and confirmation, where Frankie was accepted into Communion and Freya, Oscar, Ruby, Xavier and Jack were confirmed.

St Andrew's also supports four uniformed groups of Guides, Brownie Guides and Rainbows who meet regularly during term time and occasionally attend our monthly Family Service.

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 2022 was 'The Diary of a Disciple' which looked at stories from Luke's Gospel. 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 – Youth Co-ordinator

SUNDAY SCHOOL

We have had a good time in Sunday School this year; 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 the most 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+

10+ is our youth group for young people in school years 5 & 6. The group meets on a Thursday evening, currently at 6.00 pm and takes part in many activities from playing games or 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 McDonald'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 were able to repeat the popular pancake party at the start of 2023. 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+

The 12+ youth group runs every Thursday and has seven regular members. Peter and Mandy run most evenings with support from Emma, Lucy and Chris. We have a range of activities including games nights, film nights, bowling, stargazing and baking.

Peter Giles

THE KITCHEN

As Ben said last year, we must think of a new name for our group and it is now called 'The Kitchen' and meets regularly on a Sunday evening. The group enjoys regular games of 'CORKS' or other not so exciting games. Having survived our weather challenged trip to Derbyshire it was decided that a trip to Derbyshire in February would be given a miss and instead a weekend on a narrow boat would be a better option, however this needs to wait for warmer days. A number of the group took part in the Easter Monday Pilgrimage, however this had to be done in stages with no overnight stop. Pilgrimage 2023, however is planned with a traditional stop over at Kimpton and a much larger group taking part.

Emma Pallett and Chris Parker

HOLIDAY CLUB

We welcomed 160 children into our church for a week of fun, learning and activities. Under the 'Diary of a Disciple' theme the programme focused on awesome accounts from Luke'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 decided not to do the trip again 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 the new theme song as well as all the other 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 magic show to circus skills and African drumming. All the children enjoyed these activities; some of the adults may have needed ear defenders when the children were banging the drums! Each group took part in the activities at specified times throughout the week and some groups showed excellent circus skills with the unicycles and juggling equipment.

The week was rounded off with the Holiday Club service and BBQ 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 BBQ went down well and over 200 people shared in this.

We are well into planning this year's Holiday Club entitled 'The Restoration Station'. 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) BROWNIES

The first week back we worked on our Know Yourself skills builders – making towers of spaghetti and marshmallows and working in teams of various sizes to see which worked best. We also welcomed Jennifer and Ivy-Mae. We started on our Whipsnade Zoo challenge and talked about endangered animals and making animal masks. We also attended District Thinking Day. Kira, Jasmine and Summer gained their Bronze awards and Jessica, and Amara got their Silver and Gold awards, before retiring from Brownies.

We looked at old uniforms for the Whipsnade challenge, and found that our Unit was started in 1931, the same year that Whipsnade opened. We also designed the uniforms of the future. We made sock puppets out of Mr Brown Owl's old socks and had a Mindfulness evening, thinking about all we could be grateful for.

We finished Spring half term enrolling Jennifer and Ivy-Mae and making Easter and Mothering Sunday crafts. We also welcomed Isla, Yiyi, Lexi and Maisie.

In May we were talked about DIY and looked at tools and what they are used for. We also looked at various jobs and careers that girls could do, from doctors, astronauts, to scientists, ballet dancers and lorry drivers.

In June we had a 'Queens Coronation' afternoon tea party and went on Pack Holiday to Wymondley Wood (we were due to go in 2020 and finally got there this year). It was great to see the girls enjoying

themselves in the woods and learning some real life-skills. It was a first for many of girls.

We won the District Brownies Sport Day, with help from girls from Northill and Ickwell Brownies and awarded Bronze awards to Maisie, Poppie, Orlah, Summer, Elsie, and a Silver award to Kira and gold awards to Kira and Elyssa, before they retired.

We walked from Jordan's Mill and learned about the Country Code and how to look after the countryside and our feet. We also had a very messy painting evening, which was great fun.

After the Summer we welcomed, Grace, Rose and Tadiswa and did some 'get to know you' activities to see what we have in common with each other and played games outside. We went on the County trip to Whipsnade Zoo along with 600 other girls and had a great day out.

We talked about how we deal with grief and our feelings, when we heard the sad news about the Queen passing away.

We made fruit kebabs and talked about Fairtrade, seasonal foods and air miles getting foods out of season. We made s'mores and learned how to light a match safely – and I learned how to switch off the fire alarm!

We awarded a Bronze award to Amber and a Silver award to Jasmine. In November we made poppy badges out of felt and wore them to the Town's Remembrance Day parade.

We made Christmas cards and gifts in December and finished with a party and said a sad goodbye to Ellie and Jasmine, who both gained their Gold Awards.

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, because without these lovely ladies, there would be no Unit.

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

Celebrating Community

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

A Prayer for the King

Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness,
bless our Sovereign Lord, King Charles
and all who are in authority under him;
that they may order all things
in wisdom and equity, righteousness and peace,
to the honour of your name,
and the good of your Church and people;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen

A Prayer for the Royal Family

Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness,
bless, we pray, Camilla the Queen Consort,
William Prince of Wales, the Princess of Wales,
and all the Royal Family.
Endue them with your Holy Spirit;
enrich them with your heavenly grace;
prosper them with all happiness;
and bring them to your everlasting kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Visit the Church Website:

www.standrewschurchbiggleswade.org.uk

or



@StAndrewsBiggleswade



@standrewsbiggleswade

VICAR:

Revd. Liz Oglesby-Elong

Tel: 01767 312243

Email: vicar@standrewschurchbw.org.uk

CHURCHWARDENS:

Rosemary Bentley 01767 313517

Dr Robert Butcher 01767 313789

Email: wardens@standrewschurchbw.org.uk