



ST GILES CHURCH
KINDNESS COMPASSION COMMUNITY
IN CHRIST'S LOVE

Annual Report
and
Financial Report
2023
of St Giles Church
Exhall

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Annual Parochial Church Meeting

**Sunday April 28th 2024 at 10.30 am
St Giles Main Hall**

This meeting includes the Annual Meeting of Parishioners (APM) and the Annual Parish Church Meeting (APCM).

We begin with a time of prayer and worship.

Minutes of last year's meetings are available in this Annual Report

AGENDA

Annual Meeting of Parishioners (APM)

1. Opening Prayer
2. Appointment of Secretary for the APM and APCM
3. Apologies for Absence
4. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners 2023
5. Matters Arising
6. Election of Churchwardens
7. Thanks and Closing Prayer

AGENDA

Annual Parish Church Meeting (APCM)

1. Minutes of APCM 2023
2. Matters arising
3. Presentation of Electoral Roll
4. Elections to:
 - Parochial Church Council – up to 5 to be elected
 - Deanery Synod Representatives – 2 vacant places
 - Ex-officio Lay Reader Representative(s)
5. Appointment of PCC Secretary and Treasurer
6. Appointment of External Examiner (auditor)
7. Presentation of Annual Reports
(These to be distributed in the APCM Annual Report and read prior to the meeting)
 - Reports on the activities of the PCC and the parish generally
 - Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church
 - Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod
 - Financial Report
8. Matters arising from Annual Reports
9. Vicar's Remarks
10. Any other business (Chair to be notified at least 24 hours before the meeting)
11. Closing Prayer

1. Vicar's Reflections

*“Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide,
do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.*

Isaiah 54: 2

It's sometimes said, 'Be careful what you pray for'. This can be especially true of praying for our church to grow, as I hope we all do! Firstly, as God brings the growth through the power of the Holy Spirit, this will almost inevitably involve, disruption, adaptation and change. Growth will challenge and stretch us and rarely allows us to simply remain the same and hope more people will join in. Secondly, the growth we're looking for often comes about in unexpected ways, taking us in directions we might not first have anticipated, and leading us to outcomes we might not have expected.

We looked to 2023 to be a Year of Cultivation. It has indeed been a year in which God has enlarged our borders in different ways. We've stretched our tent curtains wider to cultivate a Mission and Ministry Partnership with the Ley Group of churches (Ansley, Arley, Fillongley and Corley), welcoming the Rev Steve Medley as our Associate Minister, to nurture those relationships so that we can share ideas, resources and opportunities that promote mutual growth. We've cultivated stronger links with the wider diocese through releasing some of my time to serve as an Associate Archdeacon during the Vacancy in See until a new Bishop of Coventry is appointed. I'm very grateful to Rev Jo, our Curate, who has taken on significantly more leadership responsibility over the last year and managed this so capably. There is always the danger of being spread too thinly. However, in God's economy we find that, as we step out in faith and allow ourselves to be stretched in a positive sense, God brings the enabling and equipping we need to make this something that is both fruitful and beneficial.

We've continued to work on cultivating our patterns of worship so that our service times and content are accessible to more people. Significant upgrades to both our organ and our audio-visual equipment have enhanced our worship together and opened up a range of new possibilities for further outreach. We've cultivated new ways in which to help people explore Christian faith by piloting the 'Being With' Course in the Autumn and will want to continue to provide opportunities like this at least once a year. Activities like the Coffee, Craft and Conversation group are enabling us to cultivate a broader range of relationships with our local community and we're thankful for the growth this has seen. It's encouraging to see that links between activities and services are developing well and this is something we can build on to create clearer pathways for those who would like to take further steps towards faith and discipleship. A real highlight of the year was seeing two of our younger, All Age congregation being confirmed at the Cathedral. It's a real delight to see our children taking a lead in their enthusiasm and excitement about faith in Jesus.

Like us, many churches are feeling that they are still in recovery after the pandemic, but as we move into a new year there are certainly many hopeful 'signs of Spring' in our midst. The Spirit is at work enlarging, stretching, lengthening and strengthening to draw yet more people under the canopy of God's ever-extending kingdom – let's hold faith, grow in hope and join in wherever we can!

Report by Rev Gail Phillip

2. Minutes of 2023 APCM

Minutes of 2023 Annual Parochial Church Meeting (May 21st 2023)

This meeting was held in the Main Church Hall following a short service of worship, with 38 attendees in total.

Rev Gail welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded us that we are meeting to appoint our churchwardens, to appoint PCC members, to review our activities over the past twelve months and also to review our finances for 2022 as we look forward to the coming year with anticipation and renewed energy. The meeting opened with prayer.

Annual Meeting of Parishioners (AMP)

1. Appointment of Secretary for AMP and APCM – Rev Gail proposed that Carol Gough be appointed to act as Secretary for both meetings. This was seconded by Sam Jones and accepted unanimously by the meeting.
2. Apologies for absence – Chris Wilson, Cynthia Cogley, Neva Khan, Flo Rhodes, Henry Wagstaff and Karen White.
3. Minutes of the AMP 2022 - There were no amendments and the minutes were accepted unanimously by the meeting.
4. Matters arising – there were no matters arising.
5. Election of Churchwardens – Two churchwardens are elected annually at the AMP. Rev Gail informed the meeting that after having faithfully serving St Giles as churchwarden for six years Neva Khan had decided to stand down having served her full term of office. Neva has given a totally dedicated and brilliant service over the past years which was unanimously recognised by the meeting and an expression of gratitude was given by a round of applause. Neva was not able to be present at the meeting so an appropriate expression of thanks would be offered to her in person at a forthcoming service.

Two nominations for churchwarden were received from Andy Clark and Neil Harris. There being no other nominations Rev Gail proposed from the Chair that both were elected as our churchwardens. This was seconded by Sue Barnes and accepted unanimously by the meeting.

6. Thanks and closing prayer. Rev Gail thanked our outgoing churchwarden and also our two elected churchwardens for their dedication and for fulfilling ministry here at St Giles in Jesus' name. The AMP closed with prayer.

Annual Parish Church Meeting (APCM)

1. Minutes of APCM 2022 – There were no amendments and the minutes were accepted unanimously by the meeting.
2. Matters Arising – There were no matters arising.

3. Presentation of the Electoral Roll – Beryl Owen referred to her report on page 12 which shows the electoral roll stands at 171, with 89 living in the parish ,80 in another parish but attending St Giles, and two who are attending but were confirmed in another church.

We remember at this time members of our church community who have passed away over the last year: Howard Turner, Jan Leivers, Emily Good, Roy Tallis and Barbara Walbyoff . We also remember those who have gone to their rest after the publication of this report: June Plumb, Pearl Duffy, Ron Bruce, Betty Laidler, Roy Cogley and Brian Payne.

Thanks were given to Beryl Owen for keeping this important document and all related information up to date. We are very grateful for her time and dedication.

4. Elections to:

Parochial Church Council (PCC) – There are three vacancies for PCC members to serve for the following three years. Nominations have been received from Anna Standing, Emma Flint and Sue Barnes.

All nominees must be a) aged 16 b) actual communicants and c) on the Electoral Roll of this parish for at least six months before the APCM. Sadly, Emma does not satisfy the last qualifying condition at this time. As there are no other nominations to PCC it was suggested that Emma be co-opted for the required period of time and then appointed as an elected PCC member. The meeting accepted this suggestion unanimously.

Anna and Sue were both proposed by Rev Gail and seconded by Andy Clark with the meeting voting unanimously in favour.

Acknowledgement and thanks were given to Mandy Williams who is stepping down this year and also to Rob and Joyanne Grayson who resigned from their positions on October 3rd, 2022.

Ex-Officio Lay Reader Representative(s) – John Owen was proposed by Rev Gail, seconded by Roy Edwards and accepted unanimously by the meeting.

Deanery Synod Representatives – up to four to be elected – these members represent St Giles at Deanery Synod meetings and also serve as members of our PCC. Nominations have been received from Viv Hopkins and Gwyneth Carter. Rev Gail proposed that both be elected which was seconded by Tina Watkins and accepted unanimously by the meeting.

It is noted that we have two unfilled places. If anyone is interested in becoming a Deanery Synod representative please speak with Rev Gail, Rev Jo, Viv or Gwyneth for more information.

5. Appointment of Honorary PCC Secretary and Treasurer – Carol Gough and Stephen Carter were nominated respectively by Rev Gail and seconded by Sam Jones and unanimously accepted by the meeting.

Members of the Standing Committee will be formally approved at the first PCC meeting following the APCM. Suggested members will be Chair, Hon Sec, Hon Treasurer, Lay Chair (Tina Watkins), Churchwardens Andy Clark and Neil Harris and one other member will be selected at the PCC meeting.

6. Appointment of External Auditor – Gavin Kibble is willing to continue as our external examiner. He was proposed by Rev Gail and seconded by Anna Standing and accepted unanimously by the meeting.

7. Presentation of Annual Reports – (these were distributed in the APCM Annual Report and read prior to the meeting)

Financial Report – Stephen Carter. The report was distributed prior to the meeting for all to read. Stephen reported that he has good things to say about the report. The finance committee appreciated that making sense of the figures can be difficult.

When the budget was set for 2022, we thought our general fund would run dangerously low, but giving has generously increased over the past 12 months which is very encouraging. Our finances cannot yet be classed as good, but still a work in progress. We were able to use restricted funds to enable repairs to the church organ and install the new Audio-Visual System. We thank God for legacies as these allow us to continue to do God's work for many years to come.

Opportunity was given for questions with nonforthcoming.

The Finance Report was proposed by Andy Clark and seconded by Sam Jones and accepted unanimously by the meeting.

Special thanks were given to Sue and Val for giving their time counting all monies and envelopes from services.

Annual Reports – Rev Gail expressed thanks to Neva Khan and Penny Pallett for preparing and pulling together the Annual Report and for distributing ahead of the meeting. These reports provide a very good insight into the ministry of St Giles throughout 2022. A huge thank you to all of those who have been involved in making things happen through the year.

8. Matters Arising from Annual Reports - there were no matters arising.

Rev Gail gave a special thank you to Chrissie Hughes who, for many years, has provided a fantastic ministry within the Care Homes in our parish. Sadly, during Covid these visits were not able to continue. Chrissie is now stepping down from these visits which we pray will soon be returning to the frequency of pre-Covid measures. The meeting showed their agreement and appreciation with a round of applause.

9. Vicar's Remarks – Message from Acts 1

Rev Gail posed the question as to how we like our stories to be? Clear beginning, middle and end with a definite conclusion tying up all the loose ends? Or do you prefer a more open-ended kind of story with looser connections, accidental happenings, twists and turns with mystery and muddle leading to a less than tidy ending?

The account of Jesus' Ascension into heaven recorded by Luke in Acts is perhaps a mixture of both of these styles. What appears to be an ending is also a new beginning. God's story of love for the world continues – though it may not move at the pace we might expect or in a way we might prefer.

The Ascension is the last act of the cycle of Jesus' life on earth- the Ascension celebrates the return of Jesus to the Father, although this is by no means the end of Jesus' mission. The kingdom of God has come in Jesus now, but there is also that “not yet” element – the full realisation of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven is still to come and we have no idea when - it might be tomorrow (at least we will have had our APCM!) or it might be in another thousand years or more years' time.

The disciples have to adjust to the reality that they are entering into a new season of mission and ministry with Jesus still ever present with them, but in a different way. We too at St Giles are in a new season. We are not the same church we were a decade or more ago. We are not the same church as we were pre-Covid. We are in a different place and in a new season.

New seasons take time to come to terms with. Before Jesus ascends the disciples ask him “Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” They are looking back with nostalgia, expecting that the Messiah would restore Israel to its former glory, as they understood it. Jesus' ascension is not going to take the disciples back to times past but he is taking them on and forward. He casts a new vision for them, soon to be celebrated at Pentecost, - a vision in which these ordinary disciples are so filled with the Holy Spirit that they are able to share their experience of Jesus with everyone, launching a domino effect of witness to Jesus which will spread to the ends of the earth.

We are here today as a result of that vision becoming a reality and we're part of making that vision a reality for others too. Those dear brothers and sisters in Christ who have left us to be with Jesus and who we remember fondly today have faithfully served this vision in the life of St Giles and it is for us to continue and extend their legacy.

This can often feel overwhelming – this may be why the disciples are left staring into space after the Ascension. They needed an angelic prod to move them on again. Like us, it took the disciples a long time to realise that, in this new season, in the power of the Holy Spirit, they themselves were the way ahead for the church, they were the resource, they were the answer, together with all those who would become disciples through their witness. If we want to see St Giles grow in this year of cultivation and beyond, we will all need to be a part of that, we will all need to pitch in.

The disciples immediately recognise their need for more people. They get back to Jerusalem and Luke lists for us the main disciples. But of course one, Judas, is now missing. Scholars have debated as to whether the disciples did the right thing in insisting that their official number be made up to twelve again. They had their own criteria and their own way of making it happen which led to Matthias becoming an apostle.

In our annual reports we have seen lots of appeals for more helpers, more volunteers. It is often the same names appearing on our rotas although it has been wonderful over this year to see more people stepping into newer areas of ministry.

The encouragement we can draw from our Acts reading is that when we feel down on numbers, when we feel short of folk to cover the vast array of tasks which ensure the safe and smooth running of the church and its ability to grow, we can take heart that God is preparing people, people we might have overlooked, people who are not yet part of our number, people we can reach out to and come alongside, people God is at work in and calling in ways we may not see. These people will need our welcome, they will need our support and prayers, they will need those stories we share about what faith in Jesus means to us and the difference it makes. When we all play our part in this way, God will bring the growth. Amen

10. AOB - A letter of thanks and encouragement from Neva Khan, who was unable to attend the meeting, was read to the meeting by the PCC secretary.

The meeting closed with prayer at 10.45am.

Report by Carol Gough

3. Structure, Governance and Management

Report on the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council

There are 19 serving members on the PCC - eleven elected members, six ex-officio members and two co-opted members. Our Safeguarding Officer Muriel Ganley, Honorary Treasurer Stephen Carter and Honorary Secretary Carol Gough attend meetings but have no voting rights. This year we held eight full PCC meetings and one Standing Committee meeting.

Four members will be standing down at the APCM this year as their three-year term of office comes to an end. Please consider whether you might be called to join the PCC. Rev Gail, Rev Jo or indeed any member of the PCC will be able to provide more details about the work of the PCC. If you are interested and willing to stand for election, nomination forms can be found on the church noticeboard or you can ask the PCC Secretary Carol Gough for one.

At the beginning of the year Archdeacon Barry attended a PCC meeting to propose that Rev Gail be appointed as Priest-in-Charge for Corley, Fillongley, Ansley and Arley, to be known as the Ley Group of parishes. He also proposed that Rev Gail would enter into a temporary secondment as an Associate Archdeacon to give support to the archidiaconal team until such time as a new Archdeacon Pastor could be appointed. After a lengthy discussion and opportunity for questions and answers, the proposal was accepted by members of the PCC. This was fully documented in the PCC minutes and was subsequently displayed on the church noticeboard. PCC members agreed that this would provide an excellent opportunity for Rev Gail to further extend her leadership qualities and that she would also be able to offer her own valuable gifts to this most important role. Rev Gail informed all congregations of these changes at services held on Sundays February 5th & 12th 2023.

The upgrade of the Audio-Visual systems within church was finalised this year. This three-and-a-half-year project would not have been possible without time freely and generously given by James Harden, Steve Watkins and Stephen Carter. We are thankful too for the funding made available through the Sue Bourne Legacy. The benefits of the new system are now being enjoyed by congregations at the majority of our services.

In May we celebrated the Coronation of King Charles with a Coronation weekend. This celebration gave a unique and missional opportunity for the church to reach out and establish new links and relationships within our local community. A Celebratory Service was held on Sunday May 7th at 10.30am followed by an afternoon tea-party and a Coronation Songs of Praise service at 5pm.

Mission and Ministry, Finance and Stewardship (F&SG), Buildings and Maintenance and the St Giles Meadow Working Party all contribute to each PCC agenda.

The groups provide updates, good and sadly sometimes bad news and also matters that require serious discussion, debate and decisions making; with prayers said for guidance and making the right decisions. Reports from each of these groups can be found within the Annual Report. Safeguarding is always included as a standing item at each PCC meeting.

We pray that 2024 will be a further year of cultivation and growth. We look forward to welcoming and working with newly elected PCC members as we move forward together.

Report by Carol Gough

Electoral Roll

The number on the Electoral Roll is 162, which is slightly down and the previous year. Of those people, 85 members live in the parish, 75 are from another parish but attend St Giles and two who attend but were confirmed in another church. At this time, we remember those of our congregation who have died - June Plumb, Betty Laidler, Ron Bruce, Roy Cogley, Marion Biddle, John Wetherby and Richard Cross. They were much loved and will be greatly missed. We have also welcomed one new member who has joined the Electoral Roll.

Report by Beryl Owen

Safeguarding

The care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in Church activities is the responsibility of the whole Church. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a safer church for all.

St Giles Church complies with the Church of England Safeguarding *Policy Promoting a Safer Church* which was adopted as our parish policy in December 2018. This was reviewed and adopted by PCC in September 2023. The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Our PCC has overall responsibility for safeguarding and along with Rev Gail and myself, has a duty of care to the vulnerable people in our church and community, but it is everyone's responsibility to be vigilant.

During the past year a few more activities were introduced within the church and community although we are still lacking new volunteers, so progress is slow. If you feel able to help in some way, then please contact the churchwardens, Rev Gail, Rev Jo or have a chat with me.

All but a couple of courses - Basic, Foundation and Leadership - are now up-to-date and will be satisfactory for the next three years. We have had a lot of support during this time by people helping others that do not have computers. All PCC members, clergy, churchwardens and myself have had to complete a *Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse* course which has been quite a challenge to some.

All DBS certificates have now been changed from five years to three years to comply with diocesan and national requirements. We continue to work hard at safeguarding everyone in our church community and recognise there is always more to do.

Our Parish Dashboard is a very visual tool, enabling us to keep our policies procedures and practises up to date. This ensures we have the correct procedures to enable us to keep people within our church and community safe.

My personal thanks go to Yvonne Knowles who helps support me with the paperwork, spreadsheets etc. Alongside this, as Parish Safeguarding Officer and on behalf of Rev Gail and Rev Jo, I would like to express a big thank you to all those who continue to help the church and community in various forms. Without those selfless people, we would not be able to offer the help and support we do.

Report by Muriel Ganley – Safeguarding Officer

Fabric Goods and Ornaments

In summary:

1. A full church inventory was carried out by Andy Clark in Spring 2023.
2. The Bell tower clock was serviced in early Spring 2024 with no issues found.
3. In October 2023 the roof space above the nave was inspected for rot and debris and was cleared by the professional company PCC of Corby who also spray treated it. This was done with our architect John Dodson in attendance. The two other roof spaces were inspected with no work being required.
4. The noticeboard by the north gate had started to rot and was in a poor state of repair. A decision was taken by PCC to replace it and fortunately the original carpenter was found who made an identical copy. Many thanks to Neil Harris who oversaw this project and also to Bernie Mann who very kindly funded half of the cost.
5. In January 2024 NoiseBoyz were able to install the new projector screen, following the completion of work on the roof space. This has largely brought our AV upgrade project to enhance our worship and livestreaming to a close, funded from the Bourne legacy.
6. In summer 2023 height barriers were installed in the Meadow car park and wooden fencing with gates were also put up, thanks to Steve Watkins. This was to discourage fly tipping and inappropriate use of the car park. This has had a considerable effect, but we do still have a problem with people using the area to take recreational drugs in their cars. This is something that we all find very distressing as the litter that is left behind needs constant clearing. Alongside all the people who help to clear rubbish, we are especially grateful to Irene Tyler who goes above and beyond in keeping the area tidy.
7. In Autumn 2023 we noted that work needed to be done to the chancel roof and also a window that provided ventilation to the nave roof space was missing its weather protection. In November, slates were reinstated into the window with wind guard netting added so the roof can breathe without letting the rain in. Work is still needed on the coping stones above the arch which will be completed when the weather is better.

8. Lastly, Henry and Kathryn worked closely with a company called Church Organ World near Manchester where our organ spent a few months being refurbished and upgraded, again with funding from the Bourne legacy. The organ was safely delivered back to us in August 2023 and reinstalled ready for many more years of use.

The writing of this report has coincided with the sad news of Henry's death in March 2024. We are immensely grateful for all of Henry's very faithful service to God and to St Giles church over so many years. Seeing this significant work on the organ through to its completion has been just one part of the wonderful legacy of his life amongst us.

Hopes for the coming year:

- With the AV work now complete it would be great to have the church re-painted.
- We plan to complete Bell Tower repairs in 2024 in line with recommendations from our last Quinquennial inspection.

A huge thankyou to everyone who gets involved in the day-to-day upkeep of St Giles church and making it a wonderful place of worship.

Report by Andy Clark

Green Genies

We met several times last year to tidy the churchyard and weed the borders and then plant out the begonias once again grown and supplied by Stella. These gave us a wonderful display after a slow start due to the dry weather, but the rain soon got them going. The roses once again gave a good showing. Unfortunately we are having a lot of problems with moles causing damage especially in the Garden of Rest. We have a good team of helpers but we always welcome new members to help us in any way you can as it is quite a big area to keep looking lovely for everyone to enjoy.

Report by Stella Bunting, Jackie and Robert West.

Meadow Working Party

During the last year we have once again tried out ways of increasing the variety of wildflowers in the meadow. We had success with plants such as foxgloves in the hedges and borders but we are still hoping to establish yellow rattle in the main part of the meadow to enable other species to compete with the grass. We have another plan in mind to try this spring so watch this space!

The main development this year was the change to the layout of the car park. We now have a height restrictor in place at the entrance to prevent large vehicles going in and unloading rubbish. This can be unlocked when we need to allow larger vehicles like the huge tractor that the farmer brings to cut our meadow at the end of each summer. There is also a new fence across the width of the car park dividing it into two sections. The whole area can be opened when we need a lot of parking for major events but the smaller area is less inviting for those who wish to use the space for anti-social behaviour with cars or motorbikes.

Report by Kathryn Unsworth

Halls Management

During 2023 all of our regular users have continued with their activities in the main hall, namely Exhall Ringcraft (dog training), Pilates, Tai Chi, Over 50s, GKR Karate, Zumba and children's dance classes. The Drama Club also met there between September and February. The small hall is used less often, but Mothers' Union and the Bereavement Drop-in Group were regulars along with Ash Green Residents' Association and Coffee, Craft & Conversation.

Although several groups are classed as outreach and do not pay a hire charge, these organisations kindly give a donation each year towards the use of the hall.

There has been a steady stream of ad-hoc bookings over the year, ranging from children's parties to a Seed Swap event. Most users treat the hall with respect and there has only been one minor issue that was dealt with successfully.

Unfortunately, the recently installed heaters have proved rather unreliable, with elements needing to be replaced by Steve Carter, Steve Watkins and Andy Clark. It's hoped that the new parts will continue to work for rather longer than the originals.

Report by Tina Watkins

Finance and Stewardship

The purpose of the Finance and Stewardship Committee is to assist the PCC and the incumbent in the responsible management and stewardship of the church's financial resources.

The Finance and Stewardship Committee held regular quarterly meetings in 2023. The main focus was to continue to closely monitor income and expenditure and make recommendations to the PCC as to how best to optimise our finances. Our ongoing structural deficit continues to be a significant concern and means continued vigilance is needed in 2024 and beyond. We continue to look to God for guidance and to trust in His abundant grace and goodness.

Committee members: Helen Anderson, Stephen Carter, Denise Crampsie, Sam Jones, Rev Jo Parker, Rev Gail Phillip

Report by Helen Anderson

4. Reports on Worship and Prayer

Ministry Leadership Team

The Ministry Leadership Team continues to provide wise and strategic input into our worship ministry, ensuring that all our various congregations are well represented in our service planning. The team works together to think and plan creatively, particularly around our major festivals through the year. It has been a joy to welcome Eddie Lanteri onto the team this year and to encourage Penny Pallett in leading and preaching as she undertakes further lay leadership training through the diocese.

Report by Rev Gail Phillip

Children and Families' Work

In 2023 we continued to receive support through the Super Sunday School for events like our enjoyable and well attended All Hallows Eve Party in October and to fund resources for our young people.

The regular 11.30 am All Age Worship service continues to grow steadily around a dedicated, multi-generational, core. There are now over ten children attending regularly with their families. On Good Friday several families attended at 12noon for an hour of faith based crafts and worship. Later in the year, in November, we were delighted to see two of our young people confirmed by Bishop Ruth at Coventry Cathedral.

The two Christingle services held on Christmas Eve were very well attended and much appreciated by many families. This year it was wonderful to have children from our 11.30 service help to lead the first of the Christingle services. The 11.30 service became the 11.45 service at the beginning of 2024, recognising the success of the 'soft start' coffee continues to be served from 11.30 and again after the service. Thank you to the team of helpers who make this possible.

Our outreach project to give away free hot chocolate on Wednesdays to Ash Green students continued until Easter. Our thanks go to the dedicated team of helpers who regularly gave away over 70 hot drinks and quite a few biscuits. We hope to re-start and develop this project in the future.

Please remember our young people and their families in your prayers, they are the future of St Giles.

Report by Rev Jo Parker

Choir

Since the last APCM the choir has supported regular worship each Sunday. Our members have had a testing year with various health issues so we have had to manage with reduced numbers at times. We would love to welcome new members of any age so please either speak to us or pop in to our practice on a Friday evening if you're interested.

In addition to weekly services, we have provided additional music for festivals such as Harvest and Christmas. This year a new version of *The First Nowell* was commissioned and we were very surprised and excited to hear from a senior figure in the diocese that we were the only choir to have used it in our carol service! We had another nice surprise when a young couple attending our morning service to hear their banns read approached us to sing at their wedding the following weekend. We went along to St Michael's Budbrooke and sang for them and they were really thrilled to have a choir there. On a sad note, we also sang at the funerals of two church family members last summer and although they were sad occasions, we were honoured to be able to support the families in church.

The choir has also supported the bazaar by running the tombola stall where we raised just over £200 and by providing a tree for the Christmas tree Festival. We enjoyed a day out in October at the Black Country Museum and a Christmas meal in December, sharing both these occasions with the Bellringers.

During the past year the church has had the organ digitally rebuilt and the organists have liaised with the organ builders to ensure that we have an instrument capable of serving us for another 30 years!

Report by Henry Wagstaff and Kathryn Unsworth

Worship Band

We struggled for some time to work out just why we couldn't see numbers increasing in the 11.30am service but it's true to say that time is a healer and that the Lord is at work again. Many thanks to Rev Gail and particularly Rev Jo for all her support and her encouragement for patience, as we are now seeing an increase in both congregation numbers and, more importantly, involvement.

We have seen growth to a steady regular 25+ people at 11.45am, including folk returning after the pandemic and also new members. It's really encouraging to see the participation children are having in the services and to watch and listen to them as they take an active part and help to lead us. Their ability to take on board information and re-share it from week to week is really encouraging, as is the involvement of parents and other adults who willingly share and participate in these more interactive services.

Special thanks to Ollie for his technical support, playing and singing.

Since the installation of live stream camera equipment, we are preparing for a modern way to communicate the word of God anywhere around the world. It's not quite there yet but won't be long. Ministry is key. Our goal is to continue to grow, share God's word through our ministry and play as big a part as possible in all areas.

Report by Roy Edwards and James Harden

Bellringers

During 2023 we were asked to ring for both weddings and funerals to help celebrate unions, as well as lives well lived. We are a small band, and continue to find it increasingly difficult to bring in ringers from other towers to help out when some of our members are unavailable to ring for services around life events. Please pray that this situation can be resolved during 2024.

Unfortunately, the person who started to learn to ring in 2022 stopped coming because of work commitments and we also lost our other new member. If you are interested in learning to ring, please get in touch – we would love to welcome new members!

Report by Steve Watkins

Schools' Ministry

Engagement with our local schools continues. During 2023 we led assemblies in Wheelwright Lane Primary, Goodyers End Primary, Exhall Junior School, Exhall Cedars Infant school and Exhall Grange. These included Easter, Nicholas Chamberlaine Day, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas. There were also class visits to church from Wheelwright Lane and Exhall Cedars.

November and December were especially busy with Exhall Cedars coming to church to learn about Remembrance and we are very grateful to Brian Inott for sharing his wartime stories with the children. At our Annual Act of Remembrance we again welcomed representatives from some of the schools who laid wreaths and in December we were absolutely delighted to host carol and nativity services for each of our primary schools in church. Thank you to everyone who helped to make these special Christmas memories for schoolchildren in our parish. A highlight of the year for Rev Gail and I was spending an afternoon at Exhall Grange School learning about Christingles and then helping the children to each make a Christingle which we lit in an open air ceremony.

Report by Rev Jo Parker

Home Groups and Compline

This year our two home groups both began to use Tuesday evenings as their main meeting time on a fortnightly basis. This also allowed us to combine the groups at certain points in the year and hold joint sessions in the small hall. It was great to welcome some additional members to the group on these occasions. We cover a variety of themes around discipleship and mission with interesting and inspiring discussions. Do have a chat with me, Rev Jo or Chris Wilson if you're interested in joining a group.

The weekly Compline (Night Prayer) at 7 pm on Tuesday evenings is much appreciated as an oasis of prayer and reflection during the week. We are very grateful to John and Neil who lead this so faithfully.

Deanery and Diocesan Synod

Three meetings were held during 2023 - in February at Holy Trinity Attleborough, in May at St James Bulkington and in November at St Mary Atherstone. As usual it was interesting to visit other churches and informative to hear the views of people from all over the Deanery.

February Meeting

Discussion was mainly about how churches might respond to new housing estates being built in parishes. Topics covered included do parish boundaries need amending, potential church plants, a possible new parish in the northeast of Nuneaton and using new community centres for worship.

May Meeting

The theme of this meeting was being a generous church. Discussion in small groups covered suggestions for increasing giving, raising money in various ways, and involving more members of the community in supporting the church financially.

November Meeting

This was the first meeting of a new three-year cycle, so some time was given to welcoming new synod members and explaining synod procedures and purposes. Small groups discussed ideas/vision for this cycle, some of which were then shared with members. The meeting ended with a service of Compline.

Report by Gwyneth Carter and Viv Hopkins (Deanery Synod Reps)

Prayer Chain

Our prayer chain consists of a group of 14 people who undertake to pray for those of the church, community and beyond who have requested prayer for specific reasons, some of which are urgent, and others are long term. At present we have about 44 names on our list.

Requests are usually communicated via e-mail and are treated with the utmost confidentiality. We have a list that is updated fairly regularly and sent out as a reminder but every individual request is sent out as soon as it comes in. We rejoice that God always hears and answers our prayers. We have had many answers to prayer throughout the year.

Please be aware that we also have a prayer board in church on which post-it requests can be added.

It is a privilege to be a part of this ministry and if you feel led to join us, please get in touch. Many thanks too to the faithful band of pray-ers who pray wherever they are.

Report by Chris Wilson

5. Reports on Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care Team

The aim of the Pastoral Care Team is to maintain contact with and support members of the church and community in as many ways as possible. During 2023 we did this in a number of ways including personal visits and telephone calls. Holy Communion is given to members in their own homes and in care homes.

All requests and visits are treated with confidentiality and all members of the team have received the required safeguarding training.

If you know of anyone who would appreciate a visit, or if you feel you would like to join us in this ministry, please do get in touch with me.

Report by Vivien Hopkins

Bereavement Drop-in

I am delighted to report yet again how well our bereavement group has been doing over the past year. After my health problem in August 2023 the wonderful John and Beryl Owen took hold of the reins and just ran with it. But now in February 2024 I feel that I can get back to doing my bit.

We regularly have 20 people when we are at full complement and we all enjoy a good natter, a lovely cup of tea or coffee and of course some amazing cakes baked by several of our ladies. At each meeting John sets us a fabulous quiz and we have such fun with some of the answers, it's quite a popular part of the afternoon.

On alternate Thursdays most of us go out to lunch trying different pubs and restaurants and that is always such a nice social afternoon. Everyone in the group has one another's phone numbers and they can contact each other for chats if they find themselves at a loose end.

Michael brings his dog and Mandy and Gary sometimes bring their little dog too. Occasionally grandchildren turn up, depending on school holidays and child-minding duties. It's quite a wonderful bunch of people and I am so proud to be a small part of it. It is such a warm and welcoming place to be for a couple of hours on a Thursday afternoon. So, if anyone is in need of a shoulder to cry on or an understanding ear where it is safe to talk in confidence, St Giles small hall 2pm to 4pm is the place to be.

Report by Sue Barnes

Residential Care Homes

The well-established pattern of monthly visits to our care homes continues. There is a monthly mid-week communion service in Bede Village and monthly worship in Richmond Lodge, Platinum and Fairfield. Special thanks go to Sue Barnes who has had to step back from her valuable support at Platinum; the residents and staff miss her and wish her well in her recovery. We thank God for the way he is using us to bless elderly folk in our parish through this ministry.

We are also grateful to Chris Wilson for her ministry to former St Giles folk in other residential homes. Starting later in 2024 Chris will also be leading a Sunday service at Bede Village.

Report by Rev Jo Parker

Hospice Support Group

The Hospice Support Group has been raising funds for the Mary Ann Evans Hospice for more than 35 years. During 2023 we held six Coffee Mornings which were well supported by the local community which raised £1,273.39 during the year and was handed over to the Hospice representative at our January 2024 Coffee Morning.

Everyone is welcome at these events; we make a small charge for entry (no charge for children) which covers the cost of drinks and cakes. There is also a raffle and a sales table. Thanks must go to all our supporters but especially those who volunteer on the day and everyone who makes cakes and provide raffle prizes.

Coffee Mornings take place bi-monthly on the third Saturday of the month from 10.00 am– 12.00 in the small hall. If you would like to help at this event, please do not hesitate to contact Viv or Jackie.

Report by Viv Hopkins and Jackie West

6. Mission and Evangelism

Coffee Craft and Conversation

Craft Coffee and Conversation formerly Knit and Natter was set up by Rev Jo back in the winter of 2022. The aim was to tackle social isolation and encourage genuine friendship and fellowship within the community. We hoped to attract people with little or no connection to St Giles Church and to live out our desire to provide care, compassion and kindness for the community.

There were three original members but week by week the group grew and we now have 15-20 regular members currently meeting on Wednesday mornings between 10.30am and 12.30pm (except for the first Wednesday in the month).

Some of our members just come along to sit, watch chat and drink coffee - some bring along their own crafts to do and there is usually another organised craft available for people to try if they wish. The group members share their ideas, knowledge and talents with others and the group chat and genuinely support and encourage each other.

A wide range of things have been made by the group – most of them have been either donated to the Hospice Coffee Mornings or sold at the Christmas Bazaar. The group worked on an impressive Remembrance display that was placed around the pulpit in church and exhibited more than 400 poppies that were knitted, crocheted or hand crafted. Patterns were made available to church members and to friends/ family of the group members and a stunning display was produced.

In November, group member June Edwards offered her talents and hosted a wreath-making workshop for 15 people and we enjoyed a bring and share lunch with mulled wine. The finished wreaths were of a really high standard and great fun was had by all. We hope to repeat this again in 2024. CCC members also produced a sustainable Christmas tree, made out of old wooden pallets, for the Christmas Tree Festival which was adorned with decorations that were all created by members of the group.

We are always happy to welcome new members – you don't need to have any craft knowledge just come along and see what we get up to.

Report by Karen White

Mothers' Union Exhall

Meetings are held in the Small Hall on the third Thursday each month. We currently have 23 members, one indoor member and one diocesan member. We are a very friendly Group part of a worldwide community working and praying in 82 Countries.

Following a New Year social, speakers included Rev Jo Parker, Rev John Horton, Peter Aldersley, Penny Pallett and a footcare professional. We made bookmarks for Mothering Sunday and supported the bazaar with refreshments. Our members also assist within the church through cleaning brasses and duties at services.

Deanery events were a Candlemas Service at Mancetter, Deanery Service at Holy Trinity, Attleborough, and Exhall hosted a Deanery Service in October. We raised £146.40 from two table top sales to support the *Away from it All* project. Members were asked to help with refreshments at the leaving service of Bishop Christopher and at the Diocesan Advent Service in the Cathedral, our banner was proudly processed along with others from the diocese. You will find us each month in the parish magazine.

We have been set a challenge by our Deanery President to promote Mothers' Union and aim to do this by providing Bibles for those being baptised at Exhall. We also have a selection of cards for sale after the morning service in the small hall.

We welcome anyone - men or women, married or not - who would like to join our meetings. Speak to anyone on the Committee - Viv Hopkins, Yvonne Knowles, Mandy Williams, Neva Khan, Marie Crilly, Cynthia Cogley.

Report by Cynthia Cogley

Community Partnership Group

We had a number of fantastic and engaging community events during 2023.

The King's Coronation Tea Party in May saw good attendance from both the church family and from around the community and everyone enjoyed the event.

Our Harvest Supper and Barn Dance in October was a very successful event, with a wide range of ages attending. With their enthusiastic dancing, a group of young people ensured that the evening was a very lively affair! The simple ploughman's supper went down well and the music provided by The Cat's Whiskers was just right. We hope to repeat the event for Harvest 2024.

The Christmas Tree Festival, which ran from December 9th to January 6th, was another successful event, with a good number of trees displayed. A new participant was Bedworth Library and we hope to attract more new organisations/individuals this year.

Report by Tina Watkins

Parish Magazine

We continue to print and distribute around 250 copies of our parish magazine. Some are posted to those unable to attend services and a good number are delivered by our faithful band of deliverers – many thanks to you all. The remainder are collected in church. The cost remains at 50p per copy – a bargain and an excellent means of outreach!

As ever, articles from our regular contributors are very much appreciated and continue to be provided with great reliability. One-off items are most welcome too!

We receive some income towards production costs from advertisers and would love to welcome more. As an experiment, I have offered one month's advertising free of charge to encourage more people to use us to promote their business. One person has agreed to continue for six months which is very good news. Prices range from £100 to £400 per year, depending on the size of the advert so if you know any individuals or small

businesses that would find our magazine a good medium to promote their services, please direct them to me.

Report by Tina Watkins

Parish E-Communications

Our weekly e-newsletter and website continue to form the backbone of our communications. The weekly newsletter is regularly opened by more than 70% of people it's sent to. It's hard to determine why the other 30% don't open it although we are aware some people access it through the website rather than email. A short hardcopy notice sheet has been re-introduced for 8am services.

Our website and Facebook page continue to be central to external communications and we are making greater use of both to publicise one-off events as well as our regular services. This seems to be particularly effective at reaching families with young children. The website is gradually being rewritten but moving forward with this, as in previous years, remains a time/skills/financial resources issue.

For church family who don't have access to email, information is regularly posted out including our Parish Magazine and *Live your Faith* prayer, praise and worship sheets. Regular feedback reassures us that these are very much appreciated.

Report by Penny Pallett

Drama Club

Following on from the variety show in 2022, we were able to recommence our annual pantomime in February 2023 with *Simple Simon*. The show was great fun to perform and was very well received by all of our audiences. We had 23 people on stage, ranging in age from nine to 81-years-old. As an added bonus we were able to give the church £1,000 towards the cost of our use of the hall.

We must thank all of those from the St Giles family who supported us by coming to see the show, and also those who helped serve refreshments and chaperone the children in the dressing room.

Those involved in the show consider it to be the "panto family" and enjoy getting together on the Sunday evening after the run to enjoy a meal together and generally let off steam! We also get together around April to watch the DVD recorded during the week, an occasion of great hilarity and good-natured banter.

Some of our members took part in the Christmas Carol Service, performing a sketch, *O Come All Ye Faithful*, which picked up the excitement of Christmas, particularly as many people are reluctant to take up the invitation.

Report by Tina Watkins

Exhall Over 50s Club

The Over 50s had another successful year with between 50 to 60 people attending each week. We maintained our programme of varied activities and added our version of *Blankety Blank*. Our outings included a visit to Springfield in Spalding, a day trip to Oxford and an outing to Planters Garden Centre followed by a carvery lunch.

We also enjoyed a couple of joint enterprises with Kirks Coaches which involved a visit to Melbicks followed by an afternoon's entertainment and meal at Barston Lakes. Our Christmas lunch at Weston Hall saw 75 members attend and 69 booked for the panto at Birmingham Hippodrome.

Membership remains steady at 81 although we sadly lost our club founder, Marion Biddle, without whom we would not have been brought into existence. For many of our members our Tuesday meetings are their only social activity each week and frequently express the importance of the friendships and support enjoyed by all. We have fun! We are here to combat loneliness, enjoy good company and support each other.

We are happy to welcome new members at any time so please get in touch with Tricia Munro on 024 7664 4507.

Committee – Iris Freeman, Joyce Downs, Phyllis Watts, Julie Jones, Sue Cooper-Williams, Sarita Cooper, Mary Brown and Pat Howard.

Report by Tricia Munro – Chair

7. Ecumenical Relationships

Bedworth Church Together

We continued to meet on a monthly basis as ministers across the Bedworth area. These get-togethers are a valuable source of mutual support and prayer. On Good Friday, we held an open-air service for our local community in Bedworth Town Centre. At Christmas, we again held an outreach in Bedworth Town Centre, which included worship, hot chocolate and our very own Advent Spinner Quiz! The weather was absolutely appalling and the event had to be curtailed due to heavy rain.

BCT continues to support The Harbour Centre. This fantastic initiative, spearheaded by Life Church, which includes a community shop, cafe and hub centre to connect people to a whole variety of support networks, is thriving. The community shop offers the opportunity for those in need to access a wide range of both fresh and preserved food produce and other donated items for a minimal membership fee, providing a greater sense of choice, dignity and empowerment. Throughout the year members of St Giles have generously donated food and non-food items to the Harbour Centre as well as volunteering regularly in the shop.

Through BCT and Life Church, St Giles have also been generous in donating medical supplies and sleeping bags to Ukraine.

Report by Rev Jo Parker

Ash Green Residents Association (AGRA)

This has been a relatively quiet year, apart from reporting the usual fly tipping, pot holes, litter and street lighting etc. We have assisted Exhall Residents Association in conducting a traffic survey to measure the impact extra vehicles will have on our area if development along Bowling Green Lane is given the go ahead. We have informed our Councillor that two layers of barbed wire has been placed on top of a public footpath and the matter is being dealt with.

We were invited to lay a wreath at the Memorial in St Giles Road on Armistice Day on behalf of the residents of Ash Green. We also included a cross. In December we joined with several groups who decorated Christmas trees in St Giles churchyard, an uplifting sight for all to see.

We have had discussions with our Councillors and St Giles Church concerning the ground in front of the Memorial stone at the bottom of St Giles Road. Several ideas have been suggested, the decision is still ongoing. We hope to continue to raise concerns from our residents in the coming year, but would appreciate younger people joining our committee or approaching us with their ideas/ concerns.

Report by Kate Coyle and Isobel Jacques

Notes on the Annual Report

Notes on the Financial Report



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KINDNESS COMPASSION COMMUNITY
IN CHRIST'S LOVE

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