

# **St Andrew's Church Backwell**

## **Short Reports 2023**



## St Andrew's Choir

2023 was another busy year for the choir. As well as singing for the usual weekly services, we had a special Evensong to mark Geoff Hobbs' retirement from the choir after over 50 years' service and a memorial service for Susan Harker. In July, it was a privilege to sing our yearly evensong in St. Mary, Redcliffe, accompanied by Graham Alsop on the magnificent organ. Advent and Christmas were busy, with an Advent carol service at St. Andrew's and Christmas carol services at St. Bridget's and St. Andrew's. It was a treat to have Andrew Kirk play for a few of our services. We thoroughly enjoyed our choir outing to see *The Wind in the Willows* at Backwell Playhouse.

We said fond farewells to Emma and to Iona, both of whom moved away. Ethan and Ruth were formally admitted to the choir, gaining their surplices. It was a great pleasure to welcome Ren to the choir as a probationer in the autumn. Our enthusiastic junior choristers are developing their musical skills well. I am grateful to Ann for playing for us occasionally and to all of the choristers for their dedication. Finally, many thanks are due to Jean, who has accompanied us on the organ very ably, numerous times this year. *Andrew Colley*



## Worship Band

The St Andrews Worship Band lead the sung worship during our Informal Worship services and Cafe Church. We have four regular musicians; keyboard, guitars, bass and singers. We meet on a regular basis to practice and pray together in preparation for the service. Each service begins with a block of worship songs to welcome God's presence and to provide a space for the Holy Spirit to move and dwell in our time of worship together. We then close with a further time of sung worship. The introduction of our new church sound system has made a great difference to the overall sound quality and balance of instruments and has helped considerably with the setting up process before playing. We are a small group which requires a high level of commitment from each member to make things work so we are very grateful for the time each person gives meeting regularly and practising in their own time. A big thank you to all involved. *Claire Wilmott*



## **St Andrew's Bellringers**

We have had another successful and enjoyable year. We now ring from 10.15 to 10.45 am each Sunday and usually have enough ringers to ring all 10 bells, generally to a high standard. We also aim to ring a quarter peal before the evening service on the third Sunday; these longer pieces of ringing have enabled some of our less experienced ringers to make significant progress over the year.

Bell ringing played a big part in the celebrations for the Coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla and we had open ringing and a quarter peal after the service on the day and rang a full peal the following day before the Choral Evensong service. The peal enabled 15 year old Clara Waller to ring her first peal.

In August we rang a peal as a farewell compliment to Rev'd Kary Garner, the departing Rector.

In September we had a very successful weekend away to North Wales, where we rang at several towers in the area and enjoyed a trip on the Llangollen Steam Railway and a tour of their works courtesy of Huw Parker, one of our ringers and a prime force behind the restoration of the railway.

The peal for the Patronal Festival was a new sequence called Bacoile Surprise Royal after the name of Backwell in the Domesday Book.

We also held two open tower events where the public were invited to climb the tower to find out about bellringing and take in the view from the top of the tower. These were both very well supported.

The Backwell ringers provided the core of the Chew Branch team that won the Bath & Wells Diocesan 8-bell striking competition at Wincanton in September. The Chew Branch have now won this competition seven times in a row. Our ringers provide help and training for ringers from a number of other local towers in the area and ring for Sunday services at Barrow Gurney.

We hold a practice on Monday afternoons which helps ringers from the area progress from bell handling to method ringing. Our main practice on Wednesday evenings is usually well attended, sometimes with over 20 ringers present; we aim to provide an opportunity to develop one's ringing in a supportive and encouraging environment.

## St Andrew's Pastoral Team 2023-24

During this past year in addition to the Ministry Team the Pastoral Group has consisted of four regular members who met prayerfully supporting parishioners by visits, telephone calls and home communion.

Support has been centred around people and families with long term health issues, around bereavement and end of life care. Some of those families are still receiving support as they adjust to a new way of living without their loved ones.

We had hoped that 2023 would have seen the opportunity to expand our work. However, the team itself has been affected by long term health issues.

We have managed to maintain our pastoral commitments and will continue with our current list of parishioner needs.

Rev'd. Katy had hoped to expand our work by hosting pastoral leadership training with a view to recruiting new members to the group and working within a wider community brief. However, her tenure finished without achieving this. We very much hope that the new incumbent will help us achieve this aim.

**'Bear one another's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfil the law of Christ.'** Galatians 6.2

## Home Group

The group meets to share on our faith journeys - to get to know one another better, to learn together, to pray together and to encourage each other. We are part of the shared group leadership and we have always found small groups the biggest help in our own Christian lives. This group has been running since Covid led to the merger of Andy's Cafe church with St Andrews a few years ago. There has always been a dozen or more people on our email list but most often the actual attendance has been 7-10 of us, which is a good number for this sort of group to work. What we do varies from term to term and, through the last few months, the home group has been using the Bible Society's new offering 'The Romans Course'. This mixture of video teaching, some filmed against the backdrop of Rome itself, and discussion questions has brought out Paul's message to the Christians in Rome with great clarity and impact.

We have tried meeting on different days [Wednesday or Thursday] and with different frequencies [weekly or fortnightly] because whichever pattern we follow there is always someone who finds that choice difficult. Most recently we've tried meeting a little earlier in the evening [6.45 for 7.00]. If more people would like to join us that would give us scope to have more than one group which could meet at different times and so suit more people. If you are interested, do talk to any member of the group. If this all sounds unfamiliar or suspect to you, our meetings have been encouraged by the presence of Peter Bailey and, when the timing worked for him in the past, Martin Canning [who also led the daytime home group when that was in existence], so you could ask them for an unbiased assessment of what it might offer you.

*Ian & Helen Wills*



Enthusiastically singing carols outside Spar



## St Andrews Mission & Outreach Committee

**World Mission.** Communication with St Andrew's church, Ndola North, Zambia remains sporadic, but we do exchange news and prayer topics. We are perhaps overdue a visit to Ndola to re-energise the link. After Zambia – Bath & Wells Sunday in July, we were able to send a donation to help with replacement of equipment stolen from the church in Ndola. There is more work to do with our partners in Zambia on plans to spend some legacy funds the diocese holds to the benefit of the link across the diocese, but Bishop Michael's planned visit to Zambia will take place in April/May and he will cover a number of issues. The appointment of a new Zambia Link coordinator who was born in and has worked in Zambia has been a boost this year. We committed to supporting a CMS Mission Partner in Nairobi, Aaron Stanbury and in the summer held a fundraising BBQ for him (raising £633). He travelled to Kenya in December, and we await news of his progress.

**Global Justice.** In our annual review, the list of charities we support from St Andrews was modified, with the local charity Connect (which funds Neil Wylie's school chaplaincy work) replacing Bristol Schools Connection. Neil does some amazing work and it's good to support this local initiative. The remaining charities (one per quarter) for the 2024/25 year are CMS, The Sisters of the Church and USPG. Hopefully there is greater awareness of each of these charities, and we again set a target of raising £2,000 each quarter, which includes the £1,150 donated from parish contributions. Individual sponsored activities (Curry Night raising £453 and the BBQ) and the value of goods donated to The Sisters added to the total, but we haven't yet met our overall target. Food donations at our Harvest service were given to The Sisters of the Church and cash donations to Ripple Effect for their bee keeping project in Zambia. Additional fundraising was undertaken by individuals on behalf of charities with which they have strong links. We remain a Fairtrade church and promote specific areas of activity (e.g. a Big Brew fundraiser for Transform Trade at The Meeting Point) and of course supermarkets do stock a range of products.

**Presence in the Village.** Our weekly prayer topics include the whole community road by road, covering businesses and houses, updated to include new housing developments. Together with the other local churches, we hand delivered printed Christmas greeting cards (with Christmas service information) to every house in the village. Our publicity on social media, on A Church Near You and our website continues to be very active, especially for children's activities. Our links to the Junior School are strengthening, notably with pupil chaplain scheme which is now on its third cohort of chaplains and has the largest group so far.

**Christian voice on the environment.** A small group prepared a submission for an Eco Church Bronze Award, with preparation assisted by the pupil chaplains. The award was duly given, and a plaque placed in the link at church. A silver award is the next target. A partial re-wilding of the area by the south porch of the church was completed but is in need of a champion to maintain it long term.

*Martin Canning March 2024*



# Children's Ministry Report

## Sunday Club

We have been meeting 3 times a week in 2023. Regular attendance has been between 3-5 children, with the occasional influx of children at seasonal times or when children's choir has visited. We have used the Psalms, Exodus, Lent and Jesus' Miracles modules of the Mustard Seed Curriculum to dive into the Bible and have done arts & crafts and games.

We have watched a few clips from The Chosen and tried to imagine what life in Jesus's day might have been like through acting out some of the miracles. We also learned about God through the Narnia series by C. S. Lewis.

## Children Choir

The choir is nearly at full capacity, with great attendance records through the whole year. They had three performances at St Andrew's for Mothering Sunday, End of School Year and Advent. They learned songs from Beatles to Disney classics this year and have enjoyed learning more about rhythm.

## Backwell Junior School

Collective Worship: We have continued to hold weekly collective worship at the junior school on Wednesdays. We have gone through a theology basics series again to start the year (worship, prayer, meditation, Trinity, Communion etc) then learned about Fruits of the Spirit, Beatitudes, Stories from the OT (David, Daniel, Elijah, Abraham), Psalms etc. We also always have seasonal themed ones: Remembrance Day, Lent, Easter, Christmas, Harvest etc.

Mrs Mason continues to support this by playing the piano and teaching the children wonderful hymns.

The kids love coming up for games and illustrations and are always enthusiastic to take part.

Church Days: Church days continue to be a great success story, in terms of both children, teachers and volunteers having a great time together. We had struggled to keep volunteer numbers up but have always managed in the end to keep all activities.

Church Services: We have done Ash Wednesday, Easter, Pet Service, End of School Year, Pupil chaplains Commissioning Service, Harvest and Christmas Carol Service in 2023 and have continued to invite parents for refreshments.

Pupil Chaplains: The second pupil chaplain team of 8 children were commissioned by Bishop Michael in February 2023. They met regularly through the year for Bible study on Mondays and have been involved with collective worship. They have written and read prayers for most of the school services and have taken part in worship at St Andrew's at Harvest as well. They have volunteered at The Meeting Point in June. They also took a trip to Taunton with Martin and Timi



Taste and See that the Lord is Good - tasting game



Seb, Sophie and Finley made bird feeders in Lent.



Choir rehearsal with percussion instruments.



Ethan and Ruth now also sing in the robed choir.



Pupil Chaplain Team

to take part in the diocesan pupil chaplain day, where they helped lead worship and sang beautifully. The chaplains were also involved in St Andrew's Eco Church Certificate application process and were proud when we received a Bronze.

The Pupil Chaplaincy program has been accepted to the Learning Hub initiative by the Growing Faith foundation, which provides extra funding towards the scheme. In 2024 Timi will start working with other schools to support them in starting their own programs, as well as writing a handbook about pupil chaplaincy.

RE visits: Timi has been invited to year 5 RE lessons to share her testimony and to talk about what faith is like in everyday life, and how does one 'become a Christian'. We also hosted Year 4 in February 2023 at St Andrew's where they found out more about what we do in the community (this was supported by volunteers from the various groups).

Christmas and Easter in a Box: BJS has made these a part of their RE curriculum now, so we have run Christmas in a Box for year 3s and Easter in a Box for year 6s.

### **Begin Well**

In 2023 we ran three Begin Well Courses (February, June and September), 27 mums & their partners attended these in Backwell and Nailsea. Patty-Lou continued to support these with refreshments funded by the Methodist Church. The courses have had very positive feedback, and we receive many messages asking if there will be more at various specific dates.

Some feedback from the Begin Well post-course questionnaires:

*'All facilitators were warm, welcoming and friendly. They did a fantastic job.'*

*'Thank you so much for the fantastic course, we are really grateful that it was free and the material and people were brilliant. I would 100% recommend you to anyone.'*

*'It is a well-structured and comprehensive course, that helps expecting parents to prepare for the upcoming delivery and parenting as well as a great opportunity to meet local parents-to-be. But more than that, you can tell the people running it really care and they put so much effort in to make us feel welcome.'*

### **Seasonal Events**

Light Party – Attended by 30 children in the end with last minute additions, we had lots of fun at the light party. This year's theme was 'A lamp to my feet'. We also gifted Devotional Books to the children who attended which was very gratefully received.

Easter Egg Hunt – Rev Katy organised an Egg Hunt after the Easter service in the graveyard.

Christingle – about 17 children made Christingles this year. We enjoyed worship led by the band and even got the children dancing



Martin and the team at Harvest



Easter in a Box for year 6



Christmas in a Box for year 3



Begin Well Class at Nailsea Methodist Church



Light Party



## Little Lambs

Little lambs has gone from strength to strength this year with a total of ten sessions. We didn't run sessions in April or August. Over the year we've had between 15-27 children attending with the average being 23 children per session (231 attendance over the year). In total 40 families were engaged with the sessions with many sessions being attended by both parents.



The sessions we've covered this year have included;

- Creation 1 (day and night - space) - Paper mache planets, Tin foil crafts, chalk paints, kinetic sand and magnets
- Creation 2 (skies above and waters below - fish and birds) - shaving foam clouds with birds, rainbow bath bombs, bird seed feeders, playdoh, chia seed slime
- Creation 3 (land and animals - dinosaurs) - painting stones, finding fossils, volcanic scene, Lime jelly, measuring feet.
- Coronation tea party - sand castles, tea party, red/white and blue rice, bunting, sticky crown
- Noah's ark - water play, ark stamps, wooden ark, animal painting
- Harvest - washing animals, farming scene, veg patch, Planting seeds, market stalls.
- Jonah - Gellibaff and fish, boats, desert island, fishing, painting seascapes
- Joseph - colour sorting, grain and cups, Coloured foam, coat colouring, sticky coat
- Advent - Jesus biscuits, nativity dressing up, advent wreath colouring, nativity colouring, lollipop Christmas stars, Christmas cards, nativity scene.



July was a free play session and we provided bacon sandwiches. This was really well received so we have decided to repeat this when needed/appropriate.

The sessions have all included 6-8 activity stations which always have at least one messy activity and one craft session as well as a reading corner. The sessions are currently 75 mins with a story and snacks followed by music and singing in the last 15 mins.

The original helpers are still on board and taking it in turns to help. We usually have 1 leader and 3-4 helpers in attendance. We have had 1 additional





helper (a grandparent) who has joined the team. 4 families have provided help in the form of buying snacks, getting library books, reading stories and helping put out activities the night before. However, due to my maternity leave we need to re-engage with these people to get them to help at further sessions.



Little lambs continue to go from strength to strength however my maternity leave has been difficult for various reasons.

- It's hard to find the time with a very young baby to plan the sessions although I'm hoping that this is becoming a little easier as Macsen gets older.
- Timi has been a brilliant support, but she is stretched so asking her to run the sessions is another commitment.
- We started to have some help from parents, but this has dropped off alongside my maternity, so I need to restart the request for help.
- We are still reliant on the same helpers for the sessions and haven't actually received any additional offers of help.
- We are reliant on Timi doing the advertising of sessions on Eventbrite and Eventbrite has started to charge over a certain number of bookings which has been problematic.



I don't have an up to date picture on the donations we've received from little lambs during the year, but we have had a number of difficulties with the card machine not having Wi-Fi. We also need to make it clearer that we are expecting donations as I think many parents do forget.



The other thing to mention is we did start a toddler service which was held twice. It was well received by the parents and children who attended. There were only 4-6 children at these services, but we know that these things take time to build. I do think we could make a success of these types of services, but I think it would be better to try to do these as one-off services at Christmas and Easter initially rather than a monthly commitment. The services need to be tailored specifically to little children, not just older children for them to be really engaging.

*Rhiannon Mark - March 2024.*



## Churchyard

Huge thanks go to the volunteers who help keep the churchyard looking so good throughout the year.

Our contractors continue to offer good value for money and always go the extra mile. Trees and shrubs around the churchyard require regular maintenance. In July and September tree surgeons carried out the necessary pruning and tree work.

In August an area around the south side and main entrance of the church was selected to start a community run re-wilding project. Many volunteers from the village came and screefed out patches of grass sward so we could introduce a variety of wild native plants. Rewilding is a slow process and more will be done year by year. It is hoped these areas will eventually need minimum maintenance, but until then there is a lot of extra work. There are 18 maintenance plots divided up around the church and at present only half of them are attended to on a regular basis. So, if anyone could join us, we have plenty of spare area.



Tina Soper has recently joined our group and we are very grateful for her help. Richard Standing who all the volunteers will know well, has proffered his services over the last 15 years. He is now easing up on his duties, but he will continue to look after the machinery and fuel and will carry out odd jobs whenever he can. We owe him enormous gratitude for everything he has done. He will be much missed.

It is clear that much of the community including family and friends of the deceased value the churchyard. The colour from their floral tributes at the graveside is stunning.

You will realise from this report that we are seriously short of volunteers and we do need more to help maintain our beautiful churchyard. If you can make the time to come and help us, we have mowers and all the equipment at the ready. It will help us enormously.

If you wish to volunteer, please contact the St Andrew's Church Office.

*Tim Harland March 2024*



## Ladies Group

This group meets on the second Monday of each month and is well attended by around 30 women from the church and village. It is a valued meeting place where friendships are fostered and renewed. The meeting begins with a reading and prayer and finishes with refreshments.

We raise a small amount for charity with a few social events or a bring and buy and our charity for this year will be The Memory Café at Nailsea.

Over the past months a variety of speakers have informed and entertained the group. A highlight of the year is the annual Christmas lunch held at The Masonic Hall in Nailsea.

This past Christmas was no exception when about 45 ladies sat down to a delicious meal which they had not had to cook. Unfortunately, due to the rising age of the membership and health problems within the leadership, the organisation of

the group in the coming months will be difficult. I am grateful to Valerie Lamb and the committee as they seek ways to overcome these problems.

*Elizabeth Webb (retiring leader)*

## Mothers Union

The Mothers' Union is the world's largest lay Christian membership charity. Since 1876, when Mary Sumner first brought together parents in her own Hampshire parish to build their confidence in bringing up their children, it has grown to an organisation of over four million women -and men- in over 80 countries of the world, promoting stable marriage, family life and protection of children through, praying, enabling and campaigning. Prayer is central to the work of Mothers' Union. We are an inclusive organisation! We welcome men, women, parents, non-parents, grandparents, clergy, bishops, those who are married and those who are not - anyone who has been baptised and who will support our aim to provide Christian care for family life.

We have raised money during 2023 for Mothers' Union projects both here in the UK and in other areas of the world through our coffee morning , spring and Harvest Lunches and our Cream Tea in the summer. We have enjoyed a variety of speakers and activities at our monthly meetings including a 'Fair Trade Quiz', a talk about the Memory Cafe in Nailsea, information about Modern Day Slavery and an update on how Ukrainian refugees are managing their lives locally. Many of us have attended church services, fundraising and social events in the Deanery and Diocese throughout the year meeting up with old friends and making new ones.

We meet on the fourth Tuesday in the month at 2.15 in Church House. There is always a warm welcome extended to everyone, members and visitors, wishing to share the fellowship and friendship at our meetings. *Marie Bale*

**The Village Magazine** seeks to serve the local communities of Backwell, Chelvey and Brockley by providing information about events past and future. It remains at heart a church magazine, but also looks to inform people about local civic events such as Parish Council meetings. Through the paper copies and the online version, I estimate it is reaching 700-800 homes in the area. It is funded by donations from readers (thank you all who contribute) and advertising. The magazine is currently financially stable.

The magazine is made up of articles, notices and adverts. What is the difference?

For The Village Magazine, "an advert" is a piece of embedded artwork normally promoting a local business. It stays in the magazine over several months and carries a charge depending on the size. Money from adverts is the main income for this voluntary run publication. Now that we use Adroit's as our printer, advertisers do not have to remain for the whole year but can run for shorter times; we charge proportionately. Adverts need to be submitted to our advertising manager Hilary Power and she will invoice the advertiser in due course if the magazine has the space to take them on.

For us a notice or an article are editable words and may include photos. There is no charge for these appearing in the magazine. Anyone can submit copy to the editor. without gaining prior permission . These form the life blood of the magazine, but I do not know from one month to the next what will land in my inbox to be included in the next edition and so, whether I can fit it all in. On the whole, most of the notices and articles sent in do find their way into the magazine. So, if you want to promote an upcoming event or raise a local issue, send your words into [backwellvillagemag@gmail.com](mailto:backwellvillagemag@gmail.com) and I will see what I can do with them. Repeating what I said last year, I do not write the magazine, I just compile it. The magazine is written by local readers. So, send in the article you would like to read.

I need to thank the magazine committee, Lesley Barrett, Hilary Power and Julia Philis for all their hard work for our local publication, as well as Ann Belcher for her amazing front cover photos.

*Jane Canning (Editor and Chair of the Magazine Committee for The Village Magazine).*

## Backwell C of E Junior School Foundation Governor's Report

I started last year's report... "the West Leigh and Backwell C of E Junior School Federation should have three Foundation Governors on the Local Governing Body (LGB), but currently only has two." The same is true this year. Jenny Holmes has stepped down as a school governor. It was a great shame to lose her expertise, but we are very blessed to welcome Hannah Barclay as her replacement. Hannah is not a regular worshipper at St Andrew's, but as a committed Christian and parent of children attending West Leigh, I think she will be a great asset to the LGB. Foundation Governors have to apply through the Diocese. Hannah has completed that process, and I look forward to working with her. There is now a vacancy for a further Foundation Governor, but it seems sensible to wait and see if our new Rector will want to fill that post.

Obviously, being in a vacancy has meant that more of the schoolwork falls to our children's worker, Timi, but she seems to be coping admirably running weekly assemblies, termly school services, church days, Christmas and Easter in a box. The Pupil Chaplains project continues to thrive with 15 new Chaplains being commissioned at this year's Ash Wednesday Service. The last cohort of Chaplains, who finished their term of office just before Christmas, wrote warmly of what they had learnt and achieved in their year serving their school community. In addition to this, the value of this work has even been recognised by the Church of England. The Pupil Chaplain work at the Junior School has been awarded funds to become a C of E Learning Hub by the Growing Faith Foundation. The grant, which runs over two years, will provide the means to extend Timi's working hours, giving her the time, among other things, to write a manual to help other schools introduce similar pupil chaplain schemes.

Please persist in prayer for the School Federation. The staff continue to face very challenging times, while working hard for the wellbeing and achievement of their pupils that "they may have life and have it to the full" John 10:10.

*Jane Canning*





## Backwell Life

Lunches on a Tuesday remain popular events, with 25 to 30 people sitting down to eat every 2 weeks. Scotty regularly cooks a 2-course meal for us once a month and there's always room for more guests. A small number gather for a short communion service before the soup lunch, which alternates with the other meal. Christmas lunch was a great occasion, and we were able to offer our regular guests a free lunch this time, with donations received being passed to The Sisters of the Church in Bristol. Transport for those unable to walk to the Parish Hall has become increasingly important, so additional drivers would be welcome.

The chair yoga sessions have seen another increase in numbers, with now over 20 people joining per session. The social element is an important feature, and they say the exercise is still challenging. A small group of parents and children congregates after school and prior to a ballet lesson next door and readily demolishes the cakes our volunteers produce each week.

Our summer Holiday Action programme for children was well received again, although this last year we were in the WI Hall due to kitchen refurbishment in the Parish Hall. We included a baking club, poly printing and a ukulele workshop. Plans are under way for this summer, again with a few new options and the return of some favourites. In the other holidays, we aim to offer Tuesday Break sessions for children, although these are more low-key.

We continue to seek new ways to enhance our range of activities at The Meeting Point, although we know some will be successful and some not so. This winter, we decided not to participate in the Warm Welcome scheme as unfortunately it didn't draw people in last year.

We still have the occasional EU citizens seeking digital support for their EU Settled Status application, but this is now very rare.

We are extremely grateful to all our volunteers for their support, especially with baking cakes, with practical help and just being good company. We have added a few new volunteers and soup makers this year, which is really helpful in spreading the load. More would always be welcome, or course. Our membership subscription helps cover our costs, but we are pleased to have received a grant from the Parish Council again this year (largely to fund the summer programme), a generous donation from Backwell Probus plus other donations from our supporters. See more on us at [www.themeetingpointbackwell.co.uk](http://www.themeetingpointbackwell.co.uk). or call in for a coffee sometime. Look out for the bright yellow flags on Tuesdays. *Martin Canning February 2024*



Christmas Lunch



Holiday Action Baking



Pupil Chaplains visit  
The Meeting Point



Clay Workshop



Celebrating Scotty's  
birthday

