

All Saints

CHURCH, RISELEY

Church Lane, Riseley, Bedford, MK44 1ER
www.allsaintsriseley.org



Annual Church Report 2024

KNOW CHRIST AND MAKE HIM KNOWN

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Dear Friends,



The Isaacs Family

Looking Back

As we reflect on another year in the life of the church, I trust that like me, you will find great encouragement in reading through this year's annual report. We have so much to celebrate and be thankful for as we reflect on all that God has done in us and through us this past twelve months, including:

The special services involving baptisms and confirmations where a number of young people publicly professed their faith in Jesus; an enthralling weekend at home where we were fed the riches of Romans 8; an Easter holiday club where we saw so many answered prayers; new faces becoming familiar faces

amongst our church family; faithful saints preserving through, at times, immense hardship and personal suffering; a well-attended and stimulating church vision morning; the rhythm of the 'regular' week by week meetings, both Sundays and mid-week that help bind us together as a Jesus Loving, Jesus Dependent, Jesus Welcoming, Jesus Sharing, Jesus Serving Church.

Yet we should not be surprised for all that God has been doing, for as we heard on Easter Sunday, Jesus who died, is alive and reigning over all of creation – all praise to him!

However, whilst we thank our Lord and Saviour and give him the glory, let me also take this opportunity to thank every member of the church family for the part you have played in the life of All Saints this past year – for your prayers and faithful endurance and for the way you have used your gifts, your time, your money and resources to bless the church and serve the Kingdom.

Looking Forward

Whilst we have much to thank God for as we look back, we also have much to hope for as we look forward. Let me mention just a few things in particular:

800 Celebrations

This year marks the 800th anniversary of the appointment of the first Rector of Riseley in 1224, when Fulco de Monte Acuto was licenced during the reign of King Henry III. Although there have no doubt been many changes to the church building over the past 800 years, and even the personnel who meet there, the Christian message that has been proclaimed remains unchanged - a wonderful message of hope, joy and salvation for all, found in our risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a message that that we are seeking to continue to share at a series of special events taking place across the summer culminating in a banquet at the Village Hall on Saturday 21st September when we will be joined by guest after dinner speaker Rico Tice. More details to be announced, but please make sure you have this date in your diary!

Building

We are fortunate to benefit from the vision, hard work and care of previous generations who have left us the legacy of the All Saints Church building, developed and maintained across those 800 years. Initial plans are being drawn up at the moment for some improvement works which we hope will make the building more user friendly and help to ease some of the current pressures we are facing with regards to both space and storage. I hope that once we are in a position to share further details, the church family will get behind the initiative as we seek to play our part as the current custodians of the building and pass it on in good order for the benefit of future generations. We will be sharing more details about these plans in due course.

Finance

As ever, let me take this opportunity to say a huge thank you for the generosity of the church family which, along with the receipt of a couple of legacies, has enabled us to cover our costs this past year. As you will see from the Finance Report, we anticipate costs rising further this year, and we need to see an increase in our general giving to ensure that we can meet them. This is a responsibility that we all share in, as we seek to respond to the overwhelming generosity of Jesus and give generously and sacrificially according to what God has given us. Please pray that God will raise up all that need for this coming year, and consider how you might be able to respond to the needs.

Church of England

A number of big questions remain with regard to the divisions in the wider Church of England following decisions made at General Synod in relation to issues around human sexuality which deviate from the Bible's teaching. We continue to seek to navigate them alongside others who seek to uphold the Word of God over the coming months whilst simultaneously seeking to ensure that that we are a truly inclusive church which fully loves, welcomes and disciples all people, whoever they are, whatever their gender, race, sexuality, social class, background as people made in the image of God and who are dearly loved by Jesus.

In Conclusion

And so, as I draw to a close, let me say that this is just a small snapshot of the life of our church, with so much more going on as evidenced by all that's included in this report. As we continue into 2024, let's make sure to keep Jesus at the centre of all that we do, and to keep depending on him as we seek to further live out our church vision to be a Jesus Loving, Jesus Dependent, Jesus Welcoming, Jesus Sharing, Jesus Serving Church.

We have a great God and a wonderful mission as we look to Know Christ and Make Him Known in the year ahead.

With much love in Christ,

James

PS. And finally, a very big thank you to everybody who has contributed to this year's profile – with a special mention of thanks to Karen Houck for compiling it all together – thank you Karen!

James Isaacs

Agendas and Minutes

Agenda for Meeting of Parishioners

Parish of All Saints Riseley

Sunday 12 May 2024 during the 10.30am service at All Saints Church, Riseley

A joint meeting of:

- (a) The persons whose names are entered on the Church Electoral Roll of the Parish; and
- (b) The persons resident in the Parish whose names are entered on a Register of Local Government Electors by reason of such residence:

For the election of Church Wardens.

Agenda for Annual Meeting of Parochial Church Council

Parish of All Saints Riseley

Immediately following the Meeting of Parishioners on Sunday 12 May 2024 at All Saints Church, Riseley

1. For the election of parochial representatives of the laity to the Deanery Synod
2. For the election of parochial representatives of the laity to the Parochial Church Council
3. For the appointment of the Independent Examiner
4. For the consideration of:
 - (a) A report on changes in the roll since the last Annual Parochial Church Meeting;
 - (b) An annual report on the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council;
 - (c) The financial statements of the Council for the year ending 31 December 2023;
 - (d) A report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the Church of the Parish;
 - (e) A report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod; and
 - (f) Reports on other matters of parochial or general church interest.

Notes:

1. All persons whose names are entered upon the Church Electoral Roll of the Parish (and such persons only) are entitled to vote at the election of parochial representatives of the laity.
2. Subject to the provisions of rule 14(3)(c), a person is qualified to be elected a parochial representative of the laity if:
 - (a) Their name is entered on the Church Electoral Roll of the Parish;
 - (b) They are an actual communicant which means that they have received communion according to the use of the Church of England or of a Church in communion with the Church of England at least 3 times during the 12 months preceding the date of the election; and
 - (c) They are of 18 years or upwards (for election to the Deanery Synod) or of 16 years or upwards (for election to the Parochial Church Council).

Minutes of Annual Meeting of Parishioners

Parish of All Saints Riseley

23 May 2023

Present: Revd James Isaacs (Chair), Diane Sollars (Secretary), Sue Walker, John Walker, Zak Worts, Bill Wallis, Lynn Wallis, Judy Green, Sue Elks, Val Foster, Catherine Smith, Alison Keating, Jane Rhodes, Robin Rhodes, Dianne Jones, Jon Nicholls, Jo Nicholls, Julia Pullin, Martin Hargreaves, Roline Hargreaves, Graham Sollars, Mark Eddon, Sally Eddon, Monica Isaacs, Rob Toseland, Sam Toseland, Kathryn Staniforth, Hugh Staniforth, Margaret Nicholls, Phillip Nicholls, Catherine Veitch, Penny Gray, Roger Gray, Trevor Staniforth, Sarah-Louise Cakebread, Jamie Wyatt, Wendy Wyatt, Kat Wignall, Marion Stubbart, Sue Tebbit, Ann Joyner, Stuart Owen, Barbara Owen, Dave Sheffield and Zoe Sheffield.

Apologies for Absence: Karen Houck, Verena Pentlow, Brian Simister, Lynda Simister, Rachel White, Jemma Carroll, Pieter Carroll, Dudley Ferdinando, Jan Ferdinando, Keith Williams, Sue Williams, Emily Hermon, Loreen Shelford, Katie Nicholls and David Shaw.

James Isaacs welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the purpose of this meeting is to elect Church Wardens.

Minutes from the Previous Meeting: 15 May 2022

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved and signed by James Isaacs. There were no matters arising. James thanked Diane Sollars for her work as PCC Secretary throughout the year.

Election of Church Wardens

James Isaacs advised that there were 2 nominations willing to stand as Church Warden.

Richard Carter was willing to stand again as Church Warden. The nomination for election form had been completed prior to the meeting. Richard was nominated by Hugh Staniforth, seconded by Graham Sollars and unanimously agreed, there were no abstentions.

Kathryn Staniforth had agreed to stand again as Church Warden. The nomination for election form had been completed prior to the meeting. Kathryn was nominated by Monica Isaacs, seconded by Roger Gray and unanimously agreed, there were no objections or abstentions.

The Meeting of the Parishioners was closed and followed by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

Minutes of Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Parish of All Saints Riseley

23 May 2023

Present: Revd James Isaacs (Chair), Diane Sollars (Secretary), Sue Walker, John Walker, Zak Worts, Bill Wallis, Lynn Wallis, Judy Green, Sue Elks, Val Foster, Catherine Smith, Alison Keating, Jane Rhodes, Robin Rhodes, Dianne Jones, Jon Nicholls, Jo Nicholls, Julia Pullin, Martin Hargreaves, Roline Hargreaves, Graham Sollars, Mark Eddon, Sally Eddon, Monica Isaacs, Rob Toseland, Sam Toseland, Kathryn Staniforth, Hugh Staniforth, Margaret Nicholls, Phillip Nicholls, Catherine Veitch, Penny Gray, Roger Gray, Trevor Staniforth, Sarah-Louise Cakebread, Jamie Wyatt, Wendy Wyatt, Kat Wignall, Marion Stubbart, Sue Tebbit, Ann Joyner, Stuart Owen, Barbara Owen, Dave Sheffield and Zoe Sheffield.

Apologies for Absence: Karen Houck, Verena Pentlow, Brian Simister, Lynda Simister, Rachel White, Jemma Carroll, Pieter Carroll, Dudley Ferdinando, Jan Ferdinando, Keith Williams, Sue Williams, Emily Hermon, Loreen Shelford, Katie Nicholls and David Shaw.

James Isaacs explained the purpose of this meeting is to elect PCC members, appoint an Independent Examiner and that there would be an opportunity for questions regarding the Annual Report including the Finance Report.

Minutes from the Previous Meeting: 15 May 2022

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved and signed by James Isaacs. There were no matters arising.

Election of parochial representatives of the laity to the Parochial Church Council (PCC)

James thanked the PCC members whose terms had come to an end this year – Dudley Ferdinando and Verena Pentlow.

Nominations for the PCC had been made in advance of the meeting. There were 3 nominations to stand on the PCC. Graham Sollars had come to the end of his 3 year term and was willing to stand again. The nomination of Graham Sollars was proposed by Penny Gray and seconded by Phillip Nicholls. The nomination of Sarah-Louise Cakebread was proposed by Katy Carter and seconded by Dianne Jones. The nomination of Trevor Staniforth was proposed by Martin Hargreaves and seconded by Dave Sheffield. All 3 nominations were approved by with 1 abstention.

James thanked all 3 for standing for service on the PCC and for everyone else on the PCC for their help in leading the church in Riseley.

Appointment of the Independent Examiner

Brian Simister, confirmed that Malcolm (Bill) Rowland has agreed to continue as the Independent Examiner for the accounts. The appointment of Malcolm was proposed by Brian Simister, seconded by Richard and agreed with 1 abstention.

PCC Reports

James Isaacs signposted everyone to the reports in the Parish Profile for the Electoral Roll, PCC, Building, Finance and Deanery Synod reports and thanked everyone for their partnership in the gospel. He had been encouraged by the reports and thanked everyone for their work as we look to build one another up and then opened up the meeting for questions.

The meeting closed with prayers of thanksgiving for God's provision and praying for the coming year.

Churchwarden's report

It's amazing how quickly a year goes by but the annual report is a good time to reflect on the year that was and pause for thought and prayer.

It is important and good that we give thanks for God's provisions over the last 12 months and we do see His hand in the blessings He continues to shower on us. Our finances, with all the challenges in the economy we see around us, are OK and we have been even able to almost cover our Family and Youth worker costs (praise be). Yes, we have not had any real major expenses in the year and we know that the heating system needs attention as does one of the buttresses. So please continue to pray that He will continue to provide.

Also, please give thanks for Dudley and his helpers that do such a great job looking after the building and fabric of the church much that just goes on in the back ground. Talking about "ground" – huge thanks to Lesley and Graham that again do an unsung job keeping the churchyard in such good order and looking lovely.

We have had a baptism and confirmation service in the last 12 months and it is wonderful to see God at work building His church in Riseley as we have also seen our numbers swell a little. We are not about seeing more people in our Sunday services, but again quoting from our Vision statement, we want to be Jesus Loving and Jesus Sharing – encouraging one another to grow in love and devotion to God as well as wanting us all to be able to share the good news of Jesus to those around us.

We are blessed with the ministry of our Rector James (and family) and all they do for the church and the wider community. It is also wonderful to have others in our church willing and able to deliver talks and lead services – so thanks to Lynda, Martin, Cliff, Graham and others.

As we start to look at the year ahead, there is much to commit to our Father's hands – the ongoing discussion about "Living in Love and Fellowship" in the wider Church of England, the 800 year celebrations of having a Rector at All Saints, what we should be doing to make our building more accessible and functional for all the activities that take place day by day and week by week. So, as we reflect and look forward, please be encouraged to spend time with our Father and commit all these things to Him in prayer both in praise and thanksgiving as well as seeking wisdom for decisions and what we should be asking Him for.

Kathryn Staniforth & Richard Carter

Parochial Church Council (PCC) Report 2023/2024

The PCC consists of James Isaacs as Chair and Kathryn Staniforth and Richard Carter as Church Wardens. Lynda and Brian Simister continue to serve as representatives at the Deanery Synod, Brian also has responsibility for finance and Lynda for church safeguarding. The other members of the PCC are Mark Eddon, Dave Sheffield, Jon Nicholls, Martin Hargreaves, Graham Sollars, Loreen Shelford, Trevor Staniforth and Sarah-Louise Cakebread. Sam Toseland also attends PCC meetings as the Children and Families Worker. Jon has come to the end of his term serving on the PCC this year and has decided to step down.

The PCC meets bi-monthly throughout the year to discuss regular topics in the life of our church, including church mission, finance, safeguarding and the upkeep of the church building. During the last year sub-committees have also worked on particular events such as the Weekend at Home, the Village Show and the 800 Year Celebration.

Discussions have continued to take place during the last year on our response as a church to the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) consultation. Two joint meetings have taken place with All Saints PCC and St Mary's to discuss the changes proposed in the Church of England and both PCC's have agreed resolutions in response to these changes.

Please give thanks for everyone who has served on the PCC and the different gifts that the group brings to the life of our church. Pray that we would make wise, gospel led decisions about the life and mission of our church.

Diane Sollars, PCC Secretary

Building and Fabric report

It has again been so good to see the church building used widely during the past year for so many different activities throughout the week. Again for this last year there is not a huge amount to actually report on in terms of structural work or repairs in the church building. Most the activities have centred around maintenance and keeping things spick and span. I am very thankful to all those who work on the cleaning rota, maintaining the churchyard and to those who help with the DIY cleaning mornings twice a year.

Since the porch doors were repaired and a lock fitted we have thankfully had no cases of antisocial behaviour or vandalism so let's hope this continues to be the case.

The ageing gas heating system has limped on through another winter and just about keeps the building warm enough. We are looking at various options for replacing the heating system in line with new energy regulations, DAC permissions, installation and running costs etc. Nothing imminent but the process has started.

James, the Church Wardens and I have had further discussions with our architect David Llewellyn on reordering of the space inside the church building and various options will be considered and further developed after we receive a report of options from David.

I am conscious that I keep saying this, but we do need to explore whether there might be opportunities for accessing a wider base of financial support for the church building from across the village and to seek potential grants that help to offset the considerable costs that are coming down the road ahead. This is particularly important at a time when we are facing roof, stonework repairs, new heating and internal reordering. If anybody feels they have the skills and energy to drive this, please let James know!

We are truly blessed with a lovely welcoming and versatile church building that is used by so many groups throughout the week and for worshipping on a Sunday. Please pray that in the future others can continue to bring the life changing Gospel message to people of all ages in a building where this has been happening for the last 800 years.

Dudley Ferdinando

Churchyard



It's a lovely sunny warm afternoon in April and I am cutting the grass at the front of the building. The mower is making light work of the grass when a lady comes up the path and looks to talk to me. Stopping the mower so we could speak, she smiles and kindly tells me, that the Churchyard is beautifully maintained and a joy to visit.

I hope that many people think that, and it is a real pleasure to be a very small part of the team that work in the Churchyard. Of course we must thank Lesley Death'e who continues to spend so much time (almost daily now) caring for the whole area keeping things looking so good and she is always happy to talk to those who visit.

Apart from the actual "gardening" aspect of the Churchyard, Lesley can also be seen cleaning gates, sweeping the mud and dirt away on the road at the front. She also very sadly, has to

regularly clear away rubbish and bottles from the hedges.

Over the winter we tried planting a number of new bulbs of Narcissi, Bluebell, Crocus and Snowdrops. We have had a modicum of success especially in front of the church and plan to try again this autumn. We have split some of the clumps of snowdrops and moved to other areas. I hope this spring you could not have failed to have seen the incredible display of Primroses around many graves on the Eastern side of the yard.

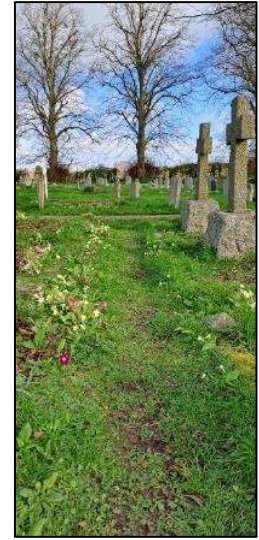


Keeping the grass area cut at the front of the church means that through the better days of Spring, Summer and Autumn the area can be used on a Sunday as a pleasant place to serve Tea and coffee after the services. On wedding days it's a great area to spend time catching up with friends and family.

One issue that is difficult to manage is plastic. Unfortunately plastic flowers and gifts on graves become very brittle in the sun over a time and then break when the council cut the main grass. Pieces end up everywhere and do not biodegrade, causing problems for the wildlife.

For later this year we will be looking at bringing in some new plants to compliment more established areas of the Churchyard. While we do have natural plants for the insects we would like to increase summer flowering plants to help further attract the bees and butterflies. Recently we managed to rescue some discarded

plants from the Green Bin and these are now thriving within the area.



Graham Sollars

Financial Review

As can be seen from the accounts, 2023 overall was a stable year financially with a small decrease in our overall funds from £20,479 to £19,309. (Income for the year was £78,940 and expenditure was £80,111.) The fact there was such a small overspend was due to a number of one-off items which are unlikely to be repeated in 2024. These included two legacies totalling £3,000, a number of generous one-off donations, and a high level of fees paid for funerals etc. We were also fortunate, for the second year running, not to have any major repair costs.

Clearly, we cannot expect a repeat of that in 2024, and we will also see a rise of over £2,000 in our parish share payment to the diocese, as well as a rise (of the order of £1,500) in our gas/electricity charges because we are at the end of 4-year contracts where power has been supplied to us at a rate much lower than is currently charged. Taking everything into account, if there is no increase in overall giving, we will have, in 2024, a deficit of the order of £10,000, which is approximately half our current funds, and clearly that is not a sustainable position.

Looking at the situation on a monthly basis, our monthly expenditure will be about £7,000, of which approximately £1,000 will come from the tax reclaim, and £100 or £200 from statutory fees for funerals and weddings. This means we need to have a monthly income of almost £6,000, and that assumes there are no major building repairs necessary. Currently we have just over 40 individuals/families contributing £4,400 each month, so it is clear that what we need is more people giving and people giving more!

Without a material increase in overall giving it may be necessary to consider reducing the PCC's donations to other charities, which are currently helping the gospel to be known to people locally, nationally and in Valencia, but we should pray, and take action, to ensure that any reductions are not needed.

Brian Simister

All Saints Church Riseley Accounts 2023

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

INCOME	2023	2022	
		UNRESTRICTED	DESIGNATED
GIVING	57,675	57,551	5,000
GRANTS		2,279	
FEES	4,141	2,989	
TAX RECLAIM	13,855	11,759	
INTEREST ETC	269	49	
LEGACY	3,000		
TOTAL INCOME	78,940	74,627	5,000
EXPENDITURE			
PARISH SHARE	52,174	51,278	
VICARS EXP	1,507	1,575	
INSUR/UTILITIES	4,265	3,740	
ROOTS & SHOOTS	408	157	
OUTREACH	1,456	2,365	
DONATION	6,634	6,884	
NORTH BEDS YOUTH TRUST	8,900		7,800
BUILDING MAINT	1,923	2,491	
MUSIC	770	765	
SECRETARIAL	340	367	
MISC	1,734	1,456	
EQUIPMENT		1,182	
TOTAL SPENDING	80,111	72,260	7,800
SURPLUS YEAR	(1,171)	2,367	(2,800)

Financial Review

ALL SAINTS CHURCH RISELEY

	2023	2022
Surplus for the period	(1,171)	(433)
Balance brought forward (unrestricted)	14,080	11,712
Balance brought forward (designated)	6,400	9,200
	<hr/>	
PCC Funds 31 Dec	19,309	20,479

BALANCE SHEET 31 DECEMBER 2022

ASSETS/LIABILITIES	2023	2022
FUNDS AT NATWEST BANK	19,174	20,334
CASH IN HAND	135	145
	<hr/>	
TOTAL ASSETS	19,309	20,479

ALL SAINTS CHURCH RISELEY

Notes to the accounts

- 1) These accounts have been produced on a cash basis
- 2) In addition to the assets shown in the balance sheet, the Diocese held assets on behalf of the PCC to the value of £1,989.27 being 88 shares in Diocese Deposit Fund and a further £1,519.30 in a bank deposit account.
- 3) Unrestricted donations totalling £6,634 shown in the accounts was made up as follows

Crosslinks	2,004
CPAS	600
Children's Society	300
Festive	1,500
Church Society	200
Stables	500
Faith in Kids	400
Food Bank	300
Beds & Herts Trust	40
Rector's Discretionary Fund	700
Evangelical Alliance	90
	<hr/>
	6,634

- 4) £1,250 of the tax reclaim was designated income. A donation of £8,900 was paid to North Bedfordshire Christian Youth Trust of which £7,650 was from our Designated Funds. Currently no Designated Funds are held.

Agreed by PCC on 5/2/2024

Rector of All Saints Church

James Isaacs

Honorary Treasurer

Brian Simister

Honorary Examiner

Heather Shelton

Electoral Roll

Electoral Roll

The number on the Electoral Roll for the 2024 Annual Parochial Church Meeting is 87. The latest revision includes 5 additions and 1 deletion.

We give thanks to God that All Saints continues to grow in numbers, with a good many young people regularly attending.

Hugh Staniforth is the Electoral Roll Officer and an application for membership can be made at any time.

Hugh Staniforth

Administrative Information

This section provides the administrative information for All Saints Church, Riseley which together with St Mary's Church, Bletsoe form the Benefice of Riseley with Bletsoe.

Church information

Church address	All Saints Church Riseley Church Lane Riseley Bedford MK44 1ER
Correspondence address	16 Church Lane Riseley Bedford MK44 1ER Tel: 01234 708234 email: allsaintsriseley@gmail.com
Website	https://allsaintsriseley.org/

Key personnel

Rector	Revd James Isaacs
Readers:	Lynda Simister
Church Wardens:	Richard Carter elected 2018 Kathryn Staniforth elected 2022
Treasurer:	Brian Simister
PCC Secretary:	Diane Sollars elected 2018
Children and Families Worker	Sam Toseland
Deanery Synod	Brian Simister elected 2019 Lynda Simister elected 2019
Honorary Examiner	Heather Shelton
Banker	National Westminster Bank plc

PCC members

Loreen Shelford	2021 – 2024
Mark Eddon	2022 – 2025
Martin Hargreaves	2022 – 2025
Dave Sheffield	2022 – 2025
Sarah-Louise Cakebread	2023 - 2026
Graham Sollars	2023 - 2026
Trevor Staniforth	2023 - 2026

Sharnbrook Deanery Synod



Meetings

We held four synod meetings and were addressed by our new curates, and the Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust, the Diocesan Racial Justice Action Group, Bishop Richard and the Diocesan Giving Advisor (Kate Ford). A Deanery Quiet Day on 'The Kingdom of God' was held in October.

Deanery Mission Support & Strategic Plan

This was discussed, finalised and agreed at the June meeting and presented to Bishop Richard and Archdeacon Dave.

Work with Children, Young People and Families

With the help of the Resources Cupboard and resources from the Growing Faith Foundation and Verulam House Trust, this work has been extended and developed. Please do ask if you would value help or support in this area. A very successful launch of the Deanery Hub was held in November, run by Becky May of the Resources Cupboard and addressed by Bishop Jane.

Changes of People in 2023

We were pleased to welcome Revd Jes Salt as Priest-in-Charge of Milton Ernest, Pavenham and Thurleigh.

Revd Christine Clark retired as Assistant Rural Dean and we are very grateful to her for many years of faithful and cheerful support for people in the deanery. Revd Nick Munday has taken over from her as Assistant Rural Dean.

Keith Williams retired as Deanery Lay Chair and we are very grateful to him for his energetic work for the deanery, especially for the work with children and young people. We have a vacancy for a Lay Chair: please consider whether you might be called to this vital role.

Geraldine Skinner retired as Deanery Treasurer. Thanks to her for her many years of devoted service in this role. Stephen Hill of Felmersham has kindly replaced her.

Looking ahead, the deanery will be electing in May four lay and four clergy representatives to the Diocesan Synod to serve for three years. This is your opportunity to have input into the shape of the diocese over the coming years. Please consider whether you might be called to this role.

Parish Share

In 2023 the Deanery paid 83% of the share requested by the Diocese, leaving a shortfall of just over £90,000. This was average for Bedford Archdeaconry but well below the Diocese as a whole (91%). As a result, the Diocese is currently expecting to cut a stipendiary post from the deanery in the coming years. Many thanks to the 13 parishes (out of 25) who paid the request in full in 2023 and to those in the other parishes who are working hard to pay as much as possible. Please continue to be generous, reflecting our Lord's abundant generosity to us; and do seek help from Kate Ford (the Diocesan Giving Officer) if you need help to make easier the task of raising finances in these difficult times.

***Revd Nick Munday
Assistant Rural Dean***

March 2024

Safeguarding

The care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults in our Church family is the responsibility of all who participate in the life of the church.

If as a church we follow the guidelines below, we will be working towards promoting a safer environment and culture for everyone.

- Safely recruit and support all those with any responsibility related to children and vulnerable adults.
- Respond promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation.
- Care pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse or other affected persons.
- Care pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns/allegations of abuse and other affected persons.
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk.

If you do have any concerns, that someone you know is at risk of, or is being abused or presents a risk to others, please seek advice from the parish safeguarding officer, Lynda Simister, Revd James Isaacs or the Diocesan safeguarding officer Jeremy Hunt. If there is immediate risk or danger, please contact the police on 999.

Contact details are displayed in the church on the safeguarding posters and on our website.

We are pleased to say that we have not had any safeguarding incidents to report in the last year.

Please pray that All Saints will indeed be a safe place for everyone but if there are any issues that they will be dealt with sensitivity following all the correct guidelines.

Lynda Simister, Safeguarding Officer

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is simply sharing the love of God with one another with encouragement and support and by showing practical concern. We can offer to be a listening ear and to pray with someone, to visit someone or to offer help in other practical ways. Most needs are met informally and spontaneously through existing relationships that follow naturally by our worship together, house groups and other church meetings/groups.

With the help of the church family, the pastoral care team have been able to provide additional help in the form of meal rotas and lifts to medical appointments at doctors surgeries and hospitals.

Kathryn Staniforth

Young People

Roots, Shoots & Fruits



Our Sunday groups for ages 0-14 have been looking at the same things as the adults have in Services for the past 6 months. This means that when families talk together later that day and, in the week, they will have all been learning the same wonderful truths from God's Word. The children have enjoyed creative games, crafts, activity prayers, delving into God's Word, and illustrations, which all help point to the main message of the day.

We benefitted from some amazing training

in February from Ed Drew on behalf of Faith in Kids. We learnt that we can only do our best and to enjoy it, that we're on this teaching journey with their parents, and to focus on the one Big Idea from Scripture. I think I can safely say that all the team found this encouraging and

insightful as we help our children and young people grow in their faith, knowledge of Jesus, love of Jesus and His Church and peer evangelise.



I am incredibly grateful for the team, who give up their time to prepare and serve on Sundays once a month, it is a sacrifice, but one that we can truly say is worth it as we see our children and young people loving Jesus. If you would like to be part of our amazing team, please do come and speak to me!



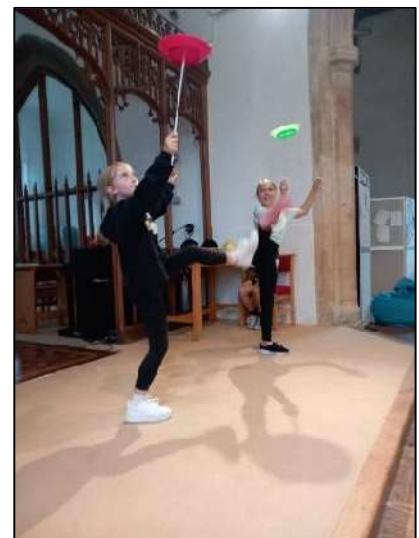
Sam Toseland

Youth Club



We meet every other Friday evening in the church between 6:45 and 8pm and all young people in school years 4 to 8 (8 to 13 year-olds) are welcome. We begin with a short bible talk and this year we have covered the Fruit of the Spirit, Genesis (Creation to Abraham) and Peter.

We then play games, do activities, make crafts etc, including in the last year, a design your own smoothie, build a tower out of newspaper, racing homemade boats on a paddling pool, circus skills, board games, blind obstacle course, end of term BBQ, outdoor games, many games of Mafia, and so on.



Young People

Praise God for:

- The steady growth in numbers attending. We now regularly get more than 10 coming to each session.
- The lovely atmosphere we have and building relationships.
- The chance to simply share the gospel message.
- The small team of leaders who faithfully turn up.

Pray for:

- That the young people will receive and respond to the gospel message.
- More leaders, especially with the growth in numbers.
- The young people who are too old for youth club attending other church groups such as Soul, Fruits and Our Voice.

Dave Sheffield

Junior Jivers



The Thursday term-time morning meet continues to be a joy for all. We have seen relationship growth and opportunities to share, witness, and encourage faith. We are incredibly blessed and thankful to God for the team! Junior Jivers couldn't happen without the dedicated Church family coming in to help with relational work, refreshments and turning the church into a welcoming session. Thanks to some very hard work behind the scenes, we have an easier, safer and more concise selection of toys for the children 😊



We have been able to present the beauty of God's Word and love through music, story, craft and activities – Looking at the weather, transport, animals, and God's Good gifts! There has been love and intention as we chat in stay and play, deepened friendships, support to parents and carers, and strengthened ties with other family church events.

We covet your prayers that all these things would be for God's glory and praise. We have been reaching numbers of 30 children on occasion, and so we are prayerful for more help on the team, building those bridges with mums, carers, dads and the children - please do ask us if you could help even if just monthly/once in 6 weeks to be part of this exciting work.



Julia Pullin, Monica Isaacs, Sally Eddon & Sam Toseland

Soul



This year in SOUL we have seen a few changes. We have welcomed some new faces and have changed the format a bit. Whilst an important part of each session is to play games, chat and have fun with a marshmallow topped hot chocolate, the Bible study is the main focus of every evening. It has been really great to hear some really honest and mature discussion this year. Everyone has really enjoyed the VOX series from Christianity Explored Ministries. The series follows a group of teens over a week where they live together, cook, clean and camp whilst being set challenges and discussion points. Whilst we all had a firm favourite; it was encouraging to see a diverse group of teens coming together and talking about Jesus. It really helped our group feel comfortable to say what they felt. Our group also felt we should contact the producers and suggest we should be the participants in the next series!

A prayer point for SOUL would be that others are encouraged to join and feel comfortable to share with the group.

Jamie Wyatt

“321 Blast Off” All Saints Holiday Club 2024



Our Holiday Club this year was such a blessing. It was hard work for the wonderful team, but a sacrifice that will not only build up our Church children and families, but also be a witness to the village - being part of God's Family is amazing.

As we looked into 3,2,1 adapted from Speak Life material, we saw that Jesus is part of God's loving 3, that Captain Adam and Captain Jesus are our 2 representatives, but that we can be 1 with Captain Jesus, set free from sin, darkness and death – forever.

What a joy to share this with many returning children from last year, from families that come to Junior Jivers and from friendships made at the school gate. What a joy to sing together, play hilarious games, benefit from some brilliant crafts and décor (Thank you God for

Julia), grow as a team, meet and chat with parents, and sit under the wonder of God's grace and goodness. We looked forward to more blessing as we celebrate the culmination of the Club with an All Age Service, BBQ and rocket launch that all the families that attended are invited.

There is absolutely nothing better you could be doing in the Easter holidays than being part of ASHC, join us next year week beginning 14 April 2025, for yeeeeehaaaaaa Wild West in the Book of Ruth!



Sam Toseland

Fellowship

Prayer Meeting



Yes, there is more than one option for us to join together in prayer each month! We have a choice of the second Wednesday of the month at 8pm in the vicarage extension and on the fourth Wednesday at 11am inside All Saints Church, or you could attend both if you wish.

We have been to both options and find them a relaxed way of joining a group who truly believe in the power of prayer, as Paul wrote in his letter to the Hebrews - Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
Hebrews 4 :16

To pray in Jesus' name is to trust the saving work of the Lord Jesus as the sole ground of our access to God, and we feel it is a privilege to meet together in prayer.

The time starts with a reading from the bible after which we pray either openly or in our hearts as the word inspires us. Then we explore needs both globally and locally in prayer. It can be a time of sharing concerns for ourselves and others enabling us to continue praying fruitfully during the week. We see many answers to prayer, nothing is too great for our God. The growing congregation with many young families is testament to an answer to our prayers. Please come and join us, we would love to see the prayer meetings grow as well.

John & Sue Walker

Homegroups

Homegroups provide a "home within a home" at All Saints. As small groups of Christians who regularly come together to study God's word and pray for one another, they offer an opportunity to develop deeper friendship and fellowship than our Sunday morning meetings alone usually afford. In many ways, homegroups are the 'front-line' for discipling Christians, offering pastoral care to one another and equipping them to be sent out as stronger believers.

Over this past year, the homegroups have worked their way through the final chapters of Luke's gospel, the Growing on the Frontline course, produced by the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity and listened to a series of talks from the book of Revelation. These series have often (but not always) dovetailed with our sermon series, allowing people the chance to explore and apply what we have been thinking about on a Sunday in a more personal and profound way.

We currently have seven different homegroups that meet fortnightly across the benefice on different days and at different times. These are friendly and open groups who are always up for welcoming new members. If you are not yet part of a homegroup and would like to join one, please speak to James for more information.

Please give thanks for the many ways which our homegroups help us as Christians to serve and equip one another. Pray too for the homegroups as they meet this coming year, that they would continue to help us in our discipleship as followers of Jesus.

James Isaacs

Coffee Morning Services

I wonder what you do on the second Wednesday of every month at 10.30am?

Well, following my retirement, I was free to finally 'check out' the monthly Coffee Morning Service at Church and so with a bit of encouragement from the regular pianist off I went!

Fellowship

It turns out that there is a smallish group of folk who meet regularly for a short service up in the sanctuary, involving a few traditional hymns, a Bible reading and a short talk from James.

What I've come to like about it is:

- 1) It's great to meet up with others and get to know them better
 - 2) It's great to know I'm not the youngest attending - Matthew Pullin is only 2!
 - 3) It's great to get 'stuck into' a couple of rousing hymns!
 - 4) It's great to hear a bit more about Jesus
- &...
- 5) It's seriously great to have scones and cake galore after the service!! (Thanks always due to Margaret, Sue & Judy)

So, if you are reading this and you are able to get to All Saints @1030 on the 2nd Wednesday of the month..... particularly if you are happy to forget about your waistline once a month ... then you've really got to come and join in!!

Mark Eddon

Brook House Services



Aging in the Bible is said to be a sign of experience (I'm certainly hanging on to that!) and God promises His continued love and concern for the elderly.

"Even to your old age and grey hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you." (Isaiah 46:4).

A regular small group of us from All Saints join James for the monthly Brook House Service. A good number of residents enjoy a short, accessible talk from James, some prayers and of course some well-known hymns which are generally sung with gusto! Many of the residents have complex health needs and

are generally quite frail, but it is always such a joy and encouragement to spend time with them, get to know them and to hear about their varied and interesting life-stories - they are great fun to spend time with!

Although our bodies weaken, the spirit is still capable of expansion, renewal and even new birth in old age. In spite of changes, losses and chronic health conditions, the elderly can continue to cultivate their relationship with God and so it's really important that we as a church stay connected and that's what we hope and strive to do once a month with the wonderful support of the Brook House staff (particularly Sharon) who give the All Saints team such a warm welcome. Please continue to pray for the residents of Brook House as we share the love and hope of Christ with them through the year.

If you're ever free at 11:15 on the third Thursday of the month, why not come and join us at Brook House for the short service - it's certain to put a smile on your face and lift your spirits!

Sally Eddon

Music

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, with songs, hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3v16)

Our heavenly Father repeatedly invites us as his children, to find our greatest joy in Him and gives us the gracious gift of worship. Part of expressing that joy and worship is through music and songs which is a great privilege and honour for all of us in the Christian life to partake in. Music and singing aid us in our response to our amazing God

Fellowship

and to one another. They help unite us and express our love and thankfulness to God, as we each have a great deal to be thankful to God for, even in the most challenging of situations, and every one of us has a voice, therefore we can all sing thanks to Him. In singing and playing together we celebrate who God is and all the great things He has done for us, and we express the truths of God's Word. We come before the Lord with heartfelt praise to give glory to God and experience his love anew. We celebrate how God changes our lives and we are challenged to keep our worship fresh and moving forward with Christ. With our focus being on Jesus, our worship through music and songs enables us to deepen our relationship with our Saviour and with one another, and encourage one another to turn and look to Jesus too.

As a church music group, we aim to create a strong and clear lead to enable the congregation to sing together in response to our amazing God's goodness and grace, to ultimately glorify Him in obedience to His Word. A great amount of time, prayer and effort goes into the planning and preparation of the songs chosen for the different services, ensuring relevance to the Scriptures and themes each week as well as considering a balance of styles for all, across the different services over time. We are extremely thankful to God to have a committed, talented, faithful, and passionate music group at All Saints. It is a privilege to serve our amazing God in leading the music worship here and to be a part of this fabulous team.

Many things happen behind the scenes in relation to the music at All Saints from regular weekly services to additional 'special events' throughout the year, with practises, planning, coordinating music and people, listening to and learning new songs, writing out music and words so all can join in, keeping records of songs we have sung, sorting out lyrics for song sheets, to name just a few, and we are so thankful to our great sustainer and provider God for enabling us to serve Him and the church family in this way. We also give thanks for the committed sound team who graciously turn up every week too and have the thankless task of getting the technical equipment to behave! We are also extremely grateful for those in our church family who have given practical support and encouragement in various forms along the way.

As we face different individual challenges and excitements, now and in the future, we praise God for all He has provided so far and give thanks we are safe in the knowledge that we serve a gracious, loving, and righteous God. We continue to look to Him and pray for His leading for the future and trust in His plan for us all.

*"Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!
Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous works among all the peoples!
For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised." (Psalm 96 1-4)*

Jo Nicholls & Sally Eddon

Weekend at Home

Riseley Primary School Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October 2023

So it was that time again - time for a weekend together as a church family! A fun, relaxing time was promised, together with the aim of all participants being spiritually refreshed.

A guest speaker was booked and the planning team (James, Kathryn, Diane and Graham) met and.... planned! Riseley C of E primary school was the selected venue. The All Saints Church family together with St Mary's were all invited and encouraged to sign up. The music group worked away at preparing/practising the songs for the day, with the normal humping and setting up of their kit the night before.

So, finally Saturday 7th October dawned and from 0900 the 70 enthusiastic attendees (56 adults and 14 children) started arriving, happily starting the day over a welcome coffee.

The news had already broken that our guest speaker was to be Hugh Palmer, the recently retired ex-Rector of All Souls, Langham Place. Hugh came along with his wife Clare (and I for one just had to just block out the fact that he was a Brighton & Hove Albion supporter!) The theme of the weekend to get to grips with was to be the rather daunting topic 'The A to Z of the Christian Life'.

Fellowship

Another huge help on the day was the very generous support of Rachel Went from St Neots Evangelical Church, who as a worker for the Brave Trust, a Christian schools' work charity, had agreed to lead the All Saints childrens' work/activities for the day.

There were 3 hour long 'sessions' during the course of the day each including collective worship and a talk from Hugh. The talks were all based on Romans 8 ...

1) Under New Management (v1-11)

This was basically incredibly encouraging as we heard good news for weak Christians (there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus) and more good news for dying Christians (one day you'll hear I'm dead, but don't believe it as I'll be more alive than ever before - D L Moody)!

2) A New Identity (v12-17)

We are Debtors as we didn't 'earn' our salvation, but now, despite our ongoing battles with our sinful nature, we always need to remember we are adopted children of God and we have the assurance that we are co-heirs with Christ!

3) Facing Hard Knocks (v18-27)

There are plenty of groans in our lives right now, but we've been promised Glory, so let's resolve to ensure our future Glory infects our current groaning. We should be excited, we should persevere and whilst we don't always know what to pray for, the Spirit of God intercedes for us.

These talks were all incredibly clear, enlightening, reassuring and galvanising!

The youngsters also returned from their activities with lots of enthusiasm to tell us all about what they'd been up too.

And whilst the talks were obviously key to the day, so too was all the downtime during which we had a lot of fun together... lots of chatting and getting to know each other better, enjoying a typically challenging and entertaining quiz from Kathryn (still a few disputed answers of course!!) and partaking in a serious amount of eating... whether coffee and biscuits, the big fish/sausage and chips meal or the unending supply of cakes! Somehow, it was already 4.30pm and all that remained was the communal packing up. Another great annual home away day... but it was not yet totally all over as the next day over 80 packed I into All Saints for a great joint service including a final talk from Hugh... and yes, more eating and drinking with a stay behind bring and share meal, prepared and coordinated by our 'regular' team of ladies. Much further chat through mouthfuls of bread, cheese and plenty of puddings!

The last talk was entitled 'More than Conquerers' based on the last part of Romans 8 (v28-39). *'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose' (v28)...* that's God's wonderful promise for us, His purpose cannot be thwarted, He's 'sorted' the plan - we can be totally confident in God - He's totally invested in getting us to Glory and our future is secure in Him! The annual Weekend at Home Away Day was over for another year. We had a lot of fun and relaxing.... and we were seriously fed and watered, both practically and in the uplifting and encouraging message of the positivity of the A to Z of the Christian Life.

See you all at the next one, on Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 October 2024... get it in your diary - don't miss it!

Mark Eddon

Bell Ringing

The bell-ringers are still going strong with the four of us this last year ringing for services every other week plus special services as they arise plus weddings as they come along when we have imported ringers to make up the full ring of six.

In answer to your prayers, we now three beginners who are doing very well and will soon be joining us on a Sunday working towards being able to ring all six bells before too long.

Fellowship

Please pray us all that we will be able to ring for you all for a long time to come.

We are always looking for new ringers to add to our merry band. If you are interested, please make contact with one of us and you will be made most welcome to come see us ringing and to have a go and then given full tuition to continue to become an able ringer.

If people are interest in seeing the bells this can be arranged at a suitable time to all.

Practice night Tuesday evening 7.30 pm to 9 pm

Ringing 1st and 3rd Sundays 9.45 am ready for the service.

David Shaw, Tower Captain

Ladies Lunch



On the second Friday of the month, at 12.30, a group of ladies meet for lunch at The Fox and Hounds. Numbers are variable but there are 24 ladies who have attended on several occasions but each month we have about 12 attendees. Below are comments made by people who came in April.

"A good time to catch up with friends from church and get to know new people."

"a time to exchange views (with total respect) complaints of too few traditional hymns. The joy of meeting our children. The future of our church".

"A lovely time spent with ladies who I don't normally have the chance to talk to in church, along with great food!"

"Good chance to catch up with ladies

who I haven't seen at church as I don't live in the village".

"a good opportunity to chat to friends."

"Lovely to talk to different friends from church."

"Great chance to relax with friends and good food".

As part of our church family, we aim to show love and care for one another help us Lord to do that when we meet, help us to shine for you and bring glory to your name.



Lynda Simister

Men's Group



The Men's Group has seen another busy year of social and community activities both inside and outside of the village. The Group was formed many years ago and we have all aged significantly since its formation around 2005! Most of the group are retired from paid work but busy volunteering in different capacities.

The format and structure of the group has remained the same since its formation. The primary purpose is to build genuine friendships between men both inside and outside of All Saints. Since the start, we have met up roughly once a month for a range of social and community-based activities. Meeting

together as a group of Christians and non-Christians gives us plenty of opportunities to gently explore and share what we believe. As such the group is very much appreciated by lots of people and strong friendships have been

Fellowship

forged which I believe is particularly important between men who might find it more difficult than women to be open and sociable!

As the group gets older and some individuals take on caring responsibilities, we are not all able to do the same things we may have done previously. We are looking for new ways of enabling everybody to still join in.

Walks, cycling, pub meals, visits, music nights, discussion evenings and helping out with village events is the mainstay of what we get up to.

Since many of the group are now retired, most are involved in volunteering work with charities and local organisations. We have four of the group who drive the Villager Community Bus! We are all open and keen to help others who are in need of practical help and support.

Prayer requests would be for us to keep running a programme that is enjoyable, useful to others and that provides an environment where we all feel comfortable exploring more about the Christian faith and that we have the opportunities to share living as a Christians in today's world.

Dudley Ferdinando

Bus Stop Café

"I really like going there and having somewhere to spend time with my friends. I love the new air hockey table and pool table." (Josh Cooper year 7)

The sessions are held every Thursday afternoon during school term time between 3.30 and 5.00pm for young people as they return to the village from secondary school. A wide range of indoor and outdoor activities are available with music, food/drink in a safe space to 'chill' after school. 35 sessions were held in 2023 with over 50 different young people attending, mainly year 7 and 8. but year 6 were invited to attend after summer half-term.

There are 12 volunteers on a rota who run the sessions, 9 of whom are members of the Church. It is a great opportunity to demonstrate God's love in the community and get to know some of the young people in the village. Please talk to one of the team if you are able to help.

Bus Stop Cafe was launched in January 2023 as a partnership between All Saints Church, Riseley Parish Church and Riseley Children's Centre and Community Hub – with each providing funds and support. The Hub has provided all the necessary policies, processes, admin support, insurance and DBS clearance for volunteers.

Initially run as a pilot, Bus Stop Cafe is successfully meeting a need and the PCC has continued to support it in 2024. Please pray for this important service and mission opportunity.

Team - James and Monica Isaacs, Keith and Julie Haynes, Barry and Emily Hermon, Loreen Shelford (Safeguarding), Tracey Thomas (Admin), Catherine Veitch, Martyn Wady, Rachel White, Keith Williams, Os Worts, Zak Worts

Keith Williams

Serving one another

Refreshments

At the time of writing this report, with the weather improving, we can look forward serving outside in the sunshine once again in the coming weeks.

We have been serving a lot more tea and coffee recently as the congregation increases which is great to see. Serving has been a bit chaotic at times with the increased numbers, endeavouring to serve as quickly as possible is a challenge, so hopefully everyone gets a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit eventually if they can compete with the children!

We have been blessed to have a great team of people to make tea and coffee every Sunday this past year. The introduction of disposable paper cups has made the task much simpler, no more washing up!

Fellowship

We will welcome any additional volunteers who would like to join the rota. Currently, it requires serving tea, coffee and biscuits approximately every six weeks

Our thanks to everyone for their support

Robin & Jane Rhodes

Cleaning

Once again, I would like to thank all those who give up their time and energy to the very important job of keeping our church clean and tidy. The building is very well used in the service of God and our community and it is welcoming to enter a clean and tidy church for these occasions.

We have a rota which requires us to “do the housework” about one week in six or seven, for a couple of hours on a Friday or Saturday to make sure the church is welcoming on the Sunday! We usually work in pairs. The more the merrier though and we would welcome more volunteers to help anytime.

We have a “deep” clean twice a year which is useful for bigger jobs and those there isn’t time for every week. Please do attend even if you can’t commit to a more regular slot.

We thank God for our church, community and all the people who contribute in many ways.

Alison Blanchard

Gingerbread Event



All Saints Gingerbread event has become very popular, bringing families together over a Christmas afternoon. Last year was no exception with 20 families signing up and filling the Church. The event involves every family decorating a gingerbread house with fun games and activities too, some turning out to be quite competitive!

The afternoon also involved an interactive Bible talk led by Sam which was well received (partly due to lots of sweets being involved!). This event also brings the opportunity of good conversations and getting to know others, some from outside the church family.

Please pray that this festive event would continue to flourish and friendships made would lead to us being able to share more of the true meaning of Christmas and the joy and good news it brings us all.

The Hargreaves

Fellowship

Snapshots of Church Fellowship



Mauddy Thursday Supper



Communion with the Bishop of Ebsfleet



Good Friday Crafts



Church Vision Morning



Remembrance Sharnbrook Rugby Club



Christingle

Training and Development

Hope Explored and Christianity Explored



It's been a joy to run both the Hope Explored and Christianity Explored courses over this past year. These have provided an opportunity for people to come with their questions and dig a bit deeper into the claims of the Christian faith. As we have done this, it has been as exciting as ever, as once again people have encountered Jesus through his word as we have read through the gospel of Mark together. A number of people have made (renewed) commitments to want to follow Jesus as a result, with others having simply grown stronger in their faith - praise God!

Do please pray for those who have been on the courses this year, that they would continue to grow in their knowledge and love of Jesus.

Do consider who you could invite to come on one of our courses that we'll be running this coming year.

Do you have questions, would you like to join a Hope Explored course? Please contact James Isaacs to find out more.

Riseley Primary School



It's been another hectic year at our primary school with new staff joining us, many different activities for the children along with the second year of the implementation of our new curriculum. Last year for the first time

we had a mobile swimming pool on site for two weeks which meant that as well as fulfilling the requirements for the older children (without the costs of and time taken in travelling) the younger children were also able to participate. It was such a success that its being repeated this year.



Our Values Tree

In February the phone call came from Ofsted but this was a false start since it was postponed the next day due to the lead inspector's illness. The inspection eventually took place at the beginning of March. This was the first full inspection since 2017 when we were still a Lower School and the first under the more demanding framework which was introduced in 2019. We were delighted to be graded as good with early years graded as outstanding. This is a testament to the vision, work and efforts of Leigh Pointon and the whole team. Particular congratulations to Alex Brown, Early Years lead and her team. The inspectors were so impressed that they told governors that the work in Early Years should be shared with other schools. Please give thanks for Leigh, the Senior Leadership Team and all the staff.



Our Curriculum display

The inspectors have made recommendations on how we can develop further and the team will be working on those to ensure our children have the best education and personal development we can provide.

Please give thanks for our team of governors. The responsibilities of governors seem to increase each year. Our foundation governors are - James, Loreen, Jamie, Samantha, Richard and Catherine. We are very grateful for all they do along with our other governors.

We are also thankful for the continued close relationship between All Saints and the school. Give thanks for James, Lynda and Sam for leading assemblies and for Sam and her team in running Aslan club.

A major area for prayer this year is finance. Balancing the books, without impacting on the education of our children presents more and more challenges each year and places continued stress on the leadership of the school. Please pray for wisdom on this.



Reading Challenge

Please continue to pray for the whole school community- staff, children, parents and governors that they will all flourish fully in life and learning.

Richard Carter & Catherine Veitch

Mission Support

Milsons – Valencia, Spain

Julian and Nicky Milson are missionaries in Valencia, Spain, along with Jemima (18) and Theo (16) their children. They have now been in Valencia for six years.

Julian is the Rector of the Anglican Church in Valencia which is part of the Reformed Episcopal Church of Spain. There's one Bishop (who is technically under the Archbishop of Canterbury) in Madrid and there are approximately 30 small congregations across the country. The Diocese of Spain works alongside the Church of England's Diocese in Europe.

They work alongside Chris and Rosy Redfearn who joined them in the Summer of 2022 with Chris acting as Julian's Curate. They had a baby boy in November and also have a two-year-old daughter. The French family (here with CMS Australia) are also members of the church family – their role in Spain is to run a Spanish language theological training course called MOCLAM which operates across Spain.

During the past year we have been able to introduce several new initiatives, largely because of the extra capacity we have since the Redfearns joined us:

Bibles

We bought new Bibles for the church at the beginning of 2023. It says something very important about us to have the expectation that people open up a Bible in our Sunday service. We firmly believe that where God's word is opened, there his voice is heard.

Prayer

Early last year we introduced a brief prayer meeting to pray together before the Sunday service. As yet it's just the missionaries who come along but we're hoping others will follow our example in due course.

English Club

In April we launched the English club every Wednesday. Nicky runs the club and prepares each session. The number of children has fluctuated but we have a core of around 14 who come most weeks. Every week we play, we read a biblical story, we sing, we have a snack and do a craft activity. We charge two euros per session, which more or less covers all costs.

Light Party

One of the things we hope to achieve through the English Club is to establish links with the families of the neighbourhood and to reach out to them. To help this happen, we have begun to introduce one-off events in the calendar to which we can invite the children and their families. The first of these events was in October when we had our Light Party, as an alternative to Halloween celebrations. It was a great success and there was a real party atmosphere. Many of the children of the English club came with their families, some Christians came from other churches and of many of the families of our church were also there. It was one of last year's highlights and we plan to repeat it this Autumn.

Lego Club

We have just started a Lego Club for 10–14-year-olds which we hope will become a bridge into our weekly Youth Group. We've started small (with 3 people) so please pray for more to come.

The Youth Group consistently has around 8 people coming along but we have been as many as 20 on occasion. Chris has taken over leading the group from Julian.

In December we had Christmas Carol services by candlelight. There were two services – one in English and one in Spanish. We also had a Gingerbread House making event and an All-Age service (on Christmas Eve) at which the

Mission Support

Children from the English Club sang a few songs they had learned. All of these events saw a good number of visitors and we were able to strengthen links with families in the area.

Please pray:

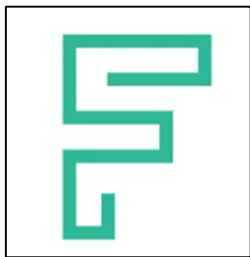
- For our plans to visit the UK this July (sadly not All Saints' this time round).
- The new Lego Club to grow.
- For our first Church Family Conference (in May) that the whole church family might be there.
- That our Gospel witness would produce fruit and links with local families would result in them coming along to church
- That our church family would make meeting together weekly a priority in their lives.
- Pray for Theo taking his iGCSEs in the Summer Term.
- Give thanks for all the gospel encouragements we have seen this year.

May we take this opportunity to thank you all for your prayerful support - it is a joy to partner with you in the gospel work here in Valencia.

Julian & Nicky Milson

Facebook: Iglesia Anglicana Valencia

Festive



Over the last year, Festive has seen significant growth in the core area of our work: the student network! We have gone from supporting around 450 sixth form and college students to over 750, representing just over 500 sixth form and colleges across England and Wales. We have been blown away by the courage that so many of these young people have to share the Gospel and live boldly for Jesus in some quite challenging environments. It is fantastic to hear each month of new Christian Unions starting up and the faithfulness of the Lord as we pray with and for these young people and see some incredible answers to prayer. For each young person we are praying for by name, writing to with encouragement and giving them the tools and resources to share the Gospel in their context, this means that thousands more young people are getting to hear about Jesus' saving grace!

As well as the student network, we have been working hard developing new resources to inspire and equip our students: growing a suite of resources around prayer (encouraging students to pray more for their friends and to pray together as a CU) and producing a podcast series, Beautiful Feet – watch this space! As we look to the year ahead, we are excited about launching this podcast, recruiting a new cohort of students (and some extra volunteers) over the summer and are prayerfully fundraising to bring on an additional staff member to keep up with the growing mission. On behalf of the team, thank you for your ongoing prayers and support.

Festive update

X: @festiveuk

Instagram: festiveuk

Facebook: Festive - FE & Sixth Form Initiative

www.festive.org.uk

The Stables Christian Centre

As many of you know, the Stables Christian Centre was established in 1984 by John and Ali Wood in buildings and the grounds of the Old Rectory in Bolnhurst. The Stables has continuously offered a positive and practical working experience to adults on the margins of society, in particular those with learning disabilities, mental health problems and ex-offenders. The Seed Sowers Project offers work-based experience in small caring groups to adults with various needs who find an ordinary workplace too difficult.



Packaging the preserves

This year it has been wonderful to be back in our routine of working with clients on a Tuesday and Thursday in the kitchen, craft room and out in the gardens and at Christmas our clients had a lot of fun at their respective get togethers and our Tuesday clients took home the personal picture frames they made in the last few weeks before Christmas. More recently Sharon has been teaching our clients some cooking skills and they have enjoyed making pizza, shepherds pie and other delicious dishes.

We welcomed lots of lovely people including many of the All Saints congregation at our Coffee Shops and at other events through the year including The Giddy Goat Summer Fayre and

Riseley Show and a special sale onsite at Christmas.

During 2023 we were excited to welcome two new Tuesday clients and we are continuing to work with our contacts to fill our other spare places with new faces who we hope will really benefit from working with us. Sadly in 2023, we also said goodbye to staff member Mark and another of our long-term clients.

We are all looking forward to seeing what the rest of this year brings with hope.

Please give thanks for the enjoyment we witness from our clients each week, for the facilities that we have, for the support we receive and for the staff and trustee team.

Please pray that further new clients will be found that will benefit from the project, that the staff team continue to be shining lights in all that they do and that we find sufficient financial provision to meet our ongoing and increasing project costs.

And please pray that God's presence will always be felt at The Stables and everyone involved will continue to honour Him in everything that happens at the Stables.



Potting Aconites

Our 2024 Coffee Shop afternoons start on Saturday 4th May from 2.00-4.30pm and will be held on the first Saturday afternoon of each month through to October. If you haven't been before, come and try some homemade cakes, or purchase produce and gifts created at the Stables. All proceeds support the work we do with our clients.

Karen Houck

