



**ST ANDREW'S**  
CHURCH • COBHAM

**2023**  
**ANNUAL**  
**REVIEW**

March 2024

## GREETINGS CARDS

As mentioned by Lynn Moreno in her report on Church Gate House on page 15, the following designs, including Easter Greetings cards, are available for sale in aid of Church funds. Please contact Elaine in the Parish Office, if you would like to place an order.



## EASTER CARDS



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## Contents

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| GREETINGS CARDS   | 2        |
| VISION STATEMENT  | 5        |
| THE CHURCH AND ITS MINISTRY                             | 5        |
| Vicar's Report  | 5        |
| Ministry through Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals        | 6        |
| Ministry to Cobham                                      | 6        |
| Final Thoughts  | 6        |
| St Andrew's Home Groups                                 | 7        |
| Life as Training Priests                                | 7        |
| Music Ministry  | 8        |
| CHURCH DEVELOPMENT PLAN                                 | 10       |
| Introduction  | 10       |
| "Buttoning-on Points"<br>Report                         | 10<br>10 |
| North West Cobham                                       | 11       |
| Increasing our Income Stream                            | 12       |
| FINANCE REPORT  | 12       |
| ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNICATIONS                       | 12       |
| Assets and Fabric                                       | 12       |
| Sacristan   | 13       |
| Garden of Remembrance                                   | 13       |
| Parish Office   | 13       |
| MyChurchSuite   | 13       |
| Church Gate House Welcome Area                          | 14       |
| Church Watching   | 14       |
| Cuppa & Chat  | 14       |
| Communications  | 14       |
| 'Church Noticeboard' published in the Go-Local Magazine | 14       |
| Website   | 14       |
| Next Steps  | 15       |
| Other communications                                    | 15       |
| Archivist   | 15       |
| Electoral Roll  | 15       |
| PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL                                | 16       |
| Membership  | 16       |
| The work of the Council in 2023                         | 16       |
| Deanery Synod   | 16       |
| PCC COMMITTEES  | 17       |
| Standing Committee                                      | 17       |
| Budget Committee  | 17       |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Churchgate House Committee                             | 17 |
| Facilities   | 17 |
| CGH Rental   | 17 |
| Marketing of CGH                                       | 17 |
| Booking via ChurchSuite                                | 18 |
| ECO Committee  | 18 |
| Faith and Social Action                                | 18 |
| Outward Giving Team                                    | 19 |
| Pastoral Committee                                     | 20 |
| Property Committee                                     | 20 |
| Safeguarding   | 22 |
| Policies and practice                                  | 22 |
| Safer Recruitment                                      | 22 |
| Training   | 22 |
| CHURCH ORGANISATIONS                                   | 22 |
| Bellringers  | 22 |
| Church Cleaning  | 23 |
| Church Flowers   | 23 |
| Church Gate House Welcome Area                         | 23 |
| Mothers' Union   | 23 |
| CHILDREN AND FAMILIES                                  | 24 |
| The Church's Work                                      | 24 |
| St Andrew's School                                     | 25 |
| Remembrance Sunday                                     | 25 |
| Christmas Fair   | 26 |
| Lantern Parade   | 26 |
| FAITH AND SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS                       | 26 |
| Oasis Childcare Trust                                  | 26 |
| Cobham Area Foodbank                                   | 26 |
| Garden Route Children's Trust                          | 27 |
| OM Himalayas (formerly OM Nepal)                       | 27 |
| Transforming Lives for Good                            | 28 |
| OTHER ACTIVITIES                                       | 28 |
| Christmas Lunch and Easter High Tea                    | 28 |
| Churches Together                                      | 30 |
| Elmbridge Multifaith Forum (Registered Charity 122962) | 30 |
| Spiritual Cinema                                       | 31 |
| Village Day  | 31 |
| PICTURES OF ST ANDREW'S SCHOOL ACTIVITIES              | 32 |

## VISION STATEMENT

### To Know, Glorify, and Make Christ known

The Vision of St Andrew's is to bring a broader, larger congregation to Christ; to nurture, feed and serve our congregation and community; and to apply our faith in our everyday lives.

St Andrew's continues to seek to be a Christian community through which all can come to know and accept God's love for them and reflect that love wherever they are.

## THE CHURCH AND ITS MINISTRY

### Vicar's Report

*Report by the Vicar, Revd Dr Mike Branscombe*

#### Parish Ministry without too many Covid interruptions

As I get ready to write this report each year, I take time to look back through my diary and get a sense of all that has happened over the months. For the first time since 2019 we have ministered to Cobham for a whole year without any serious restrictions imposed by Covid regulations. Other than contracting Covid myself in February and missing our Marriage Preparation Day, we have been able to offer worship, teaching and pastoral ministry freely in 2023.

#### New Initiatives in 2023

During the year we began a number of new ministries and activities, due in no small part to the energy and enthusiasm of our curates, Tori and Bryan, and the extra time available to Moni following the end of her Curate's training.

On Thursday January 19<sup>th</sup> we held our first "Cuppa and Chat" meeting in church between 1pm and 3pm. This place of welcome is an attempt to gather people for conversation, friendship and to combat social isolation. We provide tea and coffee, and Pret A Manger and Gail's Bakery provide us with sandwiches, cookies and pastries. There is no agenda for

this gathering, it is just a space where people may drop by for as long as they like to enjoy the gathered community. We often see a table with a game of Scrabble being enjoyed and as the year went on more people joined us week by week. Elmbridge CAN have also partnered with Cuppa and Chat joining with us to meet some of the refugees they serve and support locally.

On Saturday February 4<sup>th</sup> Tori facilitated a small group to participate in a new initiative of Guildford Diocese, the Leading Evangelism Learning Hub run jointly with the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS). This 18-month learning hub encourages churches to make faith sharing a natural part of the culture in parishes and church life. Through several day courses and evening meetings on Zoom, we have been encouraged to try new things and work on our understanding of how faith is most easily shared. Some of the things we have learned and tried during the year have become part of what we do month by month at St Andrew's. With more of the course to come in 2024 we will review its effectiveness for us next year.

On Thursday April 20<sup>th</sup> we offered a course called the Bereavement Journey. Bryan and Tori worked with a small team to offer this 6-week course to anyone who wanted to reflect on how we journey through grief. Those who

attended this course found great help and support and have formed a community of care for one another. The course will be offered again in 2024.

At Easter an opportunity arose for us to open the church to the local Ukrainian community, both long term residents and those displaced by war. With visiting clergy from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Britain, a service in Ukrainian took place and Easter customs associated with church and the blessing of special Easter foods were offered. It was very moving to see so many people gather for worship in the midst of such difficult circumstances and people were so very thankful to be in church and able to worship in their native language. After this initial success, we have made the church available on the third Sunday afternoon each month and the services have continued. This connection has also allowed me to become a trustee of the Babusya Galyna UK Charity which seeks to offer support to those in Ukraine and those displaced by the war.

As part of our continuing effort to achieve the second goal of our Church Development Plan (which you can read elsewhere in this annual review see page 11) we have developed a new worship service that takes place in Cobham Village Hall at 7pm on Sunday Evening. This informal service has input and involvement from a wide team of leaders. David Greenwood is putting his training as a Worship Service Leader into practice as Tori and Bryan coordinate a number of existing and new preachers and leaders at this service. Tori and Bryan guide the selection of themes used in services each week and have been developing the skills of the team that deliver the services. The first service took place on Sunday September 10<sup>th</sup> and worship has continued each week.

### **Ministry through Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals**

In 2023 we welcomed 8 couples into church to celebrate their marriage. It was a real joy to share with these couples through the year and particularly joyful to hear our choir singing and church bells ringing out at these services. We also continue to welcome many people through Baptism. After a thorough review of baptism preparation in 2022, Charleen passed this responsibility to Bryan in 2023. We ask parents to attend a simple preparation evening which explains what the Christian faith is and how baptism is understood by the church. Funeral and memorial services have taken place throughout the year and we continue to

offer support and care to all of the families who come to us as they say goodbye to their loved ones.

### **Ministry to Cobham**

I would like to thank Revd. Dr Moni Babatunde, Revd Charleen Hollington, Revd Tori Silletti, Revd Bryan Silletti, Elaine Bray, David Fuge and Shirley Mensa for working hard to serve God through St Andrew's Church. Each of them gives so much more than simply doing the things on their job descriptions. The commitment and loyalty they each offer and receive is a true blessing to us as a church and to me as incumbent.

On July the 1st we were able to celebrate with Bryan and Tori at Guildford Cathedral as they were ordained as Priests in the Church of England. They continue to grow in experience and their ministry among us has been a great encouragement and blessing. Their enthusiasm and humility as they minister among us is appreciated by so many people.

Our work at St Andrew's School has continued with the usual pattern of assemblies by clergy, visits to church and providing leadership as governors. The school has also been blessed by the addition of a weekly Music Assembly which is led by David and Louise Fuge. The support offered to school through "Transforming Lives for Good" coaches has been recognised by the school as a major component in helping vulnerable students to succeed in education. I would like to offer my thanks to Carrie Taylor as she leads this ministry, and her fellow coaches Alison Greenwood and Elaine Bray.

### **Final Thoughts**

On Thursday January 5<sup>th</sup> I found myself in Durham Cathedral for a celebration, a place where I had spent many happy hours on placement as a theological college student, for on that day both Charleen and Moni graduated from Masters and Bachelors degree courses respectively. I sat in the Cathedral like a proud parent as two of my colleagues were recognised for their study and determination in completing these courses of study. Neither of them had been mandated to study: both chose to stretch themselves in pursuit of development as priests who serve our parish. I think that their commitment typifies so much of what makes us a special church community, not a simple settling for who we are and where we are, but striving for more as we seek to serve Jesus and make Him known to others.

With a clergy team of five priests and three Occasional Preachers we have been able to

support neighbouring parishes in vacancy or with cover for sickness or time off. In 2023 our ministry team also took services in Effingham, Little Bookham, Fetcham, Oxshott and Stoke D'Abernon. We will continue to support our neighbours where possible. At the end of 2023 I began to explore with the parish of Hersham how we might help in offering ministry at Whitely Village too. Out of all this activity we have also seen a vocation to Licensed Lay Ministry emerge as one of our Occasional Preachers, Kelly Morris, has begun training for licensing as a Lay Minister in 2025.

I offer special thanks to Malcolm Graham for his years of service as church treasurer, a task which he has taken with exceptional diligence and commitment. Malcolm's health has prevented him from continuing in this role and James Moreno has taken on the duties of treasurer having previously served as assistant treasurer. I would also like to thank Paul Hurrell and Sam Aquaye who have served as churchwardens during 2023. I value the time I spend with them each week, their encouragement, wisdom and support for me as incumbent sustains me as together we work out what ministry and mission looks like at St Andrew's Church.

In June I attended the Guildford Conference for the Clergy of the Diocese. During three days at the Hayes Conference centre in Derbyshire we heard from many engaging and inspiring speakers. One comment from Sam Wells, Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields, stood out for me. Sam told us that, "Whilst as Vicar of your particular parish you cannot know everyone who lives there, you should do everything that you can do to make sure that everyone knows who you are." This charge struck a chord with me and has deepened my commitment that St Andrew's should have a visible and highly prominent position throughout Cobham as we seek to serve Jesus and make Him known.

## **St Andrew's Home Groups**

*Report by Revd Charleen Hollington*

2023 saw a concerted effort made to boost the number of people involved in home groups at St Andrew's. For example, Richard Lloyd, head of the Mission Enabler Team for the diocese, came and spoke to our home group leaders and other interested people. Under the theme 'Belong, Learn, Care and be Cared for', efforts were made at services to encourage people to put their name down to join a group. A presentation was given at the service on 29 January 2023 and following from that, we were successful in putting together a

new group hosted by Becky Moorman and led by Mike Branscombe. In addition to this, the existing four groups continued to meet regularly. Each group is choosing its own materials or alternatively using the Swedish Bible Study Model suggested by Richard Lloyd, focussing on the Gospel reading for the upcoming Sunday.

Home groups are an invaluable source of support for one another in practising our faith and also in simply forming deeper friendships within the church, and a further push should be made this year for more people to join a group. One difficulty is finding a day and time that suits all those who wish to join a group.

Charleen Hollington continued in her role as Home Groups Co-ordinator.

## **Life as Training Priests**

*By Bryan and Tori Silletti*

We cannot believe that by the time you read this, we will have been here nearly two years. Unfortunately, the most challenging lesson of our experience in training in the Church of England is that it can involve many moves and the experience of changing communities and churches regularly can be challenging. Since entering the discernment process 8 years ago we have been able to see a great range of churches which gives us a great insight into the different ways churches can function and worship. St Andrew's has been a great addition to our experience of church as it offers such a diverse range of ministries that we can get involved in and learn from. Whilst formal liturgical worship may not be our usual chosen style, it is valuable to be able to see how this works at St Andrew's alongside some more relaxed expressions of worship the church has grown. We have had the opportunity to learn the ropes in the fundamentals of Parish ministry, including, pastoral care, schools work, PCC, baptisms, funerals, and weddings, alongside a regular schedule of preaching and leading worship in any setting whether informally in Cobham Village Hall at 7pm or on a 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday at the high altar here in church.

Of course, our life in Cobham is an endless juggle of trying to balance our ministry, family, and training requirements. We have been grateful to the Diocese's support and to St Andrew's for understanding how flexibility is essential to enable ministry and family life to work! Abigail and Solomon very much see St Andrew's as their home church with people around them who care for them and they love coming to Church. As we have got to know the people of St Andrew's we have seen for

ourselves the bonds of care and support that hold many of the church relationships together, alongside being able to learn from observing the ministries of a dedicated and faithful clergy team who care deeply for the church and its people.

During our time here at St Andrew's we have increasingly learnt how our energy and passion for our ministry is expressed most fully when we come alongside others in helping them to explore and deepen their faith in Jesus Christ – the One who transforms lives. We were initially asked to come to St Andrew's as Pioneer ministers, (which, we have been told, means people who may have some creative ideas and are willing to take risks for our faith and mission). We are grateful that here at St Andrew's we have been given some space to do just that and to explore different forms of ministry. We have enjoyed the experiences of growing teams to run The Bereavement Journey, ALPHA, Church in the Community, and take a small team through a year-long course to influence faith sharing in the church. This is all alongside supporting the general working and development of the church, including Safeguarding, Team meetings, PCC, Budget, ECO, children's & youth work, and Communications teams. We find great pleasure in seeing the growth of lay ministry and people becoming excited about God and we love having the opportunity to pray for and encourage the release of God's gifts in others.

We write this report, not as a checklist of what we have been involved with so far, but as a letter of thanks. Thank you to the people of St Andrew's Church. We all share in our faith and in our serving and we have experienced God's people encouraging each other, financially supporting each other and being willing to get involved, to be surprised, to pray and to be part of all that is possible in the kingdom of God, including welcoming newcomers like the Silletti Family. We say with grateful hearts - as brother and sister in Christ with you all – thank you St Andrew's Church. May God bless you with the richness of his life changing presence.

## Music Ministry

*Report by David Fuge, Director of Music*

It has been another excellent year for the Music Ministry at St. Andrew's. Both the Choir and the Band have enhanced our worship with their commitment and desire to contribute their best efforts to the music making within the church.

**The Choir** has a membership of 16 but has been joined by friends for occasions which require more extensive resources.

We have been pleased to welcome Holly Moreno and Emma Broadbent-Combe during the last year who have strengthened our soprano line.

Having joined the Choir in the 1970s, David Robinson retired at the end of our Easter morning service. I'd like to thank David for his long service and for his and his wife Judith's help in finding my feet when I first arrived at St. Andrew's as a teenager in 1976.

As is always the case, we would welcome anyone who can sing in tune(!) to join us in the Choir. Like many other choirs, we are in particular need of Tenors and Basses to help spread the load.

**The Band** has played exceptionally well on many occasions this year and has even been booked for a wedding, alongside the Choir, which seems to have been a huge success. The number of services at which the Band plays has expanded and it has been good to see how the musicianship has grown and the common sense of worship among the members has been so evident in the services and the practices.

**The Community Choir** had fewer outings this year but provided a very strong lead for our Crib Service. I hope that there will be more opportunities for them to get together in the coming year.

Our Music Ministry has continued at **Singing Assemblies** at St. Andrew's School. The children seem to enjoy it very much and we try to include songs that we have taught them at some of our Family Worship services, in the hope that they will come and join in on a Sunday morning. Thanks to my wife, Louise, who leads the assemblies with a sense of fun and encouragement. She certainly gets results and takes the opportunity to share her faith with the school while teaching the songs.

**Jacob Costard**, who has on occasion deputised for me when I have been away, was appointed Organ Scholar of Hereford Cathedral for 2023/2024 and took up his post in September. Jacob's first encounter with the organ at St. Andrew's was in May 2014 (the day after he had passed his Grade One piano exam with distinction) when he tried out one of his pieces on the organ after a service. Before he left for Hereford, he gave an amazing performance of the *Final* from Vierne's Symphony No. 1 as the closing voluntary after a 10am service as a parting gift. What an amazing journey he is having! Jacob is incredibly talented and blessed with a deep and obvious faith. We wish him well.



**2023** was another busy year for the Music Ministry.

The Choir has sung anthems at most 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday services throughout the year. These are always chosen to fit in with the theme and mood of the service and to enhance our worship.

During Lent, we reintroduced the Penitential Setting – which hadn't been sung for some time. I was able to post old recordings with the words on our YouTube channel, which allowed anyone who wished to learn the setting ahead of time the opportunity to do so.

On Good Friday evening, our musical offering was titled, "In the Shadow of the Cross". This was a service devised by Cathy Whitnall and was intended to draw us closer to the events and emotions of Good Friday.

An extended Choir sang works by Lotti (Crucifixus à 8), Pergolesi (extracts from Stabat Mater), J.S. Bach (final two movements of St. Matthew Passion) and Dan Forrest (And can it be?). Also included were congregational hymns, the Improperia (Plainsong set for Good Friday), and organ pieces played by our organist for the evening, Mike Smith, and by Jacob Costard, who gave a very moving performance of Bach's organ chorale, O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß (O man, bewail thy sin so great). Thanks to Paul Hurrell who read passages from Isaiah and St. John's Gospel so beautifully.

This was a very emotional evening full of wonderful music and Cathy's intention that we should be drawn closer to the Passion story was totally fulfilled.

On Easter Sunday, the service was a great celebration of resurrection joy at which the Choir sang the anthem, Rejoice! The Lord is King (Malcolm Archer) and the Band led the church in a rousing, closing song, He has risen!

In May, we celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III with a Civic Service. The Choir was joined by some extra singers, which meant that we were able to sing Handel's great Coronation Anthem, Zadok the Priest. Jacob Costard accompanied the anthem on the organ, freeing me to direct the Choir and the result was memorable. The service as a whole was a fitting celebration for the community.

The Choir and Band have sung and played a wide variety of music throughout the year and are always flexible in adapting to whatever musical forces are available on any given Sunday. At the beginning of September, we

all donned nautical garb for the Family Worship titled The Greatest Treasure and even adapted Amazing grace to fit a sea shanty.

In November, the church hosted the Cobham community's Remembrance Service. The service opened with the moving Introit, The souls of the righteous (Roy Massey). During the Act of Remembrance, another one of St. Andrew's talented young people, William Wilde, played the Last Post and Reveille brilliantly.

The anthem was Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace (Samuel Sebastian Wesley).

In December, we held our traditional Service of Nine Lessons and Carols by candlelight in preparation for Christmas. This was a beautiful, atmospheric service led by an enlarged choir. There were ten carols sung by the choir alone and seven carols for the congregation. Grace Branscombe sang the solo for the first verse of Once in royal David's city and set the tone for whole service which drew us close to the Christmas story through readings and great music. The Choir excelled on this occasion and the congregational singing was inspiring too. A real atmosphere of wonder and worship.

The Community Choir had an outing at the Crib Service on Christmas Eve and I'm grateful to all of those who took part. They gave a strong lead to a large congregation and, after the play, sang an old Salvation Army favourite, Noel, and then sang Feliz Navidad after the service. Thanks to Dan Eades who played his violin for the service and for bringing his family and friends to join the choir!

Later on, a somewhat reduced Choir led our Midnight Mass and, as the anthem, sung a re-arranged version of Sussex Carol to suit the voices available. In fact, the Choir that night were so good that they and the church received a mention and a 5\* rating on Google reviews from someone in the congregation while the service was going on!

Another energetic and fun filled Christmas Day Family Service with a packed congregation, followed by the closing service of the year on New Year's Eve (at which Jacob Costard made a welcome return), brought 2023 to an end. A year full of great memories of meaningful worship and praise and one in which the musicians in the church have worked extremely hard and with great dedication and purpose.

Thank you to Kevin Ayton for all his help in the preparations of the PowerPoint hymn and

song words for services and for his help in leading the Choir. Finally, a very big and heartfelt thank you to everyone who has been involved in making music in the church in 2023. It has been a memorable one. To God be the glory!

## CHURCH DEVELOPMENT PLAN

### Introduction

At its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022 the PCC approved a Church Development Plan (CDP) for St Andrew's. The CDP consists of three principal goals, which are discussed in the following three sections of the Review.

### “Buttoning-on Points”

*Report by Charleen Hollington*

We need to create more places and more points of interaction where our community can experience a sense of belonging, caring and learning and become part of our St Andrew's family.

These points of interaction are colloquially called 'Buttoning-on points' (BOPs).

On 28 January 2023, the PCC met at a special meeting about the Church Development Plan and as part of this meeting, an action plan was put together to advance the goal of creating more BOPs. The plan included such things as identifying group activities at the church and approaching the leaders of those activities to find out how we could help to make those activities more effective in drawing people into the life of the church. I reported back to the PCC on progress on 11 July 2023.

This report for the 2023 Annual Review is largely drawn from my report to the PCC in July.

### Report

The conclusions I drew, as reported to the PCC on 11 July 2023, were as follows:

This was a valuable exercise as it gives an overview of the activities of the church and can help us to see the wood rather than just the trees.

There were 32 group activities identified, and I note the following:

The groups which most come into contact with 'the outside world' (for want of a better expression) are Little Fishes, the Christmas Lunch, the Easter High Tea, Party in the Park, Faith Ambassadors, Transforming Lives for Good and the occasional offices (weddings, baptisms and funerals).

All of the other groups are led by and comprise the same small number of people who are already very involved in the life of St. Andrew's and whose average age must probably be well above 60.

Those groups that are active are all doing a very good job, of which we can be proud.

Some groups have become inactive due to too much pressure on too few people.

The question is: how are we to draw people engaged in these activities further into the life of the church? My personal view following this exercise is to agree with Shirley Mensah that we need to establish a culture of invitation to 'the next thing'.

The implications of this, I suggest, are:

St Andrew's needs to have a number of clear 'next things' to invite people to, and we must be active and unabashed in inviting people to them – not just leaders of the groups, but PCC members and all regular church members.

Social and fellowship evenings are very good events to invite people to, and these need to be revitalized and resourced, and greater support giving to those people who end up doing most of the work.

It is important to have regular Alpha-type courses - perhaps two a year, of different flavours, to invite people to. We are delighted that Tori Silletti has taken the lead in setting up an Alpha course beginning on 10 January 2024 in conjunction with Churches Together, and over the past few months a concerted effort has been made to invite people from the community to that course.

An obvious 'next thing' to invite people to is a service. We currently do well at inviting families and children to the family services. However, there is a concern that our other services, while beautiful and uplifting for the initiated, may be too formal and perhaps baffling for the unchurched. How comfortable are we inviting 'outsiders' to one of our services? With this concern in mind, Tori and Bryan Silletti have taken the lead in setting up our new 'St Andrew's in the Community' services which started in September, as this

informally-structured service may be one to which we can comfortably invite the unchurched. It is anticipated that the new service will be a welcoming 'landing pad' for people attending the Alpha Course.

We need to develop our ChurchSuite contact databases so that targeted emails can be sent out with invitations to events and services, and work has been done on this. For example, a specific contact database for baptism families has now been set up which is useful for sending out reminders of family services, Party in the Park, and the Light Party.

Fundraising events are a good way to draw the community into the life of the church and the Faith and Social Action Committee could look at organising more of these, although the problem of the same people doing all the work rears its head again.

The 'next thing' need not only be for 'outsiders': are there 'next things' to which we can invite the regular, committed members of our church? Perhaps we could consider such things as a contemplative service, or a service of thanks and refreshment, for example. Another possibility might be a theology evening – say, for example, on the Psalms.

Work parties, such as the garden clean-up, can be good activities to invite 'outsiders' to, as people like to do a good deed without having to come to church. These are also good opportunities for inviting younger people. Each such group activity should be clearly Christian in flavour, so that anyone invited to join comes into contact with the Word. For example, an opening prayer should be said before beginning the activity. Again, a targeted ChurchSuite email to baptism parents or newly married couples could be very helpful here.

#### **Looking ahead in 2024**

The Alpha Course and the St Andrew's in the Community services should be strong sources of 'buttoning on' for people in 2024.

There is scope in 2024 for creating 'next things' in the form of fundraising, work parties, social events and activities for our committed core of workers at St Andrew's, but the difficulty is the old one of the same people doing all the heavy lifting.

We should encourage in the congregation a mind-set of 'the next thing', to invite others to, or to attend themselves.

## **North West Cobham**

*Report by David Taylor*

One outcome of the "vision day" held several years ago was to consider how St Andrew's might be more effective in the area known as North West Cobham. It was acknowledged that there was a long-standing historic divide marked by the old Portsmouth Road. With this in mind, the church agreed to address this both from a spiritual and a social aspect.

With the above in mind, when seeking housing for two trainee "pioneer" curates in Cobham, a property was purchased in the N W Cobham area to help establish a church presence in that area. In 2023, a new initiative of informal Sunday evening services in Cobham Village Hall was started. These services were designed to be an attractive alternative for people living in N W Cobham and elsewhere who might find the more traditional services at the parish church difficult to access. So far, whilst providing a valuable "fresh expression" of worship for existing church members, these meetings have largely failed to attract new attendees from N W Cobham. However, our Children and Families Ministry team, led by Shirley Mensa, have reached out to residents in that area through the Party in the Park events and she has actively successfully lobbied for new play equipment and other improvements of the community area.

Alongside the above, St Andrew's has developed a longstanding, supportive, relationship with Oasis Childcare Trust and the Cobham Foodbank. Both have a large proportion of clients within the N W Cobham area and an increasing demand for their services has led to both organisations having an urgent need of larger and more suitable operating facilities, ideally in N W Cobham. At a meeting of many interested "stakeholders" initiated by St Andrew's church in 2022, it was agreed to create an informal partnership of Oasis, Foodbank and St Andrew's to try and identify premises in the N W Cobham area in which all three could work together in a co-operative relationship. A building was identified which offered the potential of meeting the requirements of both Oasis and the Food Bank, as well as providing a "social hub" which could provide a "buttoning-on point" for residents, young and old, living in that area. Approaches made regarding that building have so far proved abortive, but the search for a way forward continues with the active involvement of Cobham councillors and residents' groups, supported by Walton Charities.

## Increasing our Income Stream

*Report by the Vicar*

The third aim of our Church Development Plan is in many ways the easiest to measure. We either have more money, or we don't! As I write, the accounts for 2023 have not been finalised; however initial indications are that income has increased and my hope is that we have finished the year without a deficit. To achieve our aim of increasing our income stream four things were done in 2023.

- We held a gift Weekend on July 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> where financial gifts were offered beyond our regular giving in thanksgiving for God's goodness.
- We introduced the ability for people to make gifts to God through the Church by text message.

- A sermon series on giving took place in October which culminated with an opportunity for people to indicate their commitment to giving to God through the Church on a regular basis. We also asked people to consider an increase in giving to reflect the increases in the cost of living.
- A significant piece of work was undertaken by Lynn Moreno and Marten Symons in analysing how Church Gate House is used for events and lettings. After a thorough review of existing rates for hire and facilities offered, they brought forward a number of suggestions to PCC. These suggestions, along with a redecoration and the redevelopment work to be undertaken on the entrance and toilets in 2024, will help increase usage and lettings income from Church Gate House. Many thanks to Lynn and Marten.

## FINANCE REPORT

Because the church is a registered charity, we are bound under current legislation to submit a fully detailed Annual Financial Report to the Charity Commission. The Diocese also receives a copy. To economise on printing, this Financial Report has therefore been

published as a separate document within its own covers, rather than including it as an additional (and fairly substantial) section to this Review. In due course the report will be published on the St Andrew's Website. Some hard copies will also be available at the APCM.

## ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

### Assets and Fabric

*Report by Paul Hurrell and Sam Acquaye*

The quinquennial inspection and the subsequent report, which we received in 2018, has been an excellent guide to the current state of the building and grounds of the church. The Property Committee continued to meet and operate in 2023, under the excellent chairmanship of Clive Moorman.

During 2023 maintenance work was carried out to address various specific issues in and around the church. These included: cleaning of the gutters, fixing a significant leak of roof water into the church boiler room and installing a new 'French Drain' to address a large damp patch at ground level on the north side of the church. All the halogen lights in the Church were replaced with energy efficient LED lights, which resulted in significant reduction in electricity usage in 2023. The transformers for the LED lights in the Chancel were also replaced with new ones that are more compatible with the dimmer system in the Church. The Church clock was also fixed to show the right time on both faces and also to change automatically when the clocks go forward / backwards. Permission was granted

by the Archdeacon for work to commence on the boards at the back of the Church.

A deep clean of the church was carried out just before Christmas. A clear-out of overgrown shrubbery in the car park, and also in the garden of Church Gate House, was organized and carried out by a number of volunteers from St Andrew's.

Work on the refurbishment of Church Gate House commenced which included installing grey aluminum doors and windows and painting the whole interior. Both boilers in CGH were found to be leaking and replaced. The old piano was also replaced by a new one donated by Sheargold.

There are no major issues to report on the flat above Church Gate House. It has been occupied for the whole of 2023 with very minor repairs. The current tenant, who moved in during 2022 is quite satisfied with it. The tenancy, which provided steady income throughout the year, was renewed for a further year with the provision for a break after six months.

The house at 57 Coveham Crescent for the new curates is still occupied with no major maintenance issues.

The laptop currently being used for the Youth ministry is quite old and will need replacing. This will enable the Youth ministry team to upload and run lots of inspiring programmes on the Web to assist our children in their journey of knowing Christ.

## **Sacristan**

The work continues to be shared between Judy Brickett and Derek Bullman.

## **Garden of Remembrance**

This part of the churchyard provides an attractive focus for remembering loved ones. It is very well maintained by Mick, the gardener who maintains the garden in Church Gate House under the supervision of Mabs Ostley.

## **Parish Office**

*Report by Elaine Bray Communications and Administration Manager*

The Parish Office is based in Church Gate House and is open on Monday – Friday between 9am and 1pm, although Elaine is available after that. Elaine continues to endeavour to offer a warm and friendly welcome and to assist anyone visiting, calling or emailing the Church Office. During the last year ChurchSuite has been 'rolled' out to the wider Church family and many more people are now using it. We have also started using even more of the facilities within ChurchSuite for example rotas, events and forms. Hall bookings have again marginally recovered during the past year. During the winter months and during the cost of living crisis there have been fewer private birthday party bookings, which do provide good additional income during the summer months. Church Gate House remains a popular location for Church Away Days when we are able to welcome other churches here, and also for funeral and baptism receptions which are not weather dependent. The garden remains a unique differentiating point when people are comparing halls in the summer. As we write this report, the building works are well underway in Church Gate House.

Social media is an increasingly important strand of our communications strategy. We have continued to use HootSuite to facilitate broadcasting to three social media sites, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook in one post. Posting to Nextdoor and additional Facebook pages has allowed us to extend our digital reach. The reach of Instagram has increased during the last year. Traditional posters remain an important strand of the communication strategy and we are grateful to

David Tipping for helping to keep the noticeboards up to date.

## **MyChurchSuite**

*Report by David Greenwood*

Through MyChurchSuite, church members can see their rotas, update their contact details and their permissions for how the church can contact them (GDPR), opt in or out of the weekly email, see the calendar and sign up for events, view all their church communications in one place, see the church address book and choose what contact details to make visible in it (to other St Andrew's members only). Parents/carers can manage their children's details, meaning the leaders always have the very latest information. MyChurchSuite can be accessed either as an App on your mobile device or through a browser on a computer.

ChurchSuite is the Church's admin system which holds all that and more. All the major rotas for serving in services are now held in ChurchSuite and email reminders go out (to those who haven't turned that off). It gives the staff team and Church Wardens an overview of everyone involved in a service. It is also used for the sending of emails from the church. MyChurchSuite is like your own window on the parts relevant to you.

We rolled out MyChurchSuite during early 2023 with presentations in church and CGH. The Address Book has not taken off though. Individuals need to give permission for their selected contact details to be shown in the Address Book and you can do this in MyChurchSuite. So far not many people have ticked the boxes for any of telephone, email, address or even name to be visible in the Address Book. We found we do need the permission for "name" to be set for a name to appear on rotas or others cannot see who is on so we have had to take the view that there is a valid operational reason for the names to be visible of anyone on a rota. It would help the rotas if a phone or email address was visible too. To do this, please go into MyChurchSuite and give the permissions you are comfortable with or talk to Elaine or David Greenwood to set them for you.

You should be able to reset your password at the login screen if you have forgotten it. If any difficulties then contact me at [davidg@sac.church](mailto:davidg@sac.church) or Elaine in the Parish Office.

## Church Gate House Welcome Area

*Report by Elaine Bray*

People are still most welcome to pop into the Welcome Area for a free coffee and a warm welcome during office hours. The team of wonderful welcomers, who used to greet visitors to Church Gate House, has not been able to return to the role but the welcome area remains open

## Church Watching

*Report by Elaine Bray*

The Church Watching rota does not currently operate. If someone wishes to access the church during the week, by arrangement, Elaine will open the church for them. In times of community or national interest a willing group of volunteers will also help to keep the church open.

## Cuppa & Chat

*Report by Revd Moni Babatunde*

Cuppa & Chat is an initiative borne out of a need to serve our community by providing people – particularly the lonely, who need a place to go with a cup of tea, a conversation and a friendly face. In January 2023, we welcomed guests into Church for the first Cuppa & Chat, and thanks to the generosity of the local Pret A Manger store who initially supplied us with sandwiches, croissants and other baked goods, we were also able to provide a light lunch for our guests.

Since it opened, Cuppa & Chat has grown, now regularly welcoming over twenty guests. Every Thursday at 1pm the church is full of happy chatter as people connect over cups of tea, snacks, and engage in activities such as a lively game of scrabble. Additionally, we now provide a space for volunteers from The Elmbridge Hub, to meet and offer advice and support to refugees within the community.

The generosity and support from Pret A Manger and Gail's Bakery has helped us to expand the range of our offerings to our guests which has helped to foster a sense of warmth and connection during their time at Cuppa & Chat. For this we are truly grateful.

We hope to continue to welcome members of the community to join us at Cuppa & Chat from 1 pm to 3pm every Thursday.

## Communications

*Report by Tori Silletti*

The PCC Communications team were charged with the task of thinking about the ways in which we can grow and shape how we

communicate as a church, beyond what we already do.

## 'Church Noticeboard' published in the Go-Local Magazine

The first main priority of the team has been on how St Andrew's as a church could communicate with the wider (non-church) community and explore a variety of ways of doing this. It was considered that the best way forward was to be published in an existing magazine that is delivered into over 10,000 household in the town, rather than us trying to recreate our own parish magazine which would have a much smaller reach. We have reserved the centre-double pages of the Go-Local magazine for each edition. The Magazine is published bi-monthly, costs less than our previous 'Family Magazine', and has a wider reach and more outward focus. The intended reach of our articles is to reach those who do not come to church at all and have little faith. Each editions contains the following:

One member of the clergy writes a small 'pause for thought' to help people think about the possibility of God (with photo of the clergy member).

One church activity is advertised as the focus in each edition which would be of interest to those unsure about church, e.g. Bereavement Journey, ALPHA, Cuppa and Chat etc.

A small 'save the date' section gives brief details of a few other upcoming events.

The church branding and contact details are always given.

The great news is we are already aware of people who have come along to 'Church in the Community' and ALPHA solely as a result of seeing our publication and we trust many more are getting familiar with St Andrew's Church through the use of our consistent branding as well as thinking about God as a result of the gentle 'pause for thought' our clergy team write. Of course, some of the successes we will never know about, for example, I wonder how many people may have come to our Christmas services this year because they saw it in our publication? We are confident the town will become increasingly aware of the presence and activities of the church as we continue publishing alongside the church's other avenues of sharing information.

## Website

The PCC Communications Committee have also – largely thanks to David Greenwood – refreshed and updated our website. The front

page now shows pictures of actual St Andrew's people and scenes, to reflect more accurately what we 'look' like as a church

The team has ideas about making the website more dynamic and accessible. This should enable people to register an interest in, or sign up for, church activities such as marriages, baptisms, courses etc. There is now a brand-new ALPHA page, so that people can always register their interest in finding out about faith.

A current issue is that the website looks different on different devices. This is being addressed. David is also hoping to implement the new capabilities for tailored calendars shortly.

If you are part of a church organisation or group, please check your page under "About Us" or "Get Involved". David would be grateful for any updates, improved wording and maybe pictures which can be used to make your page more attractive.

### **Next Steps**

Our next steps as a team are thinking about how we can use new and creative ways to make it easier to share regular news and information with our current church congregation.

Well done, Zoe, David, Claire and Elaine for all their continued hard work in shaping the communication with the church and the wider community. If you have excellent website or IT skills and would like to get involved, please do get in touch [tori@sac.church](mailto:tori@sac.church)

### **Other communications**

Elaine Bray maintains an **online mailing list**, Listserve, with messages which she distributes weekly, and sometimes more frequently, and which appear on the parish website. This allows email messages to be sent to subscribers at any time with information about church activities and events. The main notices for the week ahead are given during Sunday services,

There are **notice boards** at the south entrance to the Church, at the lychgate, at the north-west entrance to the churchyard, and in the High Street.

### **Archivist**

We do not currently have an archivist at St Andrew's. Between them, the Church Wardens, Paul Hurrell and Sam Acquaye, David Taylor, Leonard Beighton and Elaine Bray endeavour to ensure that the records are kept appropriately.

### **Electoral Roll**

*Report by David Greenwood, Electoral Roll Officer*

Do you consider yourself to be part of St Andrew's Church? Are you on our church Electoral Roll?

This is NOT the same as the Government one used in local and national elections.

Being on the Church of England Parish Electoral Roll entitles you to vote at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. The number on the roll determines how many Deanery Synod representatives we have, so we would like it to be a fair reflection of our adult "membership". The Electoral Roll is held in our ChurchSuite system.

At the end of 2023, the number on roll stood at 183. During the year we added 11 people and one has died.

If you are not sure if you are on it already, please email me at [davidg@sac.church](mailto:davidg@sac.church) and I can check and/or send you the form (which is also available on the website or at the back of church).

We have to start the roll again from scratch every six years and that comes round again next year, at the start of 2025.





## PCC COMMITTEES

The PCC operates through a number of committees. Each committee includes at least one PCC member (not necessarily the chair) and reports on its activities to PCC at least annually to ensure two-way communication.

### Standing Committee

*Chaired by the Vicar*

This is the only Committee required by Church law. It is chaired by the Vicar and its members are the churchwardens, the PCC treasurer, the PCC secretary, and one other PCC member. The other member is Michael Elson. It meets in the months in which there is no PCC meeting and exchanges e-mails as need be. It has power to transact the business of PCC between Council's meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council.

### Budget Committee

*Report by Bryan Silletti*

In 2023 we transitioned to budgets by budget-holders to help understand our costs by each area of ministry. We now have budget codes set up for each budget area that is helping us to understand and manage our costs by each budget holder for quarterly updates to the PCC. Since we are a church, faith in Jesus will continue to be the bedrock of how we evaluate programmes and costs, but we are hoping that our budgeting process will allow us to understand and manage our costs more effectively, while stretching us as a church to plan for future programmes where God is leading us. We are in the process of transitioning with our new treasurer, but hope to continue to enhance our budgeting, reporting and communication to the PCC.

### Churchgate House Committee

*Report by Lynn Moreno*

#### Facilities

Time was spent last year looking at our hiring facilities. In general, our facilities are good with the kitchen, projector/screen and garden. The kitchen facilities needed a deep clean and we worked with Elaine and the cleaners on organising this and getting it established on a regular basis. Advice was also given regarding the decoration of the rooms post the installation of the new doors.

After having reviewed other church offerings, we have also sourced occasional cards for sale (Christmas, birthday, thank you etc) with Bible verses inside. To our knowledge Christian cards are not available anywhere else in Cobham and this is another service we

can offer to our congregation, and beyond. It was launched at the family service in December with a fantastic uptake. Cards will continue to be displayed in the Lounge and will be available to purchase throughout the year (see also the inside front cover of this Review for a display of the cards available.)

After the entrance renovations are completed, we would like to review the Welcome area and consider adding a sofa and coffee table to make this a softer seating area. We also need to look at storage and how this is to be managed after the renovations.

Later in 2024/25 we would also like to revisit the garden area and see whether any simple improvements can be made.

#### CGH Rental

An extensive external review was carried out in Spring 2023 to assess our pricing versus other similar facilities. These included; Cobham Village Hall, Stoke D'Abernon Village Hall, St Mary's Stoke D'Abernon, Downside Village Hall, Oxshott Village Hall, St Andrew's Oxshott, and Little Bookham Village Hall.

In summary, it was agreed that an increase would be appropriate and it was applied from 1<sup>st</sup> June for new hirers, and 1<sup>st</sup> September for existing customers. Exceptions to the normal hiring fees were also agreed so that we can continue to serve our local community while gaining a small revenue from ad hoc business and celebratory events. This included 10% discount for regular hirers, 50% discount for registered charities. On the next page is a table showing the current hiring rates as displayed on the website.

#### Marketing of CGH

- An account was set up to enable CGH to be visible via Google Search, so that if people search for a venue to hire in Cobham CGH is an option (whereas previously it was not showing).
- St Andrew's webpage was updated with more details and pictures of the hall set up for an event, to showcase facilities.
- Other advertising options are also being explored.
- <https://sac.church/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/St-Andrews-Cobham-Hall-Hiring-Fees.pdf>

### St Andrews Cobham Church Gate House – Hiring fees

|                      | Main Hall        | Lounge                | Pastoral Room | Whole Facility | Wedding Package                         |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|---|
| Capacity seated      | 80               | 20                    | 10            |                |   |
| Weekday rate per hr  | £25              | £16                   | £10           | £340 a day     | £1000                                   |
| Saturday rate per hr | £35              | £26                   | £15           | £500 a day     |   |
| Included in the rate | Kitchen & Garden | Coffee area, TV & DVD |               | Maximum 8 hrs  | Thurs pm to Saturday<br>Everything incl |

\*10% discount for regular users, 50% discount for registered charity

Projector and sound system available for hire @ £25 per booking

#### Booking via ChurchSuite

Our old manual booking and invoicing system is being transitioned to Church Suite. This will enable online booking and invoicing to be managed and monitored in a more efficient manner, saving time for Elaine and enabling us to track/report usage. This is nearly complete, with Elaine finalising the invoicing.

#### ECO Committee

*Report by Bryan Silletti*

In 2023 we moved from Clive's leadership to one led for the interim by Bryan, and we have enjoyed exploring what our individual passions are and what we would like to get involved in as a team. In 2023, we have enjoyed our ECO walk through the Cobham Court Park and leading a Creation Tide service during the harvest season in September. We are a small team, but hope in 2024 to have more walks, additional services dedicated to exploring our relationship with God and creation, as well as understanding what further impact we can make as a team on issues of sustainability. We have started to work on the rewilding area and hope to make some improvements little by little to continue the rewilding area and also to create an outdoor space for others to enjoy.

#### Faith and Social Action

*Report by Charleen Hollington*

I thought it would be helpful to set out at the start of this report the terms of reference for the work of the St Andrew's Faith and Social Action Committee. These terms of reference were established in 2015 after a process of reflection and engagement with the PCC. They are what the committee measures its work against, and are as follows:

##### **Terms of reference**

- To encourage and enable all members of the church family to undertake and participate in this work [i.e. the work of helping to establish the kingdom of heaven by feeding the hungry and caring for the needy, seeking a just and fair society for all, and caring for the

environment], whether in Cobham or beyond, as an essential outworking of their faith, and to identify ways in which they can do so;

- To recognize, honour, encourage and support those members of the church family already engaged in identifiable areas of work;
- To find ways to bring the work being done to the attention of the church family regularly, whether during services or by other means (for example, the church website and the parish magazine), with the aim of:
- placing social concerns at the heart of their spiritual life, alongside their worship of God, and emphasizing that a life of faith does not end at church;
- exciting their interest and obtaining their physical and spiritual support;
- To consult with the church family in order to hear their voice as to the work in hand and possible work to be undertaken in the future;
- To work with Outward Giving and the PCC in identifying projects that would be suitable recipients of funding from the church;
- To help all members of the church family engaged in this work to deepen their faith and strengthen their commitment through prayer, worship and regular reflection on their activities.

2023 was once again a year in which the St Andrew's Faith and Social Action Committee, together with our project champions and Christian Aid representative, continued in their efforts to fulfil their terms of reference. How far we have succeeded will be a subject for reflection in 2024.

The committee continued to consist of Charleen Hollington (Chair), Leonard Beighton, David Taylor and Elaine Bray. Our project champions and the charities they represent are Peter Kelly (OM Himalayas), Paul Hurrell (the Garden Route Children's Trust), Carrie Taylor (Transforming Lives for Good), David Taylor (Oasis) and Alison Greenwood (the Foodbank). In addition to these, Helen Goddard continues to represent Christian Aid Week in Cobham.

This report is an overview of the work of the Committee as a whole: please see the separate reports from the project champions on their respective projects.

One of the issues we hope to deal with in 2024 is that of finding new committee members, possibly from the younger generations, to refresh our perspective. We will also need to consider the chairmanship of the committee due to likely changes in Charleen's personal circumstances in 2024.

During the year we continued the practice of holding 'Project Sundays' at which project champions lead a section in the service giving information about their particular project. These are held on a third Sunday when the service is less structured and we have been considering making the service more wholly centred on the project rather than just providing a 'slot'. The project Sundays seem to be well-received and are very helpful in 'making real' the work of St Andrew's.

Christian Aid Week also went well, thanks to Helen Goddard's efficient organisation.

We continued in 2023 to send out a quarterly newsletter. It is not clear how many people read it, but it is useful at least in reminding people that we are here.

On the fundraising front, the concert by Alberto Portugheis with Bobby Chen and Jacob Costard arranged in May by David Taylor was an outstanding success, both in terms of community response and money raised.

Another Hit and Hope Golf Day was held, which was once again won by the ladies' four-ball, the Hail Marys. All fees and expenses were paid by a donor, and a clear £420 was raised.

Looking back on 2023 in the light of our terms of reference set out above, I would say that there are some areas where we have done well and some areas which perhaps need our attention. For example – are we doing enough to get the congregation more involved? One way of doing this might be to hold more fundraising events in 2024. This is something the committee will be reflecting on in 2024.

As always, though, we give grateful thanks to the Lord who has blessed us with so much and made us able to share. It is worth noting that St Andrew's is a tithing church, and the substantial donations to the main projects and other charities we support are drawn from the regular contributions of the congregation to the church (the work of recommending how the funds should be applied is carried out by the Outward Giving Committee).

Lastly, as usual, I give my grateful thanks to everyone involved and for your constant and time-consuming efforts to make St Andrew's a church that 'walks the talk' to the glory of our Lord.

God bless, Charleen

## **Outward Giving Team**

*Report by Cathy Whitnall (chair)*

Keith Baird, Julie Baird, Michael Elson, Beryl Mooney, Carrie Taylor, Cathy Whitnall

The team was glad to welcome Beryl Mooney as an additional member.

The OGT faced a slightly surprising – although extremely welcome – challenge for 2023. The PCC was able to set aside a total of £20,565, which was a substantial increase over previous years. This meant that we were able to expand our portfolio whilst also increasing donations to several of our regular recipient charities.

We have continued to make donations to the charities supported by the Social Action forum, i.e.

Garden Route Childrens Trust (£3,000), OM Nepal (£2,000), and Transforming Lives for Good (£2,000). We also continued our support of A Rocha (£2,000).

We have increased our donation to Oasis (Cobham) to £4,000, whose workload continues to increase. We have also continued our support of Elmbridge CAN with a gift of £3,000. However, we did not donate to Cobham Area Foodbank at this time, because we were informed that their funds were in good health. This decision meant that we were then able to give much greater support to St

Andrew's School, in supporting a project called *Sing Up* which would reach every child in the school. Without our help St Andrew's would not have been able to find the £2,000 that the project required.

We were able to send donations to two further charities. *Embrace the Middle East* (formerly Biblelands Society) which has a long-term presence in Gaza and is able to help with providing food, water and shelter to many of those in need. We have supported this charity in the past (although not for around 20 years). A new suggestion was the chaplaincy fund at Send Prison, which equips several of the activities run by the Mothers' Union in the prison, and also gives support to those leaving prison. We sent £1,000 to each of these charities, and then the remaining £565 was sent to Crisis.

As always, we welcome suggestions from any member of the congregation for charities that we might support.

## Pastoral Committee

*Chaired by the Vicar*

In 2023 the Pastoral Committee has continued to offer ministry, however it has not resumed regular pastoral meetings. With Diocesan changes in the way that pastoral teams operate and the move to training and authorising of such ministries by the parish incumbent, we have not added to the team in 2023. As our clergy team has expanded and pastoral ministry is also being offered by our TLG team at St Andrew's school, it is time for a review of pastoral ministry at St Andrew's which I will undertake in 2024.

Once again the pastoral team were at the heart of our "Time to Remember" service on November 5<sup>th</sup>. The service was very well attended, and we were glad to see many families we had helped with services during the last year.

Our Prayer team have been meeting and ministering to people throughout the year. The most visible aspect of their ministry is being available during the 10am Sunday morning service to pray with anyone who feels a need to pray for themselves or a loved one.

## Property Committee

*Report by Clive Moorman, Committee Chair*

The Property Committee (David Tipping, Mike Branscombe, Keith Baird, Sam Acquaye, Paul Hurrell, Nick Constable, Greg Bradley and Clive Moorman in the 'chair') met six times in 2023 and it has been a busy year for the team.

**New Directional Signs:** Members of the committee have been liaising with Elmbridge BC to encourage them to install a new signpost at the top of Church Street directing people to our lovely church. It seems that this encouragement has borne fruit and we expect this to be erected in 2024

**CGH Maintenance:** Both boilers in CGH were found to be leaking and needed replacement. It was agreed that it would be more cost effective to replace both of these boiler with a single, larger capacity, Bosch boiler and this was installed in January by KT Gas. Despite a number of notices at the back of our car park saying "don't park on the grass", this was largely ignored by a number of our hall users, causing damage to both the grass and kerbs. So the team installed concrete posts and chain links to deter this activity. As an extension of the project to refurbish the hall at CGH, it was also agreed that we would repaint the lounge, coffee area and the adjoining corridor in the same colours as we had chosen for the hall. The roof of the shed in CGH garden was in a very poor state of repair and was refelted, after which the shed was cleaned and tidied up to remove redundant equipment. It was agreed that we would fit a 'non-return valve' to the service water outlet from the car park to the river. Whilst this will not prevent the car park flooding, it will reduce some early flooding that occurs when the level is not quite high enough to breach the riverbank. A number of other minor maintenance issues were fixed throughout the year, eg a dripping tap, broken toilet roll holder, etc

**Health and Safety Works:** Following an accident by Clive falling down the stairs, a new handrail was installed by the steps leading to the church boiler room: it was also agreed that the lone working rules should be more rigorously enforced. In addition the pressure safety valves on the church boilers were replaced as recommended by our insurance company.

**Refurbishment of CGH:** The PCC agreed that we should upgrade our plans for the refurbishment by installing grey aluminium doors and windows in lieu of the proposed white PVC doors and windows. It was felt that the additional cost of £11,000 was worth it as it vastly improved the appearance. Subsequently the new aluminium doors and windows were installed by TP Improvements in both the hall, kitchen and toilets. The balance of the proposed refurbishment of CGH, encompassing redesigning the entrance with automatic aluminium and glass doors, reconfiguring the toilets, and building a new

storage room, finally started to move forward when we received our Listed Building Consent on 19<sup>th</sup> December. Gavin Sallis of Sallis Construction was appointed as our contractor, and started work on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

**Rewilding St Andrew's Field:** Last year the Eco Committee fenced off 50% of the field for rewilding and whilst that developed over 2023, it was considered that further work was needed as it now looks a bit untidy.

**Redesign of CGH Garden:** A design for the garden was done and a budget price of £25,000 identified. However this project remains on hold until funds become available and the new extension is in place.

**Garden Tidy-ups:** We had a couple of garden tidy-ups in the year, but we were hoping that the redesign of the CGH garden would reduce the need for this. It is proposed that once the building work is completed an extensive tidy up is carried out including steam cleaning the patio and refreshing the steps edge highlighting

**Church Repairs:** A full inspection of our drains was carried out as recommended by our last quinquennial report and all were found to be in good working order. However our gutters outside both the church and CGH were extensively blocked. City Guttering were engaged to clear all of the gutters and carry out repairs of the damage caused by squirrels. It was agreed that we should have a programme of annual gutter clearing to prevent damage to the fabric of our buildings. Also there was a significant leak of roof water into our church boiler room through an old coal chute and this has now been blocked off. It was also found that there was a serious fault in the way that the church boilers had been installed and this was repaired at the scheduled service point. The oak gate in the corner of the churchyard was falling apart and need replacement. This was generously funded by the Robinsons and fitted by Keith Baird. There is a large damp patch at ground level on the north side of the church and this was thought to be caused by the raising of the ground level by the Combe Tomb. The ground level was lowered and a new 'French Drain' installed and it is hoped this will solve the problem. The boiler room sump pump failed and needed to be replaced, albeit the duty on it should be much less now that the leak has been fixed and the drains cleared.

**Church Floor Grating Repairs:** Areas of the church floor identified last year have yet to be repaired and these will be looked at over next year.

**Utilities:** Our fixed price contract with Ecotricity came to an end in December and a new 12 month fixed price contract was negotiated with them by Greg Bradley. This contract is now at a lower price than last year and was valued at being more competitive than other suppliers and maintains our 'green credentials'.

**Work in Progress:** There is still much to do in 2024, mainly to complete the refurbishment of CGH. There are a number of items that need addressing and funding in the short/medium term this year, namely:-

1. Complete the CGH refurbishment project
2. Install new sign outside the entrance to CGH
3. Fit new blackout blinds to CGH hall
4. Steam clean patio and repaint visibility lines
5. Fix security issues on CGH kitchen door
6. Address problems with unstable heating trench gratings in church
7. Solve damp problem on north side of church and get wall replastered.
8. Replace broken fence post in car park
9. Repair tap in coffee area
10. Redecorate the church kitchen
11. Fit non return valve to drain outlet of car park
12. Fit new hot water boiler to church kitchen
13. Install new modern controls to our church boilers
14. Get smart meters installed
15. Redesign the garden at CGH or at least have an extensive tidy up if funds are not available for redesign
16. Improve the weed control in St Andrew's Field
17. Carry out annual maintenance and clearing of gutters at church and CGH
18. Identify a competent handyman to carry out minor maintenance repairs.

Many thanks to the members of the Property Committee, CGH Committee, Elaine and other members of the congregation that actively support the maintenance of our beautiful church premises so that we can all continue to enjoy it in the years to come.

## Safeguarding

*Report by Wendy Jane Gray, Parish Safeguarding Officer.*

### Policies and practice

The clergy and PCC of St Andrew's continue to give due regard to guidance issued by the House of Bishops relating to safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is a standing item on the agenda of each PCC meeting.

All safeguarding policies are updated and approved annually. The next update will occur at the PCC meeting on 19 March 2024. These policies are in line with the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance. They meet statutory requirements relevant to our parish context.

The Parish Safeguarding Dashboard introduced by the Diocese Safeguarding Team two years ago, has proven to be useful. This is an online tool that allows the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) to complete an audit of safeguarding practice in St Andrew's. The PCC has signed up to this. Following the audit an action plan is generated which serves as a reminder for general procedures such as essential safeguarding training and for annual reviews, for example agreeing policy. This is not a one-off exercise but a constant as safeguarding is reviewed and implemented in parish life.

The Diocese Safeguarding team introduced the first Safeguarding induction/refresher day in July 2023. This enables the PSO to meet and share experiences and ideas with PSOs from other parishes. It promises to become a good networking event and was extremely helpful for sharing ideas in similar and contrasting parishes.

### Safer Recruitment

The online system for DBS clearance has now been extended to require renewal of existing DBS checks every three years. The system is always under review as volunteers pass the three year mark and new volunteers come forward for roles within the church.

### Training

In April 2021, the Church of England published a new Safeguarding Learning and Development framework. The focus of this is on developing a positive culture of safeguarding within the church rather than simply looking at policies. Since then the Diocese of Guildford is committed to providing safeguarding training to all church officers so they are equipped to understand and discharge their safeguarding responsibilities and have the core understanding of how safeguarding is rooted in our mission and theology as a church community. All training is to be refreshed once every three years. This has become much simpler to do online since the covid pandemic. Training can easily be started and saved to be completed at a volunteer's convenience. If anyone is unsure of their training responsibilities please simply look up on the Guildford Diocesan website under *Safeguarding Training*.

By ensuring that protocols are implemented and reviewed regularly, our worshipping community will look out for each other and work to have a transformative effect on the lives of others and ourselves. Thank you for taking time to read this and support our parish safeguarding in any way you can.

## CHURCH ORGANISATIONS

### Bellringers

*Report by Zoë Ostley*

2023 was a new beginning for the bellringers. Although we did not manage to ring the new year in, we began a year of regular ringing for morning services.

An early year recruitment drive for new ringers in January was a great success in achieving interest in learning to ring. An amazing number of twenty plus people joined us on our open evening with eight people committed to "*Learn to Ring*"

Learning the art of bellringing is not a fast-learning process. It is not instant; it takes time

to become a competent ringer to control the bell, its ropes and to be able to safely ring with other ringers. Teaching is carried out at the learner's pace and can take several weeks of repetitive handling, one to one tutoring.

Whilst we commenced with eight learners, the commitment required to attend weekly sessions was difficult for some and by the end of 2023 we had two new members with varied abilities join the ringing band.

Practice nights have remained a regular event. We have had the assistance of Stoke D'Abernon Tower Captain Julian Ball join us on a very consistent basis. His help in teaching

the learners along with Roger Tompsett and Peter Bound has helped St Andrew's ringers be a voice again in the community.

We are pleased to report we have eight regular ringers, including two long-standing members of our own congregation, who commit to morning Sunday ringing, weddings, festival events and practice nights supported by regular ringers who join us at our practice sessions.

Together with visiting ringers and other bands ringing occasionally at the weekends, St Andrew's Ringers are progressing well and look forward to an exciting schedule of challenges for 2024.

## Church Cleaning

*Report by Derek Bullman*

I've tried cogent argument in favour of volunteering to be part of a church cleaning team (as was the case before Covid) – 2021

I've tried humour as a reassurance that I am not a grumpy old man, looking to boss people around and make their lives miserable – 2022. All to no avail.

So, in 2023, given that certain minimum standards have to be met and that I cannot be expected to do everything myself; the church has had to bite the bullet by paying contractors to do a "deep clean" just before Christmas while the Churchgate House cleaners now keep the Church kitchen and loo up to scratch.

But it is not all about me and what goes on in the church is not all about worship, baptisms, marriages and funerals. There are concerts, school holiday activities, Cuppa & Chat on Thursdays, refreshments after family services, Christmas decorations etc. etc. and their organisers deserve huge praise for cleaning up nicely after themselves. That's how it is going forward – a collective unofficial partnership of volunteers, supplemented by contractors when necessary.

## Church Flowers

*Report by Mabs Ostley*

The presence of fresh flowers in the church will always make visitors feel welcome. However costs, and the fact that the flower team is now down to one member, mean that we still have to use silk flowers for our altar display. The pedestal arrangement is changed seasonally, but it is removed during Lent and also sometimes if there is a wedding.

## Church Gate House Welcome Area

*Report by Elaine Bray*

People are still most welcome to pop into the Welcome Area for a free coffee and warm welcome during office hours. The team of wonderful welcomers, who used to greet visitors to Church Gate House, has not been able to return to the role but the welcome area remains open.

## Mothers' Union

*Report by Jenny Vickers*

We have continued to meet monthly and have enjoyed a variety of talks given by members of our parish. Bryan Silletti's theme was "God in Sailing" and Cathy Whitnall told us about her spiritual experience in attending the Oberammergau play. Charleen gave us a view from both sides of the Boer War and Margaret Branscombe introduced us to "Moving to Learn". Paul Masters returned to give us more insight into Scouting and Tori Silletti gave a moving account of modern-day slavery. Mike explained the need for the food bank in Cobham and how it was managed. In January, following our short AGM, we welcomed Yvonne Nicholls into our branch when she was enrolled by Mike. We "entertained" ourselves on one occasion, when our speaker was unable to come, by recalling "special" events we had attended. In July we had our annual tea party to which members of branches in the Leatherhead deanery were invited. Our theme was "Theme Tunes" and how they brought back memories of both radio and television programmes we had enjoyed in the past.

We have not had any day outings since the pandemic but we have enjoyed socialising over tea or coffee at Denbies, Squires in Cobham and Squires in East Horsley.

We had a cake stall in Church in October.

Our Christmas lunch was enjoyed by our members and we were pleased that Mike and the clergy team were able to join us.

Sadly, Eileen Ranger, who had been a member but had moved to a nursing home, died and Joan Painter moved away from Cobham. Hazel Spalding, who had been a member for many years and a regular attendee of the Friday morning communion service, died in December.

We have continued to hold T4U bi-monthly. We see this event as our offering to the community and welcome anyone who would

like to join us for an afternoon of fellowship, tea and cake.

We would love to have more members join us so if anyone is interested why not come to a meeting and learn more about the MU and how we function as a branch. We meet on the last Thursday of the month in the lounge at Church House Gate House.

Branches within the Mothers' Union endeavour to raise funds to support the various MU projects both at home and abroad. We held two raffles, and had a cake stall which, together with the profit from our Christmas lunch, raised £401.

## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### The Church's Work

*Report by Shirley Mensa*

#### Vision for 2023/24 & Achievements

Our vision for the Children & Family Ministry in 2023/24 was to create more places and points of interaction where our community could experience a sense of belonging, caring, and learning, thereby becoming part of the St. Andrew's family. Here's an overview of our achievements and ongoing efforts towards this vision:

#### Investing in Spiritual Growth:

We recognized the crucial role our Kids' Church leaders/volunteers play in the ministry and prioritized their spiritual growth through a spiritual retreat and reading a book together, meeting to discuss/pray. Providing support and training for Kids' Church leaders and volunteers is crucial for the effectiveness of the ministry. Organizing events like the Pancake Evening, Party in the Park, and Easter High Tea fosters a sense of community and fellowship among volunteers.

#### Community Events:

We organized various community events throughout the year, including the Pancake Evening, Party In the Park, Easter High Tea, and special celebrations such as Coronation Day. These events provided opportunities for families to come together, experience fellowship, and deepen their sense of belonging. Organizing holiday clubs, retreats, and special events like the Light Party and Remembrance Day Crafts provides opportunities for children and families to engage with the church in fun and meaningful ways.

#### Youth Support Programs:

Our engaging youth programmes, including discipleship for years 6,7,8 and years 9,10,11 aimed to provide a safe space for teens to connect, grow, and explore their faith. We facilitated visits to other churches to expose youth to diverse worship styles and encourage spiritual growth. Encouraging

youth to serve in church and community activities fosters a sense of responsibility and compassion: at OASIS, the sound desk, and serving at community events.

#### Recognition and Appreciation:

We regularly celebrated and appreciated the dedication of our volunteers through thank-you notes, acknowledgment during church services, and the year ending dinner. This helped foster a culture of appreciation and support within the ministry.

#### Training and Equipping:

To ensure the safety and effectiveness of our ministry, we provided regular training sessions to empower volunteers with up-to-date safeguarding training, child safety protocols, and new procedures for Sunday activities.

#### Feedback and Reflection:

We received positive feedback from volunteers regarding our efforts to create a supportive and spiritually enriching environment. Volunteers appreciated opportunities for personal growth, reflection, and community building.

#### Continued Engagement with Families:

We continued to create warm and welcoming environments for families, ensuring they feel valued and included in church life. Our programmes, such as Little Fishes and youth support initiatives, aimed to engage families and nurture faith in children.

#### Community Outreach:

Collaborating with local businesses, schools, and organisations demonstrates the church's commitment to serving the community beyond its walls. Events like the Pancake Evening, Light Party and Party in the Park provide opportunities for families to connect and engage with the church in a relaxed setting.

#### Moving Forward:

As we move forward, we will continue to evaluate our ministry initiatives through the lens of families, seeking feedback and actively engaging with the community. We remain



committed to creating inclusive, supportive, and spiritually enriching experiences for all members of the St. Andrew's family.

Through our collective efforts, we believe that we are positioned for growth and impact in the years ahead, as we continue to serve and support families in our community.

## **St Andrew's School**

*Report from the Headteacher, Stina Witkowski*  
(See the back cover for photographs)

The first half of the academic year at St Andrew's has flown by and, as always, we have filled it to the very brim with inspirational learning opportunities for our students. The St Andrew's Church team has been with us every step of the way, supporting our pupils each week through clergy led assemblies, and coming in to read with pupils as well as being part of the Faith Ambassadors Club. Revd. Mike Branscome has also supported the school as it gained a new Head Teacher and Assistant Head this year.

The school has created and nurtured many partnerships with other schools and charities over the years and it is something we treasure. The American Community School has funded countless school trips and swimming lessons for our pupils as well as Reed's students, who come in weekly to sit and share a book with our pupils. Oasis charity in town worked with us over Christmas to ensure that 35 sets of £100 vouchers and presents went home to families in our community.

As a school, we work closely with St Andrew's Church and some of the wonderful highlights have been our Christmas Carol service and nativity play. At the end of the Autumn Term the whole school walked to St. Andrew's church for our annual Christmas service. The children really entered the spirit of Christmas with lively songs, readings and prayers. We welcomed a large number of our parent community as well as members of St. Andrew's church who enjoyed applauding the different class songs. Special thanks go to the clergy of the church for their warm welcome, David and Louise Fuge for the music, Carrie Taylor for rehearsing the readers and all the parent helpers who walked with us.

Our younger pupils took part in a traditional nativity play this year. They worked tirelessly to learn all the words to their songs and also shared some at the Church Carol Service.

We celebrate our children in assembly each week with certificates for achievement and upholding the weekly school value. Each half

term teachers invite children to the Head teacher party as a reward for demonstrating the values for the whole half term and for effort with their homework. The award can be achieved as easily for an act of kindness to another, as it can be for something of an academic nature.

Anti-bullying week and Safer Internet Day were held to make sure our pupils are safe and their mental health and wellbeing protected.

### **Remembrance Sunday**

St. Andrew's School took part in the Cobham Remembrance Parade along with ex-servicemen and women, army cadets, St. John Ambulance cadets, Scouts, Cubs, Guides and Brownies. The parade marched down the High Street, Church Street and through the churchyard to St. Andrew's Church. The children sang the first hymn and observed the 2 minutes silence before going over to the church hall to do activities related to poppies and remembrance. The parade then re-formed for the return march.

### **We celebrated Black History Month**

Elmbridge Museum presented a wonderful assembly to share with the Key Stage 2 children about the story of Cesar Picton. We learnt he was born in Senegal and brought across to Britain through the Atlantic Slave trade where he was then placed to work for Sir John Phillips. Over his lifetime he eventually became a wealthy coal merchant who later lived in Kingston.

### **BigFoot Arts Company – BHM workshops 'Carnival of Heroes'**

Carnival of Heroes was a carnival of fun for the children! Music, dancing, singing and a whole host of information, celebration and contemplation about past, present and future black heroes. The cast were fantastic fun and laughter could be heard echoing down the halls of the school! A brilliant afternoon enjoyed by all.

### **We celebrated our amazing school grounds with Outdoor Learning**

It has been such an immense privilege to lead an outdoor learning session with every class over the last two weeks. It has been wonderful to see everyone from Reception to Year 6 out and about in nature. As a result of our learning, we've become better scavengers, lots of people have seen several very jumpy frogs, we've built a new compost heap from pallets and our raised beds are much clearer ready for overwintering before they spring to life next year.

**The school has supported and raised funds for a variety of charities this year.**

Young Minds – hello yellow day

Unicef – collection for Christmas Jumper Day and at the Nativity Play

Poppy Appeal and took part in Remembrance Sunday march and church service

Children in Need – Christmas jumper day

**Christmas Fair**

PTA put on an amazing Christmas Fair. The Mayor of Elmbridge Councillor Richard Williams, opened the Christmas Fair and messaged : *‘St Andrew’s Christmas Fair was a really busy and happy event. We chatted to Yvonne Bond, Chair of the Friends of St Andrew’s and to Stina Witkowski, Head Teacher and to the most senior pupils. We won on the tombola, but I was utterly useless at bowls. This is a great, very friendly school and a joy to go to.’*

**Lantern Parade**

The Christmas lantern parade was back in force! We had a great show of lanterns both large and small. A good number of our school community brought their own lanterns, made a new lantern, or carried one of the 'big builds' which we're grateful to have been gifted. The parade down to the high street, led by the marching band, looked and sounded superb! A second huge thanks to Cobham Furniture Store who helped transport the lanterns back up the hill afterwards. Well done to all involved - it was great to see St Andrew's in the thick of our village community once again.

*‘St Andrews Primary School did a simply wonderful job creating more lanterns than we have ever had! It was so lovely to see so many families from the school and beyond joining in.’*

## FAITH AND SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS

### Oasis Childcare Trust

*Report by David Taylor*

Outreach forms the beginning, middle and end of all that is done at Oasis. The team works with families, supporting them on their journey to overcome their challenges. and currently Oasis is looking after 129 families in a variety of ways.

St Andrew’s focuses its support on the Freedom Programme for Survivors of Domestic Abuse. 15 individuals signed up for each programme which ran twice in 2023. The course helps participants recognise the different manifestations of abuse, the impact on their self-esteem, the impact on children and the long-lasting implications on their children’s lives as they grow up in an abusive environment. It also enables them to come out of their isolation, giving them a sense of community and the opportunity to forge friendships within a safe and secure space.

Oasis also runs a Fresh Food and Toiletries programme during the school holidays and over 100 families benefitted from this in 2023. The young people from St Andrew’s have helped in the preparation and distribution of the food bags and Oasis is particularly grateful for this. St Andrew’s sees this an important part of the young people’s Christian discipleship.

### Cobham Area Foodbank

*Report by Christina van Roest trustee and general manager*

Another year of Cobham Area Foodbank serving the Community has passed.

In December we commemorated 10 years of the existence of our foodbank, nothing to celebrate outrageously as it is sad enough that we are still needed in this ‘affluent’ area in Surrey.

We helped many families struggling with the Cost of Living, the rising energy costs, the rocketing bills for the rent payments, the regular household bills and all the unexpected costs that crop up in the year.

Many of our clients have full time jobs but with not enough funds to pay for all essentials and additionally food for them and the children.

We are thankful for your continued support and generosity. Your response to our appeals and requests made it possible to help many local families. In 2023 we distributed over 34,000 kg of food and since we opened in 2013 we have provided 250 tons of food and essential items to the deprived people in our area.

Nearly 1,000kg was donated by St Andrew’s Church Cobham this year and generous financial contributions have helped us to provide our service and pay our dues behind

the scenes. Our regular costs are insurance, maintenance and running of the very needed Mercedes Sprinter van, and the commercial rents we must pay to run our warehouse and distribution centre. Sometimes we have to buy additional items with a high price ticket (like: nappies, laundry detergents, laundry conditioners etc.)

None of the foodbank 'staff' takes any pay for the work needed; all donate their volunteer skills and personal time out of compassion and gratitude that we can help.

We are very fortunate to have a wonderful team of cheerful and flexible volunteers to keep our operation running smoothly throughout the year.

Extra efforts are requested during the Christmas season when we prepare hampers with special Christmas food, fresh vegetables and fruits from the market, fresh eggs and topped off with fresh meats from the local butcher. All our families could celebrate Christmas with lovely foods and Christmas Crackers.

We were chosen to be the Charity of the Year by Squires Garden Centre in Cobham and we are very grateful for their support. They were organising events and supporting our Charity with their collected funds of the day. There is a collection bin and a Charity money box to collect funds for the Food Bank.

It would be very appreciated if you could help us again in the New Year with prayer, your continuous support, the generous contributions of food and money, following our platforms on Facebook and Twitter where our list of essential items are published and regularly updated.

If you as the Church or as private members of the congregation would like to make financial contributions, you can donate directly into our bank account: you can find the details on our website.

Did you know we also work with Elmbridge Lottery? Find out how on our website.

Many thanks for your generous help and support. The very best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year.

## **Garden Route Children's Trust**

*Report by Paul Hurrell*

The Garden Route Children's Trust (GRCT) is a UK registered Christian charity, founded in 2006, that funds a number of feeding projects for pre-primary school children from under-privileged communities in selected regions of

South Africa. The children are provided with a nutritious breakfast of e'Pap every school day during the year. In 2023 the GRCT was able to feed over 8,500 children each day.

South Africa faces a triple burden of malnutrition among poorer children aged under 5 years, namely: Unsatisfactory nutrition; hidden hunger; and overweight. e'Pap is a pre-cooked porridge, blended from maize and soya, that contains a multitude of beneficial vitamins, minerals and trace elements. Studies, as well as reports direct back from the project leaders, show that the children experience better health outcomes, are able to play with more energy, and have greater levels of concentration and retention in the classroom as a result of their e'Pap breakfast. It only costs about £20 to feed one child a breakfast of e'Pap for a year.

Over the last 3 years, the number of feeding projects funded by the GRCT grew significantly to a total of 14, mainly in the Western Cape. The trustees took the decision in 2023 not to take on any more projects as the charity had reached the maximum number it could sustain with the current levels of income. The GRCT also decided to end its relationship with the Ermelo project with effect from end 2023.

The charity periodically funds other items for the benefit of the children. One such item in 2023 was enough paint to create new playgrounds that will ensure more creative and stimulating play.

The St Andrew's Outward Giving Committee proposed to increase their annual donation to the GRCT from £2,000 to £3,000. This generous offer was approved by the PCC and gratefully accepted by the trustees of the charity. The other main annual fundraiser, the Christmas Coffee and Cake Sale, held this year in the Oxshott Village Centre, once again raised over £3,000.

A new fundraising initiative called "Breakfast for Breakfasts" will be launched in the first half of 2024.

## **OM Himalayas (formerly OM Nepal)**

*Report from Peter Kelly, St Andrew's project champion for OM Himalayas*

Operation Mobilisation ("OM") in Nepal and the greater Himalayan region are growing in their caring and humanitarian ministry and in their efforts to advance the gospel. The year 2023 is on track to break records for people reached, aid delivered, gospel tracts, bibles

shared, and leaders trained, and it was a very strong year as well for churches started and families contacted. We will have details on this incredible year later in 2024, but suffice it to say that the partners like St. Andrew's who support OM Nepal should feel confident that their support is well used for the care of mind, body, heart, and soul to the people of this region.

A few highlights of 2023 include ongoing success of the AIDS family care ministry, and advances in the agriculture and farming programmes from the Shiloh Centre in Kathmandu — one particular item of note is the introduction of a giving programme for baby goats to remote families, who can benefit from the milk when the animals mature, and then create a herd and provide meat from adult animals — leading to a source of family financial security. Now that teams are fully decentralised and living in local communities, the Shiloh farm is a more of a centre for coordination, planning, and outreach. The actual hands-on training in sustainable agriculture is predominantly taking place in the local communities, which is proving to be quite effective.

OM continues to respond where needs present themselves and where they can be of use. In October 2023, OM mobilised to provide support in the aftermath of the earthquake in Western Nepal and this story was brought to life by Phil Slade, OM coordinator for the UK

and Nepal liaison to St. Andrew's, who spoke at our church service in October. We pray for Phil, his wife Elaine (also an OM worker), Ben (OM Nepal country leader) and all the workers in Nepal providing healing and loving support to local physical needs and spiritual support and hope to those who need to hear one simple truth; you were made by a God who loves you and who has created you for a purpose.

*We give thanks for the wonderful progress made in 2023, and pray for God's Spirit to continue to inspire, encourage and strengthen the work of OM in the Himalayas.*

## Transforming Lives for Good

*Report by Carrie Taylor*

Our coaching at St. Andrew's School continues to go well. We are in the process of starting with our 5th cohort of pupils. There are 3 children engaging in the coaching sessions with our 3 coaches. Some of the TLG families have come along to church events, such as the Parties in the Park, the Light Party and the Holiday Club and good relationships are being forged through these and through weekly phone messages to each child's parents about the sessions, goals and steps made. Teachers and support staff at the school welcome us in and it feels a privilege to work closely with them. We had a very positive Annual Review in November.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Christmas Lunch and Easter High Tea

*Report by Shirley Mensa*

The Charity Christmas Lunch, held on Christmas Day, is an annual event organized by St Andrew's Church with the aim of providing a warm and welcoming environment for those in the community who may be lonely or in need of extra support during the holiday season. Sponsored by Waitrose, Squires, and Babusya Galyna Charity, Oasis, this event has become a beloved tradition in our community and surrounding towns for 9 years

#### Event Overview:

**Date:** December 25th

**Venue:** Church Gate House

**Description:** The Charity Christmas Lunch offers a festive gathering where guests can

enjoy a delicious Christmas meal, companionship, and entertainment on Christmas Day. It is open to anyone in the community and surrounding areas who may be in need of support or simply seeking companionship during the holiday season.

**Highlights:** Festive decorations provided by Squires, and Babusya Galyna, gifts provided by Waitrose and Oasis, music by volunteers, a traditional Christmas meal provided by Waitrose, and heartfelt camaraderie among guests and volunteers.

**Sponsorship:** The event is generously sponsored by Waitrose, Squires, and Babusya Galyna Charity. Their support plays a vital role in its success and impact.

#### Success and Impact:

**Community Engagement:** The Charity Christmas Lunch has become a highly

anticipated event in our community, drawing attendees from various backgrounds and age groups. It has provided a valuable opportunity for individuals to come together, share in the holiday spirit, and forge connections with others.

**Positive Feedback:** Both guests and volunteers have provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about their experiences at the event. Guests appreciate the warm hospitality, delicious food, and sense of belonging, while volunteers express gratitude for the opportunity to serve and make a difference in the lives of others.

**Partnership Impact:** The sponsorship provided by Waitrose, Squires, and Babusya Galyna Charity has been instrumental in ensuring the success and sustainability of the Charity Christmas Lunch. Their generous contributions enable us to host the event on a larger scale and reach a broader audience each year.

#### **Learnings and Future Plans:**

**Volunteer Support:** One key learning from this year's event is the importance of having a dedicated volunteer team to assist with clean-up and post-event tasks. In the future, we will focus on recruiting volunteers specifically for this purpose to ensure a smooth and efficient wrap-up process.

**Continuous Improvement:** As we reflect on the success of this year's Charity Christmas Lunch, we remain committed to ongoing improvement and innovation. We will seek feedback from guests and volunteers to identify areas for enhancement and explore new ways to make the event even more inclusive and impactful in the future.

In conclusion, the Charity Christmas Lunch continues to be a beacon of hope and joy for those in our community who may need support or companionship during the holiday season. With the generous support of sponsors like Waitrose, Squires, and Babusya Galyna Charity, we are able to spread warmth, cheer, and goodwill to all who attend. As we look ahead, we are excited to build upon the success of this year's event and further our mission of serving those in need with love and compassion.

#### **Charity Easter High Tea**

The Charity Easter High Tea, an extension of the beloved Charity Christmas Lunch, is an annual event organized by St Andrew's Church to provide a warm and inclusive gathering for the community and surrounding

areas during the Easter season. Sponsored by Downs Solicitors, Waitrose, and Squires, this event offers an opportunity to engage with and support those in need of extra support while fostering connections within the community.

#### **Event Overview:**

**Date:** Easter Saturday

**Venue:** Church Gate House

**Description:** The Charity Easter High Tea is a festive event that welcomes guests from the community and surrounding areas to enjoy an afternoon of delightful treats, companionship, and entertainment in celebration of Easter. It serves as an extension of the Charity Christmas Lunch, offering a similar atmosphere of warmth and inclusivity.

**Highlights:** Easter-themed decorations, a variety of sweet and savoury treats, live music or entertainment, and opportunities for guests to connect with one another and volunteers.

**Sponsorship:** The event is generously sponsored by Downs Solicitors, Waitrose, and Squires, whose support contributes to its success and impact in the community.

#### **Success and Impact:**

**Community Engagement:** The Charity Easter High Tea has proven to be a popular and highly anticipated event in our community, drawing attendees from near and far. It provides a valuable opportunity for individuals to come together, celebrate Easter, and strengthen bonds with one another.

**Support for Those in Need:** The event serves as a means of reaching out to and supporting those in the community who may be in need of extra support during the Easter season. It offers a welcoming and inclusive environment where guests can feel valued and cared for.

**Partnership Impact:** The sponsorship provided by Downs Solicitors, Waitrose, and Squires plays a crucial role in the success of the Charity Easter High Tea. Their generous contributions enable us to host the event on a larger scale and provide additional resources and support to our guests.

#### **Area of Focus Moving Forward:**

##### **Integration with Community Events:**

Looking ahead, one area of focus for the Charity Easter High Tea is how we can draw our guests into other community events held at St Andrew's Church. By showcasing (at the Easter High Tea and Christmas Lunch) the range of activities and programmes available,

we hope to encourage continued engagement and participation beyond the Easter season.

**Promotion and Outreach:** We will explore creative ways to promote our other community events during the Charity Easter High Tea, such as through informational displays, promotional materials, and personal invitations

**Feedback and Evaluation:** We will seek feedback from guests to better understand their interests and preferences, as well as their willingness to participate in other community events. This feedback will inform our future planning and strategies for increasing engagement.

The Charity Easter High Tea continues to serve as a beacon of warmth, hospitality, and community spirit during the Easter season. With the support of our sponsors and the dedication of our volunteers, we are able to create a memorable experience for all who attend. As we look forward, we are excited about the opportunity to further integrate our guests into the vibrant tapestry of community life at St Andrew's Church, ensuring that they feel welcomed, valued, and connected throughout the year.

## Churches Together

*Report by Revd Charleen Hollington*

In 2022, after being in abeyance for some time due to the pandemic, an effort was made to get Churches Together in Cobham and Stoke D'Abernon going again, and this effort has continued well in 2023. Helen Pattison has continued as Chair, and Jane Berridge as Treasurer. Suzanna Knott is the very able secretary. Kim Plumpton who was chair of Churches Together for several years, departed for a new position in the URC and she has been replaced by Dan Balsdon.

Charleen Hollington currently represents St Andrew's clergy on Churches Together but there is a need for two lay representatives from St Andrew's as well. Unfortunately, despite several requests being made at PCC meetings and at services for a lay rep, still no-one has come forward.

In January, St Mary's hosted the annual Churches Together Service for Christian Unity, combining it with their Sunday sung evensong service. The theme for the Week of Christian Unity leading up to the service was Justice and Racial Equality. St Mary's also hosted the World Day of Prayer service in March. Both services were well attended.

In Lent, the pre-Covid practice of people from the different churches joining combined Lent groups was taken up again. 44 people joined the combined groups and St Andrew's was well-represented in this number. The groups used material from the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity which was well-received. It has been suggested that the combined Lent groups should happen every year, but this will need to be discussed within each church.

On Good Friday, Churches Together re-instituted the Cross of Witness in Hollyhedge Parade, using the cross provided by Sacred Heart. About 30 people stopped and stood around the cross during a two-hour period. This was an important and successful act of witness.

After many years of arranging the carols on the High Street, St Andrew's Oxshott were no longer able to do so, and the role fell to St Andrew's Cobham. Several volunteer musicians came to the fore, for which we are very grateful. A good crowd of singers turned up, and the evening was a success.

During the year, planning began for a Churches Together ten-week Alpha course beginning in January 2024, led by St Andrew's Cobham under Tori Silletti's leadership but with the participation and help of all the churches. Sacred Heart Church, as the most centrally positioned church, will host the course.

In addition to these specific activities, Churches Together provides a very valuable forum for the churches in our area to exchange information and find ways to support each other in their respective initiatives.

## Elmbridge Multifaith Forum (Registered Charity 122962)

*Report by Geoff Morris*

Our main events this year have been a visit to the Weybridge Synagogue, hosted by Rabbi Kath Vardi at the beginning of the year and a discussion in May, at Christchurch Esher, entitled "Different Faiths Living Together". Both had stimulating presentations leading to lively discussions.

Kawther Hashmi, with whom I am joint Secretary of EMF, is stimulating the cooperation of Faith Forums (or Fora?) within the Guildford area, encouraging those who are on-line or within a short distance to join each other's meetings. She has also hosted meetings in Guildford on Sunday afternoons of representatives of nearby Forums. We await a

report to our Committee at the next of our approximately quarterly meetings.

Our Committee has been strengthened by the addition of Sai Raviendrakumar (Hindu).

Nabil Mustapha, one of the Founders of EMF 20 years ago and Chairman until recently, has suffered from deteriorating health and died on 30<sup>th</sup> January, as I write this report.

We continue, under the leadership of Margaret Hicks, to help people to understand each other's faiths (without trying to 'convert!') and to work together.

## **Spiritual Cinema**

*Facilitated by the Vicar*

In 2023 we enjoyed fellowship and reflected theologically on what we have watched. We enjoy a wide variety of films looking at many themes and I am always fascinated to hear the spiritual reflections offered by those who gather month by month.

In 2023 we watched these films.

January – Brooklyn

February – Fisherman's Friends – One and All

March – Bank of Dave

April – The Apostle Peter and The Last Supper

May – The Chorus

June – Belfast

July – Juno

August – Julie and Julia

September – Life is Beautiful

October – Mrs Caldicott's Cabbage War

November – Downton Abbey A New Era

December – A Christmas Story

## **Village Day**

Village Day was organised this year in September by the Cobham Business Improvement District (formerly the Cobham Chambers of Commerce and now One Cobham). Unfortunately their plans came to nothing as there were issues over road closures. However in the afternoon the Church was open and Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust held their annual duck race. David Taylor gave a talk on the Church which, given the circumstances, was well attended and well received.



## PICTURES OF ST ANDREW'S SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

(See page 25)



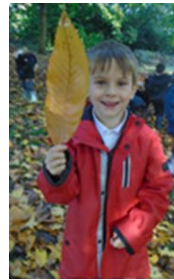
Nativity Play 1



Nativity Play 2



Remembrance Day



Discovering the World of Nature 1



Discovering the World of Nature 2



At St Andrew's Church



Nativity Play 3



With the Mayor at the Christmas Fair



At the Headteacher's Party



Lantern Parade