



St Mary the Virgin, Almondsbury

Annual Parochial Church Report

Presented at a meeting held on 14th May 2023

This combined report is presented in accordance with the Charity Commissioner's Statement of Recommended Practice commonly known as SORP 2005.

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Accounts of the Parochial Church Council for the year ended 31 December 2022 incorporating:

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- Detailed notes to the accounts;
- Independent Examiner's Report.

St Mary the Virgin, Church Road, Almondsbury, BS32 4DT

**Annual Report of the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council
and the activities of the parish generally for the year to 31 December 2022.**

Correspondence address: St Mary's Church, Church Road, Almondsbury, Bristol BS32 4DT

PCC Members:

Rev Paul van Rossum (Associate Vicar)	Mike Jenkinson (Chair/Lay Minister)
Astrid Domingo Molyneux (Lay Minister)	Clare Jefferis (Deanery Synod)
David Thomson (Deanery Synod)	Nick Roach (Treasurer)
Liz Tierney (Safeguarding Officer and Data Protection Lead)	
Tim Jefferis (Churchwarden)	Dick Avery
Thelma Gibbs	Rosemary Griffiths
Mo Pearson	Rose Pullan
Sandy Thompson	Mike Tierney
Pam van Rossum	Judi Thomson (PCC Secretary)

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The Parish of St Mary's, Almondsbury, is part of the Benefice of Almondsbury and Pilning with Compton Greenfield, which is currently in vacancy.

The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure. The appointment of PCC members is governed by and set out in the Church Representation Rules and is from those on the Electoral Roll of the Parish. The PCC is registered with the Charity Commission (registration number 1131407).

ASSOCIATE VICAR'S REPORT

This report relates primarily to the calendar year 2022. For the first half of the year Philip Rowe was in post as Vicar as we emerged from the pandemic and live streamed services were replaced by in-person services.

Unfortunately, the choir decided that it could not continue and disbanded. As a result, the previous pattern of three services was replaced by a new pattern of an 8.30am said Communion Service and a 10am All-Age Service.

Then, following Philip Rowe's retirement in August 2022, the role of 'vicar' has been carried out by Astrid Domingo Molyneux, Mike Jenkinson and myself working together. As well as leading services in Almondsbury, we have also taken services and funerals at St Peter's, Pilning.

As Philip wrote in his report last year, the role of the Vicar working with the Parochial Church Council is the promotion of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. At St Mary's we have focused this on our Mission Statement of 'Connecting with God, each other and our community.'

We have continued to connect with God. As we moved through 2022 confidence grew and numbers at services have returned to pre-pandemic levels. For example, over 500 people took part in the two Christingle Services on Christmas Eve. Messy Church is meeting regularly every month in Church and the monthly Saturday morning prayer meeting has continued in-person with healthy numbers attending.

We have also continued to connect with each other, particularly through the coffee time after the All-Age service. The house group has continued online and in 2023 a new weekly lady's group has started to meet in church. The Daily Thought email has also continued, with over 200 people receiving it each day.

We have connected with the community through various means. The weekly toddlers' group meets every week in Church in term-time. The ministry of the Church in being available for private prayer during the week has been enhanced by the new glass doors and underfloor heating. We continue to contribute to school life through an input to an assembly every two weeks by Pam Skelding and through the work of the foundation governors. We have continued to promote a 'Charity of the Month,' which both raises awareness and funds. We also support local agencies including the Sisters of the Church Food Bank in St Pauls, Bristol North West Home Bank, and the Salvation Army Christmas Toy appeal.

We are hugely grateful to all those who, often in unseen ways, have worked hard to enable us to do all of this in ever changing circumstances. It is through good teamwork and God's grace that the mission of St Mary's has continued to grow through the year.

We are currently working with the Diocese on the appointment of a new vicar to lead the South Severnside Benefice of Almondsbury, Pilning and Compton Greenfield. We will report on progress at the AGM.

Paul van Rossum, Associate Vicar

CHURCH WARDEN

Having been elected at the Extraordinary Parish Meeting on 10 July 2022 and then attended the on-line Archdeacon's Visitation in August, I am privileged to serve the church as Churchwarden.

I will leave matters concerning the fabric and furnishings of the church to the Finance and Buildings report and matters concerning worship and mission to the Worship and Mission report.

Following the retirement of Philip Rowe in August 2022 the church worship has been sustained by the Associate Vicar and the Licensed Lay Ministers (Paul, Astrid and Mike) and we are profoundly grateful to them for their hard work week in and week out. We are also grateful to all of the volunteers who work hard to ensure that all the church groups, activities and processes have continued. Through the efforts of all these people we have continued to offer worship, teaching and fellowship in the church and also have reached out to touch the lives of many others.

My primary focus has been on managing the process for appointing a new vicar to the South Severnside benefice. This usually takes in excess of 12 months and sometimes much longer, so I am pleased to report that we have made good progress and a timetable has been agreed, which anticipates the new incumbent taking up their post in October or November 2023.

We are working jointly with the other churches in the benefice (St Peter's Pilning and All Saints Compton Greenfield) to ensure that we can compile an accurate and compelling picture of the benefice and the three churches. We are additionally working with Father Charles Sutton (Area Dean) and Canon Mark Pilgrim to make sure that we capture a 'personal specification' for the new incumbent that reflects the needs and opportunities of the whole benefice.

We have agreed with the diocese that the new incumbent's sole pastoral responsibilities will be the South Severnside Benefice, which will help ensure that the churches of Almondsbury, Pilning and Compton Greenfield are able to continue to serve the parishioners.

Tim Jefferis, Church Warden

WORSHIP AND MISSION

We have continued to receive reports on various aspects of the church's spiritual life and on how the church is functioning. These are considered and recommendations made to the PCC.

A new Ministerial team format is in place, following Philip's retirement in August and is working well. Paul, Mike and Astrid are getting to know the 8.30 service attendees and it is reported that they are very appreciative.

Paul is also taking a Communion Service at Pilning on the first Sunday of the month, as Philip used to do.

It is recognised how hard the ministerial team are working, especially with the extra unseen work of managing email requests and concerns as well as funerals etc. It will be a relief when a new minister is in place.

It is also recognised how an unseen army of welcomers, AV team, cleaners, Praise group members, Banner ladies, readers, prayer folk, etc pull together.

The 10.00am service is well attended and there is good 'chatting' afterwards – always a good sign of a loving community and an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to minister to the Church 'body'. The Catering team do a great job providing drinks etc.

The wider Community Services have been well attended e.g. Remembrance, Carol, Christingle. It is often commented on how the local community or visitors pop into church for some reflection time.

The Charity of the Month focus engages the congregation in looking beyond our immediate concerns.

The Tea, Toast & Prayer continues once a month and is well attended.

2 small groups are running.

Messy Church and Toddlers continue to provide a service to the community.

The Good Friday Activity morning is very busy.

*Pam van Rossum, Chair, Worship and Mission Team
and Rose Pullan, Ex-Chair, Worship and Mission Team*

BUILDINGS

Thank you everyone who has helped so much with our Finance and Buildings this year. Revd Philip Rowe, took on many F&B duties at cost to his free time and ministry. Nick Roach's work

as treasurer is excellent, and the Church would be lost without the knowledge and hard work of Dick Avery, Gerry Annis, and Graham Jeffery. Tim Jefferis has offered PCC wise strategic guidance towards prioritising our spending. We acknowledge funding from Almondsbury Charity and the H R Stephens trust.

In terms of work, we have enjoyed a small rest from quinquennial and triennial business. The diocese is yet to announce the date of the next quinquennial review, but expect it to happen next year, 2024. We have pretty well tackled all the recommendations we intended to address. The remaining “deferred work” will demand big spending in the future. The possible costs on my list, broadly in the region of £100,000, would necessitate external funding.

Our proudest achievement must be the completed chemical treatment of the vestry ceiling. This required a morning of the contractor’s time, but also a huge amount of persuading, pleading and cajoling from John Ingle, Graham Jeffery and myself to get authorisation from the DAC (their adviser has strong views against chemicals). In time ceiling panels will need to be reinstalled and possibly some form of ventilation added. The Almondsbury Charity funded the redecoration of hoppers and downpipes in September. Thanks to support from the Stephen’s Trust, problems with the hearing loop have been rectified.

The treasurer’s report addresses our main concern - a financial shortfall. The first warnings came at the start of this church year, and the projected accounts have forced a severe reduction in our contribution to parish share (from £64000 requested versus £30000 pledged).

The church must therefore be frugal and cautious in other spending; hence delays to several items of maintenance and repair. One example of the items on hold is the felling of the Norway Spruce in the churchyard corner (notwithstanding possible future damage to graves and walls). We are seeking to reduce the frequency and cost of churchyard maintenance and grass cutting. With regards to deferred quinquennial recommendations, PCC did reject our advice to get quotes for “touching up” the Nave paintwork (my fault - I put the case clumsily). It would be worthwhile reviewing this decision, and also considering repairs or complete refurbishment of the woodblock floor in the Nave. (Both would require funding from external charities.)

Some spending has continued for reasons of safety. The lightning conductor was repaired last April. Repairs to the lights in the choir vestry await DAC advice. We are grateful to the bellringers for financial assistance towards the forthcoming replacement of spire ladders.

The costs of heating require careful monitoring, particularly as the price of fuel oil has doubled.

Finally, the current membership of F&B is depleted and, moreover, some of us will soon stand down. I would be delighted to talk to potential new members. In particular, our treasurer will be unable to continue much longer; an understudy is required in the first instance. The vital role of safety representative remains unfilled. I am slowly moving my place of worship to within walking distance of our house in Alveston, and wish to hand over to a new Chair of F&B.

Mike Tierney, Chair, Finance and Building Committee

FINANCIAL REVIEW

At the end of the accounting year (31 December 2022) our financial position continues to deteriorate. Our investment assets now stand at £128,863 as against £175,768 a year ago. A drop of £46,905 - partly due to the fall in the stock market (our funds are invested with the CofE

CCLA organisation) and partly because our expenditure exceeded income and was met by drawing down investment funds.

Our 2022 income was £68,368 against an expenditure of £103,805. A deficiency of £35,437 of which £30,205 represents an operating shortfall and the rest being unusual expenditure on church infrastructure.

All of our available reserves (i.e. those not tied up in Endowments and the like) are allocated to funds such as the Bell Fund, Building and Grounds and the Long Term Reserve. These represent a commitment to the enduring survival of a strong and healthy Church – at least over our 10 year planning window. The difference between the available reserve and the various funds to which the PCC has earmarked funds stands at £2k. This represents the PCC's ability to spend without eating in to the existing fund allocations.

The PCC has already taken a substantial step towards addressing our operating shortfall in 2023 by reducing our contribution to the Parish Share to £30k per annum. This was a very difficult decision to have to make and sadly reflects a position that many of our local churches are also having to make. We still need to find substantial savings elsewhere and have plans to significantly raise our income. We have committed to considering raising our Parish Share contribution later in the year as and when our funding position improves.

The PCC is committed to continuing all the support and services that the Church currently provides:

- Keeping the church warm for services, (including weddings and funerals) and during the week days to allow folk to continue to drop in, explore the church, enjoy coffee mornings, prayer meetings and all the religious, community and social activity that the Church supports.
- Support outreach activities.
- Support children and youth services such as Messy Church and Toddlers group.
- Support our charities such as missionary services in Uganda.

Nick Roach, Treasurer

SAFEGUARDING – PROMOTING A SAFER CHURCH

It is the aim of St Mary's Church to develop the spiritual and social life of the children and young people in church in a safe and secure environment and to protect them from harm whenever possible. St Mary's Church also aims to provide respectful, pastoral care for adults.

The church endeavours to follow the Safeguarding Principles of the Church of England which are:

- The care and nurture of and respectful pastoral ministry with all children, young people and adults.
- The safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable.
- The establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.

In terms of Safeguarding, it is the duty of the PCC, with the incumbent, to promote a safer church for all in the church community, and to ensure there is a plan in place to raise awareness of, promote training and ensure that safeguarding is taken seriously by all those in the church community.

Because St Mary's Church provides activities for children and young people and provides pastoral care for vulnerable adults the PCC is classed as a charity. Members of the PCC, as trustee of that charity, are eligible for DBS enhanced checks under the recommendation of the Church of England and Charity Commission. They are also expected to undergo the online Basic Awareness, Foundation and Raising Awareness to Domestic Abuse Training as recommended by the Diocese of Bristol.

St Mary's Church also continues with its requirement that all those wishing to work directly with children or to undertake pastoral visits on behalf of the church must go through our internal vetting procedure and obtain Enhanced DBS clearance.

We currently have in total 28 have also been cleared to do children's work and pastoral visiting. All PCC members have had DBS checks, as required by the Charity Commission, which is an additional 6 people. During the past year we have had 2 people who have left, 3 newly recruited workers and 7 renewals, with 3 potential new recruits.

The church office keeps an up to date record of all the DBS certificates, date of issue (renewal after 3 years), level of clearance, whether children's or adult work is undertaken and what safeguarding training has been done, which the highest level is required to be refreshed every 3 years.

The Church of England now expects that all church paid staff and volunteers to receive Safeguarding training appropriate to their level of involvement in church activities. Most Basic Awareness and Foundation training continues to be undertaken online. A zoom training programme is in place for the Leadership course. Most people who were required to, have completed their refresher training over the past year.

The Church of England have made it mandatory (as from the beginning of 2022) that all PCC members, group leaders and pastoral visitors to do the Raising Awareness to Domestic Abuse Training. This is an online module which will need to be refreshed every 3 years. There is also a new online Safer Recruitment & People Management Module which the PSO and one other need to be identified to do and refresh every 3 years.

The Church office will keep a record of all training undertaken so please notify the office and the Parish Safeguarding Officer of any C of E Safeguarding training undertaken.

We continue to use the online Safeguarding Dashboard – this allows us to be able to track all the Safeguarding Policies and Processes. The PSO is responsible for the Dashboard and has editor rights – and some PCC members have read rights to the dashboard. New in January 2023, there has been an addition to the Dashboard called the Safeguarding Hub – this will allow us to enter and keep track of all DBS records and training records, and this is work in progress.

The Safeguarding Policy and guidelines have been reviewed and updated, and approved by the PCC in March 2022. This policy can be found on the Church's website, under Safeguarding and Data Protection heading.

Thank you to those who have renewed their DBS certificate this year, also those who have undergone Safeguarding training. Their commitment to Safeguarding in our church is greatly appreciated as is the support from Philip Rowe, the Ministry Team, Group Leaders and the Safeguarding Team at Diocese of Bristol. Thank you for everyone who has supported me in my role.

Liz Tierney, Parish Safeguarding Officer

DATA PROTECTION REPORT

It is nearly 5 years since the new legislation for General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force. Though we have left the EU, these rules will still apply.

The following can be found on the Church's Website – The Data Privacy Policy, Data Consent Form and Data Protection Procedures Policy. There are copies of the Data Consent Form in church.

Various other data consent forms are available for other areas where personal data may be displayed in the public domain – like Noticeboards, the website or the Lich Gate.

All data, apart from the Lich Gate, is kept in the Church Office. The Associate Vicar, Data Protection Lead and Parish Administrator have access to the data. The Lich Gate data is kept by the Data Protection Lead and passed onto the Lich Gate Editor for inclusion in the Lich Gate.

We as a Church MUST with all emails relating to Church business using the BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) option – many of us already do use this. We must remember that not everyone wants their email address in the public domain.

Thank you to everyone who filled these Data Consent forms over the past year.

Liz Tierney, Data Protection Lead

PRAISE GROUP REPORT

What a joy to be normal again after a time of restrictions imposed during the pandemic and its aftermath. It is great to be back in church worshipping God together in words, song and with music. My thanks go to everyone for co-operating with the various impositions and still being mindful of others, even though formal restrictions have been lifted for some time.

The praise group has played throughout the year and has comprised various combinations of Astrid, Lyn, Matthew, Sandy, Simon, Jenefer, Susan, Stephen, Sue, Helen and me. Sadly, we have lost Sue, Stephen and Susan during the year, as they have moved out of the area or joined a more local church.

I would like to thank Astrid and Sandy for planning the worship each week. I would also like to thank the AV team for honing the sound and operating the projector and screens each week, allowing the whole congregation to participate in worship more effectively.

If anyone else would like to take part in the Group, as a singer or musician, they would be very welcome to join us. This could be on a regular or occasional basis, whatever suits. We are not looking for musical excellence; just a heart to work together to lead people in worship, and draw them closer to God.

Mike Jenkinson

REPORT ON BRISTOL WEST DEANERY SYNOD

Introduction

Following two years of continuing disruption and unforeseen changes within our local communities, across society and experienced on a global platform due to the Covid Pandemic it was with increasing relief that some aspects of life were returning.

All parishes reported significant impact over the last two years in terms of decreased income, attendance, volunteering; and also increased caution and anxiety.

Three Deanery Synods took place in 2022 and the key themes were:

- The Environment and Net-Zero Carbon Proposal**
- Up-Date in the Strategy -Transforming Church. Together**
- Responses to the Cost of Living and Energy Crisis**

Deanery Synods in 2022

March Deanery Synod: Net-Zero Carbon Proposal

Deanery Synod on 10 March 2022 focused upon shaping a motion to bring to Diocesan Synod to give the previously agreed Climate Emergency recognition a greater sense of urgency.

The Meeting was held in person at St Mary's Almondsbury.

The Main Theme:

Agreement of the Net-Zero Motion to take to Diocesan Synod: Rev Dr Andy Murray to move: *that this Synod recognises the need to take urgent and immediate action at a parish, diocese and national church level, in order to achieve the Church of England's NetZero Carbon targets by 2030. We affirm the national church and diocesan work currently underway regarding these targets. In addition, we commend the proposals outlined in the 'Bristol West Deanery NetZero Carbon (March 2022)' paper and we therefore call upon the Diocese of Bristol to formally consider the proposals and recommendations contained within the above paper with a view to identifying a programme of support targeted at parish level.*

This Net-Zero Motion was proposed, by the Rev Dr Andy Murray, and unanimously carried and accepted at Diocesan Synod on 11 June 2022.

The meeting was also attended by Clare Fussell, Diocesan Environmental Director, who provided a variety of practical actions and links to available resources for both parish and school.

The Uganda Link

The essential platform for this is *'building relationships of wholeness across culture with Christ at the center'*. In short this is about 'relationship'; between Christians, across cultures, over geography and with, sometimes, differing views of this world. It is about learning from each other and providing mutual support. The Uganda Link is a feature of every Synod and the working life of our parishes in the Deanery.

Two key thoughts at this time:

- The impact of the pandemic has been serious and challenging within the UK; in Uganda and many other parts of the world it is disastrous.

- Additional impacts of the virus have been loss of education opportunity for young women (due to an increase in pregnancies) and an increase in domestic violence.

May Deanery Synod: Transforming Church. Together

Deanery Synod on 19 May 2022 focused upon how we, as a Deanery, continue to shape the developing Diocesan Strategy to deliver across the Diocese.

The Meeting was held in person at St Andrew's Avonmouth.

The Main Theme: Transforming Church. Together

The Ven Neil Warwick, Archdeacon of Bristol, introduced this update on the development of the diocesan strategy. Archdeacon Neil began by asking members of Synod to share in small groups the best thing that had happened in church in the last week.

Archdeacon Neil said that, in developing the strategy, the Diocese has been keen to listen to less-heard groups, such as minorities and the disabled. A draft of the strategy was presented to Diocesan Synod in March; the strategy was developed further in response to feedback; and a bold bid for funds would shortly be submitted to the national church. Key parts of the strategy include the following:

Investing in people – sustaining the same level of stipendiary ministry as at present.

Investing in people's wellbeing – especially the wellbeing of stipendiary clergy.

Investing in volunteers – enabling all to serve as well as they can.

While the church is still present in every community, we are not representative: we need more under-18s and minorities, and people are critical of the church's treatment of women, the Windrush generation and LGBTQI+ people. A key objective of the strategy is to ensure that everything we do is sustainable.

Uganda Up-Date

Ali Rowe (St Mary's Almondsbury) reported that a group of about 13 people from the Deanery plan to visit Uganda from 14 to 31 October 2022. Others will be welcome to join the group. Ali was about to move to Kingswood and South Gloucestershire Deanery, and she thanked members of Synod for their support and hospitality: being the Deanery Uganda Representative has been a real joy, she said. The Revd Janet Lee (Christ Church Clifton) thanked Ali for her leadership of the Uganda link. Janet updated Synod on a Deanery project to support girl children who have become pregnant during the coronavirus pandemic.

October Deanery Synod: Cost of Living and Energy Crisis

Deanery Synod on 5 October 2022 focused upon the impacts of the current cost of living and the energy crisis.

The Meeting was held in person at St Peter's Henleaze.

The Main Theme: The Cost of Living and Energy Crisis

The Rev Chris Dobson was welcomed as the facilitator for the evening's discussion. Chris highlighted recent decisions by the Government led by Prime Minister Liz Truss and Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng that benefitted the rich and had a negative impact on the poorer and more vulnerable members of our society.

He invited the Synod to explore and discuss three questions:

1. How might our churches respond to the cost of living and energy crisis?
2. What are the challenges for us as we make our response?

The wide range of suggestions and Responses from Synod members were outlined and circulated throughout the Deanery and within the Diocese. They are attached to the minutes that were circulated following this Synod.

Uganda Report

Rev Janet Hill updated Synod on the Deanery trip to our link Dioceses in N Uganda which would take place at the end of October. Synod members participating in the trip joined Janet in outlining what the trip would include and prayer cards were distributed to Synod members for use before and during the trip.

THANKS

The PCC employs Matthew Thomas as Organist and Judi Thomson as Church Administrator. All other routine activities are undertaken by volunteers and Council places on record its appreciation of these volunteers who give their time and skills to the church and community.

ADOPTION

This report was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 21st March 2023 for presentation to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 14th May 2023.



St Mary the Virgin, Almondsbury

Reports from Organisations

Distributed with the Annual Parochial Church Report

Presented at a meeting held on 14th May 2023

THE LICH GATE

General

Following the easing of the Covid-19 restrictions and public events and meetings recommencing, external content for the magazine returned to near pre-Covid levels at the beginning of the year. The combination of post Covid recovery and the conflict in the Ukraine has led to a global cost of living increase that is affecting both advertisers and the printers.

In particular, the printers announced a price increase in December 2022 for 2023; having kept the prices stable throughout the pandemic when they themselves experienced significant loss in business revenue. This increase is 11.5%, but they did propose that it could be reduced to moving to a slightly lower grade of paper (and also reducing the number of pages). This coupled with anticipated reductions in advertisers that always accompany the new advertising year, has led to the conclusion that there is a real risk that the magazine would operate at a loss during 2023 and that significant action would be required to prevent this (and for the magazine to continue to be even produced at all).

Editorship

I did advise over a year ago that I would be giving up the role of editor at the end of January 2023, and that the February 2023 edition would be my last. This was timed to coincide with the new advertising year which starts in March. I am delighted to advise that Mr Garth Jackson has offered his services and following a formal review process managed by the PCC that he has been confirmed in this role.

Garth is a local businessman who is very active in the community and he currently runs the Almondsbury Active centre that was previously the social club on the Almondsbury Parish Hall & Recreation ground complex. The complex itself is a registered charity (managed & run by its trustees) and since taking over in January 2019, Garth has managed the facility through the entire Covid 19 pandemic and has made significant changes and improvements to its running and operations. He has already started to take on the challenges of the Lich Gate and to head off the potential issues it faces.

Distribution

Ray Daniels who has been managing the group of volunteers who deliver the magazine announced at the end of last year that he was no longer in a position to carry out this role. Mr Steve Townsley volunteered to take this activity over – commencing with the February 2023 edition (pending confirmation of the new editor – and if the magazine was to continue at all) and has acted proactively to establish the necessary contacts with the printers and with Ray for a handover

On-Line

PDF copies of the magazine are posted to the Almondsbury Community Facebook site and to a dedicated FB magazine site (339 members and increase from 229 last year). There is a dedicated Email for the magazine: editor.lichgate@yahoo.com

Printing

All issues during 2022 / 2023 were produced on time – Motion Printers of Severn beach who print it are reliable and flexible and provide a very good service. Personally, I am very happy with them and I see no reason for any change in this area even given the project price increase as these cost issues will impact all other printers and they were by far the cheapest (and best) provider when they were selected approximately six years ago.

Thanks

My grateful thanks to everyone involved with the Lich Gate magazine and for their help and support during my time as the editor. I wish Garth, John Ingle and Steve all success for the coming year I have met with Garth and a member of his staff who will be working on the magazine, I am in the process of handing over to them and I will continue to be available to help in any way I can for as long as they can put up with me.

Edward Ranger, Editor

CHILDREN'S WORK

The children's group meets each week throughout the year during the All- Age service. There are about 5 regular attendees and sometimes more children who are visiting. There is no Youth group.

Last year's Good Friday Activity morning was very well attended with 56 children and 40 adults in addition to our helpers. People had returned after our last two Easter lockdown videos.

An Elevensies event with Treasure Hunts, was held after the service at the beginning of September to 'kick off' the term. It was quite well attended with a good buzz including younger children and Dads. It did not, however, bring in extra families to the service before.

The Toy and Gift Service with pop up Nativity, included a few extra children but numbers were lower than expected. Several bags of toys were taken to the Salvation Army hub at Staple Hill.

The Christingles were as popular as ever, especially the second one. There were about 500 attendees of which a large proportion were children and young adults. £762 was collected for the Children's Society.

Pam van Rossum

BABIES AND TODDLERS GROUP

Toddlers is growing. We have 5 lovely new mums who have met and made friends, and sit together every week! The Glebe wheel in ladies from the home and we give them tea and coffee. They love to watch the children and shake shakers and join in with singing nursery rhymes! We have grandmas and parents, mums and some dads. The heating is a bit hit or miss though and it is often cold in the lady chapel. We are thinking maybe we need a heater to switch on in the lady chapel.

Sandy Thompson, Leader

OASIS GROUP

The group that meets after school monthly on Mondays is still on hold following Jan's operation. We fully intend to have our group start again when warmer weather comes!

The families keep in touch as friends and it would be good to meet for prayer when possible to prepare for the coming season.

Thanks for all helpers and the support of the wider church.

Jan Cooper and team (Sandy, Sue, Ro and Michael)

MESSY CHURCH

Messy church is very well attended and numbers are growing. We have between 60-70 parents and children attending each month. We have a short Introduction after the children have a drink and biscuit then a child friendly bible story on the overhead screen followed by a song. 6-7 crafts related to the story are set up on tables for the children to spend an hour doing them. Grace is sung before the children have a meal. Sessions usually run for 2 hours. Mo and I are very grateful to our dedicated team without their help it would not be possible to undertake this important mid-week ministry.

Sandy Thompson and Mo Pearson, Leaders

CATERING COMMITTEE

I took over the running of the catering committee when Alison and Philip retired last summer.

The first big event we ran without Alison was the Cream Teas for the Village Fete. This raised a considerable amount for St Peter's Hospice.

Songs of Praise 19th June held in the vicarage garden after which cake and tea / coffees were served.

Messy church has continued to thrive and the ladies who serve up meals from the kitchen are to be applauded for the sterling work that they do. However, apart from overseeing the use of the kitchen the committee does not get involved.

A Parish Lunch was held in the vicarage garden on Sunday 17th July Over fifty people were served with a ploughman's lunch plus desserts.

The church's farewell and presentation service to Philip and Alison was held on the 7th August and was followed by cake, pastries and tea / coffee.

Unfortunately we lost a valuable member of the team when Liz Tierney resigned from the committee The number of members now stands at only four.

18th December the committee served mince pies and mulled wine after the carol service. It went very well.

The committee decided there was a need for a Policy For The Use Of The Kitchen and therefore one was drawn up and approved by the PCC.

Since a visitor to the church was observed in the kitchen it was decided for reasons of hygiene to keep the kitchen locked.

The cleaning of the kitchen was initially done by Pam Skelding's team of volunteers. However it has since been decided that as the kitchen is cleaned after every use this is no longer needed.

The coffee rota continues to be a bit of a problem but after a recent appeal we have a few new volunteers.

I would like to thank everyone, the committee members and others who willingly offer their help with various events.

Rosemary Griffiths

BELLRINGERS

Dare I say that 2022 was the year we regained a degree of “normality”? In terms of activities, the bells have been rung where possible on Sundays and for weddings and practice nights. There was a large amount of ringing for the various Christmas services and activities with the only disappointment the lack of ringers to ring at midnight on New Year’s Eve 2022/ Day 2023.

Thanks must go to the following people.

- Gerry for maintenance, risk assessments, CCTV, and being able to see the bells in glorious technicolour, fly cleaning and just about everything else that wouldn’t have been done without him!
- To Philip and Paul for their support of the ringers throughout the year and we wish Philip a very happy retirement
- Adam for continuing as secretary and wedding organiser and doing all the paperwork and keeping us abreast of the news and developments, locally and nationally as well as being “Statto”, with all the facts and figures below.
- To our members, guests and visitors, without whom we couldn’t function.
- Tim as Treasurer and Adrian as Deputy Tower Captain
- Welcome back Steve and Julia 😊

In statistics the story of 2022 is:

- Attendance on Sundays ranged from 3 to 9, with the average being 5.6 down from 5.9, the average on normal Sundays last year. We rang on all 52 Sundays and had six or more ringers on 27 of these (52%, the same as on normal Sundays last year), seven or more on 12 (23% down from 24%).
- Attendance on Mondays ranged from 0 to 12, with the average being 8.4 down from 8.8 on normal Mondays last year. We rang for 33 of 52 Mondays, 12 of the missing Mondays being due to our decision to ring once a month at Chipping Sodbury, one to the AGM, one to the death of the Queen, three to Bank holidays, and two to lack of ringers. We had eight or more ringers on 20 or 33 Mondays (61% up from 58% on normal Mondays last year) and ten or more on 6 Mondays (18% down from 25% on normal Mondays last year).
- We have 12 resident ringers, four more than last year. Although none of the 12 are juniors, a daughter of one of the twelve has begun learning to ring.

Our ringing highlights were a touch of Primrose Minor, a touch of Kent Minor, a touch of Little Bob Minor, and a 240 of Plain Bob Doubles rung on the back six.

We rang a touch of 280 changes of Plain Bob Triples on 9 September to mark the death of the Queen and we rang three quarter peals in 2022 whereas we had rung none in 2021. These were:

- On 20 February a quarter of Plain Bob Triples to celebrate the life of Don Haskins who served as our tower captain for many years.

- On 2 June a quarter of Plain Bob Triples to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee
- On 7 August a quarter of Plain Bob Triples to mark the retirement of Philip Rowe, our vicar of 25 years
- A visiting band from Milton in Oxfordshire rang a peal of 5040 changes of Lambda Alliance Major on 12 November.

Otherwise, we rang 23 different methods versus 17 last year. These varied from Rounds to Norwich Surprise Minor taking in Rounds and Call Changes, Plain Hunt, Single Court Minimus, Reverse Bob Minimus, Double Bob Minimus, Cloisters, Nervous Breakdown, Grandsire Doubles and Triples, Plain Bob Minimus, Doubles, Minor, Triples and Major, St Simon's Doubles, St Martin's Doubles, St Nicholas Doubles, Reverse Canterbury Doubles, Stedman Doubles, Erin Doubles, Bob Minor, St Clements Minor, Spliced Plain and Little Bob Minor, Brussels Sprout Minor, Thelwall Minor, Cambridge Surprise Minor, King Edward Surprise Minor, and Norwich Surprise Minor.

We held an open day in the church and the ringing chamber for members of the church and the wider village to come and see what we do. We attracted at least 30 people of all ages into the tower and many of these braved the steep stairs into the belfry, whilst others took in the view via the CCTV cameras there. In the church 2 videos ran showing the restoration project, and we were well entertained by the fabulous handbell ringers and fed royally with tea and cake. It was a really great opportunity to show what we're about and we will look to hold another event in the Summer.

Members and friends lost were Brian and Wendy Goodliffe, and again we wish them well in their new home. And our thoughts with James Read as he continues to help nurse his partners' mother through illness.

We continue with our monthly joint practice with our friends at Chipping Sodbury. This allows us to ring Surprise Minor and Major and also give the learners a chance to have a stronger band around them as they progress.

Branch practices resumed, but not the quiz, so Almondsbury continued to be the reigning Quiz Champions until February 11th when we were the Quizmasters and yielded our title.

"A bell's not a bell 'til you ring it"

Marcus Booth, Tower Captain – Almondsbury