

All Saints

CHURCH, RISELEY

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



Annual Church Report 2025

KNOW CHRIST AND MAKE HIM KNOWN

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Dear Friends,



As I read this year's parish report and I look back on the year gone by, my heart is left overflowing with joy and thankfulness for all that God has been doing in and through All Saints Church. There has been much for us to celebrate and so much for us to give thanks to God for as we have sought to 'Know Christ and Make Him Known' as a church family.

800 Anniversary Celebrations: One of the undoubted highlights of the last year, was our programme of events celebrating the 800th anniversary of the appointment of our first Rector in 1224. As well as being thankful for the last 800 years of gospel witness and ministry at All Saints, we were able

to mark the occasion with a wonderful photo exhibition; a special celebratory service with a bring and share lunch and an afternoon of competitive (and not so competitive!) wheelbarrow racing; a strawberry cream tea in the Vicarage Garden and a sumptuous banquet at the Village Hall, as the gospel of Jesus Christ was proclaimed afresh throughout.

The Gospel Being Proclaimed: Of course, we don't just seek to 'Make Christ Known' in the special events, but in the day to day too, as we gather together for our weekly Sunday services and midweek groups, as we prioritise opening up the Bible and listening to God's word. Beyond our meetings, it has been wonderful to hear of how the church family has been sharing the good news of Jesus amongst their families and friends, in their workplaces and even with strangers on the bus!

Growing Numbers & Growing Faith: It should not come as a surprise then, that we have seen significant growth in numbers across all our regular meetings, not least our Sunday services and midweek young people's groups. The gospel of Jesus really is good news, and as Jesus' Lordship is prayerfully and lovingly proclaimed and modelled, God grows his church.

It is not all about numbers though, and actually it has been really exciting to see people across the church growing in their personal knowledge and love of Jesus and supporting and encouraging one another in all the ups and downs of life. Both those who have been followers of Jesus for many years, along with those who have come to faith more recently, have been bearing much fruit in all sorts of wonderful ways, not least persevering whilst enduring hardship – sure signs of God being at work in and through us.

God's Abundant Provision: And through it all, God has provided abundantly in meeting all our needs through his incredible generosity and kindness to us. The response from the Church Family to our financial situation as we outlined it at the end of 2024, was incredibly heartening, as has been people's willingness to step up to serve on the various church teams and the individual roles that people perform, often discreetly behind the scenes. We really do have the privilege of being part of an amazing church family, trusting in and seeking to glorify the most amazing God - all praise be to him!

Looking Forward:

Whilst we have much to thank God for as we look back, we also have much to hope for as we look forward. Behind the scenes, plans are being shaped for a phased re-ordering project, that will see the building become a more user-friendly space for a church building that is used flexibly across the course of the week. This will involve creating more 'open space' by removing the remaining pews from the back of church; repairing the floor where necessary; replacing the chairs; and creating more storage space, and I hope to be able to share more soon. We are also hoping to give some attention to the sound and heating systems, aware that both are 'limping' somewhat at the moment.

Rector's Report

As I write this, preparations are well underway for the Wild West Easter Holiday Club which promises to be a time of great excitement. This will be followed by our Easter celebrations, APCM and looking further ahead our annual Church Weekend at Home from 11th-12th October 2025. Please plan to come and join for these special occasions as we share life together and play our part in the life of the church as we continue to point one another to Jesus.

On a personal note, I am looking forward to the chance to take a step back from the regular duties of parish ministry whilst enjoying a sabbatical over the Summer. As well as an extended time in Brazil as a family, I am going to be focusing on practicing my Portuguese with some intensive lessons, along with going deeper in my own personal devotional life. I am very grateful to the PCC for agreeing to this. A few people have asked me if I am worried about leaving the church for a few months and things falling apart, and the answer is an unequivocal 'NO'! As is evidenced in this profile, the church is never about one person, but the whole body of Christ, and we have such a wonderful team at All Saints who know and love the Lord, that in his strength, I anticipate a wonderful time of encouragement and blessing for all.

And so, as I draw to a close, let me say a big thank you to everybody who has been involved in church life this past year. As you will see as you read the rest of this report, there is so much hard work by so many people as we seek to Know Christ and Make Him Known at All Saints. Can I thank you for all that you have done and continue to do as we continue to persevere in our mission to the communities where God has placed us.

We truly do have so much to be thankful to God for. And so let us continue to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus – to him be the glory, now and forever, Amen.

With love in our risen Lord and Saviour,

James

PS – Thank you to all who have contributed towards this years report – and especially to Karen Houck for lovingly and skilfully putting everything together!

James Isaacs

Agendas and Minutes

Agenda for Meeting of Parishioners

Parish of All Saints Riseley

Sunday 11 May 2025 during the 10.30am service at All Saints Church, Riseley

A joint meeting of:

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

For the election of Church Wardens.

Agenda for Annual Meeting of Parochial Church Council

Parish of All Saints Riseley

Immediately following the Meeting of Parishioners on Sunday 11 May 2025 at All Saints Church, Riseley

1. For the election of parochial representatives of the laity to the Deanery Synod
2. For the election of parochial representatives of the laity to the Parochial Church Council
3. For the appointment of the Independent Examiner
4. For the consideration of:
 - (a) A report on changes in the roll since the last Annual Parochial Church Meeting;
 - (b) An annual report on the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council;
 - (c) The financial statements of the Council for the year ending 31 December 2024;
 - (d) A report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the Church of the Parish;
 - (e) A report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod; and
 - (f) Reports on other matters of parochial or general church interest.

Notes:

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

Minutes of Annual Meeting of Parishioners

Parish of All Saints Riseley

12 May 2024

Present: Revd James Isaacs (Chair), Diane Sollars (Secretary), Christian Burnage, Sarah-Louise Cakebread, Pieter Carroll, Jemma Carroll, Richard Carter, Mark Curtis, Mark Eddon, Sally Eddon, Jackie Gardner, Robin Gardner, Penny Gray, Roger Gray, Judy Green, Martin Hargreaves, Roline Hargreaves, Ann Harrott, Emily Hermon, Barry Hermon, Monica Isaacs, Alison Keating, Jonathan Nicholls, Jo Nicholls, Margaret Nicholls, Phillip Nicholls, Verena Pentlow, Nicky Perfect, Amelia Prigmore, Julia Pullin, Jane Rhodes, Robin Rhodes, David Shaw, Dave Sheffield, Zoe Sheffield, Heather Shelton, Brian Simister, Lynda Simister, Catherine Smith, Graham Sollars, Kathryn Staniforth, Hugh Staniforth, Trevor Staniforth, Loreen Shelford, Sam Toseland, Rob Toseland, Catherine Veitch, Martin Wady, John Walker, Sue Walker, Rachel White, Sue Williams, Keith Williams, Mabs Wood, Wendy Wyatt, Maria Scott, Julie Henderson.

Apologies for Absence: Dudley Ferdinando, Jan Ferdinando, Alison Blanchard, Karen Houck, Dianne Jones, Katie Nicholls, Val Foster, Katy Carter and Zak Worts.

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

Election of Church Wardens

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

Richard Carter was willing to stand again as Church Warden. James Isaacs explained that Richard has now served 6 years which is the maximum set by the Church of England. As a result, the meeting will need to pass a resolution for Richard's re-election. This was agreed by everyone with no objections and no abstentions. The nomination for election form had been completed prior to the meeting. Richard was nominated by Jane Rhodes, seconded by Margaret Nicholls and unanimously agreed, there were no abstentions.

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

Sam Toseland prayed giving thanks for the work of the Church Wardens and their service to the Church.

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

Minutes of Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Parish of All Saints Riseley

12 May 2024

Present: Revd James Isaacs (Chair), Diane Sollars (Secretary), Christian Burnage, Sarah-Louise Cakebread, Pieter Carroll, Jemma Carroll, Richard Carter, Mark Curtis, Mark Eddon, Sally Eddon, Jackie Gardner, Robin Gardner, Penny Gray, Roger Gray, Judy Green, Martin Hargreaves, Roline Hargreaves, Ann Harrott, Emily Hermon, Barry Hermon, Monica Isaacs, Alison Keating, Jonathan Nicholls, Jo Nicholls, Margaret Nicholls, Phillip Nicholls, Verena Pentlow, Nicky Perfect, Amelia Prigmore, Julia Pullin, Jane Rhodes, Robin Rhodes, David Shaw, Dave Sheffield, Zoe Sheffield, Heather Shelton, Brian Simister, Lynda Simister, Catherine Smith, Graham Sollars, Kathryn Staniforth, Hugh Staniforth, Trevor Staniforth, Loreen Shelford, Sam Toseland, Rob Toseland, Catherine Veitch, Martin Wady, John Walker, Sue Walker, Rachel White, Sue Williams, Keith Williams, Mabs Wood, Wendy Wyatt, Maria Scott, Julie Henderson.

Apologies for Absence: Dudley Ferdinando, Jan Ferdinando, Alison Blanchard, Karen Houck, Dianne Jones, Katie Nicholls, Val Foster, Katy Carter and Zak Worts.

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

Minutes from the Previous Meeting: 23 May 2023

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved and signed by James Isaacs. There were no matters arising not covered in the Annual Profile. James thanked Diane Sollars for her work as PCC Secretary throughout the year.

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

James thanked Jonathan Nicholls for his long service as a PCC member, his term has come to an end this year.

Nominations for the PCC had been made in advance of the meeting, James invited other nominations at the meeting, none were made. There were 2 nominations to stand on the PCC. Loreen Shelford had come to the end of her 3-year term and was willing to stand again. The nomination of Loreen Shelford was proposed by Kathryn Staniforth and seconded by Roline Hargreaves. The nomination of Zak Worts was proposed by Dave Sheffield and seconded by Richard Carter. Both nominations were unanimously approved with no abstentions.

James thanked both Loreen and Zak for standing for service on the PCC and for everyone else on the PCC for their help in leading the Church in Riseley.

Appointment of the Independent Examiner

The appointment of Heather Shelton as Independent Examiner was proposed by Brian Simister, seconded by Phillip Nicholls and unanimously agreed with no abstentions. James thanked Brian and Heather for their work and the Church family for their ongoing generosity.

PCC Reports

James Isaacs signposted everyone to the reports in the Annual Profile for the Electoral Roll, PCC, Building, Finance and Deanery Synod reports and invited questions. He encouraged everyone to read the report if they had not yet had the chance to do so and thanked Karen Houck for her work in compiling it.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting closed.

Churchwarden's report

When we look back over the last year, the overwhelming emotion we have is gratitude.

Gratitude to God, for all his provisions to us. Our financial situation which we committed to Him in prayer as well as make sure that the church family was aware of our needs - and we have been blessed. Our thanks to Monica Isaacs for putting in some grant applications aimed at supporting our Family and Youth ministry have been very successful and we have seen the church supported from these organisations that have allowed us to increase the time we spend on this ministry as well as secure its future going forward.

Gratitude to God, as we have seen our numbers swell over the last 12 months. That is great, but we must prayerfully consider what He wants us to be doing with those greater resources.

Gratitude to God for the generosity of our congregation as they responded to the needs of the church family.

Gratitude to God for our Rector and his family and all that they do of course on Sundays but their service and obedience day to day.

Gratitude to God, for the willingness of people to give of their time and talents, whether it's looking after the church fabric, making sure the church grounds look neat and tidy, the general cleanliness of the church, for bible study leaders, tea, coffee and biscuit makers and servers, teaching our children on a Sunday morning, being available to support the Thursday drop in at the village hall for the high school kids in the village, being school governors, PCC members, flower arrangers, chair movers, support James with Sunday talks, and all the many other things that go on day to day and mean we have such an active church.

So, as we look forward at the coming year, we pray and would encourage all of you to make sure we seek God and continue in our service to one another as we see James and his family take some time to re-charge on their sabbatical in the summer.

We give thanks to God for all our congregation, new and old, great and small, young and mature, in good health and struggling, happy and sad - we have been given each other by Christ to encourage, love, accept and support one another. We pray that He gives us the strength to be there for each other as we look to Him on our earthly journey.

Kathryn Staniforth & Richard Carter

Parochial Church Council (PCC) Report 2025

The PCC consists of James Isaacs as Chair and Kathryn Staniforth and Richard Carter as Church Wardens. Lynda Simister serves as Safeguarding Officer and Brian Simister has responsibility for finance, they have both been serving as representatives at the Deanery Synod. The other members of the PCC are Mark Eddon, Dave Sheffield, Martin Hargreaves, Graham Sollars, Loreen Shelford, Trevor Staniforth, Zak Worts and Sarah-Louise Cakebread. Sam Toseland also attends PCC meetings as the Children and Families Worker.

The PCC meets approximately 6 times throughout the year to discuss regular topics in the life of our church, including church mission, finance, safeguarding and the upkeep of the church building. Another regular item on the agenda is to discuss the encouragements and challenges in the life of the church. Other topics have ranged from the Easter Holiday Club and Riseley Primary School to the Rector's sabbatical.

I have found being PCC Secretary has given me an interesting insight to the mission and direction of our church. I would encourage anyone who has considered being on the PCC to get involved and serve in this way.

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

Diane Sollars, PCC Secretary

Building and Fabric report



2024 was a special year worshipping in All Saints church as we enjoyed many celebrations to mark the 800 years since we first had a vicar. I'm pleased to say that the building is still in reasonable shape for its age and it is so good to see the church building used widely during the past year for so many different activities throughout the week. It is great to see both tower rooms used again on a Sunday morning for children's groups and if you haven't taken a look, pop up into the lower tower room which has been redecorated and recarpeted in 2024. Again, for this last year there is not a huge amount to actually report on in terms of structural work or repairs in the church building. Most the activities have again centred around

maintenance and keeping things spick and span.

The end of 2025 will see our Quinquennial inspection by our church architect and prior to this there are several jobs such as the Electrical Installation Condition Report, replacement of tower emergency lighting and smoke detectors which have to be completed prior to this. The quinquennial inspection always throws up a range of tasks that need to be undertaken and it is always a challenge to balance expenditure on repairs and planned improvements.

James, the Church Wardens and I have had more fruitful discussions during 2024 with our architect David Llewellyn on reordering of the space inside the church building. Plans will hopefully be approved by the DAC and we should see some progress during 2025. Chat to James or the wardens for further information.

I am again very thankful to all those who work on the cleaning rota, for Lesley and Graham for maintaining the churchyard and to all those who help with the DIY cleaning mornings twice a year. A big thank you to Zak who decorated the Vicarage Extension last autumn and did such a splendid job. We have also had new lighting and window blinds fitted which completes the transformation

I know that some Sunday mornings have been cold in church during the winter chilly weather but our old radiant gas heating system has limped on through another winter and just about keeps the building warm enough. We are not yet in a position where we feel it is right to spend significant sums of money to change a heating system that still basically does the job. I know that I keep saying this, but we do need to explore whether there might be opportunities for accessing a wider base of financial support for the church building from across the village and to seek potential grants that help to offset the considerable costs that are coming down the road ahead. This is particularly important at a time when we are facing roof, stonework repairs, new heating and internal reordering. If anybody feels they have the skills and energy to drive this, please let James know!

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

Dudley Ferdinando

Churchyard



It's hard to believe that we are at the start of another year. The past 12 months seems to have flown by in the life of All Saints Churchyard. It continues to look amazing throughout the year. This is mainly down to Lesley Death'e who works up there every week to maintain the look and feel of a cared for but not over manicured church yard. I hope you all agree it's working.

In the Autumn of 2024 extra bulbs were planted and these burst into life at the start of spring this year. Also, bulbs that were planted in 2023 have looked stronger this year – crocuses and snowdrops adding that splash of early colour. The delight of the wild Primroses again abound and some careful splitting of clumps of these, and some snowdrops has meant the spread of colour around the Churchyard.



Now that a certain amount of tidiness is completed more management of the existing plants is really benefiting the overall look and feel. You may not realise, but as the picture of Heather and Rosemary shows discarded plants from graves have been loving brought back to life and planted to enhance the beauty of the yard.



There will be more bulb planting in the Autumn this year and again the careful splitting of clumps of flowers will be looked at in late spring.

A big thank you to Philip Nichols who has loving and beautifully restored the bench by the church. As the picture below shows. It's a delight to be able to sit there in the sunshine after cutting the grass and just soak in the calmness and beauty of our Churchyard.

With such a beautiful area to enjoy, the Sunday service coffee and tea is regularly served outside and its wonderful to see so many people using and enjoying this lovely space.

Thank you for all the lovely comments and thank you's from people as they see us working in the church yard, its good to

know the work is appreciated.



Graham Sollars

Financial Review

As can be seen from the accounts, last year marked a change in the financial situation for the PCC, in that our income was greater than our expenditure (by slightly more than £5,000). This was partly due to one or two grants from charities, to cover the work of the children's and family worker, and partly due to a number of one-off donations by church families. There was also a large increase in regular monthly donations towards the end of the year, which will continue to be paid in 2025 and into the future.

We must give thanks to God that he has provided the funds needed to increase the working hours of our children's and family worker, to enable us to reach out to more people living in Riseley and the surrounding area. We are also able to support other missions locally (e.g. Bolnhurst Stables), nationally (e.g. CPAS, Festive), and internationally (by continuing to make our payments to Crosslinks, which helps to support the Milsons in Valencia).

It is important that we pray and act thoughtfully regarding our individual giving, so that All Saints can continue to make Christ known to people, and to try to bring them closer to him.

Brian Simister

All Saints Church Riseley Accounts 2024

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

INCOME		2024	2023
	REGULAR GIVING	56,384	55,800
	ONE-OFF GIVING	11,500	1,875
	GRANTS	7,134	
	FEES	2,120	4,141
	TAX RECLAIM	13,783	13,855
	INTEREST ETC	301	269
	LEGACY	1,000	3,000
TOTAL INCOME		92,222	78,940
EXPENDITURE			
	PARISH SHARE	54,168	52,174
	VICARS EXP	2,026	1,507
	INSUR/UTILITIES	4,178	4,265
	ROOTS & SHOOTS	765	408
	OUTREACH	1,349	1,456
	DONATION	6,416	6,634
	NORTH BEDS YOUTH TRUST	10,740	8,900
	BUILDING MAINT	3,569	1,923
	MUSIC	809	770
	SECRETARIAL	633	340
	MISC	2,064	1,734
	TRAINING	400	
TOTAL SPENDING		87,117	80,111
SURPLUS YEAR		5,105	(1,171)

ALL SAINTS CHURCH RISELEY

	2024	2023
Surplus for the period	5,105	(1,171)
Balance brought forward	19,309	20,480
	<hr/>	
PCC Funds 31 Dec	24,414	19,309

BALANCE SHEET 31 DECEMBER 2024

ASSETS/LIABILITIES	2024	2023
FUNDS AT NATWEST BANK	23,581	19,174
CASH IN HAND	833	135
	<hr/>	
TOTAL ASSETS	24,414	19,309

ALL SAINTS CHURCH RISELEY

Notes to the accounts

- 1) These accounts have been produced on a cash basis
- 2) In addition to the assets shown in the balance sheet, the Diocese held assets on behalf of the PCC to the value of £2,034.80 being 88 shares in Diocese Deposit Fund and a further £1,655.75 in a bank deposit account.
- 3) Unrestricted donations totalling £6,416 shown in the accounts was made up as follows

Crosslinks	2,004
CPAS	600
Children's Society	172
Festive	1,500
Church Society	200
Stables	500
Faith in Kids	400
Food Bank	300
Beds & Herts Trust	50
Riseley Community Hub	250
Evangelical Alliance	90
Ephesian Fund	350
	<hr/>
	6,416

- 4) Grants of £7,134 were received from 3 charities, and expenditure of these grants was designated for the Children's and Families Worker. The whole of these grants was spent as designated, and currently no Designated Funds are held.

Agreed by PCC on 10/2/2025

Rector of All Saints Church

James Isaacs

Honorary Treasurer

Brian Simister

Honorary Examiner

Heather Shelton

Electoral Roll

All Saints Church undertook the 6-yearly renewal this year. The number on the Electoral Roll for the 2025 Annual Parochial Church Meeting is 91. The latest revision includes 11 additions and 7 deletions.

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

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

Hugh Staniforth

Administrative Information

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

Church information

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

Key personnel

Vicar	Revd James Isaacs
Readers:	Lynda Simister
Church Wardens:	Richard Carter elected 2018 Kathryn Staniforth elected 2022
Treasurer:	Brian Simister
PCC Secretary:	Diane Sollars elected 2018, standing down 2025
Children and Families Worker	Sam Toseland
Deanery Synod	Brian Simister elected 2019, standing down 2025 Lynda Simister elected 2019
Honorary Examiner	Heather Shelton
Banker	National Westminster Bank plc

PCC members

Mark Eddon	2022 – 2025
Martin Hargreaves	2022 – 2025
Dave Sheffield	2022 – 2025
Sarah-Louise Cakebread	2023 - 2026
Graham Sollars	2023 - 2026
Trevor Staniforth	2023 - 2026
Loreen Shelford	2025 – 2028
Zak Worts	2025 – 2028

Sharnbrook Deanery Synod



Meetings

Synod met three times this year (the February meeting was cancelled because of illness). We were addressed by Becky May from the Resources Cupboard, Suzanne Clackson from the Diocesan Dispute Advisory Service. At the final meeting, a discussion on stewardship was followed by a 'lay-only' session on the subject of lay representation, at which **James Stewart from Melchbourne was**

elected as our new Lay Co-Chair: we are delighted to welcome him to the post – please talk to him if you have anything to raise at deanery or diocesan level. A 'Walk Through the Bible' training session on the Old Testament took place in February and a Deanery Quiet Day on 'The Parables of Jesus' in September.

Work with Children, Young People and Families

Drawing on the experience of the Deanery Our Voice project, the Deanery Hub has now been in operation for over a year, with the help of the Resources Cupboard, Scripture Union and The Alban Way, and resourced by the national church Growing Faith Foundation. This project is one of the first in the diocese and the only one covering a rural deanery. It has helped to resource new forms of worship, including youth-led services, supported churches with advice and new projects and has been developing materials for schools to cover the moving up from Year 6 to secondary school and work to support grandparents. The Resources Hub would be delighted to hear from you if you would value help or support in these areas.

Changes of People in 2023

We were pleased to welcome **Revd Simon Aley** as Priest-in-Charge of the Stodden Benefice.

After many years of sterling service as Lay Co-Chair and work with Our Voice, **Keith Williams** finally called time on his work with the Deanery Hub and we are very grateful for his huge contribution. **Revd Tim Wilson** is now the main contact between the Deanery Hub and the Deanery Standing Committee.

Lisa Mitchell has retired from the Standing Committee and as minute-taker for the Deanery Synod and we thank her for her valuable service.

In the **Diocesan Synod** elections in May the following were elected:

- Lay members: David Clark (Clapham), Graeme Dawson (Felmersham), Gillian Nursaw-Smith (Yelden), James Stewart (Melchbourne).
- Clergy members: Revd Canon Stephen Liley (Clapham), Revd Dr Min-Min Peaker, Revd Dr Diana Stretton (Sharnbrook), Revd Tim Wilson (WCRKB).

Revd Dr Diana Stretton has been appointed to the **Diocesan Board of Mission & Ministry** and **Revd Tim Wilson** to the **Board of Education**.

Revd Canon Stephen Liley ends his ten-year term as Rural Dean in May 2025; **Revd Nick Munday** is also stepping down as Assistant Rural Dean.

Parish Share

In 2024 the Deanery paid 83.5% of the share requested by the Diocese, leaving a shortfall of just over £90,000 (about the same as last year). Although this was well below the average for the diocese as a whole, it is recognized that this still represents a sacrifice on the part of many parishes and individuals. Thank you for all your support. Please continue to be generous, reflecting our Lord's abundant generosity to us; and do seek help from Kate Ford (the Diocesan Giving Officer) if you need advice on how to make easier the task of raising finances in these difficult times.

Revd Nick Munday, Assistant Rural Dean
March 2025

Safeguarding

The care and protection of children, young people and adults involved in church activities is the responsibility of everyone who participates in the life of the church. As the PCC we aim to conform to the guidelines laid down by the Church of England and to do this we have adopted the House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy for children, young people and vulnerable adults. This policy can be found on the church website. Safeguarding continues to be a standing item on the PCC's agenda and we are continuously reviewing our safeguarding practices.

Despite our efforts to keep everyone safe we recognise that there may be incidents of unacceptable behaviour happening in our church. We urge you to be aware of what is acceptable behaviour and if you are concerned that someone you know is at risk of, or is being abused, or presents a risk to others please seek advice from the parish safeguarding officer or if necessary, report the matter to the local authority social care services or the police without delay.

Local Contacts:

- Parish Safeguarding Officer Lynda Simister- 07982656728
- Rector: - James Isaacs 01234 708234
- Diocesan Safeguarding Officer Jeremy Hirst 01727 818107
- Bedford Borough Council: - 01234 267422
- If there is immediate risk or danger, please contact the police on 999

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

Lynda Simister, Safeguarding Officer

Pastoral Care

Our aim as a church family is to share the love of God with one another. We do this by praying for one another and with words of encouragement and support and also by offering practical help. We can be willing to be a listening ear and to pray with someone, to visit someone or to offer help in other practical ways. Most needs are met naturally through existing relationships made as we worship together, become part of house groups and attend other church mid-week meetings and groups.

We are thankful to God for our church family and for all the care that is shown by them offering help “behind the scenes” as needs arise. The pastoral care team, also with the help of the church family, has been able to provide additional support, where we can, when needed. If you feel you would be able to offer lifts occasionally, as and when needs arise, and if you are available, please do speak to me. Thank you.

Kathryn Staniforth

Young People

Roots, Shoots & Fruits

Sunday mornings are a golden opportunity for us to support parents in bringing up their children in the Lord Jesus. We have a small window in which to teach them rich truths, and so the role of a Leader or Helper hopefully encourages parents to keep talking, reading and praying at home.

To help this further, on most weeks the children learn what the adults are learning from the sermon and it's our prayer chats may happen at home as a result.



For Fruits, this may entail some deeper discussion questions from the text, which mix in with activities, and relevant topics that our young people face as they approach adulthood. In Shoots there are games, challenges, crafts, songs, often videos to help teach the passage, prayer and discussion. In Roots, the sessions serve to teach a few simple but big truths from the text each week, which we hope will set them up for understanding God's Word more fully later on.

We have a wonderful team, who sacrificially give up their time each Sunday to prepare, set up, love the children, teach faithfully, and pack up. What a privilege to be able to teach the

truth and clarity of God and His world to children and young people when they are most receptive...Thank you team, and please do continue to pray for us!

Sam Toseland

Youth Club

We meet fortnightly during term time on Friday evenings, 6:45 – 8pm for school years 4 to 8.

Thank God for...

- An increase in children attending, with 24 children coming at least once.
- A great team of leaders (Trev, Christian, Wendy, Dave, Roline, Zak and a few others who step in every so often) who are committed to serving regularly and loving the children with God's love.
- The gospel being regularly and clearly shared at every club meeting. This year we have looked at the Beatitudes – how God's kingdom is topsy turvy, Abraham – how God keeps his promises, and the miracles of Jesus – how Jesus is loving, powerful and worth following.
- Great fun – we have dropped eggs off the balcony (some survived), solved a murder mystery, learned circus tricks, played games, made crafts, and much more.

Pray for...

- The young people – facing so many challenges in their daily lives, that youth club will be a safe place meet with friends, and meet Jesus.
- For the families, that Youth Club would be a gateway to meeting them and inviting them to more church events.
- The leaders, to have the time, energy and inspiration to lead the club and faithfully share the good news of Jesus – there's room for more on the team!

Dave Sheffield

Junior Jivers



Our music and play parent and toddler group has continued to grow and has been a joyful and welcoming space for families throughout the year. We have had a regular attendance of 30 to 40 children and adults each week, with families coming not only from our village but also from surrounding areas.

Each session

is filled with fun and Christ-centred activities, including music, Bible stories, crafts, snacks (with a special treat from the bacon butties team once a month!), and plenty of playtime. It is such a joy to see the children learning so much through engaging Bible stories, fun music, dancing and brilliant crafts.



This has become a warm and friendly space where parents, grandparents, and carers can connect, find support, and enjoy a friendly chat. Many who attend have expressed how welcomed and valued they feel. We are grateful for the opportunity to share God's love, build relationships, and witness to those who come through our doors. As the group continues to grow, we deeply value prayers for good conversations and opportunities to share our faith in a natural and meaningful way. We also pray for continued growth and friendship among those who come.

Much love and dedication is given by the team every week, either through teaching, prepping sessions or serving refreshments. We are so thankful for each one of them. It is a privilege to get to know the children and watch them grow, and we look forward to all that God has in store for the year ahead.

Monica Isaacs

Soul

This year SOUL continued with the original format from the previous year. It was great to have a mix of new and old faces attending, with everyone feeling comfortable to contribute to discussions. As the year progressed and attendees became involved in various commitments, we decided to change the format and run a few limited session studies during term time. A further rethink will see SOUL fitting in around other Church activities by offering social sessions for the 11-14 age group. This will provide an opportunity to meet in an informal way, take part in a fun activity and share experiences. We are grateful that SOUL has managed to have so many great moments over the last few years and we ask for prayer that they may continue. We would also ask for prayers for all the children who have attended over the last few years, as they become young adults and face so many challenges that they are able to seek comfort in Jesus.

Jamie Wyatt

All Saints Holiday Club – Ruth & Wild West 2025



Our faithful God blessed us richly again this year with a fully booked club, happy children, a thrill for the Gospel, deeper friendships with families from the village, and a church family team strengthened in serving Jesus together.

Many of those involved feel God was especially kind in new team helpers, prayers of the congregation, leaders working hard preparing Bible discussions, décor, music, crafts, setting up and packing up

teams, keeping us safe and teaching us all about the wonder of His grace and redeeming love.

Whoever you are in the All Saints family of God, holiday club is a way we can witness to one another and to the rest of Riseley about what a blessing it is to know Christ and make Him known. We can't wait for next year – yehaaaaaw!



Sam Toseland

Fellowship

Prayer Meeting

The prayer meeting is perhaps the most important meeting of the month in the life of our church. The psalmist tells us that unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain (Psalm 127). It is a reminder that we cannot achieve anything in our own strength but that the Lord can perform great things through us in our weakness - we need to be people of prayer! And so, it has been tremendously encouraging to gather together each month on the second Wednesday in the Vicarage Extension at 8pm and the third Wednesday at 11am at 1 Gold Street. When we meet, we pray for the church, the wider village, each other, the global church and the world – as we commit to God our hopes, dreams, wants and needs.

It has been wonderful to hear the buzz of prayer going on during these meetings as we spur one another on in dependence on the Lord, and if you have not yet been to a prayer meeting, why not make it a priority to come and try it out this coming year?

James Isaacs

Homegroups

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

Over this past year, the homegroups have worked their way through the book of Ecclesiastes and an overview of the gospel of Mark. These series have often (but not always) dovetailed with our sermon series, allowing people the chance to explore and apply what we have been thinking about on a Sunday in a more personal and profound way.

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

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

James Isaacs

Coffee Morning Services

The Church coffee morning service is held on the second Wednesday of the month at 10.30 in the chancel. The service consists of a hymn, reading and talk encouraging us to get to know Jesus in a better and more personal way, prayers and a second hymn. Many thanks to Sally for accompanying us on the keyboard. The service lasts about half an hour. After which is served tea, coffee, homemade scones and cake, and much talk. Usually anything between fifteen and twenty-one adults and one little boy attend. There is room for more so why not come and join us.

On the third Wednesday of the month there is a coffee morning held in the church room at 10.30. Usually about fifteen people come along, plus the same little boy, but as always there is room for more. Once again tea, coffee and homemade cake and scones are on offer. It’s a good chance to meet in a relaxed atmosphere and get to know each other better. Do come and join us.

Phillip & Margaret Nicholls

Brook House Services

It has been both a humbling and enjoyable experience to be part of the church family who have joined the residents of Brook House for a short service once a month over the past few years. Sally ably keeps us all singing harmoniously with her expert piano skills, thank you Sally. James shares the Good News with a bible reading followed by a talk using fun visual aids which we all enjoy. The number of residents who attend varies, with those who do singing along heartily as they remember hymns from their younger days.

The staff are so welcoming, caring and friendly, we had the honour of singing Happy birthday to a 100-year-old lady recently who was being taken out for a birthday tea by the staff later that day.

It is with great sadness that we heard of the closure of Brook House shortly before our visit last month. We give thanks that we have been able to witness in our visits there in such a fulfilling way, we pray that all the residents will find and settle quickly into new homes. We pray for the very caring staff that they can find suitable employment soon and remember to look to Jesus for comfort.

John & Sue Walker

Music

"Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise." (Psalms 96:1-4)

Throughout time, people of God responded to God's significant acts of redemption and events of daily life, with songs of expectation and hope, joyful celebration and sorrowful laments. Jesus also sang hymns with his disciples; Paul sang while imprisoned; and the Corinthians sang during their gatherings. Likewise, we are called to actively engage in music worship together in response to God's ever faithful and redeeming love.



We engage in music worship in church as a collective expression of our faith, hope and love in Christ. It serves to express reverence, love and gratitude for the greatness of God; enhance faith through reaffirming gospel truths; and promote mutual encouragement for one another, creating a sense of unity and a supportive environment conducive to spiritual growth. Worshiping God in music and song deepens the intimate relationship with Him we enjoy through the gospel. With the songs we sing, we proclaim God's Word as the lyrics expound on the person, deeds and majesty of Christ. We are called to respond whole-heartedly to God's grace and our response in music worship to that grace and gospel truths is no

exception where we do so through joy, adoration, thankfulness, sorrow and devotion. Worshiping God together in song provides us opportunities to reflect on His glory and glorify God in expressing the unity Christ died to bring us.

We are blessed and thankful to God for the commitment, skill, hard work and service of each member of the band at All Saints who give up their time every week, plus additional events and services throughout the year, to lead the congregation in singing worship to our awesome God. It is a privilege to serve our heavenly Father and be a part of this wonderful team in leading the music worship at All Saints.

Significant amounts of time, reflection, prayer and consideration are dedicated to selecting songs that align with the theme and passage for each service, whilst also considering things like what the service is, which songs we have/haven't had previously, balancing the range of songs across a service and the wider series, and which musicians we have available when. Songs are chosen with the fundament of aiding those present to keep our eyes fixed on Christ and uphold and encourage one other as we sing out a true and affective response to the gospel. We include a range of songs, so there is always something for everyone across the different services, and

Fellowship

we value the importance and challenge of having fresh and accurate expressions of gospel truths which engage our hearts and minds with Christ.

A considerable amount of work occurs 'behind the scenes' concerning the music at All Saints and we are profoundly grateful to our constant sustainer and provider God, for enabling us to serve Him in His strength. As we encounter various challenges and opportunities, we praise God for all He has provided so far and give thanks we can be confident that we serve a gracious, loving, and righteous God. We continue to seek His guidance for the future and trust in His plan for all of us.

"...be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:19-20)

Jo Nicholls & Sally Eddon

Weekend at Home

Once again it was a great pleasure to be involved in organising our "Weekend at Home" in October.

This now yearly event brings together the churches of both Riseley and Bletsoe for an "Away Day" on Saturday at Riseley Primary School where we have access to the Hall and the schools' facilities and on Sunday, a Joint service at All Saints Riseley followed by a simple bring and share Pate and Cheese lunch.

Around 61 adults and 22 children were involved on the Saturday to enjoy three excellent teaching sessions with Ben Mandley (Associate Minister St James London) on "God has Spoken" (Hebrews 1-2) which gave great encouragement and hope in living a Christian life, which we know is not always easy. The Children were expertly looked after and taught by Fiona Bourne and her team from Christchurch Cambridge. Once again, the All Saints band were able to help with the music and singing.

But as ever it was not all work – plenty of tea breaks with wonderful homemade cakes and Kathryn's brilliant lunchtime quiz made the day relaxed, informative and a great way to bring people together in Christ. Oh, and the Fish and Chip lunch helped!

The Joint Sunday service continued the weekends' theme and offered more informative teaching with a Church Service followed by that lunch. We do like to eat don't we!

We have been blessed by gorgeous weather the last 2 years so can we make it three? The planning for the 2025 event (Weekend of October 11th and 12th) is just about to start so please pray for another wonderful two days of teaching and enjoyment for everyone and for the team organising the event.

Graham Sollars

Bell Ringing

The Riseley campanologists have enjoyed another active and successful year.

As well as their weekly practice nights, they ring for the first Sunday service of each month and then every other Sunday at All Saints. The group also ring for special services, which this year included a wedding with a Riseley connection and a request performance for a wedding in the neighbouring church at Swineshead.

Several new ringers have attended this year, with Sofia, Scott and Stuart learning the ropes and currently Liz coming on very well.

Rowan has joined the group after moving to the village, from ringing in her old church and her experience has been very welcome; she is currently on maternity leave and we wish her well for the future.

Melinda has also been on maternity leave following the arrival of a baby daughter Ophelia; we wish them well and look forward to seeing her ringing again in due course.

David, who has been the organiser and mentor for bellringers at All Saints for many years, has decided to step back from the day to day running of the group, but to continue ringing and coaching whenever possible. He resurrected ringing for the 2000 celebrations and trained up a completely new group from scratch, to ring in the

Fellowship

new Millennium. Without David's experience, enthusiasm and patience, All Saints Riseley would not have the accomplished and growing band of ringers it has today.

Practice night is on a Tuesday and new ringers or those interested in seeing what is involved are always welcome.

William Wallis

Ladies Lunch

Our monthly lunches continue to be popular, and we have about 20 people on our list and there are usually 12 or 13 attending each month. The Fox and Hounds are very good to us and put up with our anomalies. It is a great time for us to get to know one another better and to make new friends.

Pray that people who come will encourage others to join us

Lynda Simister

Men's Group

I was looking back into the formation of the Men's Group and it has been together in some form or another since the year 2000. We have obviously grown older together over the last quarter century and the majority of us have retired. The last twelve months have seen another year comprising a range of social get togethers and community activities both inside and outside of Riseley. As the group has grown older and retired from paid work, we have been busy volunteering in different capacities in a range of charities and local organisations.

However, the format and structure of the group has remained the same since it first started. Its primary purpose has always been to build genuine and lasting friendships between men both inside and outside of All Saints. Since the beginning we have met up roughly once a month for a range of social and community-based activities. Meeting together as a group of Christians and non-Christians gives us plenty of opportunities to gently explore and share what we believe. As such the group is very much appreciated by lots of people and strong friendships have been forged which I believe is particularly important between men who might find it quite difficult to be naturally sociable to men they don't know so well!



However, the format and structure of the group has remained the same since it first started. Its primary purpose has always been to build genuine and lasting friendships between men both inside and outside of All Saints. Since the beginning we have met up roughly once a month for a range of social and community-based activities. Meeting together as a group of Christians and non-Christians gives us plenty of opportunities to gently explore and share what we believe. As such the group is very much appreciated by lots of people and strong friendships have been forged which I believe is particularly important between men who might find it quite difficult to be naturally sociable to men they don't know so well!

At the start of his year Colin and Helen Minter moved to Shetland and we all miss Colin and his immense practical skills and willingness to help others including All Saints Church with a whole range of jobs. We wish them both well and lots of people in the group keep in contact with them on video calls and WhatsApp.

As the group gets older, we are not all able to do the same physical things we may have done previously and time seems to be taken up with new experiences with expanding families and grandparent duties. We are looking for new ways of enabling everybody to still join in with more gentle activities. We still try to enjoy walks, cycling, pub meals, visits, music nights, discussion evenings and helping out with village events if creaky bones allow! We are all keen, open and very willing to help others who are in need of practical help and support in the village and surrounding areas.

Over the many years that this group has been running it has been easy to see the real benefit of getting together as Christian and non-Christian Men and building lasting and genuine friendships. As the numbers are increasing in church each week, I would strongly encourage anybody younger who wants to chat about replicating this friendship evangelism model to a younger group of men in the village and All Saints. I'm keen to help!

Prayer requests would be for us to keep running a Men's Group who are older that is enjoyable, attractive to others and that offers the opportunity where we feel comfortable exploring more about the Christian faith and that we have the desire to share living as a Christians in 2025.

Dudley Ferdinando

Fellowship

Bus Stop Café

The Bus Stop Cafe meets on Thursday afternoons during term time. It is a place when young people in Years 7-13 can meet for tuck, games and chat when they arrive back on the school bus.

The “rush” of arrivals can make it quite busy for a few minutes! Tuck is the priority for most as it’s free.

Some leave soon after but a lot stay around and enjoy games on the playing field or in the village hall lounge. The pool table and football are always popular.

Last year 29 young people registered, with an average attendance of just over 12 per session. Most are boys. Previously there have been more girls, but currently there are significantly less.

The Bus Stop Cafe is a joint venture between the Church, Parish council and Community Hub. Each session is run by a leader and a helper. James and Monica are regular leaders, as are several other Church members. It is a privilege to get to know these young people.

Please pray:

- For good relationships and friendship to develop
- That it would be a place where all feel welcomed
- For more leaders to come forward
- For the younger ones coming up in the summer
- For the future of this group, especially if no more volunteers come forward

Rachel White

Serving one another

Refreshments

At the time of writing this report, the weather is slowly improving, we have enjoyed the first opportunity to serve tea and coffee outside for the first time this year, hopefully this can be repeated more often in the weeks to come.

With thanks for the growing numbers attending church, we have been serving a lot more tea and coffee recently, so let’s hope and pray that this continues

Serving can be a bit chaotic at times with the increased numbers, endeavouring to serve as quickly as possible is a challenge, so hopefully everyone gets a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit eventually, if they can compete with the children! Our thanks to all the people who also come and help distribute tea and coffee after the service, although they are not on the rota. This is a great help, ensuring everyone is served as quickly as possible

The introduction of disposable paper cups has made the task much simpler, no more washing up!

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

Our thanks to everyone for their support.

Robin & Jane Rhodes

Cleaning

Pete and I have had the pleasure of being part of the All Saints cleaning team for a couple of years now. We enjoy seeing the church through the seasons and keeping the building clean and tidy for all the events and services we hold.

The role doesn’t take long and includes hoovering the dais, cleaning the toilet facilities, sweeping the main floor, hoovering the church room, emptying the bins and sometimes we have time for those little extra jobs that perhaps don’t get done week to week such as polishing the font or moping the flooring area that the band use weekly.

Fellowship

We felt it was something we could commit our time to, due to the flexibility of when it can be done (usually a Friday or Saturday). We take the opportunity to play worship music, praise our Lord and give thanks for the gift of the church building. Looking ahead, prayers of encouragement for those in the team to stay committed would be gratefully received.

Pete & Jemma Carroll

Gingerbread House Building Event



All Saints Gingerbread event has become very popular, bringing families together over a Christmas afternoon. The 2024 iteration of the annual gingerbread house decorating event that took place at All Saints during December was awaited with much anticipation by many. Good things had been heard from the 2023 event and (certainly in our household) this was something that seemed almost as important as Christmas itself had that been allowed to be the case! The event itself was fantastic, there were approximately 20 families taking part and the church building was awash with happy noises and frivolity, mostly from the parents, while smaller members of the congregation got on with constructing their gingerbread

masterpieces adorning them beautifully with every sugary substance known to man. Judges were ruthless in eventually crowning the winner of the 'best decorated gingerbread house' to the cheers of all involved.

The event also included a number of games and entertainment following the decorating which was provided generously by the many involved in hosting the event and Sam kindly made the real essence of Christmas known to those in attendance through a talk too.

In all the event was wonderfully hosted and attended by many and certainly from my perspective was a real value to All Saints and the wider community we look forward eagerly to 2025!

Hank & Virginia King

All Saints Church celebrates 800 years...

All Saints Church celebrates 800 years...

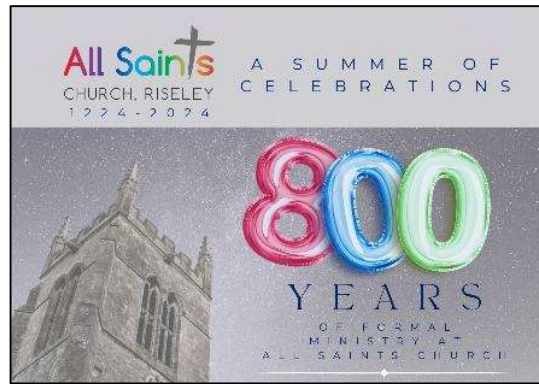
... with a Service of Celebration



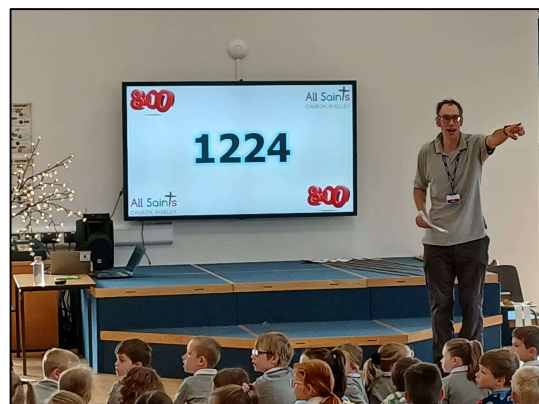
... with photos in Church



... at Riseley Show



... at Riseley Primary School





... with Rico Tice at a Banquet



... with a Wheelbarrow race



Training and Development

Christianity Explored



Last year I went on the Christianity Explored course. I found it was such a good experience for me. The course was for seven weeks and each week we watched a short video and looked into the Gospel of Mark.

In each session we would talk about what we had watched and read, and James was so good at explaining any questions we had. I found it really encouraging to hear other people's spiritual journeys and thoughts. I would totally recommend this course to anyone; especially new Christians like myself.

Adam Jefferson

Riseley Primary School



It doesn't seem very long since I was writing this last year! The year seems to have flown past with the children being involved in many activities to further their personal development along with their academic. There have been residential for some of the older children; visits to the pantomime; theatre groups visiting the school; visits from professional athletes, choir singing at Brook House; even a visit from Ned on resilience which involved yo-yos! There are too

many things to mention.

We continue to be thankful for our links with All Saints with Easter and Christmas services being held in the church, James and others holding weekly assemblies in the school and Sam and her team running a lunchtime club. The children also helped us celebrate our 800 year anniversary.



This year has seen one or two changes in the Governing body with Richard Carter stepping down and Lynne Wallis

joining us as a foundation governor and Tony Moliterno joining us as a parent governor. Give thanks for all the governors do in their support for the school.

Please join us in giving thanks for Leigh Pointon our Executive Headteacher, the senior leadership team and all the staff. We are also thankful for our enthusiastic children and our supportive parents along with the work that the PTA do.

The main challenges for the school continue to be related to finance coupled with falling pupil numbers in North Bedfordshire (and in many parts of the country). This led to the need to combine years 1 and 2 into one class in

September 2024 and further combining of classes will be necessary in September this year. Please pray for wisdom as Leigh, his team and governors navigate these challenges while continuing to ensure there is an excellent provision for our children.

Catherine Veitch

Mission Support

Milsons – Valencia, Spain

Julian & Nicky Milson are missionaries in Valencia, Spain, along with Jemima (19) and Theo (17) their children. They have now been in Valencia for six years.

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

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

2024 was an eventful year in Valencia in which we experienced two significant tragedies. In February there was a huge tower block fire in which 10 people died. It was across the city from us but the smoke was clearly visible from our terrace.

In October Valencia experienced the worst floods in recent history in which 224 people lost their lives. The area affected was just outside the city boundary and thousands of volunteers from the city helped with the clean-up and rescue. There is still much work to be done in the flooded areas and life won't return to normal for many for a good while yet.

Nobody in our church family was directly affected by either of these events, but many were involved in the volunteering after the floods and most know people who live in the affected areas.

News about events at church:

English Club

The English Club has been going well although we did see a dip in numbers after the Summer. We compete with many other after-school activities and sports. We are however confident that we're offering a useful opportunity to learn English and hear a Bible Story and trust that God brings us the people he wants to bring. We are building relationships with some local families through the club.

Lego Club

We continue to run an after-school Lego club. This has remained small but we're very grateful to God that the only boy who comes who isn't part of our church family has also started coming to our Youth Group.

Easter Holiday Club

We ran a three-day holiday club after easter as a trial to see if it might be an area of ministry we could grow in the future. We had around a dozen children each day in attendance. One of the problems we have is that in most of the school holidays children are sent to stay with grandparents outside the city or they stay in the second family home in the mountains or by the beach. We're currently weighing up what we should do in the future.

Youth Group

The Youth Group consistently has around 10 people coming along and currently most of the group are native English-speakers whose parents are missionaries working around the city. We'd love to see more Spanish children coming along.

Bible Study and Prayer – 'Grupos de Vida'

We have two groups which meet weekly having started a second group last year. The second group meets online and sometimes physically.

Church Day

Last May we held our first ever church teaching day. We were joined by Luke Foster (former Crosslinks Mission Partner in Chile and currently a lecturer at Oak Hill Bible College), who helped us to think about personal evangelism. We held the day in our church building and the majority of the church family came.

Please pray:

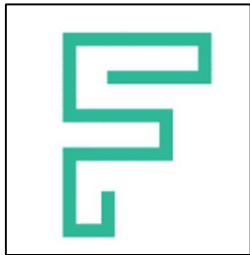
- For good relations with the Bishop. We have had some difficulties this year.
- For good ideas about how to make links with people outside of the church and the ability to encourage the whole church family in this endeavour.
- That our Gospel witness would produce fruit and good links with local families. Give thanks that some families have come to church events and pray that they would come on Sundays.
- For a wisdom as we consider whether to run another Holiday Club.
- That our church family would make meeting together weekly a priority in their lives.
- Pray for Theo taking his AS levels in the Summer Term.
- Give thanks for all the gospel encouragements we have seen this year.

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

Facebook: Iglesia Anglicana Valencia

Julian & Nicky Milson

Festive



2024 has been another fantastic year for Festive, as we've sought to equip young people across the UK to live for Jesus in their sixth forms and colleges. Your support has been invaluable, and we're excited to share with you all that God has done in and through the young people in our network this year!

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

REJOICE, PRAY AND THANKS

These are three words that I think sum up 2024 well for us as an organisation! To rejoice is to celebrate. To find joy in who God is and what He is doing - something Paul says in this little verse that we can do 'always'.

This year, we have rejoiced with students in the work of the Gospel and the provision of God as we hear of new CUs launching, Alpha and Christianity Explored courses running, the Gospel preached in colleges, and many prayers answered. There have been other moments where choosing to rejoice has felt less straight-forward. Like when we've heard from students who are anxious or broken by life's circumstances. Or when we found ourselves in April out of grant funding with just 6 months of financial reserves left to sustain us, with no guarantees of further funding. Or when Rhian our wonderful Operations Manager handed in her notice.

Even in those moments, we could still rejoice knowing God's sovereignty, kindness, faithfulness and strength was there to meet every single one of our needs.

This leads us nicely into prayer. Paul says to pray "continually" – it is to be to us as natural as breathing and as vital as oxygen. Prayer is undoubtedly the engine-room of Festive's work. We pray weekly as a staff team. We pray with our trustees and our volunteer network. We have an army of people around the country who receive our monthly prayer diary or our '40 Second Prayer' emails and who carry the mission of Festive on their knees. And we pray continually for the young people in our network – regularly encouraged by email prayer requests asking us to pray for their friends or for CU events. We pray knowing that through our prayers God by his Holy

Mission Support

Spirit is already at work in colleges across the country softening hearts, sowing seeds and drawing young people to Jesus.

Finally, there is thanksgiving. We are so thankful for all God has done in the last year. We are thankful for our fast-growing student network and our expanding team of Student Engagement volunteers who support our students so faithfully. We are so thankful that despite our mid-year financial uncertainty we have received several new grants that not only secure our work going forward but will enable us to employ a new Student Connect Worker (something we shared about the desperate need for in our Annual Review last year)! We are thankful that despite Rhian moving on, God has provided for us two brilliant new staff members in Jon (Operations Manager) and Nicola (Admin and Finance)!

X: @festiveuk

Instagram: festiveuk

Facebook: Festive - FE & Sixth Form Initiative

www.festive.org.uk

The Festive team

The Stables Christian Centre



The Stables Christian Centre at Bolnhurst is a Christian Charity that was originally set up by John and Ali Wood in 1984. The mission statement of the Stables is to promote and witness to the Christian faith and way of life, particularly in relation to social issues, and to offer practical help and friendship to those on the margins of society. The Stables has long been supported by All Saints Church financially and with staff, volunteers and trustees. As we look back and reflect on 2024, we are thankful to have had a good and positive year.

Clients (many of whom are learning disabled) continued to enjoy and benefit from attending the Stables. Tuesday and

Thursday are the days each week when clients enjoy a wide range of activities and it is a delight to see how much pleasure and joy they get from their weekly sessions, how much their confidence is growing and how much support they give each other.

Sadly, this past year, three of our All Saints staff team moved on to pastures new and we would like to again thank Karen, Emily and Verena for their dedication, enthusiasm and hard work at the Stables. Please have a word with Sean or me if you would like to chat about volunteering or staff opportunities at the Stables.

As the year drew to an end and finished for a well-deserved Christmas break. Clients were able to come together for a festive celebration where they decorated the Christmas tree, prepared and enjoyed delicious food, played games, and received a certificate in recognition of their hard work.

We were delighted throughout the year to welcome increased numbers of customers to our Coffee shops and particularly grateful to those staff and volunteers who gave up their Saturday afternoons to ensure they run so smoothly. In 2025 the monthly Coffee shop sessions at the Stables will be held as usual on the first Saturday afternoon of each month from 2pm - 4-30pm. Please pop in and enjoy a hot drink, piece of delicious homemade cake and purchase a range of preserves and crafts. The woodland walks are also worth exploring at the same time in the six-acre site. The coffee shops run from May until October.

Our retailers also grew with both The Store in Bedford and Art & Soul in St Neots now stocking our preserves.

We are excited about 2025 and ready to build on the solid foundations established over the past year. Our Tuesday team is currently full with a waiting list and our Thursday team has also grown. Both days continue to be busy as clients continue with their garden, craft and kitchen sessions.

It is our prayer that we continue to provide a safe and welcoming environment for clients to gain confidence, self-esteem, build friendships, and gain practical skills to help with employability and personal skills to help feel more included and able to contribute to their wider community.

Mission Support

We are grateful for the support we received and would appreciate prayers for the staff team and for their hard-work and dedication, for the clients continuing to enjoy attending the Stables and that client numbers on Thursdays continue to grow.



Thank you for remembering us in your prayers.

Facebook: Stables Christian Centre, Bolnhurst www.stableschristiancentre.co.uk

***Sean Watkiss, Stables Centre Manager
Dudley Ferdinando, Trustee***

