



Christ Church Eaton

Here for Christ – here for you

ANNUAL REVIEW OF 2023

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PART ONE - CHRIST CHURCH REPORTS

VICAR'S REPORT ON 2023

Thank you to all those who sent reports for this annual review. I am grateful to Ruth Thorp in the Parishes Office, who collated this document and Catherine Richmond who formatted it. I do hope and pray that you will find the review helpful. Here I outline the main themes in our worship and church life.

Renewal

2023 marked something of a return to normality for our services after the pandemic. I was also fortunate to partake in a sabbatical, a valuable opportunity for rest and renewal from January to March, returning for Palm Sunday. I'm really grateful to all those who took services while I was away, Bishop David Gillett, Kate Belcher, Maggie Diffey, Archdeacon Keith, Canon Sally Theakston, Canon Susanna Gunner, Canon Dr Peter Doll, Canon Aidan Platten, Charles Read, Phil Rodd, Andrew Parsons, Alistair Bolt, Robin Quine and Ros Wright. The Sabbatical allowed me to address long-standing health concerns, including chronic eye problems and aches in neck and hip probably related to spending too long at my desk. The staff at the NNUH eye clinic provided effective treatment, while physiotherapy helped improve my flexibility. Towards the end of the Sabbatical a blood test suggested I needed to lose weight and take more exercise to help prevent diabetes and I'm pleased to write that I have lost over a stone and reversed my prediabetes.

The Freedom of Service

The sabbatical offered the unique freedom to travel and take part in activities outside my regular schedule. Attending services at other churches in the deanery as a worshipper was a delightful experience, allowing me to see different worship styles. More importantly, the sabbatical enabled me to support my elderly mother, who had a fall and needed hospital visits. We also made progress clearing out her belongings, making several donations to charity shops.

Reflections on the General Synod

In February, I attended the General Synod, where the main topic of debate centred on proposed "blessings" for civil partnerships and same-sex marriages. The issue is complex, with deeply held beliefs on both sides. While the proposed compromise aimed to offer services without altering official teachings, it ultimately divided the Synod. The sabbatical allowed me to reflect on this matter and its significance for the future of the Church. As I write, both sides remain dissatisfied, those wanting change at the lack of it, and those wanting to maintain official teaching at the ways it is proposed to discount it in practice.

Scholarly Pursuits

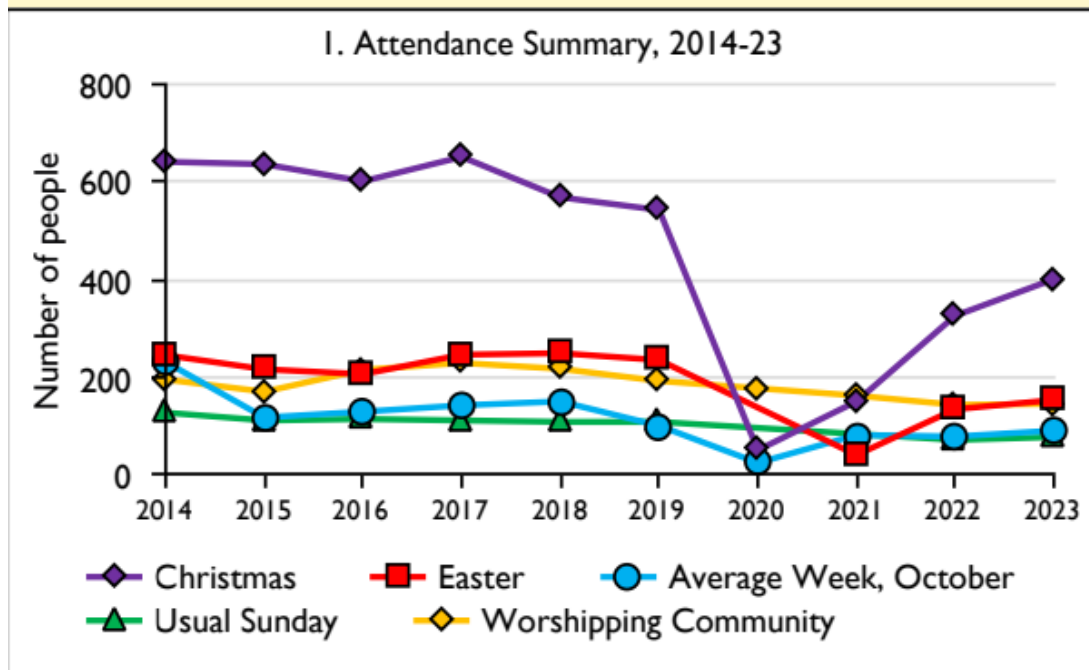
During my leave, I also cleared out my study and embarked on a rewarding journey through N.T. Wright's "Paul and the Faithfulness of God." This extensive two-volume tome provided a fascinating exploration of how St. Paul's writings reshaped the Jewish, Greek, and Roman world. The sabbatical, in totality, proved invaluable for both physical and intellectual renewal.

Special services

As usual we marked many special occasions in church, Candlemas, an all-age Mothering Sunday service, dramatized passion readings on Palm Sunday and Good Friday, special communions for Maundy Thursday, Easter Day, BCP Choral Matins for the Coronation of King Charles III, Ascension Day at St Andrew's, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, Choral Evensongs in July, September and October, Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday and a Memorial service for the Departed in Advent. We held our usual special services for Advent and Christmas, and there was a joint workshop and Christingle service with St Andrew's. We are grateful to Caroline Gibbs for organising another successful Crib service with nativity play on Christmas eve despite us now having few children attending church regularly. We marked Giving for Growth Sunday in June, encouraging people to review their giving and switch to the Parish Giving Scheme if they hadn't already. David Scott organised the service at the War memorial on Armistice Day, which fell on Saturday, but still had some school children in attendance. A high point of the year was our 150th Anniversary Thanksgiving service, followed by sparkling refreshments, with dignitaries in attendance, the Fantastic Fish display all around, a specially written Hymn by Rachel and David Taylor and a newly commissioned Anthem by Simon Lole. I'm particularly grateful to Vivien Humber who took such a leading role in identifying the anniversary and organising everything. Thank you to everyone who organised, took part in and supported these special services throughout the year.

Attendance

In 2023 the 8am communion averaged about 13, normal 10ams averaged 55 and 1 U16, and we averaged 6 on exclusively Zoom evening prayer and 15 for standard, non-choral evensongs. During the pandemic, our congregation's numbers decreased but are now showing signs of recovery. The core group of worshippers, those attending at least monthly or intending to, experienced a minor decline. However, new individuals have joined us, as indicated by the accompanying graph.



Post-pandemic, some churches have seen a reduction in services, impacting attendance figures. We are fortunate to have restored nearly all of our pre-pandemic services and to provide online alternatives for those unable to attend physically. Your continued prayers, support, and active participation have made this possible.

The festive season of Christmas, traditionally a period for welcoming guests and extending invitations to worship with us, saw an uptick in service attendance in 2023. Despite this increase, numbers have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels seen in 2019.

Easter, a time of reflection on our Lord’s sacrifice and resurrection, also saw improved attendance for our Holy Week and Easter services in 2023 compared to the previous year.

We resumed the practice of evensong on Easter Day, which carried on until October. The earlier darkness prompted us to go back to online services in the winter, considering the safety concerns of our faithful congregation.

Overall, the Church of England’s attendance in 2023 has shown signs of bouncing back. Nevertheless, there is an anticipated overall decline as the recovery appears to plateau at a lower number than that of 2019.

Leading Your Church into Growth LYCIG Course and new Growth Group

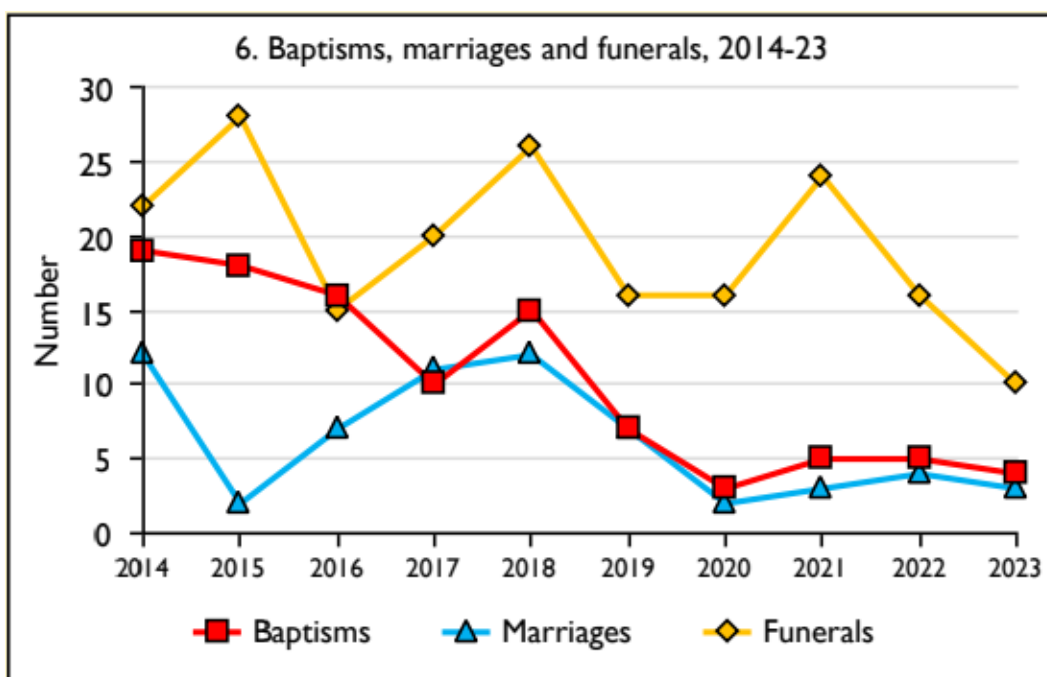
In light of the decline noted above, and having done this course, we asked Intercessors to include prayer for growth in their prayers and tried to avoid long services and prayers.

We formed a new group, the Growth Group, fostering a culture of growth within the church community:

- **Prayer and Invitation:** we identified prayer and personal invitations as crucial for growth.
- **Addressing Concerns:** there was a concern about prioritizing numbers over spiritual growth in discipleship. The group aimed to create a balance between inviting new members and nurturing existing ones, and allowing for the tiredness and even trauma that can result from the pandemic and from lack of leaders or volunteers.
- **Engaging Different Age Groups:** discussions addressed attracting young people to church through the choir and offering a bespoke course based on "The Chosen" series. Collaboration with Norwich High School was also explored and we hosted their choir and junior house carol service.
- **Adapting to Needs:** the group considered making the service order more inclusive and experimenting with different versions of the Lord's Prayer. They acknowledged the need to balance tradition with evolving preferences.
- **Communication and Away Day:** we are trying to use various communication channels like emails and church notices for invitations. Ros Wright and Vivien are planning an away day at St John's Cathedral on 15th June 2024 on the invitational theme "Come and See".

Baptisms, Marriages and Funerals

In the past year, Christ Church has been a place of both joy and sorrow, marking significant life events for our community. You can see from the graph that numbers



vary quite apart from the pandemic. We celebrated four baptisms and three weddings in 2023.

These occasions of joy and union are always a highlight of my ministry. We also did ten funerals, and said farewell to congregation members Colin Brown, Mike Brookes, Sue Harris, Mary Sword and, in 2024, Carmela Furniss. Sue was Church cleaner, flower arranger and vergger for all my years as vicar, and for years before that. Mike was our fabric officer, invaluable in the maintenance and improvement of the church, Kinchen Hall and the Cottage. Carmela was a pillar of the church and choir and musical activities for decades. Mary was a faithful sidesperson. Their families and all who miss them continue in my thoughts and prayers. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Suffering and Salvation

I led this course in Advent 2023, noting how the suffering servant in Isaiah provides a background for Christ's suffering for our sins so that we can be saved. God is present in suffering and Christ, God with us, himself even feels Godforsaken on the cross.

We discussed how Christ and the New Testament expect us to suffer, but that suffering can be an opportunity to grow more like Christ, and to exercise compassion, courage, and self-sacrifice.

We then discussed hell; if everyone is destined for heaven we have no choice but to love God, whereas some might refuse to serve God due to pride or idolatry. Punishment balances the unfair advantages they may gain and deters them. God's love and justice suggest punishment will be proportionate to our choices. The Biblical descriptions of Hell should be seen in context and not be taken too literally. Faith is an attitude of trust in God's revelation and those who have not heard the Gospel are not without hope, but Christ commands his Church to spread the Good News of God's mercy.

Finally, we discussed the idea of heaven, the transient nature of earthly sufferings compared to eternal glory, the glory that is given to Christ and those who overcome evil through him, the role of divine justice and mercy, and the profound implications of the Beatific Vision, seeing and knowing the limitless value of God, and how this can encourage us to keep hope and persevere.

A BIG Thank you

As I think about 2023 I want to express heartfelt gratitude to all the people who have contributed to our life as a church family, supported services or shared

information or invitations. Here are just some of the people I would particularly like to thank:

- Matt, the choir and the worship committee for their excellent contribution to our worship. You can read Matt's report below. I'm also grateful to Richard Rivett for organising readers, Jeff Arden for organising intercessors, and to David Edmonds for coordinating the 8am rotas and for all those who serve on rotas.
- Leisa Devlin and the team who ran the Baby&Me group. Due to the low number of attendees, and the fact that babies quickly grow up to become toddlers with different needs, the group concluded at the end of the year.
- Caroline Gibbs, who leads the Sunday school, is our Safeguarding Officer, and leads on donations and the summer fair.
- Bridget Archer, who has taken on the role of cleaner from Sue Harris and is doing an excellent and professional job, and all those who help keep the church and its furnishings clean and beautiful.
- Chris Mitchell, who, without Mike Brookes, has looked after Kinchen Hall and the cottage maintenance and dealt with serious leaks during stormy weather.
- Geraldine Verschoor, who has taken a leading role in the growth group, praying for growth, and the groups discussing *the Chosen*.
- Steph Brookes, for continuing to lead *Chat over a Cuppa* that meets on Mondays and is going from strength to strength. We are also thankful for £1700 from the Norfolk Community Fund Surviving Winter Grant, helping us pay for heating the church during the cold months in these days of high fuel costs.
- Catherine Richmond, for preparing the Zoom service and hymn sheets and uploading them on the parish website, along with the Notice sheet and special service sheets, throughout the year. Catherine also usually checks my CCE Thought emails during the week. Our Facebook page has 335 followers, up from 297 last year.
- Alistair Bolt, our Licensed Lay Minister, John Harrison, retired and active Lay Minister, Ros Wright, now training for ordained ministry, Robin Quine, Authorised Worship Assistant, all of whom have taken services and preached and Maggie Diffey, Andrew Parsons and Kate Belcher who kindly take 8am services for me when I'm away. Our prayers are with Colin Way who wasn't well enough to take many services in 2023 but hopes to celebrate his Ruby anniversary of priesting in Petertide 2024.
- Ian Parkes, our Parochial Church Council (PCC) secretary, and all who serve on the PCC. You can read Ian's report below.

- Tony Grubb, our Treasurer, for his astute contribution to the PCC and his expertise in managing our finances. He has also been instrumental in promoting the Parish Giving Scheme, PGS, which helps us track giving and simplifies our Gift Aid reclaim process. I'm also grateful to Catherine Jeffries, who retired after six distinguished years as Church Warden in 2023 and who continues to claim Gift Aid on donations outside the PGS.
- Everyone who gives money to the Church. Your generosity enabled us to maintain our building and grounds, support our staff, pay parish share, and contribute to various charities and causes. Thank you for your generosity and faithfulness.
- Ruth Vaughan, our continuing Church Warden, for her calm and competent handling of her duties, and Colin McLean, being an answer to prayer and becoming church warden in May. We are truly blessed to have such excellent wardens!
- Vivien Humber, our Pastoral Coordinator, for her compassionate and thoughtful ministry to those who are isolated or in need of support. She has also been taking notes for various committees and for the Deanery Synod, leading the Mothers Union and the Magazine Team, organising 6pm evensong rotas and helping with the Friends group.
- Jacky Sutcliffe, Anna MacDougall and others who have assisted Vivien with pastoral phone calls and visits.
- The magazine team and editors, and those who distribute magazines to local subscribers.
- Roger Glenwright and all those who distribute cards and flyers in the parish.
- The Friends of Christ Church group, for their fundraising efforts for the maintenance and improvement of Christ Church. It is wonderful to the new path to the Garden of Remembrance completed.
- Phil Rodd, vicar of St Andrew's, for 16 years of friendship and collaboration in our group ministry in Eaton. Our prayers are with him in his new ministry in the Flegg group of parishes. James Cook is doing a brilliant job in the interregnum and is also a major help to me as Deanery Chapter Clerk.
- Richard Holcombe, for his financial help, especially advising on staff pensions.
- The Group Council, especially its chair, John Ladd, for their oversight and direction of our joint vision and mission with St Andrew's, and the youth and children work putting on workshops done jointly with St Andrew's. These have around 30 children attending, many every time.
- Sarah Barley, our Finance Officer, who left during the year. We're extremely grateful

for her work on our financial systems, to Mark Jones for being our interim finance officer, and for Kyla Price who started at the beginning of 2024. You can read more about our joint group activities later in the report.

Beyond Eaton, I continue as Rural Dean of Norwich South, on General Synod and as Chair of the House of Clergy of Diocesan Synod (please see the reports below) and therefore onto the Bishop's Council of Trustees. I continue as Chair of Science and Faith in Norfolk but, being without a secretary and on Sabbatical, we have not put on any talks. I have written a book review and am booked to lead a seminar for clergy this September.

Once again, I express my thanks to everyone who has supported us. I hope and pray that, as you read on, you too will be deeply grateful for all that has been done in 2023 and will be encouraged to think and pray about how we can all seek God's kingdom and grow in faith, service and numbers in 2024.

The Rev Dr Patrick Richmond – Vicar

REPORT OF PCC SECRETARY FOR 2023

Christ Church's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of working co-operatively with the vicar to promote in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the church building, Kinchen Hall and The Cottage.

The PCC has considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and tries to help people in the parish grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and in service to others. It maintains and develops the building and keeps it open to the public throughout the year, subject to Government restrictions and Church of England guidance.

The PCC met seven times in 2023 and mostly in Church but with one meeting by Zoom video conferencing to agree the accounts in May. The average PCC attendance at meetings throughout the year was 9 out of 14 members (65%).

We gave thanks to Catherine Jeffries who came to the end of her wardenship in May 2023 and also resigned from Deanery Synod for a well-earned break from PCC activities.

Ruth Vaughan, elected in 2022, continued in her role as Church Warden. Thanks were also expressed to Colin McLean who was elected to Church Warden in May to serve alongside Ruth. We much appreciate and thank Tony Grubb for his work as Treasurer for the year. We are also grateful to Sarah Barley, who stepped back from

the Finance Officer and to Mark Jones who took over temporarily until a permanent replacement could be found. Both have admirably supported Tony over the year. Caroline Gibbs continued as Safeguarding Officer and regularly reported our progress on the Diocesan Safeguarding Dashboard at PCC meetings.

We welcomed Lynda Dryburgh-Smith who was elected to the PCC in May. After completing a second term on the PCC in May 2023, Ian Parkes was coopted back on so he could continue as PCC Secretary, a role he commenced in June 2022. We thank all other PCC members as they continue to serve. Sadly, Verger and cleaner Sue Harris had to step down this year due to ill health and passed away in the autumn.

At the APCM in 2023 it was reported that there were 141 parishioners on the Electoral Roll which included 9 new members who offset 2 people who had sadly died and 3 who had moved away. The Electoral Roll will be revised for the APCM in May 2024 with an invitation to be sent out in the March magazine requesting people to fill in an Electoral Roll form. We thank David Archer who has served as Electoral Roll Officer this year.

The parish share has once again been paid in full, and early, to assist the diocesan finances. A budget has been prepared and the accounts for 2023 will have been approved by April. The Church Terrier and Inventories will be inspected and presented at the APCM and reports from PCC committees and other groups are in this Parish Review.

The Treasurer, supported by Sarah Barley and Mark Jones, has submitted regular and detailed updates on the accounts to 2023 meetings. A key issue this year has still been the impact of higher energy costs which the PCC has been alive to and taken appropriate action. Like last year we were successful again in obtaining a £1700 grant from the Community Hot-Spot initiative by the Norfolk Community Foundation (NCF) which will contribute to keeping the Church warm on Mondays for the Chat over a Cuppa community initiative.

This year we finally completed the planned improvement to the Remembrance Garden path adjacent to the church as the water meter and water supply issues were resolved by Mike Brookes the Fabric Officer. Unfortunately, Mike was taken ill rather suddenly in the spring and passed away soon after. He is sadly missed and since his death it has become even more apparent just how much work he had done over the years to maintain the Church and Kinchen Hall, and what great knowledge he had of the issues. Thanks are due to Ruth Vaughan, Vivien Humber and Chris Mitchell who have coordinated and overseen the fabric issues since then. We pray for a new fabric officer to come forward. We thank Alistair Bolt for his work on the

Eco Church award scheme and his continued efforts in pursuit of the Silver award which was obtained in January 2024.

After much planning, and with a great effort led by Vivien Humber, we had a very well attended 150th Anniversary Thanksgiving service on 26th November, attended by Bishop Graham, the Lord and Lady Mayor of Norwich and the Sheriff of Norwich. This was the culmination of the Fantastic Fish art exhibition in Church which drew interest from across the local community with entries from schools and care homes as well as from the congregation.

A key area of discussion for the PCC this year have been Growth and Discipleship, and the Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) and the deliberations of the Bishops on the subject. It was important that this issue was discussed between the Vicar and the PCC.

Minutes and reports were regularly received from the Kinchen Hall Committee, the Donations Committee, Eaton Parishes' Group Council, the Magazine Team, the Worship Committee, the Youth and Children's Committee, Norwich South Deanery Synod and the Diocesan Synod.

Ian Parkes - PCC Secretary

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults at Christ Church complies with the current requirements by the Diocese of Norwich. David Hughes at St Andrew's kindly completes the necessary DBS checks and securely keeps records for both parishes. There is a plan to do some Christ Church DBS checks ourselves in this coming year to ease the burden on David.

All volunteers who are working with children and young people or with groups which might include vulnerable adults should undertake training every three years. Basic Awareness and Foundation level training is available online on the diocesan website and can be completed in one's own time. PCC members should also undertake Basic Awareness and Foundation level training. Those in positions of responsibility should undertake training up to and including the Leadership training module which the Diocese runs regularly on Zoom. An online module for Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse is now available and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team is encouraging people for whom it might be relevant to complete this. Induction Training was made available for Parish Safeguarding Officers last year and I completed this in December 2022, finding it very useful and informative.

The Parish Safeguarding handbook and information about courses can be found on the Norwich Diocesan website/Safeguarding.

Thank you to all those who have co-operated with form completions and training sessions this year. Please remember that safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility.

There are first aid kits located in the kitchen cupboard above the sink unit and in the choir vestry.

Caroline Gibbs - Safeguarding Officer for Christ Church

CHURCH WARDENS' ANNUAL REPORT

As I look back over the previous year's report, when we were slowly returning to normal following all the restrictions for Covid, I realise that we were almost back to normal by the start of 2023. However, this would be without the Vicar, as Patrick was at the start of his three months sabbatical. Thanks to Patrick's thorough arrangements in securing cover for all the services in his absence we enjoyed a wide variety of clergy leading our worship and preaching at our 8am and 10am communion services. Thanks also to Alistair Bolt, Robin Quine and Ros Wright for taking the Evening Prayer services on Zoom. Catherine Jeffries was in the last few months of her sixth year as Church warden and we were actively beginning to look for someone to replace her at the APCM. Patrick returned from sabbatical on April 2nd, Palm Sunday, refreshed from his studies and time away and church life resumed its normal pattern.

My thanks to Catherine for all her hard work, particularly during Covid and for easing me gently back into the role of warden. It was a real pleasure to work alongside her, and she sets the bar very high. I was pleased to discuss the role and responsibilities of the Church wardens and the impact on daily life with Colin McLean and was delighted when he accepted Catherine's invitation to put his name forward. There being no other nominations, Colin was duly elected at the APCM. He quickly came to grips with many aspects of the job and we are very fortunate to have him in post.

Sadly, at the beginning of January Sue Harris, who cleaned the church for very many years, was the verger for funerals, arranged the flowers and a member of the choir became unwell and had to step back from all her duties. While we waited for news of Sue, weekly cleaning was added to the list of the warden's duties and it made us appreciate all that Sue did behind the scenes. Once Sue had formally resigned as cleaner, we were able to actively seek a replacement and we were delighted that

Bridget Archer accepted our request to take on the job, which she started at the beginning of April. Our thanks to Bridget for carrying out the role so diligently and cheerfully.

One of the responsibilities of the wardens is the upkeep of the church building and we have been extremely fortunate to have had Mike Brookes as Fabric officer since 2015. The church is in very good order thanks to his care and attention to detail. He also took responsibility for overseeing maintenance of Kinchen Hall and the Colman Road cottage. Sadly, Mike was taken ill at the beginning of April and the wardens resumed the duties he previously carried out with the support of Chris Mitchell who had worked alongside him. Chris' knowledge has been invaluable, and we are very grateful to him in particular for taking on the care of Kinchen Hall and responding so quickly to issues reported by the Beehive Nursery.

On July 11th we had the Quinquennial Inspection by our architect David Lemon, which sets out a programme of work required both urgently and recommended over the next 5 years, for the upkeep of the church. In the summary, the opening paragraph states, 'The church is extremely well cared for and a considerable amount of work has been done over the last five years which is a tribute to all those involved in the various phases of the work'.

The high point of the year was the 150th Anniversary celebrations on the last weekend in November, when we remembered and gave thanks for all who had the vision and contributed to the building of Christ Church and was consecrated in November 1873. Over four days we had the amazing Fantastic Fish exhibition with contributions from individuals and groups in the community, including our local schools and residential homes. We offered a welcome and refreshments to the many visitors to the church for the exhibition. On Sunday 26th November, our patronal festival of Christ the King, The Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Revd Graham Usher led our thanksgiving service, which included a specially commissioned anthem for the occasion and new words to a familiar hymn tune written by Rachel Hore and David Taylor. We were delighted to welcome the Lord Mayor, James Wright, the Lady Mayoress, Kate Atkins and the Sheriff of Norwich, Dr Jan Sheldon as well as the Patrons of the Friends of Christ Church and many other guests and friends. We would like to thank Vivien Humber and her team who masterminded the exhibition and brought it to fruition. It was a wonderful community effort. Our thanks also to the team of welcomers and all who provided refreshments over the weekend. Thank you also to Matt for commissioning the anthem and arranging the music and the choir and organist for their wonderful contribution which enhanced our worship. It was a truly memorable celebration.

The wardens are very well supported by the Deputy wardens Jeff Arden, Vivien Humber, Catherine Jeffries, and David Scott who assist them with the 10am Service and their help is greatly appreciated. Our particular thanks to John Harrison who stepped down at the APCM after many years as a Deputy warden.

We are also grateful to Alistair MacDougal and the team of sidespeople at 10am as well as David Edmunds who organises the rotas for 8am. Both teams provide an important welcoming ministry. Also, thanks to those who verge at Weddings and Funerals as this is also a very important ministry to those attending a life event and who are often not part of the church community.

We also wish to thank Jeff Arden, Simon Back, Anthony Colman, Will Colman, Tanya Page and Matt Wright who regularly open or close the church in order for it to be open each day for visits or private prayer.

Our thanks to Carrie and Ian Phoenix who maintain the Garden of Remembrance as well as Richard Rivett and his team who continue to maintain the hedges and church grounds so well. Thanks also to the brass cleaning team, the flower arrangers and the sacristans, who all play a vital part in the life of our church.

Thank you also to Caroline Gibbs for organising the rota for the refreshments following the 10am service and all who help with catering at other church events. This is another important ministry of welcome and is greatly valued.

As well as the many who work front of house there are also a few essential people who keep the show on the road. Our thanks to Catherine Richmond for all she does to manage our website, produce the weekly notice sheet, publicity posters and service sheets for special services. These are sent to the office for printing and Jacky Sutcliffe brings them with other post to Christ Church each week. Also, Gerald Cooke who takes the cash collections and does the banking for us.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Hugh Back for putting out the bins each week, keeping an eye on the church for any signs of vandalism and keeps us in the loop with any issues concerning the residents of Church Avenue.

Another legal responsibility is for all the property and movable goods belonging to the church and its buildings and the Terrier and inventory will be updated before the APCM in May.

Our church family saw a significant number of changes through the year, and we were pleased to welcome new members as well as sadly saying goodbye to others, particularly Mike Brookes, Sue Harris and Mary Sword who all served so faithfully for many years. Our thanks to all who make our church such a successful welcoming

community, often behind the scenes. It is a pleasure to serve the church in this way and we are very grateful to have the continued support from the congregation.

Ruth Vaughan and Colin McLean - Church Wardens

TREASURER'S REPORT

This report will be provided with the accounts.

MUSIC AND CHOIR REPORT

After the struggles of the pandemic years, 2023 saw a return to normality (by our standards) and this report will hopefully give a brief overview of our activities.

In the 150th anniversary year of the church, the highlights were undoubtedly our choir concert ('Greatest Hits II') in October and the special celebration service in November. We commissioned an anthem from Simon Lole, a well-known composer of church music and sometime Cathedral organist. *Behold! How good and Joyful it is* uses words from Psalms 133 & 134, the same text as the anthem sung at the opening of the church in 1873. It wasn't a cheap undertaking, but it was a once-in-a-generation project and I was so grateful to all who contributed to the £2k, either through donations, or supporting the concert.

We continued with our Saturday rehearsals, regularly and irregularly as the liturgical calendar dictated. We had one 'away fixture' this year, to sing Choral Evensong at St Mark's Lakenham on the dedication of new lighting. A lavish tea was consumed. Carols were sung at the Beehive just before Christmas and our choir lunch was held at the George Hotel again in January.

I'd like to thank David Uden for covering for my holidays and sharing the playing of Evensong. Neil Ricketts accompanied our Good Friday service and the concert, and we were delighted to welcome back Dave Ballard to accompany the Advent & Christmas carol services whilst Neil was covering the Director of Music interregnum at St John's Cathedral.

The choir is a close-knit team, friendly and welcoming to all and whilst we work hard at perfecting music (and sometimes even processions), we have a good laugh too. We've seen many comings and goings over the years, and we were pleased to welcome Lucy McLean and Toby Harris this year. We still have quite a few occasional singers and although many find it hard to commit to regular Sunday attendance, we can usually deliver the goods when it matters. I'm always on the look-out for new members though to maintain our choral tradition, so please spread

the word. I'd like to thank all the choir members for all their hard work and commitment, Patrick for his support and trust plus everybody who says nice things about our efforts.

Sadly, we had to say goodbye to Margaret Sessa-Hawkins and Peter Smith during the year and wish them well for their new lives in Cardiff and Ipswich respectively. The choir and church lost a loyal servant in Sue Harris who after a courageous battle with cancer, passed away in September. It was unusual for Sue not to be in church on a Sunday, at a choir rehearsal, or verging for a funeral or wedding. She was never afraid to speak her mind and I can still hear her mutterings and sighing if she didn't approve of my music choices, or a hymn was too modern, or if the sermon was too long, or a wedding couple hadn't liaised about flowers. However, she'd always arrive early when we used to have Friday rehearsals and we'd put the world to rights whilst I ate my tea. We saw eye-to-eye on quite a few controversial subjects. We dedicated some of the music at the concert to her memory and sang her favourite 'O Holy Night' at the carol service. RIP Sue and thank you.

Matt Wright - Organist and Choirmaster at Christ Church

BABY&ME

Our group at the start of 2022 though quite small was rather stable at about six regulars. As I wrote last year, the group is very transient; as the babies grow up and start to move around we can't safely accommodate them in the church.

We lost some of our regulars when the mums/dads returned to work and the babies went to nursery.

We tried hard with various different methods of promoting Baby&Me but the numbers declined quite markedly from the summer.

With heavy hearts we made the extremely sad decision that Baby&Me would cease at the end of 2023. Christmas Day was a Monday, so our last session was 18th December. We had our two most faithful mums for that last session with their youngsters who by now had started to become quite mobile and had actually outgrown Baby&Me.

Catherine Jeffries - on behalf of the team of Alison Green, Carrie Phoenix, Dee Scott and Ruth Vaughan; and with special thanks to our organiser Leisa Devlin

SUNDAY SCHOOL & YOUTH GROUP

Thanks to a group of willing volunteers there is Sunday School for children of primary school age in term time during the 10am service at Christ Church in the Children's Room. Usually, the sessions feature the New Testament reading for the week, though the group spent several sessions in the autumn looking at fish stories in the Bible and making a fish mobile for the Fantastic Fish Exhibition at the end of November. The Sunday School Shoal was a great success.

Numbers are low, though we have been glad to welcome several visitors to the sessions over the year. Our two most regular attenders brilliantly starred as Joseph and Mary in the Crib Service on Christmas Eve, with plentiful support from the young audience to take the part of Shepherds and Wise Men.

The Youth Group for young people of secondary school age meets two or three times a term, and they have been using their sessions to watch and discuss episodes of the wonderful 'The Chosen'. Thank you to Geraldine Verschoor and her helpers for running these sessions. More volunteers to help with both these groups would be most welcome.

Caroline Gibbs

CHAT OVER A CUPPA

Chat over a Cuppa continues to grow with normally between 18-20 people enjoying friendship, conversation, and tea. There were 40 at a special New Year's tea and for the Coronation tea 35. Thanks to Community Hot Spot funding we are able to offer a warm space for meetings on a Monday during the winter.

Stephanie Brookes

PASTORAL CARE AT CHRIST CHURCH

It has long been the church's tradition to take gifts to those in the community who are frail or housebound, unwell or lonely, and to residents of local care homes and hostels at major church festivals.

After the COVID-19 lockdowns, when more innovative ways of offering pastoral and community care were needed, we have been returning to a more normal pattern.

The men's fellowship group, set up in 2020, continues to meet regularly for fellowship.

At Easter, Harvest and Christmas gift packs with a plant and greetings card are distributed to those in the parish who are frail, housebound, unwell, bereaved or lonely.

At Harvest, produce (similar to items requested by the FoodBank) is taken to local hostels (Leeway, YMCA My Place, Archway and St Martin’s Housing Trust) and a range of presents for adults and children are donated at Christmas. These hostels have a particular focus on homelessness and our aim is to highlight their work, as well as providing assistance to their residents. To that end we were delighted to welcome St Martin’s CEO, Dr Jan Sheldon (currently Sheriff of Norwich), to speak at the 10am service the Sunday before Christmas Day.

Pastoral and community care is only possible because of the contribution of many in the church family.

Particular thanks are due to members of the Pastoral Care Team and those who helped prepare and distribute gifts. We were delighted to be joined by two new members in 2023 – Julie Bolt and Robin Quine; their involvement is most welcome. I am also grateful to the team at St Andrew's with whom we work so happily over the Harvest and Christmas gifts to local hostels.

Vivien Humber - for The Pastoral Care Team

CHARITABLE GIVING 2023

Charity of the Month

The Donations Committee met twice in 2023 to discuss which monthly charities to recommend to the PCC, our aim continuing to be to balance local, national and international concerns and to support mainly Christian charities. Christ Church has traditionally supported five or six priority charities every year, indicated by an asterisk in the list below, showing the amounts sent each month from the cash collection at the back of church:

MONTH	CHARITY	AMOUNT
January	Children’s Society	£105 (plus £21.25 reclaimed tax)
February	Salvation Army Appeal for Ukraine	£210 (plus £47.50)
	Türkiye/Syria Earthquake Appeal	£215 (plus £41.25)
March	Magdalene Group*	£140 (plus £22.75)

Mothing Sunday	Mothers' Union	£100 (plus £18.75)
April	Barnabas	£70 (plus £13.50)
May	Break/Family Centre*	£110 (plus 21.25)
June	Church Army*	£75 (plus £18)
July & Sea Sunday	Mission to Seafarers	£95 (plus £20)
August	Bible Society*	£75 (plus 16.62)
September & Harvest Festival	Tearfund* (including £252 profit from Harvest Supper)	£360 (plus £16.95)
October	Scripture Union*	£90 (plus £20)
November	Hebron House	£120 (plus £18.75)
December	St Martin's Housing Trust	£150 (plus £21.25)
Christmas Collections **	St Martin's Housing Trust	£405
	Christian Aid	£405
* Priority charities which receive a donation every year		
** Christmas Collections from the Carol, Crib, Midnight & Christmas Day services		

Other Charitable Giving

Other charitable giving from Christ Church includes donations at the Lent Lunches, organised jointly with St Andrew's. In 2023 £1,400 was raised to be split equally between the Bishops' Lent Appeal 2023, the new Priscilla Bacon Lodge building and the Tearfund East Africa Hunger Crisis Appeal.

Each year £700 from church funds go to our CMS Mission Partners Dick and Caroline Seed in Cape Town. The Spring Coffee Morning, organised jointly with St Andrew's, raised £882, and the Autumn Fayre in mid-November raised £1,482.90, to be shared equally between the mission partners and Global Mission through Local Leaders.

Every year our Harvest Festival gifts of food are boxed up and distributed among the hostels Archway, Leeway, YMCA/My Place and St Martin's Housing Trust. At Christmas we donate toys, toiletries and other suitable presents for the people living in these hostels. Many thanks to Vivien Humber for co-ordinating the collection and distribution of these gifts.

In September Christ Church was open for the annual sponsored Bike Ride in aid of the Norfolk Churches Trust. Alistair Bolt valiantly took to the road and raised £560 from sponsors.

Kathy Ladd continues to collect in church to contribute to the Colman Schools, which have been organising support for families struggling with the Cost-of-Living Crisis.

Donations for hot drinks after the 10am service are sent to WaterAid and Toilet Twinning alternately. In January and September Ruth Vaughan was able to send £250 to Water Aid, £500 in all. £240 was sent to Toilet Twinning in June. There is a collection point at the back of church for unwanted spectacles which are recycled to fund Vision Aid Overseas, thanks to Jacky Sutcliffe. The Food Bank collection continues at the back of church, thanks to Anna McDougall, and we are reminded that it is also possible to donate online at www.norwichfoodbank.co.uk or www.bankuet.co.uk/norwich

In the coming year the members of the Christ Church Donations Committee will join the St Andrew's Committee to plan the monthly charities together, so that both churches will usually support the same charity each month. As we collect for many of the same charities already, though not necessarily at the same time, it seemed a good idea to pool our efforts and work together. New members are always welcome to join. I have always found it very interesting finding out about the many and various charities working locally and throughout the world.

Caroline Gibbs - Donations Committee

(Committee members: Caroline Gibbs, John Harrison

In 2024 to join with St Andrew's Donations Committee: Neil Rout, Marilyn Evans, David Huges, Vivien Humber)

FRIENDS OF CHRIST CHURCH

For the past six years the Friends of Christ Church, Eaton have been raising money for projects related to the fabric of the church building and its surrounds; these are subject to the approval of the Parochial Church Council. Money is paid into a separate Friends' fund (and may not be used for the church's general running costs). The funds help towards meeting the cost of preserving the fabric of the church, necessary repairs and the replacement of major items.

The Friends' Management Team met four times during the year - in January, April, July and October, when the 2022/2023 project and the programme for the year were discussed.

2022/23 Project

The 2022 project (a permeable, hard-standing, path to facilitate mobility access such as wheelchairs and walkers, to the Garden of Remembrance) was re-titled the 2022/23 Project because of the lengthy delays resulting from Anglian/WAVE's slow response in dealing with metering issues, as reported in last year's report to the APCM in 2023. The cost of the new pathway was originally £6,474 (including VAT) but, due to the very considerable delay in starting work, this rose to £8,515 (including VAT and an additional cost for supervision, following the sad death of Christ Church's Fabric Officer, who always oversaw our projects).

Whilst creating a new path, the opportunity was also taken to replace the wooden border edging around the Garden of Remembrance as this had decayed. Environmentally friendly edging was installed (total cost £316).

The Team recognised with great regret the death of Mike Brookes; he played a significant role in all our projects, most recently in negotiating with Anglian Water on the Garden of Remembrance path. It was agreed that the Management Team would recommend to the Parochial Church Council that there should be a plaque in memory of Mike Brookes (I am happy to say this was approved).

Those with relatives whose ashes were interred in the Garden were also told about the improvements and we are grateful for the donations we have received from them.

Events

The Team continues to reaffirm the Friends' important role in offering friendship and fellowship to the local community. Our goal is always to draw Friends and Team members from the community and the church. Our programme of events therefore has a dual function - community outreach and fundraising.

- **Quiz and Chips** took place at 7.30pm on 11th March at Eaton Park Community Hall, South Park Avenue. This was a new venue for this event and was very well attended, being fully sold out. £519 was raised.
- **Plant Sale** took place between 10am – 1pm on 20th May in the church and surrounding area. £611.90 was raised.
- **4th Annual Meeting and Garden Reception** took place on 8th September and we were delighted that David Walker, our new Patron, was able to attend and open the event.
- **Christ Church's 150th Anniversary (1873-2023)**: Christ Church celebrated its 150th anniversary in November with a special service, led by the Bishop of Norwich, and a "Fantastic Fish" exhibition (there are many fish in the Bible). It

was agreed that it would be appropriate that the monies raised (donations for refreshments and gifts) during the four-day event should go towards the 2022/23 project. Over £300 was raised.

Finance

All the monies (fundraising, subscriptions, Gift Aid reclaim) have been released from restricted funds for Friends' projects - the objective had always been to spend these monies on the purposes for which they were raised, not to hold them for any longer than was necessary.

We are very grateful to all our Friends for continuing to support us in the vital work of maintaining this much loved and valued building.

Membership of the Friends numbers remained steady throughout the year, with some welcome new members added. There are now more than 70 officially recorded "Friends of Christ Church".

Communication

Throughout the year members were kept updated through newsletters and letters and we are grateful to John Ladd for leading on media relations.

As mentioned above, we are delighted that David Walker agreed to be a Patron, joining David Taylor, Mark Jeffries and Rachel Hore.

We were very sorry that Sarah Scott and Ros Wright stood down from the Management Team this year - they will be much missed - but pleased to welcome John Ladd and Alison Court as new members.

Management Team members, 2023

David Scott (Chair), Vivien Humber (Secretary), Alison Court, Roger Glenwright, Catherine Jeffries, John Ladd & Carrie Phoenix

David Scott - Chair of the Management Team, Friends of Christ Church, Eaton

FABRIC REPORTS

Church

The only project this year was the laying of the disabled-friendly path in the Garden of Remembrance which was eventually completed in July after delays caused by Anglian Water and the installation of a new water meter.

In July the Quinquennial Inspection took place, overseen by our architect, David Lemon. Thanks to the considerable amount of work that has been done over the past five years and Mike Brookes' care and attention the fabric is in very good order.

We owe him a considerable debt. The only work which is required within the next two years is general repairs and maintenance. The next most urgent work is the crack at the west end of the north aisle north wall, repointing of the flintwork locally to the north transept east elevation buttress, School Room west wall and west end of Warden's Vestry south wall followed by the rectification of ponding at the north end of the west porch roof and replacement of the badly decayed stonework to the south transept south elevation easternmost buttress.

Kinchen Hall

Because of the age of the building and the considerable amount of rain we experienced at times through the year, leaks, particularly through the flat roofs, have been the major issue. These have been investigated and will with luck be resolved in 2024.

Some internal damage due to a failed downpipe has been repaired, with subsequent redecoration.

Due to damp and mould in the toilets, the front-facing windows were successfully replaced in September. However, the relevant section of the roof, discovered to be concrete, is adding to the ventilation challenges and needs addressing.

Two under-sink water heaters were replaced in October.

Colman Road Cottage

New tenants moved in in January and no issues with the fabric have been brought to our attention.

Generally

The good order of our fabric is, again, thanks to Mike Brookes with valuable assistance provided by Chris Mitchell and Ian Parkes. Following Mike's death, the wardens have been extremely grateful to Chris for overseeing Kinchen Hall and maintaining the routine inspections that are required at the church and the hall.

Ruth Vaughan – Church Warden

NORWICH FOOD BANK

Donations to the Food Bank are still considerably down since the Covid pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Pre-covid we were donating 3 to 4 'Bags for Life' full every week. We are now donating 3 to 4 bags a month. Thank you to all who donated throughout the year. The month before Christmas was very good as we had several more donations of Christmas goodies as well as the usual foods. Please

continue to donate and, although we say that we collect on the 1st Sunday of the month, we are quite happy to receive any gifts at any time.

Anna MacDougall & Jacky Sutcliffe

GLASSES FOR AFRICA

This year I have taken 68 pairs of old and broken glasses to Specsavers. These they repair and send to their Training Centre in Zambia for the disadvantaged with poor vision in remote and isolated communities. Regularly they send optometrists to Africa to deliver essential eye care and tests.

Please continue to put your unwanted glasses in the box at the back of the Church.

Thank You.

Jacky Sutcliffe

STAMPS FOR EMBRACE THE MIDDLE EAST

This is an Ecumenical Christian Charity working to help marginalised and vulnerable communities in the Middle East.

This year we have collected 701gms of stamps. These are then sold, British stamps at £10 a kg and foreign stamps at £15 a kg. (There are approximately 6,000 stamps in a kg.)

Every single stamp helps, so please continue to donate by putting them in the box at the back of the Church.

Thank you.

Jacky Sutcliffe

PART TWO - REPORTS COVERING JOINT ACTIVITIES WITH ST ANDREW'S

EATON PARISHES GROUP COUNCIL

Mission Statement

'The Group Ministry of St Andrew's and Christ Church seeks to Collaborate, Cooperate and Communicate in the Eaton Community.'

The Diocese established a Group Ministry for the Parishes of St Andrew's and Christ Church in 2007 when the old parish of Eaton was divided into two. Its Group Council is the vehicle by which they 'consult together on any matter of common concern'. It has no decision-making power and acts in a consultative and advisory role to the two PCCs. In 2010 the then Bishop of Norwich said that the Group Ministry should, firstly, facilitate what the people involved wanted to do to benefit and develop church mission in Eaton and, secondly, serve the future development of both churches.

Ongoing activities within the Group Ministry include:

- communications such as the Parishes' Magazine, Christmas and Easter cards
- supporting Mission Partners, through prayer and fund-raising events
- joint children and youth activities including Saturday Workshops
- events such as the Garden Party, Remembrance Day, and Lent Lunches
- the Joint Parishes' Office
- Groups, including the Mothers Union and the Julian Group.

These feature regularly on the agenda of Group Council's quarterly meetings and the minutes of its meetings are circulated to both PCCs for report and/or response.

The Lent Lunches (27th February to 3rd April) were well attended. As usual monies are raised for two charities – in 2023 these were the Bishop's Lent Appeal for 2023 – the new Priscilla Bacon Lodge building in memory of The Venerable Ian Bentley - and Tearfund's East Africa Hunger Crisis Appeal. In total £1400 was raised for these worthy causes.

The Jubilee Garden Party took place on 17th June at 210 Newmarket Road; £2,449.90 was raised for children and youth work in the parishes. This was to be the last Garden Party at this address as a new vicarage is being purchased for Phil Rodd's successor in post as Vicar of St Andrew's.

Eaton's Mission Partners have been supported through prayer and fundraising. £2,485.90 had been raised during the year - £882 at the Spring Coffee Morning and £1,603.90 at the Autumn Fayre. The parishes' Mission Partners, Dick and Caroline Seed, had a very busy year including visits to

Java, Indonesia, Bali, Uganda, Bali, Sierra Leone and Rwanda, delivering Phase 3 training and producing Workbooks in the Generosity Project, which counters Prosperity theology.

Both churches approved the selection of Mirna Paolo (Argentina) as Eaton churches' focal point as our Local Leader through CMS's Local Leaders initiative.

We continued to communicate with a growing number of children in Eaton. Activity Workshops for junior school-aged children took place at Easter (on the theme of, "*What Happened to Jesus?*"), the summer holidays (Jonah and the Great Fish), Autumn half-term (The Lost Son) and concluded with a Christingle-themed Workshop at Christmas. All the Workshops have a mini drama (which has made a very significant contribution to these Workshops), crafts, games, songs and refreshments.

The joint parishes' Remembrance Service was held at the War Memorial on 11th November with a very encouraging attendance, including some local schoolchildren; we are grateful to David Scott for continuing to organise these Services and for the clergy from the two parishes who lead them. Thanks, must also be recorded to the War Memorial Trustees for their continuing loving care of this historic monument.

The Parishes' magazine continues to run successfully with its team of volunteer editors and magazine advertising secretary. As usual Easter and Christmas cards, with a message from the two vicars, were delivered to every home in Eaton.

More detailed reports on joint activities e.g. Mission Support, children and youth work, the Office and the magazine, can be found in other reports.

The following were elected or re-elected to Group Council at the APCMs: Jane Carey, Marilyn Evans, Chris Smith, Douglas Durand and Alison Black (St Andrew's), myself, Vivien Humber (Secretary), David Archer and Tony Grubb (Christ Church). Catherine Jeffries stood down; thanks to her for her time as a member of the Council. We were pleased to welcome Douglas as a new member and delighted that Alison agreed to stand again. My thanks also to all Group Council members - whether continuing, retired or new to the Group - for their continued enthusiasm and support.

John Ladd - Chair, Group Council

PARISHES MAGAZINE TEAM

A year in which we welcomed the new Head of the Church of England, King Charles III, and said farewell to Phil Rodd, Vicar of Eaton for 15 years.

The magazine is an important part of the Eaton churches' communications package, offering an accessible Christian message to its broadly-based readership. It contains articles on subjects ranging from church events to local community matters, together with information on the goods and services of local advertisers.

The Magazine Team supports the magazine editors and the advertising secretary by reviewing contents, production, circulation, and revenues at its two meetings held in the spring and autumn of each year. The Vicars are ex officio members.

In 2022 the magazine celebrated Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee and sorrowfully marked her death later that year. In May 2023 it featured the coronation of King Charles III – the first coronation for nearly 70 years – during which the new King swore to *“maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, as by law established in England”*.

The July/August edition saw Patrick pay tribute to his dear friend and colleague, Phil Rodd, vicar of St Andrew's for 15 years. Patrick noted that they had known each other for 16 years, since he came to Eaton as Vicar in May 2007 when Phil was curate at Holy Trinity, Heigham, and the two subsequently worked closely together in Eaton's Group Ministry.

The magazine team is grateful to all those who have contributed articles, with particular thanks to our regular columnists who were able to pick up key topics in the year whilst maintaining the local flavour which is so important in a parishes' magazine.

I would like to thank all members of the team for their enthusiasm and commitment during the year.

The magazine could not function without its advertising secretary, so thanks are due to Christine Mortimer, who works so efficiently with the advertisers and printers. We are also most grateful for the sterling work of those unsung heroes, the magazine distributors, and the Office staff, who have worked seamlessly with them. Thanks also to the printers, BD&H, who continue to maintain their excellent service.

Finally, the magazine continues to generate a surplus which is used to support the work of the two churches. We are grateful to the staff in the parishes' office for financial updates, which inform the Magazine Team meetings.

Vivien Humber - Chair

EATON PARISHES OFFICE

This year of 2023 was one where there was great change evident in the office, making for a rather different and at times challenging year. Sarah Barley, our Finance Assistant, decided early in the year to move to pastures new. Before I say anything further, I would like to stress my heartfelt, grateful thanks to Sarah for her hard work in the 3 years she worked in our office. Her attention to detail, and her ability to create, launch and maintain efficient systems in the office, was invaluable. Despite having moved on, her legacy is still felt in the office in the spreadsheets and methods she introduced! I continue to be very grateful for her valuable contribution.

Of course, once someone leaves, a period of recruitment is required, and thus the search for a new Finance Officer began. We weren't immediately able to appoint a replacement, and we are immensely grateful to Mark Jones who was able to step into the breach at almost a moment's notice and keep the ship afloat. Thank you Mark for saving the office from having to have me look at finances! Everyone is very grateful about that! Seriously though, you were able to step in and do what was required, which was essential, and very much appreciated.

Much later in the year, whilst advertising for the position again, I received an email from someone called Kyla Price, explaining that she was very interested in the post, and had plenty of experience but was unable to start until January 2024. She wondered whether it was worth her applying. I responded immediately to encourage her to apply anyway, which turned out to be a real prompt from God, because ultimately, she fitted the bill and was the person we appointed! Although we had to wait a few weeks more for her to start, it was worth waiting! As she started in January 2024, that isn't covered in the report for 2023, but spoiler alert, she's fitted in well and is doing brilliantly!

Other than staffing changes, there are a few things in the office which gradually change over time. I always say that working in administration is a journey, not a destination, and it's as true now as when I began, that things change and evolve. It's important not to stand still and adapt as changes become necessary.

One big encouragement for me during 2023 was the creation of a local Norwich-based support group for Church Administrators. I have been a member of UCAN (the UK Church Administrator's Network) for some time but having the opportunity to meet with other church administrators every few weeks has proved really helpful, encouraging and enjoyable. Sometimes someone else has already solved a problem, so why reinvent the wheel? Once or twice, it's been me that has suggested a strategy that others found useful – really encouraging to support one another.

Thank you to everyone who has contact with the office, and for your support for all that we do. We aim to do the tasks which you need us to do as swiftly and efficiently as possible, and we especially appreciate when plenty of notice is given, so that we can fit in your requests among the other routine things which happen week in week out.

Ruth Thorp - Parishes Administrator

EATON MOTHERS' UNION

Mothers' Union Norwich is a part of a worldwide fellowship. Through programmes, campaigning, community outreach and prayer Mothers' Union promotes stable marriage and family life. It works through local volunteer members to create lasting change for families and their communities. Members are driven by their faith but work with people of all faiths and none.

Its programme includes:

- **Refugee Resettlement:** members from our Branch are involved in refugee resettlement, including raising funds and buying new bedding, as well as making up beds
- **Away From It All (A.F.I.A) holidays:** a MU project to provide holidays for disadvantage children in the UK
- **Angel Tree:** a MU project connected with a local prison, enabling children of prisoners to receive Christmas gifts from their absent parent
- **Cathedral Prayers:** on 1st Thursday of every month MU Norwich meets in the Jesus Chapel at Norwich Cathedral for Midday Prayers, each time hosted by a different MU group.

Branch News

We were able to offer a full programme of meetings in 2023, although these continue to be in large, airy, well-ventilated spaces during the day, rather than evening meetings in members' houses, as was previously the case, because of continuing concerns following the COVID-19 lockdowns.

The Revd Andrea Woods led us in an Advent Reflection on 13th March.

During the year we welcomed speakers including Marie-Lyse Numuhoza MBE on MU Community of Interest in Social Policy Work, Ann Aves and Liz Magem speaking about the John Aves Education Project and Sue Johns on the "Five Talents" – the Anglican Church's microfinance charity.

The Eaton Branch members enjoyed an enjoyable social event in the summer (a meal at the Eaton Park Café) on 24th July.

We took part in the Annual Festival Service at the Cathedral on 26th September.

We led the Mothers Union prayers in the Jesus Chapel of the Cathedral on 5th October.

On 11th December Alistair Bolt, a Reader at Christ Church, led our Advent Reflection.

Our thanks to our clergy, who take the Holy Communion Service at 10am on the 3rd Thursday of the month.

Angel Tree: we were also able to support the annual collection for the Angel Tree through which, working alongside The Prison Fellowship, Mothers' Union members buy Christmas gifts for children of parents in prison.

Refugee Resettlement: some Branch members helped sort and store bedding and make up beds.

Branch vision for the future

- to continue to work for all that Mother's Union represents supporting families and marriage.
- to provide inspiration for members in the year ahead.

We continue to maintain contact with Branch members and to disseminate useful information and news through emails and letters.

Vivien Humber - Branch Leader

YOUTH & CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE

Throughout 2023, the Youth & Children's Committee of the Eaton Group Ministry diligently pursued its objective: to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with children and young people in relevant ways while coordinating and expanding this vital work. It now meets termly and oversees and receives reports from the Action Team that plans specific events.

In March, the committee reviewed our efforts, noting the difficulty of recruiting a new paid youth worker, a positive shift from activity packs to interactive workshops, with growing attendance and interest from families. Plans were proposed to bridge the gap between workshops and informal family services, aiming for a cohesive, welcoming approach.

The June meeting received updates on recent events, including the Garden Party and the Easter Workshop, highlighting positive engagement with families and use of

drama. Safeguarding matters were emphasized, alongside plans to enhance collaboration with local schools and explore growth opportunities outlined in Church of England research. We said farewell to Phil Rodd, who was moving to a new benefice.

In October, the committee noted the successful summer workshop and ongoing efforts to engage families with diverse backgrounds, including those with English as a second language. Strategies for future events, such as the Christmas Workshop and potential family-based services, were outlined, emphasizing communication, community involvement and prayer.

Research and our experience confirm the importance of prayer, committed leadership, engagement with the wider church family, and proactive outreach efforts. Safeguarding measures remained a priority, alongside plans to strengthen partnerships with local schools and adapt to the evolving needs of the community. With each meeting, the committee demonstrated its dedication to fostering a welcoming, inclusive environment where children and young people can explore and embrace the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Patrick Richmond - Vicar of Christ Church

EATON EAGLES

Eaton Eagles F.C., who play in the adult division of the Norfolk Christian Football League, have been going from strength to strength. Runners-up in last year's competition, they are, at the time of writing – late January – heading the table, with 30 points from a possible 33, secured by an impressive tally of 57 goals. Club Secretary Henry Aspin reports that morale is high and that team members were grateful for a donation by a member of the Christ Church congregation that enabled them to purchase a set of new shirts emblazoned with the logo of the St Martin's Housing Trust. The club, who have been sponsored by the parishes for several years, also appeared at last June's fete, where spectators were entertained by a display of footballing skills. Home games take place on Saturday mornings at Sloughbottom Park and details of fixtures can be found on the FA Full Time website.

David Taylor - Club Welfare Officer

OVERSEAS MISSION SUPPORT

This has been an exciting year of changes for the Mission Focus Group at St Andrew's Eaton with limited support from Christ Church Eaton.

Post Covid, the monthly meetings were transferred to St Andrew's Church and Christ Church alternately so that we could keep our distance whilst we prayed for our CMS Mission Partners and Group of Local Leaders. At the start of this year the meetings moved to the comfort of 6 Peshurst Mews to avoid heating St Andrew's Church and the Children's room at Christ Church on alternate months. Everyone was welcome but sadly this did not encourage any participation from the Christ Church congregation.

The group enjoyed the monthly letters sent to us by the Seeds, our Mission Partners in South Africa, full of information of their very busy schedule and requests for prayer. Photocopies of these letters were left in the Church information areas for anyone to read and take away and highlights were printed in the Parishes Magazine.

The group of CMS local leaders, working in their own country with some financial support from CMS, did send in news but as a group we found it difficult to pray for unknown workers from whom we had no feedback. Whilst strongly wanting to support leaders in their own country, we wanted to support one particular person in one country over a period of time and build a relationship. To begin with, this was not CMS's plan as they felt they needed a pot of money to support a range of local projects over a short time. Luckily last year they did see the value of different parishes being able to support one local leader and getting to know what their needs were and how we should pray for them.

This December the two Parish councils accepted that we would now support Mirna Paulo, a local leader in Northern Argentina where she works on the ground bringing young people and women's groups to the Lord. She is very hands on and speaks fluent Witchit where she works with these indigenous people bringing them the Gospel - a very different skill set from the more intellectual Seeds who are training Pastors and Teachers of Theology all over Africa and beyond with the aid of Zoom. Sadly, she does not speak English, but her quarterly letters will be translated by CMS from her fluent Spanish.

Whilst the small mission support group does pray for our CMS partners, we felt that it was really important that all the congregation should bring these faithful workers to mind and realize the amazing work being done, far from comfortable Eaton, in the big outside world. We are hoping that the mission work will be mentioned each week at the 10am service in the prayers so we will all remember them.

We did hold two major fundraising events - the Spring Coffee morning raised £882 and the Autumn fair raised £1482.90 to fund extras for our two missionaries.

We are very grateful that St Andrews PCC send £3000 to CMS each year, from church funds, to support their basic needs.

In 2024 we are looking forward to getting to know more about Mirna Paulo in Argentina and hopefully enjoying a visit from the Seeds in the summer.

Jane Carey - Leader, Mission Support Group

NORWICH SOUTH DEANERY SYNOD

The Deanery Synod is a meeting where clergy and non-ordained members from the churches in our deanery of Norwich South, our local area, come together to discuss and make decisions about matters affecting our local churches together. The Deanery Synod connects our various Churches' PCCs to each other and to the central Diocesan Synod. It is a legally required part of how the Church of England works and meets two or three times a year.

The Norwich South Deanery Synod met twice in 2023, with notable speakers including Bishop Jane Steen and Jonathan Richardson.

In June, Bishop Jane emphasized mission and presented strategic projects, urging collaboration and experimentation. Discussions centred on mission definition, project updates, and parish initiatives, with a focus on youth engagement and environmental sustainability.

The November meeting featured Jonathan Richardson's presentation on children, youth, and families, highlighting the role of the Diocesan Team and addressing mental health concerns. Living in Love and Faith LLF updates prompted discussions on the Church's stance on same-sex relationships and sexuality. Additionally, we heard updates on refugee support and eco-church activities. Both meetings underscored the importance of prayer, collaboration, and pastoral care amidst evolving challenges within the Church of England. We do not have an official deanery synod secretary but I'm grateful to Vivien Humber for taking minutes, and for Sandra Isaac, lay chair, and James Cook, clergy chapter clerk.

Patrick Richmond - Rural Dean of Norwich South.

NORWICH DIOCESAN SYNOD

The Diocesan Synod in the Church of England serves as a representative body responsible for governance and decision-making within each diocese. It addresses various matters concerning the diocese, including mission strategy, financial management, clergy appointments, and policy formation, while also liaising with the General Synod at the national level and Deanery Synods at the local level. It usually meets three times a year.

In March, discussions encompassed the cost-of-living crisis, diocesan vision progress, and Living in Love and Faith (LLF). The dissolution of the Children and Youth & Families Forum was proposed, and legal governance updates were provided.

In June, amidst the Annual General Meeting of the Norwich Diocesan Board of Finance Limited, updates on the diocesan vision, strategy, and challenges facing families were deliberated. Questions arose regarding the Prayers of Love and Faith PLF and the Living in Love and Faith LLF process.

In November, the Bishop of Norwich reflected on division and pastoral responses in the world and the Church, while discussions focused on diocesan vision priorities, a net zero carbon action plan, and the 2024 budget, with opportunities for questions on General Synod and governance of the diocese.

Patrick Richmond - Diocesan Synod member for Norwich South and General Synod, and Chair of the Diocesan House of Clergy

