



## **Christ Church Cheltenham Activities Reports for 2022-23**

### **Evangelism Committee**

The main thrust of our evangelism this year at Christ Church was our recent Alpha Course which was well received. Over the course of several weeks, we had the pleasure of welcoming familiar and less familiar faces into our church community and introducing them to the core beliefs of Christianity.

Our Evangelism Committee worked hard to ensure that everyone felt welcome and supported throughout the course, providing a safe and nurturing environment for all participants. We were thrilled to see people engage with the course material and ask thoughtful questions about the Christian faith.

In addition to the Alpha Course, we have prayer visited the parish, and provided opportunities for church members to engage in outreach and share their faith with others. We have to work together to spread the word of God and share His love with those around us.

We believe that these efforts have been fruitful, and we look forward to continuing to serve as ambassadors of Christ in our community. We are grateful for your support and encouragement throughout these endeavours, and we are excited to see what God has in store for us in the future.

Rev Simon Heron

### **Fabric Committee**

The Fabric Committee is responsible for the physical integrity of the church, parish centre and grounds. This entails overseeing routine servicing and maintenance, plus personally undertaking gardening, repairs, painting and cleaning work to ensure the church is always safe and clean for users.

In addition to its routine work and numerous small repairs and maintenance jobs, since April 2022 the Fabric Committee has undertaken a number of major projects including installing low-energy lighting in the parish centre; clearing out the temporary vestry and making the electrical wiring in there safe, preparatory to reducing the size of the temporary vestry; and changed the locks on all the ground floor and balcony exits. The Fabric Committee is also working closely with other project teams on the installation of solar panels and on installing low energy lighting in the church.

The Fabric team has also sorted through all of the archives stored in the archives room, with important documents being sent to the diocese and numerous boxes of documents sent for secure shredding; repaired and moved the choir stalls; repaired doors that were damaged during a break-in; and overseen the installation of new spotlights in the choir. Regarding the church's outdoor space, the team has filled the potholes in the forecourt; installed bicycle racks; cleaned the solar panels; erected a bench to Winnie Smith in the memorial garden; and planted up containers in the courtyard.

Thank you to everyone on the Fabric Committee for all their hard work over the past year.

Kim Fleet  
Secretary to the Fabric Committee

### **Deanery Synod**

Church of England dioceses have asked deaneries to work on plans to coordinate activities and to allocate the resources available across the parishes in each deanery. So it will come as no surprise that our Deanery Synod has spent time fleshing out and reviewing a draft Deanery Plan produced by our Area Dean, Gary Grady. We have looked at strengths and weaknesses within the Deanery, and where and how we might collaborate so as to increase our impact for Christ in our town. This is still very much a work in progress, and we will doubtless hear more about it in the coming months.

In November Synod heard from Sarah Avery, manager of Family Space, about the massive scale of needs – in particular food and heating - in many parts of Cheltenham, and the various initiatives (Warm Space, Food Pantries etc) that are providing help. Cheltenham Citizens' Advice Bureau were receiving 2 calls every minute about the cost of living; a workload they are not resourced to deal with. We may assume needs will not diminish any time soon - rather the opposite.

Synod also discussed Churchyard Regulations (who can be buried where and what sort of memorial is acceptable). These are rather complex and often not adhered to. At Christ Church we are producing a Policy for PCC approval for our Garden of Rest covering these matters; this should make it easier for our clergy to deal with families on these often contentious issues.

The trend to conduct funerals at the crematorium rather than in local churches has meant a decline in parishes' income from fees; Synod has asked the Diocese to refund these moneys to parishes, as is done in some other dioceses. We await their decision.

In February Nikki Seville updated Synod on the Christian Arts Festival. Gary Grady updated Synod following the General Synod debate on Living in Love and Faith. It remains to be seen just what this will mean in practice; but there will be no change in the Church of England's doctrine regarding marriage.

Ian Kirkwood

### **Pastoral Team**

The members of the Pastoral Team have continued in our efforts to help and support members of the Christ Church family and beyond. It has been a pleasure to be able to visit folk in their own homes as lockdown restrictions have been lifted, though visits to Hospitals, Care homes, Nursing Homes and Retirement Flats still had some restrictions initially. However, we have made good use of cards and telephone calls, and practical support.

The Team has remained much the same since last year, except Gill Heron has now stepped down from the Team. We thank her for the support and guidance she gave. We welcome Julia Bishop as a new member of the Team, and wish Chris Eddershaw well as he takes a break.

Our bimonthly meetings for discussion and training have been led by Simon, and we enjoyed a social gathering in the Vicarage garden last Summer.

We always welcome requests from the Church Family where there is a need, and will do our best to be supportive. We also recognise the spontaneous loving care given by church folk to each other. It has also been great to see the growth of Craft Club as a valuable expression of friendship and an opportunity to share for the church and wider community.

The members of the Pastoral team are Tina Benney, Julia Bishop, Anne Chapman, Felicity Davies, Chris Eddershaw, Pat Hopkins, Janet Marshall, Jennie Norman, Angela Smith, Peter Stanley, Janet Vonk, and Mandy Whitefield.

Tina Benney and Anne Chapman

### **Christ Church Pre-School**

We have had another busy year filled with lots of exciting activities and events! We have welcomed 5 new members of staff: Jackie, Lucy, Sarah R, Sarah B and Sophia, who have all settled in really well and become very welcomed members of our team. We have now sadly had to say goodbye to Alice and most recently Charlotte, who many will know as she was here for 10 years! Alice has gone on to other exciting adventures and Charlotte has gone to work at a setting much closer to home.

We have started visiting St Faiths Residential Home every other Monday afternoon. This is an enjoyable event where the children can interact with some of the residents there. Every other Friday afternoon we go to Lego Club for half an hour before they open so the children can have fun with the Lego and show us their creativity! This week for Easter the church Craft Club joined up with us and some of their members came to do some Easter crafts with us. This was a most enjoyable event and we hope to do it again soon. Next month we will be joining Friendship Club for singing traditional nursery rhymes and playing with the parachute with members of the club.

We are busy planning our annual trip, this year hopefully to All Things Wild near Evesham. We are doing things a little differently for our graduation this year and will combine it with our party. We have 17 children going off to school this year, while we are very sad to see them move on we know they will all do very well in their next adventure at big school! We have 24 children staying on with us in September plus some new friends joining us!

This has been a great year, and we all look forward to what the next year brings!

Vicki West and Lisa Davis  
Play Leaders

### **Open the Book**

We've had a busy year since re-starting Open the Book assemblies at both Christ Church and Gloucester Road Primary Schools. We have 2 small teams of just 3 in each team and we'd love to have more volunteers – an hour and a half a fortnight is all it takes!

Both teams have been leading assemblies which give an overview of the Old Testament and we'll soon move on to retelling the New Testament. Easter has been a particularly special time as one of our 'Lego Club' families has produced a PowerPoint presentation of the Easter story

with the scenes all made from Lego! Accompanied by narration from the team, we've now shown the presentation to both schools – a powerful but sensitive and accessible way of retelling the story of Jesus' death and resurrection.

We've also been given the privilege of leading class assemblies in Gloucester Road School this year. Simon has covered the bulk of these, but Maureen has enjoyed leading two assemblies with a very welcoming and 'receptive' Reception/EYFS class at the school.

Once again, we hope to give all Year 6 leavers at both schools a copy of the excellent 'It's your move' booklet, designed to help children make the transition to secondary school, which includes testimonies of God's faithfulness from young contributors.

Please pray that this amazing privilege of sharing God's love through the retelling of Bible stories to 400+ local children each fortnight will be able to continue long into the future.

Maureen Jones and Nikki Seville

### **Lego Club**

The aim of the Lego club is to open our church doors and serve our community by providing a regular, free, safe, welcoming space, open to all, for families to get together. For parents, grandparents, carers to come after school once a week with the children in their care connect with us and others and grow friendships. To provide good quality refreshments and engaging play opportunities for children using Lego and other associated toys.

Lego Club launched on 5th November 2022 in the baptistry area of the church. The club continues to run every Friday in term time, numbers have been growing steadily over the last year with an average of 22/23 families each week. It is busy! It attracts children from a variety of different primary schools in the local area. Alongside the club there is a Kids Connect Lego Club Facebook Page to share the children's Lego and Duplo creations and the stop motion videos they have created. We have also, this term, introduced Lego Art which has proved to be very popular alongside some Lego Technic.

Over the year we have seen friendships developing between the parents, particularly Dad's, over coffee and Sarah and Carolyn's particularly good cakes. Children often ask to look around the church, one Friday Tim very graciously gave some of them a tour of the organ and the organ room and showed them how the organ works. They were fascinated. Children ask the best questions. We've also been privileged to have faith conversations with both parents and children asking about the bible and about the church.

I am very grateful for the time given by the Lego Club team to enable the club to happen. We have the best refreshments organised by Sarah O'M, Carolyn F and Wandee. Maureen does a fabulous job welcoming the children each week and is often in conversation about Open the Book assemblies with children who meet her at Gloucester Road Primary School. One of the family's who attend Lego Club have made lego models of the Easter Story for Maureen to share in school. We also have a student from Chosen Hill school undertaking his Duke of Edinburgh Award who has joined the team and helps out each week. There is always room for more helpers, so please get in touch if that might you!

Gill Heron  
Kids Connect Lego Club

## **9th Cheltenham Rainbows and 9th Cheltenham Brownies**

Over the past year we have awarded 3 Rainbow Gold Awards, the highest award a Rainbow can earn, and 4 Brownie Gold Awards, the highest award a Brownie can earn.

8 Brownies and Guides with their leaders enjoyed a day at the Royal International Air Tattoo in July.

Rainbows and Brownies went to see a Girlguiding only screening of Roald Dahl's 'Matilda the Musical' at Christmas. Girls have taken part in church parades. Rainbows and Brownies have worked on various badges and activities across the year including first aid, fire lighting (and marshmallow toasting!), putting up tents, baking, Chinese new year dragon making and dances, water games, learning about Guiding history and being very loud while playing with the parachute! Both also helped to make shoe boxes at Christmas.

We have had 19 new Rainbows across the year, 14 new Brownies (some who have come up from Rainbows and some new to Guiding) and 6 Brownies have moved up to Guides.

We have enjoyed having a few DofE helpers in both Rainbows and Brownies, as well as a Young Leader. Sian was awarded with a county award for 'Growing Guiding', having taken over the unit after Covid with only 2 Brownies and now we have 24 and a waiting list! We had two new leaders starting in September but unfortunately both have now left as they moved away from the area with their jobs.

Rabbit, Hedgehog and Kitten (Sian Green, Juliet and Elizabeth)

## **9th Cheltenham (Christ Church) Guides**

This time last year, we were preparing for 9 Guides and leaders to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee at our County HQ at Cowley. The event took place on a dry night and was a great success. We watched the lighting of one of the official beacons before sleeping out under the stars! We also hoped to restart Church Parades and we've attended 2 services in the past year, with lunch and activities in the Bayshill/Lansdown room afterwards. This year we're looking forward to 8 Guides increasing to 12 after Easter, as new girls join us from Brownies. We've continued apace with the new-ish Guide programme and all Guides have achieved a Bronze award, 2 a silver and one Guide, Skye, hopes to gain her Gold award soon, now the highest award in Guiding. Skye is also looking forward to representing Gloucestershire Guiding this summer, with an international trip to Holland. Many thanks to all those who gave generously towards her fundraising efforts for this trip.

We now have only 2 leaders. Zoe, our student Guider has been a great asset this year, but her University year is very short! If anyone feels able to help us, even on an irregular basis, we'd love to hear from you. I'm looking forward to celebrating 40 years as a Guider with Christ Church Guides later this year – it's been a privilege.

Maureen Jones

## **Friendship Club**

During 2022 Friendship Club averaged approximately 40 guests for each lunch session. The stretch and chair exercise class has been extremely popular and those that participate tell me they find it extremely beneficial. We changed our charging policy to encompass the lunch, speaker and afternoon tea. This had the effect of encouraging more people to stay for the talk and the tea and makes the charging far less complicated. We still feel we give very good value at £5.

The other change that has been introduced this year is that the Coffee morning on Lunch sessions (still 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays of the month) is now served in the Hub and not in the Alstone Porch. The porch was very dark and often very cold. The Hub is often very busy but feels more welcoming and less separated.

The craft club is growing from strength to strength and we are very grateful for all those that organise and make this possible. I also want to thank the volunteers that are running the Friendship Café on Friday mornings. Offering even more opportunities for people to meet and keep warm together.

Since the pandemic we have been aware that we need more able-bodied volunteers to help with food preparation and table setting up etc. If you would like to share lunch with us and offer your help it would be lovely to add your name to the rota. Please contact [friendshipclub@christchurcheltenham.com](mailto:friendshipclub@christchurcheltenham.com).

Mandy Whitefield  
Chair, Friendship Club

## **Craft Club**

Craft Club opened on 3 November 2021 with 11 female members. The Club today is a more diverse group of 20 plus. Meetings are 10.30 to 12.30 on those Wednesdays when there isn't a Friendship Club lunch. Members bring their own projects, dip into a range of activities, or simply just chat over coffee and biscuits. Games and puzzles have since been added to the arts and crafts. Our talented knitters have responded to the Anna Chaplaincy requests for Easter chicks, baskets and Christmas Angels which were delivered to local care homes. The crocheted wall hanging in the Hub was made by a few members working collaboratively.

We are very grateful to our volunteers who give lifts, carry out demonstrations such as flower arranging, planting hyacinth bulbs, making cards, painting, candle making and collage. A National Star College student had a work placement with us supported by a job coach during her work programme but has continued to volunteer with support from a Personal Assistant. We are very grateful to her for making and serving us coffee and biscuits. An enjoyable outing to the Star Bistro for coffee and cake last summer will be repeated in June 2023.

Pat Hopkins, Janet Osborne, Mike Vonk

## **Plan B**

Plan B offers a safe meeting space for anyone who has suffered bereavement either recently or some time ago.

We meet on the third Thursday of every month at Webbs Garden Centre on the Evesham Road, from 10.00am to 11.30am. We gather in their Conservatory where we have some privacy.

This is a nice change of scene in which to meet, chat, remember with others and coffee and cakes are always available!

We currently have 13 members from both within and outside the church and new friendships have been made, sharing common experiences as well as getting to know each other more.

The only expense incurred by the church has been the publication of the Plan B fliers.

I would like to express a tremendous thank you to Janet Vonk who has been faithfully transporting members to the venue every month.

Events planned for later in the year include our belated Christmas meal (!! ) and an afternoon tea party at Martin's house.

Martin Osborne  
Organiser