



‘a church for all - a place for you’

Annual Review 2024

Welcome to this review of the life and ministry of St Andrew's Eaton.
This review also features work that we share the Christ Church
within the Eaton Parishes Group Ministry.

The report is divided into two sections.
Part One specifically relates to St Andrew's Church and
Part Two to joint activities with Christ Church.

We hope that church members and visitors alike
will find this review informative.
Our thanks to all who have contributed to it.



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ST ANDREW'S EATON
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
MEMBERSHIP - 2024-2025

Vicar	The Rev. Dr James Cook (Chair) (Curate until August 2024. Vicar from September 2024)
Church Wardens	Chris Smith (Vice-Chair)
Deanery Synod	Jane Scott Hannah Ruth King
Elected Members	Christine Bensley Graham Bensley Janet Benson Barry Capon Sue Day Colin Morgan Mary Nelson James Oxley-Brennan Kevin Pinnock Neil Rout Edwin Wall (1 position vacant)
Secretary	Hannah Ruth King
Treasurer	Kevin Pinnock

PART ONE: REPORTS COVERING ST ANDREW'S CHURCH ACTIVITIES

VICAR'S REPORT

A New Chapter

When I first drafted this annual report last year as Curate, I had little idea that I would be writing it again next year as Vicar! The year 2024 began with us in Interregnum, following the resignation of Phil Rodd the previous summer after 15 years of ministry in St Andrew's. Interregnums can often be challenging times for churches, but there was much to give thanks to God for throughout the year, as later reports testify to.

The job advert for a new vicar was delayed somewhat so that the Diocese could secure the purchase of a new Vicarage at 28 Bluebell Road, but the advert finally went live in early March, with a closing date in mid-April. By this time, our own plans of moving to the US, which I'd spoken about previously, had fallen through, and it seemed increasingly that God was calling me to apply for the post. Consequently, I was greatly blessed to be one of the two candidates at interview on the 14th May - and was even more deeply honoured and humbled to be offered the job later the same day by the Archdeacon.

As some renovation work was required on the new Vicarage before we could move in, the installation was not held till later in the year. But this meant that the summer was a time of looking ahead and preparing for the new chapter. To this end, two brainstorming groups were set up to throw around ideas of things we could start or do differently. One group focussed on worship and discipleship (deepening our relationship with God), while another looked at mission and outreach. Both were very fruitful and gave me much food for thought as I prepared for this new chapter.

I was very grateful to be able to enjoy a 4-week break before beginning as incumbent, to have a holiday, a retreat and importantly to move house. We moved in on the 17th September, and was installed by Bishop Graham during a special service the following Monday, 23rd September. As I said during my first service as Vicar, several of my friends commented on the warmth and love they felt in the congregation, and I do feel very blessed at how supportive you all have been to both myself and Stephanie as we've made this transition.

Last year was a new start not only for me, but also for our office. We were thrilled to welcome Kyla Price to the office team as our Finance Officer in January. She has picked up the ropes and settled in so well, that I can hardly believe it's been only just over a year since she joined us. Both Patrick and I have been enormously grateful for her initiative, her reliability, and her keen eye for detail.

Mission and Outreach

Despite all the changes, through the year much of church life continued as usual, as recorded in the many entries in this Annual Review. Our regular midweek

outreach ministries of Toddlers, the Community Café and Old Eatonians continue to serve local people with community and care, and through them we've been able to build new relationships with people outside the church. The Café saw a change in leadership, as Leslie Moore decided it was time to step back from his role, having set the café up shortly before the pandemic. As a testimony to how popular and well loved the Café had become, a meeting I called to consider the future running of the Café was attended by over 30 people, from both the church and the wider community. A new team was set up, steered by Jane Scott, Julia Jones and Evelyn Nicoll, with support from Christine Bensley and Elizabeth Ogilvie. The Café continues to turn the Hall on Thursday mornings into a thriving buzz of conversation and activity, with other groups regularly meeting during the time, such as Knitters and Stitchers and a local Maths group.

More occasional events also brought people from across Eaton together, such as the Mission Fairs in the Spring and Autumn, the Eco Day, and the Summer Fair (formerly the Garden Party) - all of which you can read more about in later entries. A new initiative for 2024 was the Christmas wreath-making workshop, which saw the hall packed with over 30 people (and half a garden of foliage!) coming together from across the local community, and receiving an invitation to join for Christmas services later in the month.

The Hall is used for so much of our outreach work, but could do with significant improvements. There is poor insulation, an outdated heating system, the storage is not especially accessible, and it could do with a spruce up to make it more welcoming and inviting. Furthermore, it would be useful to have smaller additional meeting room for small groups, and an improved internal layout that means the rest of the building can still be accessed when the hall is in use. And so, the Hall Steering Committee continued to consult through 2024 on the way forward with a possible renovation. Over the summer, the Committee commissioned an architect (Kristian Molloy) to draw up plans based on the needs identified in a survey of hall users. At the end of 2024 initial plans for renovation had been drawn up, but we also became aware that a completely new build could (counterintuitively) in fact be more cost effective over the long-term. We commissioned the architect to produce a second set of plans to compare, which we were awaiting as the year came to a close.

As well as serving our community, we also long to share the good news of Jesus. Shortly after Christmas, we ran a new six-part course called Hymns We Love, a gentle introduction to the Christian faith through six classic hymns. The course was particularly aimed at an older generation, and so we ran the first session in conjunction with Old Eatonians at the beginning of January. The course proved very popular, with around 30 each time, many from our church family, but a few who were not. All who came enjoyed learning a bit about the story behind a favourite hymn, and reflecting more on the truths of the Christian Gospel that each hymn conveys.

Another way in which we can share the good news of Jesus is through our Children's Workshops, now settled into a regular pattern in our church calendar. Following the success of ending the Christingle Workshop with a short service at the end of 2023, we decided to end each workshop with a mini 'service' of songs

and prayers in the church. Recognising that many children today increasingly have no knowledge of or connection to church, we considered that simply familiarising them with being in church for a service could help to sow seeds for the future. We also decided towards the end of the year to give the children a simple take-home message that would help them remember the teaching of the Bible drama, which begins each Workshop. So in the Autumn Workshop, the children were invited to 'become friends with Jesus', like the disciple Peter, and in the Christingle Workshop we learnt that Jesus was the Light that overcomes our darkness.

Worship and Discipleship

As well as reaching out with the love of Christ, we've also deepened roots in God and his Word over the past year. The Connect Groups meet fortnightly for prayer and Bible study, and Prayer Focus meets monthly to pray for all that goes on in the life of our church and the wider world.

Following hot on the heels of Hymns We Love was the Lent Course. Thinking that this would be my last Lent Course at St Andrew's, I wanted to use the opportunity to share some what I learned during my postgraduate studies in Early Church History. Over five sessions called the Gospel and the Early Church, we looked at five figures from the first centuries of the church, to see what we could learn from them for today. We considered the first letter of Clement and the radical communal life of the early church; the martyr Perpetua, and the courage of the early Christians in the face of persecution; the bishop of Carthage Cyprian, and distinctive response of the Christians to natural disasters; the theologian Athanasius, and the central teachings about the Trinity; and the preacher John Chrysostom, and his powerful proclamation of life transformed by the Gospel.

In April, St Andrew's hosted a training afternoon for pastoral care teams in our deanery, led by my Cambridge Vicar Steve Midgeley, now the head of Biblical Counselling UK. He led a very helpful and practical session based around the opening chapters of his recent book *Mental Health and Your Church*, looking at how we as a church can best serve those struggling with mental health.

The monthly informal evening services, now known as Café Church, also enable a deeper dive into Scripture, with more space given to discussing and reflecting on a theme or passage. In the first half of the year, we worked through the Book of Proverbs, using a study guide produced by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. We paused in August for a more relaxed 'Songs of Praise', where people were invited to share their favourite hymns or songs - providing a wonderfully varied evening of praise! After my return as Vicar in the autumn, we began a new series called The Story, an overview of the whole Bible story (using materials this time from *God's Big Picture* by Vaughan Roberts).

Sunday mornings are the principal time when we come together as a church to listen to and study God's Word. This year we looked at: 2 Timothy and what is important in ministry; Acts 13-20 and the mission of God's people to share his Good News; 1 Samuel 13-31, contrasting King Saul and King David, and the importance of what's going on in our hearts; and a series called 'Encounters with Jesus', looking at the different people Jesus met during his ministry. Finally, in the autumn, I wanted to begin my time as Vicar by simply turning our hearts to Jesus

and his love and goodness, so our autumn series 'The Heart of Jesus' reflected on six passages across the Bible that spoke of Jesus' heart for sinners and sufferers (inspired by Dane Ortlund's bestselling book, *Gentle and Lowly*).

Attendance

Turning now to the statistics, there is a similar picture to last year, with figures for both regular and festival services broadly consistent with 2023, but remaining down from before the pandemic (as is true across the Church of England). The now monthly 8am BCP services averaged 7 worshippers, roughly the same as the previous year. The main Sunday morning services dropped slightly to 64 adults and 3 children (68 adults and 3 children in 2023), but this was partly due to a correction in the formula used for calculating attendance. The Café Church increased slightly, from 20 to 23. The midweek Thursday morning service remained more or less the same at an average attendance of 15 (16).

For the major festivals it was something of a mixed picture. The Good Friday devotional service was surprisingly down significantly at 50 (62 in 2023), though Easter Sunday was up at 124 (101), partly due to two christenings in the service. Numbers attending services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day was much lower at 203 (304) - though in 2023 Christmas Eve had fallen on a Sunday, and we had combined the midnight communion with the main carol service. The main carol service this year was on the previous Sunday, and drew 85 - up from the 68 of two years' previously. The midnight communion remained broadly the same as 2022, with 36 compared to 38 in that year.

It's worth remembering that numbers often decline during an interregnum, and so we give thanks that they have remained broadly consistent with 2023. We continue to pray for more children and families in our services.

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

Figures for all our occasional offices were up on the previous year. There were wonderfully 9 baptisms this year, compared to none in 2023, and including one adult. We had 5 weddings (3 in 2023), two of which took place during my pre-installation leave, and were conducted by Kate Belcher and a friend of the couple respectively. There were 16 funerals, the same as the previous year. These included 12 (7) funerals/memorial services in church and 4 (9) services at local crematoria or other venues, plus a further 5 ashes burials in the burial ground. We were especially sad to lose several long-standing members of the church, including Romaine Bailey, Margaret Willimott and Beryl Tomlinson. Although some of them had not been around much in recent years due to ill health, they will all be dearly missed, and our prayers are with their friends and family and all who loved them.

And finally...

I am so very grateful to God for each and every member of St Andrew's, for all that you give to the life of our church family, and for your support for me personally as I have made the transition from curate to vicar. I'm reluctant to give a long list of thanks, as there's always the danger of inadvertently missing someone out! I'm conscious too there are so many of you who do things often quietly unnoticed behind the scenes.

I do want to make two particular mentions, however. First is to our Churchwarden, Chris, who became sole warden in 2023 shortly before Phil announced his departure. During the ensuing interregnum, Chris held the legal responsibility for the parish, which meant an increased workload for him, not least the chairing of PCC meetings. He also served with Hannah, our PCC Secretary, as Parish Reps in the appointment process. Please do be praying for a second warden to come forwards to support Chris in the coming year!

I also want to pay tribute to Neil Rout, our former Lay Reader. As many will know, Neil recently celebrated the fantastic achievement of 60 years as a reader, and in the relatively short time that I've been here, he regularly led the midweek service once a month, alongside leading a monthly service at Ryrie Court. But as well as his upfront ministry, he was a faithful member of the congregation, whose gentle, caring nature is already deeply missed. We wish him every blessing in his new residence in Hethersett Hall.

And to all of you, thank you for your 'work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thess. 4:13). It is a joy to minister with you in the service of our loving and gracious Lord. As we look ahead to the new chapter to come, my prayer for us is Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church: 'I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.' (Eph. 3:16-17)

James Cook
Vicar

HONORARY PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT

Following on from the previous year 2023, this year's review covers an equally busy period, in continuation of the Vacancy and search for an Incumbent. This was with our churchwarden holding the reins, in collaboration with our curate and the full support of the PCC.

Interviews for the incumbency were held on 14 May. The interview panel comprised The Archdeacon of Norwich, The Venerable Keith James; The Dean of Norwich Cathedral and Patron of St. Andrew's, the Very Rev. Dr Andrew Braddock; and two Parish Representatives. I was honoured to be one of the two Parish Representatives, along with Dr Christopher Smith, our churchwarden.

The process culminated in the appointment and subsequent institution, induction and installation of our curate/vicar-elect, the Rev. Dr James Cook, as the vicar of St. Andrew's, on Monday 23 September 2024. The requirement for the PCC secretary's signature and public display of Form 17, Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986, was implemented. This was the Notice of Intention by the Bishop of Norwich, for the institution.

Another significant change in the life of St Andrew's was the 'Swap of Parsonage Designation' from 210 Newmarket Road to 28 Bluebell Road. This matter was implemented at the PCC meeting of 10 June 2024, with a unanimous vote in favour, by Members. This was to serve as a formal record to indicate that the SAE PCC had been informed about the Church Property Measure 2018, Form 1 Section 5(1) of the CPM 2018, Notice to Registered Patron and Parochial Church Council. The said document, dated 1st May 2024 and addressed to the PCC Secretary, from the Diocesan Director of Property Services, was circulated to PCC Members on 4 May 2024 by the PCC Secretary. The Diocesan Property Offices was informed of the outcome, with a return acknowledgement of its receipt.

Nine meetings were planned for the year and held on 15 January, 19 February, 29 April, 10 June, 15 July, 09 September, 14 October and 25 November. The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) was held on 13 May; membership of Council was a total of fifteen, including three ex-officio. All meetings were held in church. Meetings' agenda were prepared in consultation with the vicar-elect and churchwarden. Two new items, introduced by our new chair and vicar, featured on the agenda. These were a 'Main Discussion Topic' and 'Mission and Ministry'.

Safeguarding remained a permanent feature of the agenda, as previously, with our newly appointed Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSO), Jenny Holcombe and Carolyn Pinnock. The difference over the latter half of the past year being that the slot was moved up the agenda, with the topic dealt with at the start of meetings; to allow the PSOs leave to depart the meeting. The PSOs were very active, ensuring that Members were informed and encouraged to enrol and take the requisite safeguarding courses.

Fiduciary stewardship featured prominently in all the meetings, with thanks to Kevin Pinnock, our Honorary Treasurer, for preparing the accounts and

accompanying reports. I extend my thanks also to Kyla Price, our church Finance Officer, for her input. Other important matters that featured on the PCC agenda over the year, included the work of the Church Hall Steering Group, charged with looking into the options of developing the Church Hall, as a community-hub.

Reports and Minutes of the many church teams and committees were circulated to members and acknowledged at each meeting. This included the Standing Committee; Prayer Ministry; Pastoral Care; the children's groups and workshop; joint parishes Group Council; Charities of the Month; the joint Eaton Parishes Magazine; Mission Focus; Deanery Synod and Diocesan Synod. Some of these, no doubt, are discussed in greater detail by colleagues elsewhere in this Review. Copies of the signed Minutes of the PCC meetings are posted in the display area of the entrance to the Old Church, following every PCC meeting.

This report is the seventh of my tenure as Honorary Secretary to the PCC. My role continues to be a source of enjoyment and satisfaction, in the Master's service. My thanks to all PCC members for their unwavering commitment and consistent attendance at all our meetings. My grateful thanks are also extended to our church Office Administrator, Ruth Thorp, for her faithful support. I thank our Churchwarden Chris, who has been a great source of support to me over the year. Very many thanks, as always, to all PCC Members who contribute a report to the monthly Eaton Parishes Magazine.

Hannah Ruth King
Hon. PCC Secretary

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

It was a great joy that we were able to welcome James as our Vicar on a more permanent basis now! He is leading us in such a challenging and organised way, with Stephanie playing her part strongly too. Let's continue to pray very much for them both.

As we give grateful thanks for all they are doing, I am conscious of all the support we experience from everyone else making their particular contribution to the life and work at St Andrew's: the dedication of members of the PCC, the support in the background of the pastoral care team, the warm welcome that visitors receive from the sidespeople and deputy wardens, the singers who lead our worship Sunday by Sunday, those who operate the technology with all its unexpected little problems, and many others.

A most important part of our church life is to reach out to the local community. The Old Eatonians, the Toddlers group and the Community Café all have this as their main aim. And God is certainly blessing this work!

St Andrew's also has responsibility for the upkeep of the churchyard and the burial ground. The team who manages that so well could do with some more support.

A Steering Group has been set up to organise the refurbishment of the Hall. Now they are even considering the replacement of the whole building.

It is always a delight to welcome first-time visitors, many of whom are stunned by the beauty of the church buildings. The Lord is blessing our church with gradually increasing numbers. Let's thank him for this, and look forward expectantly and prayerfully for what He is planning for us in the coming year.

Chris Smith
Churchwarden

PASTORAL CARE TEAM (PCT)

The team consisted of James Cook (*Vicar*); *Area Pastoral Coordinators*: Ann Copsey, Jane Gascoyne, Jenny Holcombe and Sheila Nunney (*PCT Coordinator and Chair*); *Pastoral Visitors*: Mary Nelson and Valli Rao; and Colin Morgan.

Three meetings took place during the year. The delivery of weekly printed sermons to the housebound continued. Thanks are due to preachers for submitting their sermons in a written form and to Ruth Thorp, Office Administrator for duplicating them.

As in previous years, Harvest Festival and Christmas Gifts were collected and distributed to Archway, Leeway, St Martin's and YMCA MyPlace, in conjunction with Christ Church Eaton. Plants delivered to the sick, bereaved and housebound at Easter, Harvest and Christmas were well received. Due to the retirement of the owner of Salhouse Garden Centre (one of Jane Gascoyne's sons) who had supplied us with very good quality plants for a number of years, a new supplier was sought and Notcutts has been appointed. Bereavement cards were sent to next-of-kin, who live outside the parish, on the first anniversary of the death. Thanks are due to Ruth Thorp for doing this.

The team continued to work on the pastoral nurture of both new people and established members of the congregation, with particular emphasis on remembering that although a church congregation will be composed of a diverse range of individuals, all with their own likes, dislikes and needs, there can be "Unity in Diversity" and a richness in embracing diversity. As part of this theme, a training day on "Mental Health and your Church", led by Steve Midgley, was organised in April for those involved in pastoral care and was opened to members of other churches in the deanery. The feedback was good and as a result the team decided that at each subsequent PCT meeting, two chapters of the book written by Steve Midgley would be discussed, with the purpose of applying ideas to the ministry at St Andrew's. In addition, to purchase some leaflet stands for the hall and the church in which to make available a selection of helpful Christian booklets for anyone struggling with mental health issues eg. depression, anxiety.

Due to new safeguarding guidelines being issued, which would require anyone offering transport on behalf of the church to have business insurance, DBS checks and safeguarding training, it was felt that the role of transport coordinator had to be discontinued.

As always, the team members continued to support those in need and where appropriate, Holy Communion was taken to people confined to their homes. New residents to the parish, when we were aware of them, were welcomed with a visit and the appropriate literature.

Sheila Nunney

Active retired priest with PTO (Permission To Officiate) and PCT Chair

PRAYER MINISTRY TEAM

Prayer ministry continues to be a well-used and very appreciated ministry, with often one or sometimes more people coming for prayer after the service. This includes both regular church members, and those who are visiting or exploring.

The team also provide prayer at the rail occasionally during services of Holy Communion. This used to take place on 5th Sundays, but as the 5th Sunday often was coinciding with something else (e.g. Easter Sunday), the team took the decision to select one Sunday each term when prayer at the rail would be offered.

The team met three times during the year to review practice and discuss aspects of the prayer ministry guidelines.

James Cook

Chair of the Prayer Ministry Team

FABRIC

A new Architect for St Andrew's has been appointed: Nicholas Warns. He will carry out the Quinquennial Buildings Inspection and send us his report in the Spring.

The thatched roof of the Old Church has developed some holes where the original reed was weak and rotting. This needs repairing and the whole ridge may need to be replaced in a year or two.

Kristian Molloy, the architect appointed for the Hall, is helping our Steering Group to design an extensive refurbishment of the hall and another plan for a possible complete rebuild of the hall. The Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) is being kept informed. Leaders of church groups, regular hirers and representatives of local community groups are being consulted to determine what facilities will be needed and how the hall can be developed in the most eco-friendly way. Grants will be necessary to carry this major project through.

Keeping the church clean at a high level is not easy. This year the rafters of the Old Church were cleared of cobwebs.

A short length of paving was laid between the lychgate and the entrance to the hall to assist wheelchairs.

Following the theft of a mower and strimmer from the padlocked burial ground shed, the gardener has agreed to bring his own tools in future.

Chris Smith
Fabric Officer

HOSPITALITY TEAM

It was a quieter year for big catering events, perhaps because we were waiting - and praying - for the appointment of a new vicar! Nevertheless, we started the year again with an Epiphany Meal at the first Informal Evening Worship in January. The menu varies each month before this service, but whatever is offered seems to please the consumers!

We welcomed Dick and Caroline Seed, our Mission Partners, for a weekend in June and a Sunday lunch took place in the hall for everyone, organised by the Overseas Mission team and many other folk helping to make it a really good afternoon.

Then - the appointment of our new vicar was announced - and, in record time, we were able to welcome James and Stephanie on 23 September for his induction followed by refreshments for the very large congregation and local dignitaries - a joyous occasion!

Harvest Supper, and Tea after a prayer walk in October completed the programme. This year we didn't have a Tearfund Quiz and Supper as we take part in this every two years - so watch this space for 2025! And for any other events of a foody nature!

My very grateful thanks to those who help so faithfully month by month, especially for the Café Church services (Audrey Welch is a dab hand at sandwiches, and Jane Scott churns out marvellous scones!). If you can offer a hand by some cake baking or helping at a forthcoming event, do let me know.

Margaret Smith
Hospitality Team

ST ANDREW'S AND RYRIE COURT COMMUNITY CAFÉ

St Andrew's Community Café

The Community Café is run in St Andrews Hall every Thursday between 10.30am and 12.00 noon. We welcome everyone, including the congregation of the 10.00am communion service and many members of the community who come in for a chat and snack in a warm, friendly place. Many come regularly and meet old, or make new, friends. For some it is the highlight of their week. We serve tea and coffee and a variety of snacks, ranging from Gregg's sausage rolls (most popular), scones and cakes to cookies. We always have vegetarian and gluten free items. Visitors are invited to make a donation.

This last year has been exciting with good weekly attendances. The numbers range from 35 to over 50 each week. Two activity groups join us. The Maths group (8 members), meet twice a month in the peace of the front office, to discuss problems mathematical. They do join us for coffee and cakes to feed their minds. The larger group (18 plus members) of 'Knitters and Stitchers' also join us regularly, once a month.

We have a Bring and Take stall most weeks to encourage recycling, and often have a produce sale, selling preserves.

Having started the Community Café in 2018 as an outreach ministry, Les Moore stepped back in August. He had built up a loyal band of helpers, who have continued, and the café is now lead by a team - two do the shopping, Kyla Price keeps the books and a group of 15 volunteers welcome our visitors, help with the tables, the food preparation, serving and washing up. We are always looking for new volunteers - we would love to hear from you.

We are very grateful for all the continuing support we have received from Les Moore and the Church to make this a happy, inclusive space.

Ryrie Court Café

The running of the Ryrie Court Café continues, with upwards of 20 people regularly attending. However, it is no longer run under the auspices of St Andrew's. Thanks to Les Moore who headed it up, and to those who have taken on the baton and continue with it. We wish them well for the future.

Café Team

Christine Bensley, Julia Jones, Evelyn Nicoll, Elizabeth Ogilvie and Jane Scott

COFFEE ROTA TEAM

It is good to report that thanks to loyal groups of people, the weekly coffee rota has been able to supply the facility for friends to meet up in the church hall after the Sunday morning service. I extend my grateful thanks to all who have willingly helped.

Sadly, over the past few months, due to illness, we have lost eight of our regular team of helpers and they are sorely missed, though covered thoughtfully by the remaining team.

Ideally, we would therefore welcome others to help fill in the gaps in our team. If you feel able to add your assistance, I would be glad to hear from you and provide details. The rota covers the year by 4 sections, therefore ideally, requiring 4 commitments annually.

I would be pleased to discuss details with any new volunteers.

Janice Hales
Coffee Rota Coordinator (01603 455752)

CHARITABLE GIVING 2024

In 2024 this joined with Christ Church's Donations Committee as a joint venture, so this report can be found in the Joint Section 2 of the review.

ECO CHURCH TEAM

The team continued to discuss and implement ideas for improving our stewardship of God's Creation. Of particular focus this year was seeking to ensure we use only eco-friendly cleaning materials, and finding ways to help people recycle items that cannot easily be recycled at home. Towards the end of the year I was also approached by the Eaton Energy Champion, Paul Donnachie, looking for venues for a regular 'surgery' where he could give free consultation on reducing energy usage and adopting cleaner energy supplies. The result was that, beginning in December, Paul began a monthly attendance at the Community Café, where he has had many fruitful conversations.

We organised one main event during the course of the year. The now annual Eco Day returned in May with a variety of stalls across the church and hall. We were thrilled to be joined by Dandelions as well, a forest school based at Eaton Vale; and by Radu's Café providing a tasty selection of meat-free meals. Once again we partnered with EVRA, who hosted an early morning birdwatching walk and an evening talk. Numbers were a little down on previous years, which may have been related partly to a congested church calendar around May, and the Fair coinciding with the opening of the Norfolk and Norwich Festival. The team decided that in

2025 we would have the fair in the autumn, coinciding with the Harvest festival weekend.

Having achieved our Silver Eco Church Award the previous year, we were all set to begin looking at what needed to be done to get to gold, when A Rocha announced they would be revamping the Eco Church Survey. After a bit of a delay, this was finally released in the autumn, and is now much more challenging! By the end of the year, we had only just begun looking through the new requirements.

The team has now become rather reduced in numbers, and so we could do with more volunteers. It is the fifth mark of mission, and important to show our care for our God's Creation, so do let me know if you would like to join the team!

James Cook
Chair of the Eco Church Team

MUSIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

I could repeat last year's report with virtually no changes - such is the state of music at St Andrew's! Especially this year, as we awaited the appointment of a new vicar, it was obviously not the time to make any radical changes to the worship on Sundays. Nevertheless, the small but dedicated group of St Andrew's singers continued to practise and to lead worship - and I am so grateful to each one of them for their commitment. To save on winter heating costs, and with such a small number involved, we now meet approximately once a fortnight at my home to practise hymns and music, in particular for communion services.

I am very grateful once again to Colin Morgan who shares piano and organ playing at the 10.00 am service each week and the monthly Café Church on Sunday evenings. We both have the desire to see worship in its broadest terms, bringing the best of old-style hymns and new style worship songs together. I am aware that we shall never be able to please everyone all the time, but we do seek to bring glory to Jesus' name as we worship together.

Christmas services at the end of this year proved our need to be praying for more regular singers and instrumentalists as illness hit the St Andrew's Singers hard. Thanks largely to members of my family, the planned Christmas services all came to pass!

Colin and I pray that God will bring more people able to lead in worship with voices or instruments during 2025, so that we will indeed continue to "make a joyful noise to the Lord".

Margaret Smith
Director of Music

TODDLERS

St Andrew's Toddlers on Tuesday mornings continues to thrive, and in 2024 again welcomed families with under-fives for all 38 weeks of the school year. Attendance was always worth the hard work of the Team from both of our Eaton churches.

This year the average number of pre-school children attending each session went up to 19, in about 14 families, with an average of 16 adults visiting each week. Adding the two helpers with refreshments and 4 or 5 of the Team in the hall, the premises were comfortably full: most weeks there were at least 40 people there. Attendance fluctuated over the year: on three different weeks we had 50 visitors of all ages and on seven weeks just 25 came.

Many families came regularly, some infrequently, and very few only once or twice. Several grandmothers returned every week, some bringing another child once the elder had gone to nursery or school. Once the careful set-up and preparations were made, only the back door was opened for buggies to be parked in the back room and the children were admitted through a safety gate, so that once inside they might play everywhere freely. Little babies had a special carpet with suitable toys. Children were rarely unhappy, and adults relaxed in the safe environment - we aimed to support all carers with smiles, listening and encouragement.

Activities were loosely based around Bible themes, in the spring with stories of Jesus growing up, and his ministry highlights in the summer. Creation, Noah's Ark and young figures of the Old Testament provided fun with nature, animals and God's help for his heroes in the autumn. The Bible story was engagingly told with pictures, then well-known nursery and action songs and rhymes to finish. Each term ended with our story time in church - at Easter we processed down the church path and welcomed in King Jesus; in the summer we had a Teddies Picnic (and 'Fed 5,000') and at Christmas we had our Nativity service.

Everyone expressed appreciation for the cheerful welcome, wide range of play activities and the ordered, peaceful atmosphere. We have had thanks on Facebook, where 'Toddlers' appears regularly, thanks to competent publicity from our younger Team member. We are also grateful for those helpers on the rota in the kitchen who cheerfully provided drinks and biscuits all morning, some of whom were also helping to clear equipment in the hall afterwards, and Philip our cleaner who made sure all is fit for our lovely families.

These happy times would not have been possible without the Team of Jane and Jenny, Leisa, Viki and Maureen who planned and set up the Hall. Together we pray for Jesus' love and care to be apparent in our welcome and actions each week.

Jenny Holcombe
on behalf of the Toddlers Team

SANCTUARY GUILD

The dedicated team of members has continued to carry out the regular upkeep of the church brasses, communion linen and changing the liturgical colours appropriately throughout the year. Most of our members are in their eighties, and we work hard to keep up this most worthwhile act of devotion. After many years overseeing the continuity of this valuable behind the scenes work, I am stepping down at the end of December 2024. Grateful thanks to Marilyn Evans who has taken on this role. If anyone would like to join the team, you would be greatly welcomed.

Jennifer Nowell

SACRISTAN TEAM

The small team of 4 faithful sacristans has faithfully continued to set and clear the Altar for communion services throughout the year. We would welcome a few more volunteers coming forward for this valuable and quiet act of faith. Please speak to me if you could help. Thank you.

Jennifer Nowell

SAFEGUARDING

Statement for the Annual Report 2024 as required by the Independent Examiner with the accounts:

“The Warden and PCC have recorded their due regard for the House of Bishops’ guidance for policy and practice in the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. They have approved and adopted the required statements and these are displayed in the church”.

Statement the Parish’s own Annual Review of 2024

Carolyn Pinnock and Jenny Holcombe are the Parish Safeguarding Officers. They maintain the ‘Dashboard’ which charts for the diocese how the parish is safeguarded: there are 3 levels of compliance. The parish moved up from Level One to Level Two over the year, with a high number of church members completing the relevant safeguarding training. The PCC is regularly updated and ratifies the necessary policies and procedures.

Jenny Holcombe and Carolyn Pinnock
Joint Parish Safeguarding Officers

PART TWO: REPORTS COVERING JOINT ACTIVITIES WITH CHRIST CHURCH

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 Children's Workshops
- events such as the Summer Fair, 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 (19 February to 25 March 2024) were well attended. As usual monies are raised for two charities - in 2024 these were:

- the Bishop's Lent Appeal for water tanks for Ordinands' Homes in Papua New Guinea (£570) and
- Tearfund's East Africa Hunger Crisis Appeal (£750), meaning that a total of £1,320 was raised for these worthy causes.

The Annual Garden Party (now re-titled the Summer Fair, as it is no longer held in the garden of 210 Newmarket Road) took place on 8th June at St Andrew's Church, Hall, and car park. A sum of £2,038.58 was raised for children and youth work in the parishes.

Eaton's Mission Partners, Dick and Caroline Seed in South Africa and Mirna Paulo in Argentina, continued to be supported by prayers and fundraising. The Spring Coffee Morning (20th April) raised £1,110 and the Autumn Fair (2nd November) £1,159.30. As usual CMS divided this sum between the Seeds and Mirna Paulo.

The Seeds visited Eaton on the 21st July, preaching at both churches' morning services and joining St Andrews for a parish lunch: 47 people attended, including 11 from Christ Church. After lunch they spoke of their plans for the future. Information about Mirna's work comes through CMS News.

We continued to communicate with a growing number of children in Eaton. Activity workshops for primary school-aged children took place at Easter (on the theme of the events of Holy Week), the summer holidays (the story of Moses), autumn half-term (St Peter - a friend of Jesus) 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 Monday, 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, Chris Smith, Douglas Durand, Jane Scott and Alison Black (St Andrew's), John Ladd, Vivien Humber (Secretary), David Archer and Tony Grubb (Christ Church). Rachel Taylor was elected for Christ Church and Jane Scott for St Andrew's representative at the 2024 APCM. Alistair Bolt (Reader, Christ Church) also joined the team. 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

CHARITABLE GIVING 2024

Donations Team Report 2024

In October 2023 the two parishes' Donations Teams merged and have been happily working together during 2024.

On behalf of the two congregations of St Andrew's and Christ Church, the Team continues to support twelve Christian-based international, national and local charities. In 2024 these ranged from the essential work of Bible translation (Wycliffe Bible Translators) internationally, through to the Matthew Project working in East Anglia, which helps people recover from drug and alcohol abuse.

Information on the charities is circulated through news sheets and the Parishes' magazine to raise awareness and encourage support.

Totals raised in 2024 were as follows:

- Wycliffe Bible Translators (£440)
- John Aves Education Project (£738)
- Mission Geeks - Zambian Education and Medical Support (£528)
- the Magdalen Group (£400)
- Christian Aid (£949)
- the Matthew Project (£371)
- the Mission to Seafarers (£215)
- Break (£345)
- the Leprosy Mission (£730)
- Tearfund (£1,000)
- Daylight Christian Prison Trust (£473) and
- Norwich Youth for Christ (£273)
- giving a total of £6,422.60 for the year.

The Team is very grateful to the congregations for their continued support.

Two charities are also supported each year through the Lent Lunches; in 2024 they were

- the Bishop's Lent Appeal for water tanks for Ordinands' Homes in Papua New Guinea (£570), and
- Tearfund's East Africa Hunger Crisis Appeal (£750), raising a total of £1,320.

Membership: the Team is grateful to all its members and for the congregations' continuing support for this important work.

We would like to pay a particular tribute to Neil Rout, chair of the St Andrew's Donations Team for many years, who chaired our first joint meeting in 2024. We are pleased to hear he is making a slow but steady recovery to good health.

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

The Joint Parishes' Donations Team

Marilyn Evans, Caroline Gibbs, John Harrison, David Hughes, Vivien Humber and Neil Rout.

PARISHES MAGAZINE TEAM

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.

At the two meetings held in 2024 members reviewed the existing and potential future editorial content, including possible articles on walks, pilgrimages and holy places, Christian composers and Eaton residents. They were pleased to welcome a new gardening series by "Penelope Plant" in addition to longer running series such as the saint of the month and the bird report. "Picture a Psalm" finally concluded - all the psalms had been celebrated. This had been an interesting and worthwhile series.

The magazine team is grateful to all those who contributed, with particular thanks to 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

Following the challenges faced by the Office during 2023, with a change in personnel meaning that from April onwards, there was only temporary cover for the financial side of things, 2024 got off to a flying start when Kyla Price started as our new Finance Officer. She hit the ground running, being experienced not only in the realm of church office finances but also being a former church administrator and a church treasurer! This meant that when she started, she was already familiar with the complexities of Church of England finances, processes and structures, so that she simply had to learn how we at Eaton do our admin, rather than having to start from scratch. Grateful thanks are once again due to Mark Jones, who was able to induct Kyla to our systems and processes.

I'm happy to report that Kyla quickly settled into life in the Eaton Parishes Office, and we have developed a good working relationship.

I have said before that working in administration is a journey, not a destination. To that end, in April, Kyla and I both attended training sessions from a national organisation, with sessions conveniently held in Norwich. I have also done a couple of online training sessions put on by UCAN (the UK Church Administrator's Network). These sessions are helpful, giving ideas about how to do things more efficiently, and giving further opportunities to meet with other administrators to learn together, and share experiences and ideas.

There is an annual pattern of work which gives an underlying rhythm to life in the office. These things are in addition to the routine things which happen week in, week out. The following list gives you a flavour of what happens in the office which you may not be aware of, some done by the administrator, others by the finance officer:

- preparing the Parish Reviews beginning in January
- year-end accounting to enable the auditing process
- monthly batching and distribution of the Parishes Magazine
- seasonal printing required for Lent and Easter
- month end accounting
- paying staff members
- St Andrew's Hall bookings management
- children's activity sessions throughout the year, requiring printing of activity packs
- Magazine Subscription Renewals in October
- Invoicing for funerals and weddings
- Liaising with churchwardens over church bookings (at both churches)

- Settling invoices for expenses incurred by the churches, such as for Christmas cards, or for 'requisites' such as Baptism Bibles, communion wine, etc.
- the issuing of invitations to each church's annual 'Memorial Service'
- additional Christmas printing
- ...to name but a few!

As you can see, we carry out a wide variety of tasks, so we appreciate being given plenty of notice for the additional tasks you may need us to carry out, so that we can plan our time and fit the extra things in and around the routine ones. Thank you.

Kyla and I continue to work hard in the office to try to ensure the smooth running of both churches. Thank you for your continued support - it really is very much appreciated. We see it as our job to do the behind-the-scenes stuff, so that others in the churches can get on with the mission and ministry.

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 buy 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.
- RISE UP against domestic abuse: this Mothers' Union campaign was launched in 2024 to raise awareness of domestic abuse (the letters stand for Respond, Inform, Support, Empower, Unite and Pray).
- Domestic abuse can happen to anyone from any walk of life. Mothers' Union members and churches worked together to be part of the change and in 2024 Eaton Branch had displays ("*Souls of our Shoes*") to raise awareness in both churches, while some members also took part in a larger, manned, exhibition at St Peter Mancroft in the city centre.

Branch news: we were able to offer a full programme of meetings in 2024; these continued to be in large, airy, well-ventilated spaces during the day, rather than evening meetings in members' houses, as was the case before the pandemic, because of issues around subsequent COVID-19 outbreaks.

The Rev'd Graham Wilkins, Rector of Cringleford and Colney, led us in an Advent Reflection on 28th February.

During the year we welcomed speakers including Andrew Frere-Smith, Development Worker of Imagine Norwich Together, speaking on Modern Slavery, and Councillor James Wright and Caroline Ackroyd on A Year in Office.

We held a very successful Open Garden with strawberry tea on 28th June, raising £890.50 for AFIA.

The Eaton Branch members had an enjoyable social event in the summer - a meal at the Marsh Harrier, on 24th July.

We took part in the Annual Festival Service at the Cathedral on 1st October.

We led the Mothers Union prayers in the Jesus Chapel of the Cathedral on 3rd October.

On 27th November Ros Wright, priest-in-training 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, raising £120 in 2024.

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.

In the autumn of 2024 I announced that I was standing down as Branch Leader at the end of the year - it has been an interesting and humbling experience to lead the members through the COVID-19 lockdowns and I believe we rose to the occasion with the usual resilience that should be expected of the members of the Mothers' Union.

Vivien Humber
Branch Leader

YOUTH & CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE

The purpose of the committee is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with children and young people in relevant ways while coordinating and expanding this vital work. It meets termly and oversees and receives reports from the Action Team that plans specific events like the workshops throughout the year.

- 13th February 2024:
 - The committee discussed promoting "Thy Kingdom Come 2024," an initiative focused on praying for work with children, families, and young people.
 - They also explored ways to strengthen ties with local schools and reviewed the involvement of children and families in church events.

- The committee agreed to aim for organic growth by building on current opportunities, like inviting schools to our events.
- 30th April 2024:
 - The committee reviewed the Easter workshop, which had a good attendance, and planned for summer and autumn workshops.
 - They discussed increasing contact with families where English is a second language and involving the University Chaplain.
 - The committee also emphasised the importance of children and youth work being a regular item at PCC meetings.
 - They also discussed safeguarding and the importance of having up-to-date training.
- 24th September 2024:
 - The committee discussed making better use of available resources, involving the wider church community, and building on opportunities like Eco-Church.
 - They reviewed the summer workshop, planned for the autumn and Christmas workshops, and discussed ways to improve booking processes and outreach.
 - The committee also discussed strengthening links with local schools, Scouts, Brownies, and pre-school groups, as well as encouraging attendance at events like Harvest and Christmas.

Patrick Richmond
Vicar of Christ Church

EATON EAGLES

Eaton Eagles, the men's football team sponsored by Christ Church, enjoyed a triumphant 2023/24 season in the Norfolk Christian League. After several years of incremental progress, the team succeeded in winning the league title and reaching the final of the cup competition, where they were narrowly defeated by arch-rivals Heigham Park Rangers. Club captain Henry Aspin comments: 'This has been a memorable year in the life of the Eagles, and our victory in the league is a tribute to the tremendous spirit in which the players approached the challenge. Since the start of the 2024/25 season we've experienced a period of transition, with players who have been with us for many years leaving and new members coming in. This has meant indifferent form and a few poor results, but things are on the up and we are currently unbeaten since November, in the semi-final of the cup and looking forward to our remaining matches.'

Home games take place at Sloughbottom Park, and the fixture list and league table can be consulted on the FA Full-time website. David Taylor liaises between the church and the club and is happy to supply further details on 01603 501411.

David Taylor
Club Welfare Officer

OVERSEAS MISSION SUPPORT

The Mission Focus Team, (which this year had six members, five from St Andrew's and one from Christ Church) met every month except August and December to support in prayer our Link Missionaries - Dick and Caroline Seed, based at the George Whitefield College in Cape Town and, this year, Mirna Paulo, a local leader from the Witchi indigenous tribe of North Argentina, who replaced the Local Leaders we supported previously.

We met alternately in Christ Church Vestry children's room and Jane Carey's home. (Venues may change in 2025).

Dick and Caroline Seed have been sending Newsletters every few months, which now go direct to the Office and are printed, with copies left at the back of both churches.

In the summer we had the pleasure of welcoming Dick and Caroline Seed again when they visited both churches in July. Dick preached at St Andrew's and Caroline at Christ Church. Afterwards there was lunch in St Andrew's Church Hall attended by members of both congregations, to hear a presentation from Dick and Caroline about their work and their forthcoming travels to Indonesia, Australia, South Korea and Papua New Guinea.

A donation of over £235 was given to them from the collection after the lunch.

Instead of Newsletters from Mirna Paulo, apart from an initial introductory one, which outlined her prayer requests and which was translated from the Spanish for us, CMS occasionally update us with the work she is involved in with the Prayerlines booklets (at the back of the Churches) and other updates.

As well as supporting the Missionaries in prayer, the Mission Focus team, with help from members of both churches, held two fund-raising events for them in the Church Hall - the Spring Coffee Morning in April which raised £1,110 and the Autumn Fair in November which raised £1,159.30. This is extra for them, on top of the money sent each year to CMS for them from both St Andrew's and Christ Church's funds.

Last year we felt that the congregations of St Andrews and Christ Church needed to be reminded more often to pray for our missionaries, so now prayer is included for them most weeks in the intercessions - as well as their names often being included in the News sheets with lists of those in our congregations who are prayed for.

As well as in the prayers in the services, there is a reminder of them in most issues of the monthly Parishes Magazine, even if it is only an invitation to pick up the latest newsletter.

In 2025 we will continue to hold the two fundraising events, and to meet regularly to pray for the missionaries.

Maureen Blandford
Mission Focus Team

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 held two meetings, on June 12th, 2024, and November 12th, 2024, focusing on community support and church updates.

Key discussions included setting up a Community Money Advice Connect Service to help those with financial difficulties, with a talk in June from Naomi Tuma, and in November a discussion of tackling poverty.

The synods also discussed the Church of England's Living in Love and Faith (LLF) proposals, with members agreeing to forward a motion to the Diocesan Synod asking for further discussion of the stressful impact the LLF process was having on clergy, parishes and the deanery.

Other topics included safeguarding, environmental concern, support for refugees and immigrants, and parish updates.

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, Synod approved an updated Environmental Policy for Net Zero Carbon targets and considered the 18% clergy vacancy rate, recruitment improvements and lay ministry development. The Synod also acknowledged parish banking difficulties with Barclays and approved the 2024 election timetable.

In June, Synod approved the 2023 financial reports and reappointed Lovewell Blake as auditors. The session focused significantly on modern slavery, with presentations from the Anti-Slavery Commissioner and Norfolk's Chief Constable highlighting its prevalence locally. Members were encouraged to look for signs of exploitation and abuse and utilize available resources to help victims.

In November, the newly elected synod met for the first time. I was narrowly re-elected as Chair of the House of clergy and the Chair of the House of Laity was re-elected unopposed. Presentations included Church Commissioner Gareth Mostyn on financial support and investments, and an update on the Net Zero Carbon Action Plan. The 2025 budget with a £356,000 deficit was approved. A motion supporting the Listed Places of Worship grant scheme was passed.

Patrick Richmond

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

GENERAL SYNOD

The General Synod is the Church of England's governing body, responsible for making decisions on doctrine, worship, mission, and policy. It consists of bishops, clergy, and lay representatives who meet two or three times a year to debate and shape the Church's direction.

A major focus of 2024 was the ongoing Living in Love and Faith (LLF) project, where discussions centred on how the Church might better welcome LGBTQIA+ individuals while remaining true to its foundational teachings. A motion from the Bishop of Leicester, the new lead on LLF, was debated but Synod decided not to vote on it, mainly because the details were not yet clear. Safeguarding reform was high on the agenda. Members examined reports such as those from Professor Alexis Jay and Sarah Wilkinson, seeking ways to enhance accountability and better protect vulnerable people, and, since there had been little time to digest them, disagreement over them and Wilkinson had included a warning not to rush things, opted for further study and discussion, and to apologise to survivors and the former Independent Safeguarding Board, but the delay frustrated some.

The July 2024 sessions, held in York, built on these discussions while adding more detail. Notably, debates over safeguarding intensified with motions to boost oversight of abuse claims and to refine procedures for safeguarding at both national and diocesan levels. Members also wrestled with the Church's financial

challenges, including contentious discussions on clergy pensions, workload, and administrative duplication. The Synod's narrow vote to support "stand-alone" blessing services for same-sex couples on a trial basis while also asking for more theological work to be done further underscored the tension between traditional and progressive perspectives within the Church, despite the Bishop of Leicester's desire for bridge building.

Patrick Richmond
Member of the house of clergy of General Synod



St Andrew's
Eaton, Norwich

‘a church for all - a place for you’

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