



St. Andrew's United Reformed Church
Eastfield Avenue, Monkseaton, Whitley Bay. NE25 8LU

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

MINISTER'S REPORT

Saturday 29th July 2023 seems like a very long time ago – but it is a day I shall never forget as over 200 people gathered to celebrate my Ordination and Induction. St Andrew's Church community did such a wonderful job of making everyone feel welcome and the day ran like clockwork. So many people who visited that day commented on how welcome they were made to feel and this is a comment I hear so often when talk to me of their experience of St Andrew's.

My time since that day has got gradually busier as I have tried to engage with the many activities that happen at the church, as well as visiting members (and non-members) of the congregation when I can. Christmas was an incredibly busy time and it was wonderful to see the church so beautifully decorated for the many visitors who were present at various activities throughout December.

The beginning of 2024 saw me conduct my first wedding blessing which was a great way to 'practise' without the worry of having the 'legal bit' to get right! Since arriving last year I have also conducted several funerals and it is always a great privilege to journey with families at this very sad time in their lives.

As I write, we are currently in Lent, with Holy Week and Easter fast approaching, another very busy time in the life of the church which I am looking forward to experiencing at St Andrew's for the first time. The Sunrise Service on Easter Sunday is something I have never experienced so that is one thing I am particularly looking forward to!

Over the course of the last seven months I have been made to feel so very welcome as part of the church community, and I would like to thank each and every one of you for helping to make this happen. I have asked many, many questions and they have always been answered willingly and your patience with me as I have found my feet and tried to learn from my mistakes is very much appreciated. My particular thanks go to Ann and Ray Hammond who have been at the end of the telephone whenever I have needed them and have gone above and beyond to help me whenever I have needed them, no matter how big or small the need.

I am excited for the next 12 months as we go forwards together to see what direction the Holy Spirit will lead us. I pray that this will be a time of blessing for everyone who comes through our doors as it has been for me, and that as we go out of our doors into the community, we will bring blessings to those we meet.

LOUISE SANDERS

CHURCH SECRETARY'S REPORT

2023 got off to a fantastic start with the invitation to Louise Sanders to 'Preach with a View' in January. Subsequently a call was issued to Louise which she accepted and she took up her ministry on 29th July 2023 at her service of Ordination and Induction which was a joyous occasion. The church was packed with a good representation from across the Synod, North Tyneside Council and especially those churches where Louise had been involved during her training and who were all sorry to see her go.

Over and above the routine work associated with running the church, the year saw a number of main issues:

- The continued policy of replacing old lighting units with LED energy efficient units.
- A Quinquennial inspection of the premises highlighted a number of major issues.
- Re-decoration and re-furnishing of the vestry to create an office for the Minister.
- Renewal of servery cupboard doors and drawer fronts.

Membership - At the end of the year there was an overall decline in membership from 99 to 91. Sadly the year saw the loss of six members through death.

Attendance at services

Attendances at main Sunday services have continued to be around 50. Throughout this time services continued to be streamed on YouTube whenever possible.

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

We were delighted to hold three baptisms and two weddings in 2023. During the year we were saddened when there were two funerals and three Services of Thanksgiving held at the church with four funerals at Tynemouth or Whitley Bay Crematorium. Whilst the loss of long-standing dedicated friends and members of St Andrew's is a great sadness the joy of their friendship and fellowship cannot be forgotten. Services are conducted by our Minister the Revd Louise Sanders, Dr Ann Sinclair, the Revd Gordon Connacher and Mrs Valerie Taylor to whom we offer our grateful thanks.

Eldership

In November two Elders, Ann Hammond and Valerie Taylor, came to the end of their terms of office as serving Elders and at the Church Meeting both were re-elected by ballot to serve for a further five years.

The current serving Elders are: Mrs S Ames, Mrs Joan Blanchfield, Mrs B Burgess, Mr T Cooke, Mrs J Fleetham, Mr C Hales, Mrs H Hall, Mr & Mrs R Hammond, Mr P Hartley, Mr W Hopper, Mrs C Fenwick, Mr I Ord, Miss C Mallett, Dr A Sinclair, Mrs V Taylor and Mrs M Varley.

Communion Services

Along with our minister, the Revd Louise Sanders, Dr Ann Sinclair, Mrs Valerie Taylor and Mrs Lucy Cooke continue to be authorised by Northern Synod to preside at communion services held at St Andrew's. Under new rules Dr Sinclair, being an authorised Lay Preacher, is now able to preside at other churches across the Synod without the need for prior authorisation.

Northern Synod

The Revd Dave Herbert's Farewell Service, on his retirement, was held at 3.00 pm on Sunday 30th July at St James's United Reformed Church, Newcastle.

The work of the Moderator largely goes unseen unless you are actively involved at Synod. However Dave was seen at St Andrew's on the occasions when he led worship. A Moderator's work is often in the background and there have been two specific examples for ourselves where we are grateful for Dave's support, firstly the Revd Carla Grosch-Miller's ministry with us and now Louise's ministry.

The new moderator, the Revd Kim Plumpton, was inducted at a service held at St Columba's.

Some of our members are involved in the wider church at Northern Synod where Sue Ames is a member of the Children and Youth Work Group as well as being our Synod Representative, and Ann Sinclair is Lay Preaching Commissioner. Lucy Cooke is Learning and Development Officer for the Synod. During the year Bill Hopper retired from the Manses sub-group.

Outreach

As a church we continue to support the Street Pastors Project, the Bay Food Bank, SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) and the Depaul Trust, some church members being actively involved with these projects. Visits to Langley First School and Woodlawn School continue. Langley First School once again held their annual Carol Service in the church which this year was again attended by parents and families.

Charitable Support

We have been able to continue our support for various charities:

- Christian Aid by way of a direct appeal.
- Commitment for Life (Bangladesh) by the regular contributors.
- People's Kitchen (Harvest).
- St Andrew's Charity Scheme whereby 10% of fund-raising is donated to two charities chosen for 2023 which were Harbour Support Service and Northumberland National Park Mountain Rescue Service.
- The church also acts as a channel for other charitable donations when retiring offerings are sought at funeral services held in the church.
- Turkey and Syria Earthquake Appeal.
- Red Cross Emergency Appeal for Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Coast Partnership

No joint services with St Columba's North Shields were held during the year.

Ecumenical Activities

Our involvement in Whitley Bay & District Churches Together has been able to continue with Jenny Hooper being appointed as Treasurer. Unfortunately the Ecumenical Social Committee comprising representatives from the other five churches in the parishes of St Peter's and St Alban's were once again unable to hold the usual Coffee Morning and Wine and Cheese Evening but it was hoped that these could be reinstated in 2024.

Music at Services

Our grateful thanks go to our regular organists Paul Hartley, Alex Goulding and Helen Storey as well as to Tim Cooke and Carole Moore for operating the digital hymnal and other sources of music or songs. We have also been able to call upon the support of Susan Sabourn and Paul Elliott from time to time for funerals or mid-week services.

Church Life

The Executive Team continued overseeing the day to day running of the Church through the elected Teams: Finance, Premises Maintenance, Development, and Activities, as well as Hall Lettings.

During the year N&P Cleaners continued to undertake general cleaning of the premises whilst D C Landscapes undertook monthly gardening maintenance. A new window cleaning contractor, Rob Gibson Window Cleaning Services Ltd, has been engaged.

Floral Decorations

The time and effort that goes into the provision of the weekly floral decorations as well as the major celebrations at Easter, Harvest and Christmas is much appreciated. The 'ministry of flowers' is seen as an important part of the life of St Andrew's, and enables flowers from the church to be distributed in cases of illness, special birthdays and anniversaries. The support of those involved is much appreciated.

Social and Fund-raising Activities

The Activities Team continued with social/fund-raising events: Poetry and Play Reading evenings, Quiz Night, an Italian language course, Bookstall, Film Club, 100 Club, a regular monthly Saturday Coffee Morning, the St Andrew's Art Group's Exhibition plus the Church Fair. Full details are given in the Treasurer's report, but grateful thanks to all who help or contribute in so very many ways.

Letting of the Premises

The premises continue to be well used. What continues to be important is the value of the premises as a centre for bringing together the local community in so many different ways and we were pleased to be able to offer the local Quakers use of the Minor Hall whilst they are unable to use their own premises. All users continue to express their appreciation of the facilities provided.

The Manse at Beech Grove

The tenancy had not been renewed in April 2022 pending the possibility that the Manse may be needed for a new minister. Whilst there was concern at the work that would be required to bring the property up to a reasonable standard, in the end with Louise becoming our minister, and living in the Manse at Morpeth, the Beech Grove Manse was surplus to requirements and eventually Synod was able to put the property on the market for sale, where it attracted considerable interest. The final stages of completing the sale are now in progress.

Grateful Thanks to everyone who has continued to work on behalf of St Andrew's during another uplifting year.

RAY HAMMOND

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 2023 AND BUDGET FOR 2024

My report for 2023 is very similar to the past few years – except that the numbers have changed. In summary, our expenses far exceed our income, and this has been true for some time now. Each year the gap gets wider, as costs for most things, including gas, electricity and other services, increase. The result was an overspending of nearly £18,000 – a large amount, but fortunately much less than the budgeted figure of £40,000. Why was it so different? Firstly, our budget included a full year of gas and energy usage at the increased prices which occurred in late 2022. In reality, our energy contracts were taken out in 2022, before the prices increased rapidly, and so the cost to us was not nearly so bad.

Other expenses were mostly below budget as well. On the plus side, both the income from the hall lettings, and activities, has increased. Hall lettings have risen to over £13,000, which is much better than 2022, when we were still recovering from the Covid months. In 2023 there were 18 groups who used our halls on a regular basis, and several other 'one-off' bookings. The Activities Team also produced over £13,000 which included £3,700 from the Church Fair, and some other considerable amounts from the Ceilidh, the Art Exhibition, and Granny's Attic. It should also be noted that there are 10 other activities, which happen almost 'behind the scenes' on a regular basis, but which managed to raise over £7,000.

So, how do we manage to 'pay our way'? As usual, we are so fortunate to be able to receive 'top-up' from the Development Fund to allow us to 'balance the books'. It is a great relief each year not to have to worry about a lot of items – can we afford to heat the Church, can we afford our organists, do we need more fund raising activities, and should we try to let our halls all day, every day? The last item is quite important, because now that our halls are not so busy, we can use them for actual Church purposes, such as the regular monthly Saturday Coffee Mornings.

The charitable side of the Church continued in 2023. We were again involved with Christian Aid Week, and our annual charity cheques were presented to the Great North Air Ambulance, and the North Tyneside Carers Service. We also made donations to The People's Kitchen, Support and Grow North East, The Red Cross, and the Turkey/Syria Earthquake Appeal. Our Commitment for Life support also continued and £500 was sent to the group in December.

Finally, I must report that the Church has received a very large sum of money from the estate of Dorothy Postle. This has been allocated to the Development Fund, which is there to cover any maintenance and repairs needed to the Church.

Church Budget for 2024

The budget for 2024 is shown on one of the statistics pages. With our expenses rising, and income falling, the projected deficit has increased to £44,000. To a large number of Churches across the country, this would create an extremely serious problem, but, as I have said many times before, we are so fortunate to have the support of the Development Fund to see us through the year.

KEVIN AMES

WORSHIP GROUP

During 2023 the Worship Group has continued to meet on a bi-monthly basis, to review past services and plan future ones. Iain Ord has again done a good job in looking after pulpit supply, thus ensuring that we have had someone to lead worship Sunday by Sunday. On the odd occasion when Iain's search has drawn a blank, we have been pleased to step in and fill the breach. The rotas for organist, Bible readers, Intercessions and midweek prayer services also all come under the remit of the Worship Group.

The high spot in early January, of course, was when Louise Sanders came to 'preach with a view', and we were delighted when she accepted the call to become our Minister. Although we knew that she wouldn't be available to take up the post until the summer, the fact that at last there was some light at the end of the tunnel was a source of immense relief and gratitude. On Saturday 29th July, the service for Louise's Ordination and Induction was a wonderful cause for celebration, enjoyed by all. The only tinge of sadness came the following day, with the retirement of Revd Dave Herbert, Moderator of Northern Synod, who had been such a good friend to St Andrew's during his tenure.

Louise's ministry has resulted in fresh ideas and new hymns being introduced to our worship, and we look forward to learning more and more from her as the months go by. It's been agreed that whenever there is a fifth Sunday in the month, two or three members of the Worship Group will work with her to prepare and carry out the service.

We have again been extremely grateful to Dr Ann Sinclair, Mrs Valerie Taylor and Mrs Lucy Cooke for leading worship on so many occasions, particularly in the early part of the year before Louise took up her post as our Minister. We also owe a big debt of gratitude to Miss Mandy Watson for her inspirational leading of the 'Let's Sing' services and Prayer Group. We must mention too, our thanks to the other people who week by week make such a valuable contribution to our worship, the organists, Bible Readers, those who lead the Prayers of Intercession, the Elders and Stewards, and Tim Cooke and Carole Moore, who not only look after all things technical, but also operate the hymnal on those occasions when we have no organist.

Together with members of the Activities Team, we have continued to organise the occasional Monday Afternoon Service, and we've been fortunate to have Susan Sabourn (from St John's in Whitley Bay) with us to provide the organ accompaniment. Sadly, although we've invited some of the residents and staff from Eothen Homes to come along, for one reason or another (usually the last minute unavailability of the Community Transport minibus) they've been unable to come this year, but we look forward to seeing them in 2024. A few more of our own members have attended this year, and have enjoyed chatting over tea and Una's much-appreciated home-made cakes after the service.

The Tuesday morning Prayer Services have continued to attract a small but regular group of people, and the Open Door Coffee Morning afterwards has attracted some new people from outside the church this year.

Due to lack of numbers, our attempts to re-introduce a music group to lead the hymn singing were not particularly successful, so the idea has been put on hold for the time being.

Messy Church sessions at the start of the year were poorly attended, so were also shelved for the time being.

Our connection with Langley School has continued with two or three people from St Andrew's taking part in the occasional Assembly, and some of the pupils have made a special visit to the church to learn more about what we do. A connection has also been established with Woodlawn School.

During the year, the various Bible Study courses were well attended (including people from other churches, thanks to the use of Zoom), and the Biblical History classes also proved very popular.

Specially themed Bible Study sessions were organised for Lent and Advent, Ecumenical Lunchtime Services followed by soup again took place during Lent, and in Monkseaton we participated in Ecumenical (outdoor) Services on Good Friday, Remembrance weekend and Christmas. As part of our usual Easter programme, we were again joined by people from other local churches at our Easter Sunday Sunrise Service in front of the Dome, and it was good to see visitors from elsewhere joining us for our Longest Night Service in December and Carols by Candlelight on Christmas Eve.

At our Parade Services for the Uniformed Organisations, it is always good to see those of the children and leaders who are able to be present, but it was sad that at our Children's Festival Service in December the attendance of young people was so poor that adult volunteers from the congregation had to be recruited to enact the story of the Nativity – which they did willingly and beautifully!

Towards the end of the year we were delighted when Geoff Mills and Marilyn Walton agreed to augment our numbers by joining the Worship Group.

At the time of writing, our programme of activities for Lent is about to begin, and these will be followed by our Tenebrae Service on Maundy Thursday, outdoor Ecumenical Service at noon on Good Friday outside the Black Horse, Good Friday Service in the afternoon at St Andrew's, Sunrise Service in front of the Dome on Easter Sunday and the Easter Communion at St Andrew's at 11.00 am on that day.

CAROLE MALLETT

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

In 2023 there were several items of work carried out on the Church premises of which the following were Development funded projects:

1. The provision of accessories to enhance streaming.
2. Upgrading of existing emergency light fittings.
3. The provision of a new hymnal.

4. The replacement of servery cupboard doors.
5. Materials to provide technical equipment storage.
6. Repairs to amplifier equipment in the Main Hall.
7. The provision of two new laptops to replace existing equipment.
8. The provision of Church Wi-Fi equipment.
9. Repairs to Church building's roofs.

I would like to thank the Development Team, the Church Treasurer and the Building Maintenance Convener for their particular assistance in specifying and delivering the above works.

BILL HOPPER, Convener

ST. ANDREW'S CARPET BOWLING CLUB

We started 2023 with fewer members but during the year we have gained two new bowlers. Our number when everyone attends is 16.

Although there are not many of us we all enjoy the bowling and the friendly atmosphere in the Group. We would welcome new members who would like to join us when we commence bowling in September.

MARY CHRISTOPHER, Secretary

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY

When we were allowed to mix "more freely" after the pandemic the Scottish Country Dance Society decide to initially meet at church on a monthly basis for a coffee and chat on a Monday morning. This proved to be quite successful and at the beginning of 2023, after discussion, the members thought that they would like to go back to doing some dancing on a Monday morning on a weekly basis. We kept to a Monday morning instead of an evening through the week as members thought an 8 pm start was too late and there were no halls available earlier.

Unfortunately two of our members died before we could resume namely Mary Rose (who loved her two hours of fun) and Edna Logan. Mary and Edna are sorely missed but we welcomed Judith, Jacky, Jean, Janet, Anne & Rose to the group. Due to other commitments only Judith and Rose attend regularly. We now have 11 members and 8 or 9 attend on a regular basis. At this point I would like to thank Jean Jackson for her hard work in providing the programme each week which could prove rather tricky as she never know how many members were going to attend to do three or four couple dances so to this end Diane Brown set-up a WhatsApp group so we can keep in touch and let other members know if we will be attending or not. Many thanks to Diane.

To conclude we usually have a fish & chip supper (followed by a beetle drive) early in the year.

LYNNE AITKEN, Secretary

FLOWER TEAM

The Flower Team has continued to place flowers in the church for the Sunday services, baptisms and funerals. We have been able to take the flowers to people in need of cheer. Special birthdays and anniversaries have been acknowledged with a flower arrangement delivered by the florist.

In July we hosted a concert by The Newcastle Concert Band. This was a great evening.

The Harvest Coffee Morning was held in the Main Hall. The Team arranged flowers to decorate the church, collected gifts and donations for the People's Kitchen, had a cake stall and served coffee. It was a happy social occasion and good to get together. The flowers were taken to housebound church members after the harvest service, and the gifts taken to the People's Kitchen.

The Team were able to get together to decorate the church for Christmas while several men from the church erected a beautiful tree.

Soon members will be collecting donations for the church flowers. We look forward to your continued support for the ministry of flowers.

CATRIONA FENWICK, Flower Team Convener

ST ANDREW'S FILM CLUB

The Club commenced in February 2012. We have shown films monthly on Friday afternoons to very appreciative audiences from both the community and church membership. On all monthly occasions there is an interval when tea/coffee and biscuits are provided plus choc ices still at the bargain price of 30p!

We have shown a variety of films, endeavouring to cater for all tastes, and would welcome suggestions although we are limited by our licence to certain production companies.

During 2023 we have shown 11 films with an average attendance of 21 people.

Many thanks to Robert Chisholm, Catriona Fenwick, Ray Hammond and others for their help.

ANN HAMMOND

FIFTY EIGHT SOCIETY

The 58 Society enjoyed another successful year since the last AGM with talks on a variety of diverse and fascinating topics, one of the highlights being the return of Una Ketteridge with 'Call the Midwife Part 2'. Membership remains buoyant, with attendances in the low to mid 30s.

There was a successful Coffee Morning at the beginning of March and once again the caterers for the end of season meal in March and the Christmas meal for the current season did us proud and an enjoyable evening, including quizzes, was rounded off with Christmas carols.

New members always welcome!

JOHN CUGGY, Secretary

ST ANDREW'S ART CLUB

We've enjoyed a year of maximum membership, and have a short waiting list of possible new members.

Some highlights of the year:

- A very interesting visit to Newbiggin's Maritime Museum, where we were also privileged to have the Rocket House opened for us. In the afternoon our visit to 'Woodhorn' with an exclusive talk on the 'The Ashington Group' was equally interesting and informative.
- An outing to the gallery and studio of Mary Ann Rogers was inspirational, and this was followed by lunch 'on the train' at Bellingham...super... and a look around the Heritage Centre.
- A demonstration by Rose di Mascio (Tower House Gallery, Seaton Sluice) gave us some useful insight into her practice with watercolour... and she's talented!
- A 'tidy up' of our small library made our resources more accessible and useful.
- As this has been another year of traumatic international situations, we have made some donations from our funds to try and help and show our support from our privileged and safe position.
- Our annual exhibition was a huge success, with a very satisfactory number of visitors whose feedback was positive and encouraging. Our thanks – as ever – to the ladies of St Andrew's for delicious refreshments and lunches, and to all other church members for their background help in making this day 'work'.
- We continue to update our notice board as often as possible, and we hope you enjoy what we display there.
- Some members have taken up the 'Woodhorn' challenge – 'Northumberland Now', and are submitting work hopefully to be accepted and displayed at the Museum early in the New Year.
- Our year concluded with a meal at Davanti Classico, attended by 18 of us and also to celebrate Christmas, we donated £75 to the Great North Air Ambulance charity in lieu of Christmas cards to each other.

We continue to be very appreciative of the facilities we enjoy here at St Andrew's ... we are fortunate indeed.

TRISH WOJCIECHOWSKI, (SAAC Co-ordinator)

6th MONKSEATON BROWNIES

We started off 2022 by finishing off our themed badge from the year before.

Brownies planted gladioli bulbs and I am pleased all grew. We made a Mother's Day gift and an Easter craft.

After Easter we started the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Challenge badge and did lots of things associated with the Queen's reign. We joined Guides for a meeting for that badge.

We made key rings for Father's Day, had a sports night and a 50/50 night.

Summer over we started another themed badge, made spiders for Hallowe'en and finished the year with a 12 days of Christmas badge and our Christmas party.

Just before Christmas we also received a card from King Charles thanking us for our sympathy card following the death of his Mother, the Queen.

AUDREY ADAMS, Brown Owl.

7th MONKSEATON BROWNIES

We currently have 20 girls, three leaders and three young leaders. All members of our leadership team are dedicated and hardworking, which makes it a brilliant team to be part of.

This year we have taken part in a varied assortment of activities, including crafts, games, cooking and badge work. Some of the girls have been putting in extra effort with their badge work at home, which means I have also had great pleasure in awarding three Silver Awards and three Bronze Awards and am weeks away from presenting our first ever Gold Award. This is the highest award a Brownie can achieve and takes a great deal of commitment. We have also successfully moved many of our Brownies on in their guiding life when they have turned 10 with quite a lot of them moving up to Guides.

This year our junior leadership team took over the planning and running of Parliament week. This was a great success and was videoed by the Parliament week production team. Hopefully this will be used in the future as part of their advertising and promotions.

In December the girls visited a care home in Whitley Bay to sing Christmas songs which was a lovely evening enjoyed by all.

We have also taken part in the Guiding Take Over event. This is where Guiding units all over the country took over their local Odeon cinema to watch a film. This is the second year we have taken part in this event seeing *The Little Mermaid* and more recently *Wish*. The girls all really enjoy this and it gives them an opportunity to interact with other members of the Guiding family.

In February we will be taking part in a Thinking Day event with 1st Shiremoor Brownies and Guides. This will be an evening of fun, friendship, crafts and games. Again, this is an event where our Brownies meet with other units to celebrate an important day in the Guiding calendar.

This year we will also be celebrating with Helen, who has achieved her 40th year service award. Well done Helen.

CLAIR BARNFATHER

8th MONKSEATON BROWNIES

2023 was another busy year with several of the Brownies achieving their Bronze and Silver Awards after completing Skills for My Future - Lead and Have Adventures - Explore Theme Awards. As part of their Jobs Badge we invited four Parents to come in and talk and be questioned by the Brownies about their careers in Physiotherapy, Career Advisor, Special Needs Teacher and a Bus Driver. Questions from the Brownies included "How much holiday do you get?" and "Are people nice to you?" We had trips to the cinema to see *The Little Mermaid* and *Wish*, and spent one of the hottest days of the year on a trip to Seaton Delaval Hall where lots of activities were undertaken.

PAT ROBSON