

St Stephen's Southmead

APCM reports for 2022



Churchwardens' Report

Once again, it is a privilege to have served as Church Warden in 2022/23, and I thank God for the opportunity to serve in this way and for all that he is doing at St. Stephen's.

Reflecting on the last 12 months, there are a few particular highlights that I thank God for: to now have a co-Warden to lead and worship alongside and for the gifts that John brings to the role, to have secured funding for the 2 paid staff roles throughout 2023, the appointment of a fantastic, committed and passionate administrator and the structures we now have in place for monthly staff meetings all mean that this role feels like a well-supported position to take. It is encouraging to have things to look forward to in the life of the church, in particular the Church Weekend Away to Lee Abbey, and plans for a 'PCC Away Day' in the autumn to give space for God to speak to us and for reflection on where we feel called as a church. When I look back on the year, there are some memories that spark joy: the community events that have happened, baptisms, the faithful participation in worship that happens every week in various shapes and forms. We are also so grateful, personally, as a family, for the way in which we find so much compassion, grace, and encouragement amongst this church community.

This past year has also held its challenges; it never gets easier having to say 'goodbye', whatever the reason may be for that farewell, and this last year has held more of those than ever feels comfortable. In contrast, we have financial burdens to juggle as a church, and it can feel, at times, like our capacity as individuals and a community, is at its maximum. These challenges can feel like they stretch us and are heavy loads to bear, and so my prayer is that we will continually hold only to 'the burden that is light' and find rest in Jesus (Matthew 11). As we live and worship alongside each other, serving God and sharing his love with those around us, I pray we will learn from Jesus together and grow closer to God in all we do.

Hannah & John

PCC Secretary

This year we have had a change in PCC Secretary. We would like to say thank you so much to Sam for all he did whilst he was secretary and welcome to Danny.

Electoral Roll

This is the official register of the adult and voting members of the church family. At St Stephens we use this to keep contact details of every individual in the church family and use it to make sure we don't forget about anybody!

Janet Moreton

Community outreach

Over the past year, at St Stephen's, we've been involved in the community in different ways. Some of our community groups are regular groups within the building, such as toddler group on Monday mornings, and friendships cafe on Wednesday mornings, and at other times we've had one-off events both in the building, and out in the local area.

One of the main ways we've connected with the community is to support the Ranch with their wonderful work in the school holidays; each half term, and during the summer, we've sent a small team of volunteers from St Stephen's to help in the kitchen to provide meals and refreshments for the hundreds of families who attend. We've continued this support into 2023 too.

In April 2022 we helped the Community Church to host an exciting Good Friday trail at the Ranch, which included a treasure hunt, hot cross buns, chocolate, and plenty of sunshine!

In June we hosted a lively quiz in celebration of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, which was not only a fun evening, but we also raised money towards the clock fund!

In October we had a Light Party, on Halloween night, to share the light and love of Jesus, which proved to be incredibly popular, with a disco, fancy dress, crafts, sweets, and even sparklers outside despite the rain!

Jo Hamilton



A Message from the Ranch:

"Big thanks to all that helped us this half term a massive thanks to our volunteers Alison, Michael & Lyn who managed our kitchen to feed over 200 children."



St Stephens church office

Over 2022 the church office settled into a regular pattern of opening three mornings a week. The church telephone connection and voicemail are restored, and emails responded to promptly. Rotas are produced and a monthly bulletin, which is also available on the church website. Bookings for use of the church building are co-ordinated in the church diary, dates arranged for routine maintenance and occasional visitors. Records are kept and returns made to the Diocese. And there are a host of other tasks, great and small.

Up to the summer the office was run by volunteer Gill O'Rourke, who was able to come with experience of running another church office. From September our own Alison Prince took up the post as a permanent administrator. As well as organisational skills and commitment to the church she also has the advantage of being well known within the church family at St Stephen's. Gill continued to offer training and support as Ali took on board the many aspects involved.

The church office is often the first point of contact with those outside the church, and a key place for communications amongst the church family at St Stephen's, covering a multitude of tasks to help the church keep going from week to week and through the year. The administrator needs to know what is going on, and often able to 'join up the dots' when different people are making their various contributions to the life of the church and upkeep of the building. She doesn't necessarily make the decisions - often matters are passed on to appropriate others - but it is helpful to be included in communications, to know what is going on and to make sure things are carried through. Friendly faces are very welcome, though sometimes there's a need to be left in peace to get on with something that needs to be finished in the time available! And when Ali's not 'in the office', particularly on Sunday, remember she's not at work, and please keep anything related to church organisation until office hours.

It is so encouraging to have the support and prayers of such a willing church community, all those who play their part in the life of the body of Christ here.

Ali & Gill

Licensed Lay Minister

On being a Licenced Lay Minister.

It's a little over a year since I was licenced as a lay minister. It has made a difference in my life.

I feel that the Holy Spirit has made me more confident in contributing to the worship here at St Stephens Church. I have been more involved in planning and leading services, and I have grown in confidence with preaching, I have not done these things on my own; I have had good support from Jon, Jenny, and Nick, as well as our church wardens and administrative team.

It has been a long journey for me to get here. I was still in school when I felt that I was being called to ministry, but the time wasn't right for me then. Towards the end of the two-year course of exploring Christianity I was invited to be interviewed for a chance to be included in the formation year for ministry. I felt very fortunate to be judged as being suitable for this training and it became more challenging when I had to master some technology to attend lectures on zoom, because of covid!

I would like everyone to know that, as a minister of this church, I can be available for anyone who wants to talk and pray in confidence.

Janet Moreton

Trinity College Ordinands

Hi everyone, it's David here, and as I reflect on my time as an ordinand at St Stephens, I'm filled with mixed emotions. In just a few short weeks, I'll be getting married in Budapest to my wonderful fiancé, Veronika, on Good Friday. Some of you may not have had the chance to meet her yet as she is Hungarian and has only been in Bristol periodically during my time here. Veronika won't be joining me in the UK permanently until after our wedding.

After the wedding, Veronika and I will be enjoying our honeymoon after which I will move into my curacy house in Luton. As a result of this I won't be spending my final few months as an ordinand with St Stephens in Bristol, and that's something that makes me a little sad. It's been a blessing to be a part of this community, and I'm grateful for the time I've had with you all.

I've learned a great deal during my time at St Stephens, from preaching and leading worship to getting involved in different events and programs. It's been a memorable experience, and I'm grateful for all the opportunities I've had to grow and learn. But what's made my time here truly special is the sense of family that I've experienced. Despite Veronika not being able to join me here, I've been welcomed with open arms and made to feel at home. I've been inspired by the warmth, kindness, and genuine love that I've seen and felt within this community.

David Holland



Stuart writes: I would be lying if I said this final year has been easy. Axel arrived right at the end of my 2nd academic year here in Bristol, and from then on nothing has quite been the same. I was able to enjoy a nice long summer with my family without much work to distract me. Axel and the blessing that he is taking up much of our time. Then we had to return to college, and I needed to figure out how to balance work and family time.

As I am coming to the end of my time at St Stephen's and beginning to think about where I'll be going next and my curacy, I know I will miss the community you have built here. One main aspect I will always remember is how much you all want to serve each other and your local community. This is only one aspect I will strive to achieve within my curacy. If I could help to build a community like the one here, then I would be very happy. One highlight and a personal favourite of mine will always be superhero services. You can see in my picture, myself, and Axel ready for some superhero fun.

It has been great to worship and explore what God is doing together at St Stephen's. And it has been a pleasure to get to know you all and I wish you all the best for the future as you grow with your community.

Stuart Samuels

Prayer Chain



The prayer chain is a small number of people that receive confidential emails of requests for prayer.

In the last year we have prayed for many things in particular healing we have had many operations in our congregation and beyond.

I'm sure we have all witnessed miracles happen from these prayers.

If you would like to join in praying for people, please speak with one of the church wardens or myself.

1 John 5:14

Ali Prince

Kintsugi Hope



Discovering treasure in life's scars: Kintsugi is a Japanese word describing the art of repairing broken pottery with gold, making it all the more beautiful because it is broken. A Kintsugi Hope Wellbeing small group is a safe and supportive space; for people who have felt overwhelmed, providing tools for self-management, in a supportive group.

This is a course about disappointment, loss, anxiety, anger, perfectionism, shame, and resilience.

During 2022 we held a second Kintsugi Hope course, led by Clarie Miles following the success of the first one the previous autumn. Out of that Andie Fowler & John Gardner have trained and started a new Kintsugi Hope group for 2023.

Bible Study

There are about 12 of us who meet from time to time for Bible study on Monday afternoons - although on any one week the number is usually about 6!

During the year we have used the Prayer Course with online videos and questions to look at what prayer is and the many ways of praying.

We interspersed this during Lent with the Archbishop of Canterbury's recommended book and study called 'Embracing Justice', again using the online resources of videos and questions.

In the Autumn we changed gear and studied the letter of Paul to the Philippians. We referred to the book of Acts and thought about the background to the letter, but generally used the method of reading the passage several times, having time in silence to reflect and then shared the things that had spoken to each of us individually.

We are now embarking on a study of the book of Ruth in the Old Testament, relating it to the issues of bereavement, poverty and migration in our lives and world today. Each time we meet we pray together, often sharing things in our own lives we need prayer for and praying for others in church and for problems in the wider world. We welcome anyone to come and join us at any time.

Rev Jenny Low



Children and Families work

Hello! I'm Trenna the Children and Families worker here at St Stephen's Church. I am employed to oversee and coordinate Sunday morning provision for 0-10yr old's, Kids Matter and Babies Matter parenting programmes, Toddler group on Monday mornings and networking in the community.

This does not mean I do this all on my own, there are teams behind each aspect of the work, and of that I am grateful. I love to think of ways in which community can be built and some of the things that follow below, speak of community building and they certainly could not have happened without the teams and willingness of volunteers to be involved and plot and plan. If you have any ideas that would continue to build community and deepen our faith in Jesus, amongst the families of the church, and wider community - please come and find me and let's plan some fun things for 2023!

On **Sunday mornings** we continue to provide Creation Station on the 2nd Sunday of the month and Cinema Sunday on the 4th Sunday.

We have a lively and chatty group of up to twelve 3-10-year-olds. It's been a year of keeping going, welcoming, and building relationships with the children and families.

Going forward, I pray that the relationships we build and the faith we share on Sunday mornings will help our children to search for God, to find God, and to know Jesus as part of their everyday life.

The community enjoyed a **Light Party** on a very wet Halloween night! It was a very welcome dry space - even the local PCSO took shelter.

Lots of toddler group families, and all ages from church came together, for craft, hot dogs, story, and dancing. We even managed to toast marshmallows over a fire pit and have sparklers in the pouring rain! This was such a great example of our church community pulling together to make something quality happen to share the light and hope we have in Jesus.

Babies Matter ran its first programme starting in October with 3 parents. What a joy to walk alongside these new parents and their babies, and see them grow and develop, celebrate together, some of "the firsts" and talk about taking care of our self, our parenting team, and our baby. Some of these parents have now connected consistently with our Toddler group, so reducing isolation and building support networks. One parent said

"Babies Matter has helped me to understand my baby better, it's helped me in my relationship with my partner, and has helped me understand things in the crazy world that is becoming a new mum"

Kids Matter ran, and completed, two programmes in 2022, supporting 8 families with a total of 21 children between them. Badocks Wood Primary Academy was where we held one programme and another at the Greenway Centre.



This was born out of an exciting partnership with Mud Pies Forest School and Children and Young People's Social Prescribing in Southmead. Please be praying for us as we continue to make community connections, with the local primary schools. We would love to see the schools invite us in to facilitate a programme. In 2023 we hope to welcome a new facilitator onto the team and would love to see the team grow and strengthen so we can reach more families in Southmead and support them in their parenting journey.

Joanna Bacon & Trenna Blundell

Toddlers grew over the year, regularly welcoming 15 families each week. The increased use of space to include the back of church as well as the St Stephen's room, provided more space for the energy that 20 under 5's brings! We held 2 events as specific outreach events for toddlers. The first, a **Clothes swap** - a



social time in the evening, with twinkly lights and refreshments without our children, to build relationship and enjoy each other's company. One parent said, "I haven't laughed so much in a long time". The second was an evening to make a **Christmas Wreath**. 40 women (and a few children and men too) surrounded by greenery, ribbon, berries, and mulled wine, were launched into the Christmas spirit. It was special to see women from other churches in Southmead, Kids Matter families, Toddler group families, and friends, and even a few women came just because they saw it advertised and didn't have any connection with St Stephens and have since come along to toddlers on a Monday morning.

As we continue to build networks and relationships in the community of Southmead, a partnership with the Community Church that meets at the Greenway Centre, saw a **Good Friday fun morning** take place at the Ranch over 200 families from the community to take part in a trail that told the Easter Story, alongside crafts and of course an easter egg and a hot cross bun or two!

I can't end this report without saying how grateful I am to the teams and volunteers, who put in many hours behind the scenes and at each event and group that takes place.

The listening, the sharing, the laughter, the tears, and the praying - this is what makes working with the families and children at St Stephen's and Southmead so exciting and I am looking forward to all that 2023 brings.

Trenna Blundell

Safeguarding Report

Safeguarding continues to underpin all the work we do both inside our church family, as well as looking outwards where we live. Safeguarding not only helps to protect the vulnerable members of our congregation but also fosters a culture of trust and transparency within the community. It enables us to create a safe and welcoming environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

The focus this past year has been on training and updating our safer recruitment protocols.

In the year ahead, I have noticed that many of our DBS checks need updating, so expect an email about that in the coming months. We will also be ensuring that our parish activities are up to date with current best practice.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to this aspect of our ministry together at St Stephen's.

Joe Widdows

Building Maintenance

During 2022 we tackled numerous outstanding jobs around the church building, overseen by a small group of people forming our 'building team', and we held several Saturday in-house DIY and cleaning sessions, open to everyone, to tackle some of the issues. As well as making real progress, within our capabilities, we also enjoyed fellowship and lunches together. Please come and join in next time we hold a church community workday! Here is a summary of what was done over the year, with thanks to Michael Shields for his meticulous record-keeping.

Electrical inspection of the building has been completed, including P.A.T. testing of all necessary appliances. Electrical safety has thus been managed.

A Fire Risk Assessment has been carried out and additional fire extinguishers added, including the replacement of others.

All the functioning wall heaters in use within the Church have been cleaned and serviced.

Lighting: in the main Church area has been serviced and balanced lighting has now been restored.

Ceiling lights in the corridor leading to the rear toilet and Vestry have been replaced with new fittings

offering better illumination. (LED type). Lights in the Church Foyer has been restored. (LED type). In the St. Stephen's Room and Choir Vestry bulbs have been replaced with a modern LED type and the rooms are much brighter now.

Hot water heaters were installed in both toilets and the kitchen sink area was fitted with new taps, allowing a much more user-friendly experience, and the water heater serviced.

A new Church sign board was constructed and fitted to the outside wall, to the right of the main outer door entrance.

The Administration Office area at the rear of the Lady Chapel had its phone line switched to a digital service and a second extension handset installed. Internet access is still needing improvement. This is an important communication hub, within the Church and outside it.

An asbestos survey of our Church building was carried out and no further action is necessary.

Broken windowpanes in the main Church area were replaced by a glazier, and the church gutters have been cleared of obstructions by an outside contractor. Damaged and missing roofing tiles remained in need of attention (now due to be replaced during May 2023).

Repairing to the church bell clapper and rope pull mechanism is in progress. The big project concerning the repair or replacement of the Church clock in the tower is on-going. Funding raising continues. Watch this space!

Ongoing projects: The Green Team: Church Garden Fence project to install perimeter railings and gating around all our garden, to create a safe area for young children, continues. The permission of the Consistory Court is needed, also for removal and disposing of unwanted pews. A Faculty Application has been submitted covering both and further professional input is being obtained.

Michael Shields

A special memory

On the death of Queen Elizabeth, we offered people the opportunity to record their thoughts of her. This was something that had been suggested by the archbishop's office. I set up a table in the chancel, with a photograph of the late Queen along with a book. People here in church and the wider community were invited to come to record their thoughts. Perhaps they remembered meeting her, or watched her on television, or wanted to record thanks for her very long reign. Quite a few people came to write in the book.

Janet Moreton



Treasurer's Report

Total unrestricted income for 2022 remained at the same level as it was in 2023. Expenditure during 2022 increased, as we caught up on some necessary maintenance to the church building.

During the year the PCC agreed to make a tithe of £1500 to The Ranch, an adventure playground in Southmead, to help support the sessions that they provide for the young people in our local area.

We met our Parish Share commitment for 2022 and have agreed a slight increase to our commitment for 2023.

Thank you for your continued support to the life of the church.

Steve Hamilton

Please see separate sheet for the Annual Accounts