

The Foreword 2023

I do hope that as you read through this Annual Report you are encouraged – encouraged by what God has been doing in and through us as a church family! We've been blessed as we've gathered in worship, met in home groups and courses, enjoyed social activities together, served our community and supported those in need both locally and around the world.

Our vision statement is:

“Becoming a growing all-age community of faith, hope and love.”

Much work has been undertaken under the three strands this year, with clergy, staff and many volunteers serving with energy and creativity.

Faith

As well as regular preaching and teaching throughout the year, The Bible Course (Bible Society) was held in the run up to Easter. Over 120 people took part in discovering the big story of the Bible, and together were challenged to pay attention to their discipleship, being shaped by the good news of the Bible.

There was also opportunity to think about the ways in which faith connects with everyday life, in a series of talks and home group studies using material from the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity.

Hope

Jennie Prince (Curate) with a small team ran the Hope Explored course early in the year, using Just-Ice as a venue for the first time.

Nine people, of a variety of ages, came forward to be Confirmed or renew their confirmation in a service conducted by Bishop Mark Tanner (Bishop of Chester) at St Mary's Cheadle.

Love

There are continued opportunities to care for those in need, both within the congregation and in the wider community. Both regular groups such as Living Well and special opportunities such as a Bereavement Support Group have been a blessing and support to many this year.

2023 also saw the first Whole Church Weekend Away since Covid, and as well as great teaching from Antony Billington from Romans 12, there was time for building community and encouraging one another.

The parish has supported local and international charities in the year: particularly local charities working with education and homelessness and international charities involved in supporting churches and communities, with a growing connection with partners in Argentina and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It is obvious as you read this report that the work of the parish is only possible through the shared gifts of many volunteers alongside our staff team – and we rejoice that we are called to that work together, inspired by the good news of the gospel and fuelled by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew Swires-Hennessy
Vicar

Annual Report: January - December 2023

The Parochial Church Council

The Annual Meeting of Parishioners was held 14th May 2023 at St. George's Church, following a joint 10am service. Helen Kershaw and Dave McClelland were duly elected as Church Wardens.

There were a number of changes to the PCC membership. The current PCC members are:

Dave McClelland (warden) Helen Kershaw (warden) Ruth Arthur, Linda Bell, Bizzy Bowles, Hannah Brackenbury, Steven Brain, Christine Buckley, Brian Clarke, Susan Coleman, Joyce Corlett, Gill Golding, Margaret Goode, Andy Holden, Les Hutchinson, Val Parry, Jennie Prince, David Myers, Vivienne Metcalfe, Eileen Shore, Vicky Timothy, Val Vibrans and Peter Walker

The Deanery Synod members are Hannah Brackenbury, Sue Coleman, Gill Golding, Les Hutchinson, and Helen Kershaw.

At the first meeting of the newly constituted Council:

- Helen Kershaw was appointed as Deputy Chair
- David Myers as Electoral Roll Officer
- Peter Walker as Treasurer
- Val Parry as Secretary to the PCC

Val Parry

Finance & Standing Committee 2022

The current members of this committee are:

Matthew Swires-Hennessy (Chair), Dave McClelland Helen Kershaw (Church Wardens), Hannah Brackenbury, Peter Walker (Treasurer), Les Hutchinson, David Myers, Val Parry (Secretary), and Vicky Timothy.

During the year Vicky Timothy and Les Hutchinson both stood down from the Standing Committee. Andy Holden agreed to join the committee in January. Although Hannah Brackenbury left her role as Operations Manager in late 2023, she agreed to remain on the committee until the new Operations Manager is appointed.

Val Parry

Finance report 2023

We have much to be thankful for in 2023 after another year of worship, busy parish life and progress on our strategic goals. Financially speaking we are most grateful for a generous legacy gift of over £50,000 in 2023. This gift's arrival was very timely, coinciding as it did with an expensive repair to St George's Church's ridge tiles, at a cost of almost £29,000. The gift also allowed the PCC to pursue its goal of enhancing our facilities with increased confidence.

Notably, our St George's ToNIC Project ("Toilets Needed In Church") has now progressed through various stages

of feasibility study, architect's drawings and pre-application consultation with the Diocese through to its present stage of readiness for a full Faculty Application, which we hope will provide us with the necessary approval to proceed with construction.

Other minor improvements during 2023 include new shower facilities to Ivy Road (which allowed us to raise the rent payable) as well as both a new hot water boiler and new basement flooring to St Martin's Church. Meanwhile, we are also grateful to the Friends of St George's and the Choir who have paid for new choir furniture in St George's Church.

We are delighted to see our facilities being used to the full: both St Martin's and St George's Halls are consistently booked to full capacity by community groups ranging from dancing, Pilates, art, lectures & learning to uniformed organisations and youth groups. The use of our (non-domestic) facilities brings us valuable income of around £30,000 each year.

Meanwhile, however, it is necessary to sound a note of caution: our operational expenditure continues to exceed our ordinary income. This is partly due to a fall in "ordinary" regular giving (i.e. excluding one-off gifts such as legacies and exceptional donations). A good deal of work has taken place to minimise office and other costs during 2023 to offset this fall but the impact has been felt nonetheless.

That said, God's generous provision means that the church has plentiful reserves and these difficult times come on the back of numerous years of surplus between 2010-2020. For the time being, the PCC consider it more important to invest in the spiritual health and operational vibrancy of our parish – prioritising service to the Lord and to our community around us – than to make any knee-jerk reactions to short term cost pressures.

In the meantime, we can take comfort that our investment portfolio rose by around £45,000 in 2023, recovering a portion of the £100,000 loss experienced in 2022. The value of the portfolio stood at £701,545.13, as of 31 December 2023.

Our cash position remains healthy, and we can look forward to 2024 with confidence.

Peter Walker
Treasurer

Cheadle Deanery Synod Report

Cheadle Deanery Synod met three times in 2023. The first meeting took place on the 7th March with the main agenda item being a discussion around how the functions of the deanery could be improved. This was

followed by the summer meeting in June which was an informal BBQ to thank members of the synod which was coming to an end. Deanery Synod elections took place during the 2023 APCM's and a new Synod was formed on the 1st July with their first meeting being held on 4th October. During this meeting the new Interim Assistant Archdeacon of Macclesfield, Revd Leslie Currie, introduced herself and invited questions from the synod. There was also a time of encouragement by sharing what was going on in parishes around the Deanery.

Paul Cumming was commissioned as Rural Dean of Cheadle on 20th April by the Bishop of Stockport with Revd Sarah Hancock being appointed to the role of Assistant Rural Dean. The following were elected to their respective posts within the deanery during the synod on the 4th October.

Graham Lowcock - Lay Chair

Revd Calum Piper – Secretary

Tony Mason – Lay Rep to the Deanery Standing Committee

Hannah Brackenbury - Lay Rep to the Deanery Standing Committee

Revd Nick Feist- Clergy with PTO Rep to the Synod

Revd Eileen Short – Clergy with PTO Rep to the Synod

Val Parry

Electoral Roll

The Electoral Roll within the Church of England is the basic list of those entitled to vote and speak at the APCM. PCC members must be on the Electoral Roll. Each person entitled to be on the roll must be 16 years of age or more and be resident in the parish and/or be regular worshippers in church. At the 2023 APCM there was a total of 276 registered. In recent times there has been fewer numbers on the Electoral Roll. We have faith and hope that numbers will increase. To help maintain the validity of the roll it is completely renewed every six years. The next renewal will be in 2025 and that may present an opportunity to migrate the current paper-based system to an electronic system.

David Myers

Sunday Services

Our pattern of services on Sundays in 2023 was:

St George's

9.15am – Traditional style service (usually Holy Communion (Common Worship))

11.00am – Contemporary style service (usually All-Age first Sunday of the month, Holy Communion on the second)

St Martin's

10.00am – Usually Morning Prayer, with Holy Communion on the first Sunday of the month.

Our sermon series in 2023 included concluding 1 Corinthians, 'Worship in the Wilderness' (from Engage

Worship), Frontline Sundays (from London Institute for Contemporary Christianity), Habakkuk, David &, Haggai and an advent series on the theme of 'Hark the herald angels sing'. All congregations followed the same series throughout the year. We are grateful to the team of leaders and preachers who faithfully seek to serve God and the congregations in leading worship and opening God's word.

In our sung worship we've learnt a number of new songs and hymns, including through Holiday Club (August) some new songs particularly suitable for when children are with us in worship. We continue to be blessed by the service of our musicians, singers and choir, and are thankful for their work both behind the scenes and in services.

We are grateful to those who volunteer to serve as part of the 'tech' team – working on sound and vision for services. We have continued to use YouTube to record the sermons at St George's; our channel recorded just over 1600 views during 2023.

Our gathered worship clearly falls under the 'Faith' strand of our vision, but also provides opportunities for people to discover 'Hope' in the gospel and for sharing 'Love' for one another.

Matthew Swires-Hennessy

Baptisms and Thanksgivings

This ministry continues as we regularly have enquiries about baptism from our own members and others who do not attend church. We held 2 courses during the year led by our Associate minister. The first meeting of each course helps parents decide between a baptism service and a thanksgiving service. We look at both services and particularly the promises that parents make on behalf of their child. For those who choose baptism there is a four-week course where we study Mark's gospel together and cover the basics of the Christian faith. A few couples do not follow through with their enquiry possibly because of the requirement to attend church regularly and attend the short course. However, we believe that we are responsible for helping parents to understand the promises that they are making on behalf of their child. During the past year we had 4 baptisms and 2 thanksgivings both held during the 11am service. We are pleased that some of the couples do attend church regularly.

Christine Buckley

Wedding and Funerals

We were privileged to welcome five couples to St George's to be married. We were able to run a Wedding Preparation session, helping couples think about the decisions they needed to make for the service as well as looking at developing a strong relationship for the years to come.

Our ministry to the bereaved continued throughout the year. 38 funerals were conducted by members of the clergy team at St George's, St Martin's and local crematoria. We also hosted a 'Service to Remember' for those who had been bereaved, and 'Quiet Carols' those who find may Christmas difficult.

Matthew Swires-Hennessy

Churches Together in Poynton

The ministers continue to meet monthly, alternating breakfast and sharing news with praying for one another and for the different needs of the churches represented.

There were also opportunities to share in prayer across the churches, with one of the prayer evenings having a particular focus on young people.

Matthew Swires-Hennessy

Safeguarding

Poynton Parish Church has continued to comply with its duty to have 'due regard' to the House of Bishops' safeguarding guidance. Safeguarding is a standing item on the PCC agenda, and our safeguarding policies are due for their annual renewal and adoption by the PCC at its next meeting.

Our parish safeguarding officers were Hannah Brackenbury and Catherine Maclennan until 23rd October 2023, and were Helen Kershaw and Catherine Maclennan from then until 31st December after Hannah moved to a new job. Since the last APCM, 12 DBS checks have been administered, with recruitment following the 'Safer Recruitment' procedures set by the Church of England.

Our staff and volunteers have also been completing the required virtual safeguarding training in accordance with the Church of England safeguarding framework. As of the 1st April 2024 we have the following compliance.

Basic module, 98.5% compliance,
Foundation module 94% compliance,
Domestic abuse module, 87% compliance

We would like to that all those who have worked hard to complete the training in a timely manner

Helen Kershaw

pathfinders

Pathfinders is our Sunday morning youth group for 11-16's, which meets during the 11am service. The leaders for this group in 2023 have been: Carys Lesley, Michael Cairns, Kate Swires-Hennessy, and Caz Ashworth. Each week we have snacks, games, and a bible study. Over the year we've had bible study series' on: I AM's, 1 Peter and 1-3 John. In May we

welcomed 4 new young people who moved up into secondary school in September. This has made a big difference to numbers, and also has been a joy to see the older ones welcome in the new members. The group gets on well, and are keen to dig into the bible and faith questions, so it is a joy to be a part of running.

Carys Lesley

the base

The Base is our Wednesday night group for school years 3-6. The leaders for this group in 2023 have been: Carys Lesley, Dave Brackenbury, Eleanor Ashworth.

Each week, we have lots of games (the children like to run some energy off after school!) and a short bit of interactive bible teaching. The topics we've looked at this year are: the Beatitudes, Nature of God, and Jesus' miracles.

The group has 8 regular attendees, which has remained stable after losing 3 children who had moved up to secondary school in September, but also gaining 3 new year 3's. We are also beginning to get more visitors being invited by friends at this group, which is a real joy to see and a great opportunity to introduce children who don't usually go to church both to the church family and to Jesus. My hope is that this group can continue to grow in this way, and that we can open it up by advertising it more widely to those outside the church too, but it will need additional leaders in order for this to be possible.

Carys Lesley

The WAY

The WAY is a brand-new Monday night youth group we launched in December 2023 for school years 7-13. The leaders for this group are: Carys Lesley, Sue Coleman, Ruth Howitt, Ruth Arthur and Janet Lee. It's been an incredible joy to be able to start this group up, after being unable to run a mid-week youth group for some time now. We ran 3 'taster sessions' in December, to then launch fully in January 2024 (stay tuned for next year's report for that!). During the first of these, we had a 'vision night', where the young people brainstormed ideas for what they wanted the group to be, things they wanted to do, topics they wanted to learn about etc. We brainstormed names for the group for a while (and I had to veto a few...) but in the end landed on 'The WAY', which stands for 'Welcome All Youth', to encompass the welcoming, fun, loving community the young people had described wanting the group to be. The group is small, with 4 regular attendees, but they are very keen and a joy to spend time with.

Carys Lesley

Pancake Party

The pancake party is an annual event run on Shrove Tuesday, aimed at primary school aged children and their families. This year



the volunteers for this event were: Matthew Swires-Hennessy, Jennie Prince, Christine Buckley, Bob Smith, Ben and Bizzy Bowles, Helen, Andy and Charlie Kershaw, Cath McLennan. Team Kershaw did an excellent job making over 100 pancakes from scratch(!) which we offered free of charge for attendees. We also had games, colouring, and worksheets about what Lent is all about. This event is a chance for those who don't usually come to church to get to know the church and experience a welcoming family here. We give flyers for regular children's groups, and for Easter events.

Carys Lesley

Holiday Club

Holiday club is an event in the Summer holidays for children aged 5-11. This was run over 4 mornings, plus an all-age service followed by a BBQ that Sunday. The volunteers for holiday club this year were: Carys Lesley, Matthew Swires-Hennessy, Jennie Prince, Christine Buckley, Dave Brackenbury, Bob Smith, Vivienne Metcalf, Ruth Howitt, Sue Coleman, David Coleman, Helen Kershaw, Shiela Volger, Val Vibrans, Audrey Lowe, Stephanie Rookwood, Emelye Brackenbury, Jess Williams.

The theme for Holiday Club this year was "rock the boat", so we had lots of fun with pretend boats, fish, a very silly captain, and lots of rowing! We learned about Jesus through the eyes of Peter the fisherman, focusing on how Peter had seen who Jesus was and had his life changed as a result. We had a total of 24 children across the week, around half of whom weren't church attendees.

Carys Lesley

Sunday morning children's groups & families.

During the 11am service, we run 3 children's groups: Pebbles (age 3 - school year Reception), Rocks (school years 1-3), and Boulders (school years 4-6). The leaders for these groups in 2023 have been:

Pebbles: Elizabeth Walker, Bonni Caddick-Brown, Jasmin Cairns, Stephanie Rookwood, Hannah Brackenbury, Gwen Sidgwick.

Rocks: Bizzy Bowles, Matt Coleman, Karen Revers-Chubb, Bob Smith.

Boulders: Dave Brackenbury, Ben Bowles, Maria Alexiou, Sue Coleman.

Each group each week includes some games, an age-appropriate bible time, and sometimes some craft. Teaching topics this year have been: I AM's, Fruit of the Spirit, Saul and David.

The groups are all well attended, with around 17 regulars across the groups. It's been really wonderful this year to have a good number of volunteers across these groups. A huge thank you to each of the leaders and helpers here, you are an amazing team and do such a great job of

taking care of and discipling the children in our church family!

We have had challenges this year with not being able to run Sand (0-3's) due to a lack of leaders. We have created a space at the back of church with suitable toys for this age group, which helps parents to be able to engage with church whilst keeping the little ones entertained. However, I still hope to have more support for this age group, which is such a crucial stage of development for these young lives. My hope is that we could have enough helpers to return to running Sand, both for parents who would benefit from being able to be in church without worrying about their toddlers, and for the children to have their start to life learning that they are valued by the church and by Jesus.

Carys Lesley

Brightstars

Brightstars is our toddler group, which meets on Wednesday mornings for ages 0-4 and their parents/grandparents/carers. The volunteers for this group this year have been: Carys Lesley, Dave McClelland, Mike Batty, Val Vibrans, Carol Armitage, Pauline Deverell, Rosemary Spencer, Maureen Wills, Vivienne Metcalf, Susanne Chapman and Pam Hasted.

This group has benefited hugely this year from the growth of our volunteers' team. It's been great to have enough leaders not only just to fill a rota, but to be able to spend time getting to know the attendees and building a supportive community within the group. Brightstars is well attended, with anywhere between 15 and 30 families each week, the majority of whom are not church attendees. This means that this is a great opportunity for outreach and a way for members of the surrounding community to get to know the church, hear the gospel through the toddler-friendly bible stories, and see a glimpse of what the church family is like.

Carys Lesley

The Treat (Light Party)

The Treat is a light party which we run every year on Halloween as an alternative event for parents to send their children to rather than trick or treating. The volunteers for the treat this year were: Carys Lesley, Matthew Swires-Hennessy, Christine Buckley, Dave Brackenbury, Bizzy Bowles, Maria Alexiou, John and Katy Briggs, Peter Walker.

We ran this slightly differently this year than in previous years, as we took bookings and didn't require parents to stay like we had in previous years. This allowed us to run games together, and have a short talk exploring Jesus being the light in the darkness. We had 17 children attending - the majority were church regulars, but a few had also invited friends who weren't. We had very positive feedback from parents that it was a great chance

for the children to have a fun evening and not feel left out or tempted to get involved in Halloween activities.

Carys Lesley

Encounter

Encounter is an event run once a term by St George's, PCF church, and Poynton Baptist Church, for 11-18's across different churches to meet together, have a time of worship and teaching from a visiting speaker, and have some fun and fellowship together. This year we hosted this here at St George's in April for the Easter session, and also in December for the Christmas one. We have also had a session at PCF in July. We've had a growing number of young people from St George's coming to these events, with 4 attending with us in December. These events are a great chance for the young people to meet other Christians in the local area, invite friends who may not know Jesus, and hear from new speakers to hear testimonies and bible teaching.

Carys Lesley

Exploring Easter

Exploring Easter is a family Easter event which we run each year on Good Friday. This year the volunteers for this group were: Carys Lesley, Matthew Swires-Hennessy, Jennie Prince, Bob Smith, Helen Kershaw, Dave and Emelye Brackenbury, Shirley Ross, Alyson Jarvis and Sue Coleman.

We had plenty of crafts which were a mixture of biblical themes such as an 'empty tomb biscuit scene', and others like egg or bunny themed crafts for fun. We also had an egg hunt where the eggs spelled out 'Jesus is alive', and a story hunt where participants had to find all the parts of the easter story. The event was well attended by a majority of non-churched families.

Carys Lesley

Local Schools & Uniformed Groups

It's been great to have involvement with the schools in Poynton in various ways across this year. These include:

Poynton High School - Easter assemblies (via video due to exams and lack of space), and RE lessons for year 9 on Christian Ethics (along with the youth workers from PCF and PBC)

Worth Primary School - 'Prayer Spaces' Harvest visit in Church

Lower Park Primary School - Year 6 transition workshops (alongside Sarah Williams from Sowing Roots), Christmas Carol concert at church (run by the Love Music Trust)

St Paul's Primary School - Year 6 transition workshops (alongside Sarah Williams from Sowing Roots)

It has also been great to have some involvement with the uniformed organisations this year, including a visit from Cubs for their faith badge in December, and Brownies

joining us for church services in February, October and December, and singing for us at a Carol service too.

Carys Lesley

1st Poynton (St. George's) Brownies



The Brownies have had a year packed of fun filled activities.

They have worked towards their theme Awards during 2023, with Brownies obtaining their bronze, silver and gold awards. They have learnt new games and songs, enjoyed many craft activities. They learnt how to make fajitas, robots, and sand art pictures, did sewing activities and made craft activities for Mothering Sunday, Easter and Christmas and lots, lots more. They have passed many interest badges, including collecting, jobs, painting, performing, grow your own, inventing mindfulness and languages.

The Brownies attended a County Arts Day and enjoyed the many varied activities which were available to them. As a unit we went to the Stockport Air Raid Shelters, followed by lunch at Pizza Hut. We supported the Coronation trail around Poynton.

The Brownies learnt about sacrifices made during wars and decorated the hall windows and windowsills ready for the service in the hall on Remembrance Sunday.

In October we went to Glenbrook one of our Activity Centres which has now sadly had to close due to lack of funds. A fun filled day was spent all day outside doing many exciting activities.

The Brownies were delighted to be asked again to sing at one of the Sunday evening Christmas carol services. Two members of our choir members came along to Brownies and helped the girls learn the carol and accompanied them when they sang it to the congregation during the carol service. The leaders were immensely proud of the Brownies.

At the end of term, we had a Christmas party, including a snowball fight and there was a surprise visit from Father Christmas who gave every Brownie a present.

*Shirley Ross
Guider 1st Poynton Brownies*

Bereavement & Pastoral Care

The bereavement team has five members: Colin and Stephanie Rookwood, Patricia Dye Peter Allcock and Vivienne Metcalfe, who have all undertaken training in bereavement care. Viv Evans has stepped down because of work commitments. The team meets roughly every six weeks to follow up the funerals taken by our clergy. We contact the next of kin roughly four weeks after the funeral, using confidential information supplied by the

clergy, who have visited the families in preparation for the funerals. We telephone the bereaved person and offer to visit them if they feel that would be helpful or sometimes, they prefer to simply talk on the phone.

Twice a year, we run a three-session bereavement support group to help people struggling with loss. They are able to share experiences and support one another with some input and guidance from the team. People have found these groups very helpful as they realise, they are not on their own on this journey. Participants have been encouraged to remain in touch with one another and they have continued to meet socially from time to time.

The annual Service to Remember is held in June/July each year, to which those who have been bereaved over the past twelve months are specifically invited. This has continued to be well received. We also encourage recently bereaved people to attend the Quiet Carols service in December.

Stephanie Rookwood

The Pastoral Visiting Team

Having begun in late '22, 2023 was the first full year for the team of 8 visitors.

Our aim is to show love to church members who can no longer get to church services by visiting them in their homes or care homes. We encourage them in their faith by conversation, prayer and Bible reading, and of course there is always time for social chat and refreshments. The team meet together every so often, with Jennie, to support each other and share ideas.

If you know of anyone who might appreciate being visited by one or two of the team, please discuss with Matthew, Christine or Jennie. Thank you.

Jennie Prince

Afternoon Chat 'n' Tea Groups (ACT)

These four small groups continue to meet monthly in members' homes. Again, these are mainly for people who do not feel ready for weekly homegroup meetings. We gently introduce topics about our faith to encourage members to be able to verbalise what their Christian faith means to them. We take readings such as the psalms, the parables etc & help each other to see what makes them relevant to us & our faith today. Praying together & for each other is encouraged. The meeting is 'chatty' over a cuppa, maybe cake etc & usually lasts about one & half hours.

We have also had an Afternoon Tea at Lyme Breeze with a speaker, which seemed to be enjoyed by everyone. Friends are invited as well.

The 8 leaders & co-leaders meet 3 or 4 times a year to pray, share, to encourage & be encouraged to promote the Good News of Jesus to our groups.

We thank God for the privilege of doing this work for Him

Margaret Goode

Prayer Team Ministry



The prayer ministry team consists of nineteen people. Prayer ministry is offered at the front of Church after our two Sunday services. First, I want to say thank you to everyone in our team who serve in this way. We ensure strict confidentiality with what is shared and full safeguarding procedures are in place.

We have our own WhatsApp group and prayer needs are passed onto the group daily. There are occasions when circumstances are difficult and as well as the usual ways of contacting our clergy, I can be contacted at prayer@poyntonparishchurch.org or on my mobile number which you can find in Church suite.

As a team we want to give testimony to God for the many times prayers have been answered. Should you be one of those people who have experienced answered prayer, can I encourage you to share it. For example, in your home group or please approach our worship leaders and take the opportunity to share public testimony. This is an opportunity to give glory to God for all that he is doing in our Church community.

Finally, if you are interested in joining the team please contact myself.

Mike Holt

Business Chaplaincy

I have continued to call on the shop keepers and small businesses in Poynton over the past year. Over the years it's kept a positive relationship between the church and our shops alive. It's well worth keeping our finger on the pulse of 'the health of the high street' – how businesses are doing and how employees are faring. My message is similar to each one: 'Make sure you are in God's Kingdom.' I find it a privilege being able to listen to people's problems and share their worries. There are lots of smiles of welcome when I call and very few are openly anti-Christian. Please pray that I remain faithful in speaking God's Word to them.

It's been helpful to have invitation leaflets to hand out which give details of church services and future events: especially for Christmas, Easter and Harvest Thanksgiving services, and for any special Children's Events etc at St George's. It never ceases to surprise me how grateful people are to hear about what's happening at their local church. Every now and again people promise to come to a service.

I look forward to continuing my visiting during this year and I am always glad of your prayers. Thank you so much to those who pray for this ministry and to those who welcome strangers into services at our church. Sometimes it's someone from one of the shops.

Francis Cooke

Home Groups

There are fifteen home groups in the parish which are attended by over one hundred and twenty people. Since the last report two groups have merged. This was because attendance in both groups could often be low, for all sorts of legitimate reasons, such as work or holidays. The amalgamation has made weekly numbers much more viable. Another development has been the creation of a new home group, led by Les Hutchinson, for people who were not currently in a group. This new group is consolidating well.

Home groups meet regularly during the week in term time and most follow the Sunday morning sermon series in order to study the bible. I wish to give thanks to John Briggs, who has faithfully prepared the study notes. Mike Batty has also been helpful in making sure that these notes are distributed week by week. In addition to Bible study, the group members also have the opportunity to pray together for their various personal needs. Some of the groups also include wider issues for prayer, such as one or more of the church mission partners.

As I write this, the church is running a weekly series on the book of Romans. Many group members are attending this centrally in the church hall instead of meeting in their groups. However, a few groups have continued to meet in homes to follow the series. It cannot be overstated how much fellowship and friendship can be gained by being part of a home group. As well as the spiritual benefits of bible study and prayer, there are usually social activities organized throughout the year. These provide further opportunity to get to know one another and enjoy time together.

Please speak to me or to one of the clergy if you would like to be part of a home group.

Susan Coleman

Direct Mission Partners

We continue to support the mission partners of San Andres in Salta, Argentina both individually and as a church. Our main contact at San Andres is now Priscilla as Dany has taken on the Job of Vicar General with responsibility for the whole of the Salta Diocese, although we support both. Marcos is still working with Flavia on the church plant in Gran Bourg.

In Holy week 2023 Priscilla came and met with those who attended the evening services that week and she spoke at one about their work. She then continued in

the UK for a couple of weeks visiting other mission partners before visiting her elderly parents in the Netherlands. Sadly, her father who had also been a missionary in Papua New Guinea in the 1960s, died in October. Priscilla herself and her husband Hans celebrated 30 years as missionaries in Argentina.

Dany visited many of the indigenous communities and helped in the training of about 60 in April. Flavia and Sofi accompany him when they can but sometimes have to take long bus journeys back to Salta, so Sofi doesn't miss school. In November Dany was preaching in the Wichi communities in 49 degrees heat, this was shortly followed by a tornado in which there were no fatalities but lots of destruction in houses and churches. Dany had to return to Salta to get some food supplies and return.

By October Priscilla was planning a visit by Dany, family and some prospective young church leaders for early 2024. Watch this space for more info next year.

Faith Hope and Love in action.

Ann McClelland

Women's Events

In 2023, a selection of women's events took place. The aim of these is to bring together ladies together of all ages and stages for fellowship, fun and encouragement.

Our first event of the year was in February when we joined for dinner at Social Trattoria (formerly Ciao.)

A breakfast followed in April when we were delighted to hear from one of our mission partners Laura Sanlon. Laura previously served with UFM in Spain and Kenya. She now works with Latin link and the Lausanne movement in Belfast, her home city, having had to move suddenly at the start of the COVID pandemic. She also works with diaspora churches as well as ministering in a local hospice. Laura encouraged us to hold on to our core truths and had a great message for us all round.

It can often be difficult to avoid clashes with the busy social calendar of Poynton as was the case in June. Despite this, 20 or so of us met for a lovely meal at The Farmer's Arms on Park Lane.

In October we had another breakfast, this time hearing from Elizabeth Walker. Elizabeth spoke to us about the recent course 'getting your kids through church.' This was full of practical and helpful tips on how, as a wider church, we can all support families and children as they grow in their faith.

Finally in December we had our Christmas craft event. Catherine Owen led the evening wonderfully, demonstrating and assisting us as we made crackers, cards and pill boxes whilst enjoying a glass of mulled

wine and a mince pie or two. A huge thank you to Catherine for all her preparation for this event.

Thank you again to Sarka and the church office. The use of Church Suite continues to make event bookings very easy for those who wish to sign up online.

*Val Vibrans
Kate Swires-Hennessy
Alison Moverley*

Men's Events

The men's events are starting to gain momentum again post covid and needless to say the food events are the most successful! In 2023 we kicked off the year with a curry night at Appayon, followed by a couple of breakfasts, wine tasting and foot golf. Thanks goes to Dave Mc for organising the wine tasting evening - a fun and informative event as always! Foot golf was the active event of the year but as no food was involved the uptake was quite light. For 2024 we're focussing on the successful events and started the year with a curry again followed by a number of breakfasts throughout the year, the next being 18 May.

Matt Coleman

Higher Poynton Tennis

It has been a tradition of more than 50 years for members of St George's, St Martin's and their friends to play tennis on a Tuesday evening at Higher Poynton Tennis Club in the spring/summer months from the beginning of April through to the end of September. There are two shale courts, which are very well maintained. The club itself is situated off Carleton Road, Higher Poynton. Formally the club was known as Green Lane Tennis Club and next year will celebrate its centennial.

Playing tennis is fun and good exercise. It is one of the sports where competitors of very different ages can play together – especially doubles. Last year we were quite short of numbers available to play. This season we hope that we can increase the numbers so the tradition can continue. Anybody is welcome to come along for a taster session – rackets and balls can be borrowed. For further information please contact David Myers.

David Myers

The Bellringers'

Sunday ringing for the 9.15 services has been well supported and we rang for 4 weddings during 2023.

Every member of our band of ringers was able to take part in the special ringing for the Coronation of King Charles III on May 6 2023.

On Saturday September 16 2023 the tower was open as part of National Heritage Day. Groups were marshalled up into the ringing chamber at half hour intervals where

bellringing the "English way" was explained and demonstrated. We counted a total of 77 visitors of all ages.

After almost 3 years of Covid restrictions we resumed our usual program of social events during 2023.

Since January this year the Cheshire School of Bellringing has been operating Saturday morning sessions at Poynton to train new ringers in this area. The 6 pupils are making good progress.

*Rosemary Spencer (Tower Secretary)
David Friend (Tower Captain)*

St George's Wine Society

Once again, we have seen an increase in our numbers which is very gratifying.

Our first meeting of 2023 was the ever-popular wine game hosted by Dave McClelland entitled 'Wine Kriss Kross'. Our February meeting was given by Jonathan Ayres entitled 'Wines of the Southern Rhone with a splash of pink'. In March Michael Thorburn took us on 'A Trip Down Under' in Australia. Our St George's Dinner was held at Arighi Bianchi in April; the food was excellent and a good time was had by all. The May event was 'Celebrity Vineyards' and their owners and was hosted by Chris McCay. Our June meeting was a BBQ at St Martin's Hall and as usual the weather could have been a little kinder! The Church Hall in July saw us having a garden party in case of inclement weather (not unusual when we plan an outside event)!! We began September with 'Women in Wine' given by Val Vibrans. October was a comparison evening of wines by Dave McClelland. Steve Matthews hosted the November meeting with wines to look out for in the future. Our final meeting in December hosted by committee members who chose wines and foods to accompany a Hogmanay celebration.

There is a lot of hard work done to make these meetings successful and thanks are due to all who helped and ran the evenings.

Valerie Vibrans

Church Flower Team

What a difference a year makes. The Church seasons have come and gone. We had the pleasure of decorating the church to commemorate the King's Coronation both inside and out.

It's been a sad year for Anne and me personally but the Team have been very supportive, sometimes at a moment's notice, which humbles you, but we are grateful to them for their support and prayers at those difficult times.

On a happier note, we are thrilled to have Heulwyn, Diane and Chrissy join us. They have made a big impact on our Team and we are very grateful to them for their ideas, skills and time.

It would be remiss of me not to thank everyone, Kath, Anne, Linda, Val, Margaret, Diane, Chrissy, Heulwyn and our honorary chaps Brian, Malcolm and Kevin for their continued support.

If anyone would like to donate monies for flowers in memory of a loved one, please talk to our Treasurer Kath McCallister or myself Jeannette Wood. Thank you

*Jeannette Wood
Team Coordinator*

Friends of St George's Church

At last year's AGM we welcomed Marie Bennett and Glyn Derbyshire to the committee and since then both Margaret Goode and Alice Lees have resigned after some years' service. We extend our warmest thanks to them for their invaluable help. Thanks are also due to Sandra Sharpe (Secretary) and Geoff Smith (Treasurer) and to Judith Smith whose skills with a needle have revived a very worn altar frontal and produced 2 sets of hangings to be used at the Church seasons progress.

The activities of the year have included a coach trip to Lytham St. Anne's for the annual military programme on the sea front, and a hotpot supper and talk by Rhys Williams about his wide-ranging job as a doctor. One of the aims of the Friends is to support the clergy and PCC in maintaining and improving the church furniture and fittings, including the churchyard as appropriate. The plant troughs in the car park given to Living Well in memory of David Wrigley have produced enough tomatoes this year for a bowlful to be the Bingo prize! Other donations have included the choir screen and chancel furniture, to which the choir also made a contribution.

Many thanks to all those who help us fulfil our purpose in so many ways.

Susan Warrington

The Saturday Walking Group

The 2nd Saturday each and every month is Parish Hike Day. The frantic activity of making sandwiches and a flask, together with something you particularly like, gets underway.

Car sharing is the norm. Don't forget essentials like easily left behind socks, hat and gloves and even a pole to keep you upright. We try to keep the journey to no more than an hour (or so) so long as we can reach the Derbyshire Dales.

How wonderful it is to take time out and go for a decent hike where we have time to get away from the hustle and bustle and meet new people, make friends, talk about various issues (and mishaps like falling off a stepping stone and sitting in the river!) and solve the world's problems, well mine anyway! It's also an opportunity to bring family and friends who perhaps don't come to our churches, or any church, a way of

outreach perhaps. It's also particularly good for newcomers to Poynton who don't know the beauty on offer in our surrounding area. Even Vicars have been known to be keen walkers; Curates though have been a little more cautious!

Once upon a time we had to rely on our skills at using a map and compass but these days we have other aids like computer map print outs to a useful larger scale covering just the area needed and Satellite Navigation via our mobile phones telling us precisely where we are which not only gives confidence but helps us keep on the right track. We also have web sites where we can plan out our walks and give us more exact distances.

Did you know that walking is one of the best keep fit activities there is. It gets the heart pumping faster and makes you realise you've got muscles you didn't know you had. Pretty well every muscle in the body is at work as we walk over uneven ground (great relief for a bad back) and push each other over styles, whether they want to go over or not, improving our balance.

I think it must exercise the soul too because we're blessed with splendid views we had forgotten were there to enjoy. Somehow the changing weather manages to cast different shades of light over the hill side, sun streaming through gaps in the cloud like an alien ray beaming down from a flying saucer. You see one can let the imagination run wild when one is surrounded by nature's beauty, and that's another part of us exercised. In our comfy home environment perhaps we forget what it's like to feel some rain on our faces. The breeze is invigorating and there's a sense of really feeling alive. Sat on an uncomfortable rock (we don't want to get too comfy) eating lunch in the warming sun, how good life can be.

They're a strange lot these walkers, myself excepted of course, so why not join us and find out what it's like, and bring a friend, a family member perhaps, maybe your dog or friendly ferret. We find 6 to 8 miles is enough and nothing too difficult to tackle.

Do give me a call and ask to be put on the email list for walk updates and related information or just let us know you want to come. 9:30 to 9:45am, Church Hall, second Saturday each month.

*Dave Markham
dmacoustics@hotmail.com*

Property Committee

The Property Committee are charged with looking after the fabric of St George's Church, the Church Hall, St Martin's Church and Hall, the grounds of these buildings, the two houses we own at Ivy Road and Barnaby Road together with the graveyard. From this can be seen the extent of the task!

The Committee members – Hannah Brackenbury, Steve Brain, Brian Clarke, David Myers, Eric Sanderson and

Malcolm Wood have carried out a great deal of work, uncomplainingly and efficiently. It is true to say that one only notices the amount of work undertaken by the Committee when there is a delay for whatever reason and then....

St George's

As a result of the Quinquennial Inspection, the ridge tiles along the chancel roof have been replaced and a couple of spare ones provided as well. This has been a considerable commitment in financial terms but listed buildings require careful treatment. The company undertaking the work had to source the correct stone; the first lot not quite matching the original. Eventually a match was procured.

We have taken delivery of a new notice board (made by Men in Sheds) for the Chester Road site and the wording for the permanent notices e.g. services, office number and clergy names has been provided.

St Martin's

The church services during the winter months are held in the church hall which helps the heating costs.

We are still awaiting the Quinquennial Inspection due for St Martin's despite pursuing the issue with the appointed Architect on numerous occasions. A severe backlog due to the covid pandemic has meant we are 'in a queue'!

Himalayan Balsam is an issue in the grounds and a small working party has started to deal with the problem. This will require several treatments over the coming months; keeping the grass down is also a heavy commitment.

The tree saplings purchased under the 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee' scheme have been received and planted into pots to protect them during the winter months. The exact planting position was agreed with the Vicar. During the coming months we will plant them out.

Vicarage

As can be seen when one passes, the new Vicarage is beginning to grow apace and it is hoped Matthew and Kate can take occupancy during the beginning of summer! A result for which they will be extremely thankful.

Graveyard

The gravestones had their annual safety check. The amount of work carried out in the graveyard has been helped by a willing volunteer or two. We are glad of this in the summer months! A tree inspection was carried out and three trees in danger of collapse were identified. TPO approval will have to be obtained before removal.

The Hall

This continues to be well used and the floor will need

some remedial work at some time - in the near future - we continue to monitor it. For such a heavily used space it has stood up remarkably well. Thanks to the cleaning team who do an amazing job.

Ivy Road

The tenant vacated Ivy Road at the beginning of October and we acquired another tenant fairly quickly (November); the house has been let for 12 months at this stage. We carried out some redecoration and were able to acquire a higher rental. The shower had been a problem for some while and we decided to replace the cubicle and re-seal. This was completed before the new tenant moved in.

Barnaby Road

We have still to carry out kitchen redecoration after the new kitchen was installed together with a new carpet in one of the bedrooms.

Valerie Vibrans

The Church's Website

Throughout 2023 our website 'www.poyntonparishchurch.org' – has been a key way of providing information about services and events, links for booking onto events and highlighting the different services (including when times change or there is a joint service). There was a slight decrease in website traffic (-9%), but the site was still accessed by nearly six thousand 'unique visitors', most of whom were accessing the site from a mobile phone.

Social media has allowed the promotion of events and sharing of information. At the end of 2023 the main church pages had 580 (Facebook) and 186 (Instagram) followers and visits to the St George's Facebook page were up 152% (on 2022) to nearly 5,000.

Matthew Swires-Hennessy

Church Cleaning

Each Monday morning a dedicated team of volunteers comes to the Hall at around 9am to do an hour's cleaning. Our Hall is used by many people, both Church and outside groups and we do our best to ensure that we provide a clean and pleasant environment for them. A commercial cleaning company also comes in to clean on a weekly basis and our wonderful Brian Clark keeps an eye on things during the week.

During 2023 we sadly lost our longest serving member, Brian Decker. Other members, Linda Bell, Maureen and John Aspray had to leave the group for various reasons - we are very grateful to them for their help over the years. This, along with extended holidays (we are all retired!), grandchild care etc, has meant that our numbers are often depleted – from a maximum of 11 we sometimes have only 3 or 4. For this reason we would warmly welcome any new volunteers.

If you could spare an hour on a Monday morning (or just on an occasional basis) then please have a word with me. And it's not all work – our WhatsApp group is called "Cleaners who Lunch" and that's what we do. We go out for lunch to celebrate birthdays, or any other occasion we can think of! Come and join us, it's fun!

Joyce Corlett

Church Office

Life in the Parish Office shows no sign of slowing down. People often ask me what is there to do... I don't have a simple answer to that but there is always something. There are the regular jobs to keep things running smoothly and all the little extras popping up all the time.

We started the year with Hope Explored – a three-session series about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. That was followed by the Bible course in which Andrew Ollerton helped us to explore the Big story and the complexity of the Bible. The rest of the year continued in a familiar pattern. Easter, the Civic service, the Service to Remember, Holiday club, Bonfire night, Remembrance service and finely Christmas.

We have replaced the old phone line and gone digital ahead of the national change over. Our number is unchanged. I would like to thank Peter Walker for that, as well as for improving other, mainly technical, stuff in the office.

Mike has been busy looking after the hall hire. We have 19 regular hall hires and both halls are being well used. Apart from many other things that Mike does he had given the monthly Notice sheet a makeover and he is producing the new and improved Notice sheet every month keeping us all informed of what is happening in the month ahead and beyond.

In the Autumn Hanna Brackenbury has finished in her role as an operation manager. She has left a big gap in the team, and we miss her but wish her all the best on her next adventure.

All in all, it was just another year in the Parish office. Thinking back made me realised how much I am enjoying my job and all the people that come with it. Thank you

Sarka Roberts

St George's Living Well

Living Well continues to meet fortnightly on a Tuesday afternoon in the church hall.

Sadly, we have lost some of our regulars over the course of the year, but have gained others as news of the group gets round. We now have 26 on our books, a mixture of people with memory loss and their carers and some who live on their own and appreciate the company and activities we offer.

We have a wonderful team of 16 who set up the room, lead the activities, play the piano, serve refreshments, prepare crafts, give the "thought for the day", and generally chat to people and make them feel welcome.

We have had regular visits from Julia Robertson, who leads exercise and fun reminiscence activities, and Katy Allan, a lovely soprano with a friendly, engaging personality, whose musical talent is much enjoyed. The raised beds, given by the Friends of St. George's and in memory of David Wrigley have been very productive this year, in spite of attempts at sabotage by the squirrels, producing colourful flowers and bulbs and a plentiful crop of tomatoes.

Stephanie Rookwood

St. George's Lunches for the Retired

During 2023, the lunch team have provided 11 meals on the first Wednesday of each month apart from January. Our aim is to provide a warm and welcoming place with food for all our parishioners and we welcome the opportunity for people to share their faith story. There is an average of 30 - 40 attendees and there are 9 volunteers to prepare and serve the food. The charge remains at £5 for soup sandwiches and a dessert. On special feast days we serve a two-course hot meal or a cold buffet, with occasional extras (mulled wine in winter and Prosecco in summer). The volunteers meet occasionally for fellowship and friendship while sharing a meal together and planning future events.

Krys Turner

St. Martin's Lunches for the Retired

We continue to meet on the 3rd Thursday of the month, with an average attendance of 36. Sadly, we now miss some of our regular members due to ill health, and those who have passed away. However, we have visitors invited by those who always come, and have delivered new invitations to local houses.

We had a special meal to celebrate 100 years of St Martin's Church. We continued our practice of holding a short service in church at Harvest, and Easter. The Christmas event of Cakes and Carols was well attended, with a lively production, starring the grandchildren of some members, in which we all participated.

We often have speakers, Lifeboats and RNLI; Carys, and her youth work; Holiday reminiscences, with Photographs; Life in a country school.

We look forward to continuing this ministry.

Audrey Lowe

Matthew Swires-Hennessy
Vicar
May 2023

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