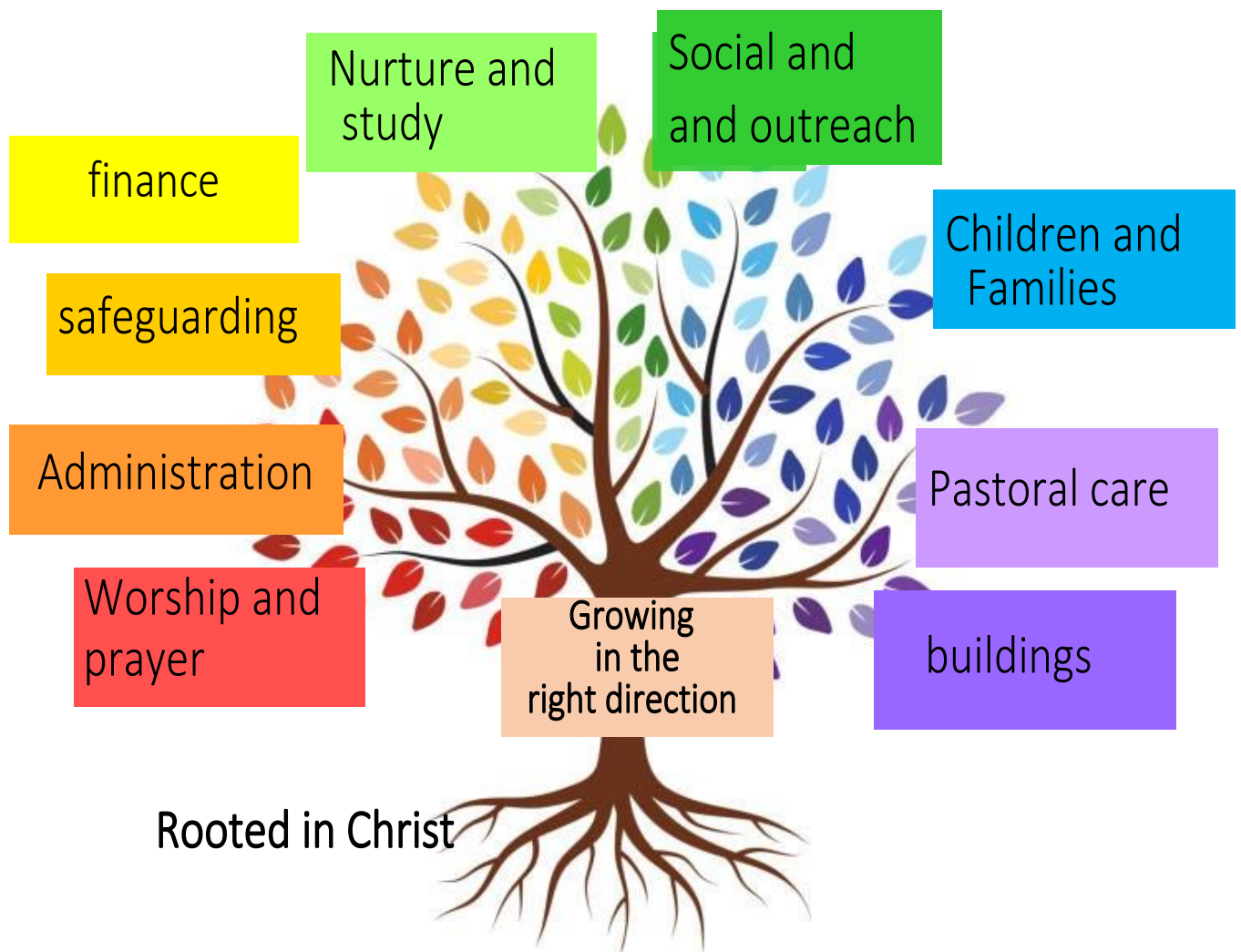


The Parish of St Bridget, West Kirby
with
Caldy, The Resurrection and All Saints

PARISH LIFE



OVERVIEW AND GROUP REPORTS

2022

This review is in addition to the Trustees Report and contains the Rector's Preface, a Churchwardens' Report, and a Safeguarding Report followed by group reports summarising activities in the parish.

RECTOR'S PREFACE

My second full year in the parish has felt more typical than the first which was affected by the lockdowns of Covid. We have had a busy parish life in terms of both worship and social activities, ministry and mission.

The year cannot pass without mention of our celebrations for the Queen's platinum jubilee and our marking of her death a few months later in September. As a parish we acknowledged her devotion and inspiration as our longest ever serving monarch.

In our worship we have celebrated the major Christian festivals and seen healthy numbers at our main services in both churches. The monthly All Together Worship has benefitted from increased involvement of the school and there is always a positive atmosphere in the worship and over refreshments afterwards. There have been some new expressions of worship including a Good Friday activity morning, a 'love your neighbour' service celebrating school and church links and an outdoor Nativity. During the year we have admitted 15 children to Holy Communion and confirmed three of our young people.

We continue to have excellent administrative support from our parish administrator and the various committees and PCC. During the year amongst many other smaller matters, the PCC has agreed to replace the noticeboard at St Bridget's, upgraded the Wi-Fi and livestreaming facilities at both churches, created one parish PCC bank account, agreed to fund a children and families worker for the parish, explored the potential provision of a toilet in St Bridget's, agreed to have both churches open daily and committed to a theology of generosity.

With the support of an excellent finance team our parish treasurer has steered us through a potentially bumpy year with grace and skill. I hope that when you peruse the accounts you will feel reassured that we manage our resources well and with a vision to make a positive difference. Like many organisations we spend more than we receive but trust that if our work is centred in Christ then we will receive the support we need. We have financially supported 14 charities and projects.

Our pastoral care team has continued to care for the bereaved and respond to other pastoral needs as they arise. Their work is deeply appreciated and results in many letters of thanks. You can read of their plans for the year ahead in the group reports.

Both our churches offer beautiful sacred spaces for prayer and worship. We are fortunate that no urgent major repairs are required. The buildings team and the enhancement team keep a watchful eye and make plans for improvements. During the year we sold the old and purchased a new parish house which we are currently letting until such time that we are offered a curate. The churchyards are cared for by volunteers and paid gardeners as we continue to cherish and care for 'God's acre'.

Throughout the year we have seen an increase in social activities. The Link in St Bridget's Centre is now back to its usual bustling, vibrant and friendly self. It is a great blessing to the community, and we are very grateful to the group of volunteers who make it happen each week. As a parish we have started a new group for babies providing a chance to make friendships and establish links with the church community. We have also established a robed children's choir, 'Sing Aloud', who sing at major festivals, weddings and other significant events.

We remain committed to running our churches in an eco-friendly way and cherishing God's earth and people. Whilst we support the foodbanks and a large number of charities, we are called to look further at our response to the needs in our community and further afield remembering that as a faith community we exist for the benefit of those outside it just as much as those within it.

The following reports give a flavour of the past year and an insight to where activity is focussed. They also challenge us to ask how our activity reflects our faith, our values, ministry and mission. I am hugely grateful to our churchwardens, ministry team and PCC, all our volunteers and each and every person who contributes to the life of the churches in the parish. As we look back at 2022, we also look around at what is happening now and ahead to what might be. Together we are called to pray that we might be open to the work of the Holy Spirit and the transforming love of God in our own lives, in our church and in our community. **Alex Williams Rector**

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

See also the Trustees Report and the Buildings report. All fabric, goods and ornaments are present and in a mostly good state of repair. There have been no acquisitions or disposals during 2022 which require entry into the church log.

Over the last year we have seen a return to the pre-Covid 'busy-ness' of the Parish. In fact, congregations have grown, with some continuing to join services online. Our Rector has worked immensely hard and imaginatively and we feel that we have all benefitted and often been challenged. We are delighted that more children and their families attend services, largely due to the growing closeness with St Bridget's School. In particular, I think the wardens speak for the whole congregation when we say that Lent, Experience Easter and especially Holy Week were very special and often deeply moving. This stems directly from our Rector's prayerful and thoughtful preparation for this period. The wardens have a duty of care to the Rector and do try to stop her overworking!

We are trying to increasingly involve people in all roles during services: sidespeople, readers, intercessors, chalice ministers, crucifers who support our ministry team. Happily, most of those who are asked are willing to take part, even if initially surprised to be approached. We hope to encourage more members of the congregation to be actively involved in worship, especially in leading intercessions, and to emphasise the welcoming role of the sidespeople.

The upgraded sound and vision facilities, with a new projector, have been much used and appreciated, especially during All Together Worship. We are very grateful to Chris Tann for his expertise and advice and for his calm control of the equipment on Sunday mornings. Several other people can now manage the live streaming in Chris's absence, enabling streaming of other services. During the coming year, we hope that the many volunteers who keep our churches running will continue to do so, that our congregations will grow, with people of all ages joining us and that God will bless our Rector with continued strength of purpose and inspiration. As churchwardens we will continue to support her and the whole parish in our ministry and mission. **Ann Holden and Gregory Buckridge, Parish Churchwardens**

It is healthy and positive that some of our activities fall into many areas of church life including worship, nurture, pastoral care, social and outreach and are simply put under the heading which seemed currently most appropriate!



SAFEGUARDING

As a parish we are committed to following the Government and Church of England guidelines on safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. Over the past 12 months, a database of our many and valued volunteers throughout the parish has been set up, together with identifying the training required by both PCC members and volunteers. Systems are now in place to ensure the initial training is completed. The paperwork around the Safeguarding process includes Safer Recruitment as outlined in the Diocesan Safeguarding Guidelines, sending for references for all new volunteers, maintaining the training database, sending out Confidential Declaration forms and generally keeping all Safeguarding records up to date. Bethan Halpenny is the Parish Safeguarding Officer and any safeguarding issues should be directed to her. Our aim is to ensure that we are promoting a safe culture in both churches. **Sue Shaw Parish Safeguarding Administrator.**



ADMINISTRATION

The parish office

Another year in the Parish Office and one of increased activity! This has meant: keeping up with the Rector and her many ideas; more responsibilities at the Centre since Martin's retirement; the installation of a new noticeboard (more significant than it sounds); opening the church every day when I arrive in the morning (possibly my favourite bit); dealing with phone calls and emails from the Mayor's office / the Council / the organisers of a Viking conference / the church clock restorers / the Diocese / bookings for children's parties / christenings, weddings and funerals. I

enjoy my job very much, I work with a nice bunch of people, and feel valued and appreciated. And of course there are always questions to answer and things to consider:

Is it legal to have a family grave on your own land?

Please return a life jacket you borrowed from West Kirby Sailing Club.

How long does coffee stay hot in the thermos flasks?

The date of the Beetle Drive is wrong in the newsletter – it's the 18th November, not 13th. I change 30 printed newsletters by hand as it's not worth re-printing just for one date. Fortunately changing a 3 to an 8 is easy. (The Beetle Drive was cancelled)

*Can you give me the name of the firm that services your dishwasher in the Centre?
(we have never had the dishwasher serviced)*

The Rector walked into the office carrying a small plastic bag of white powder, found in the churchyard. On closer inspection it turned out to be nothing more sinister than granules of slug repellent.

A marketing call on the phone: "Am I talking to the parish office of the Church of the Restitution? Have you ever traded in bonds?"

Please print out a poster of the Mayor of Trumpton.

Paula Cobby

Life in the Printing Room

Over the last year we have been finding our way forward post Covid and this has meant our Rector, Alex has had to rewrite all our service booklets. She takes a lot of effort creating these and I want to make sure this is reflected in the printing, choosing the correct weight and quality of paper. Deadlines are often (very) tight but I always try and leave enough time for changes. We use the machine from my Gould's days which produces really good jobs. There is always a variety of printing needs from the parish. My current favourite was the A2 Mayor of Trumpton for Canon Anne Samuels. We are always open to requests, even the random ones.

Anne Waring



BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

See the trustees report for detail about St Bridget's church, Caldy church, St Bridget's Centre and Caldy hall. We have a small group of volunteers who monitor the condition of the buildings, undertake repairs and make recommendations for any improvements or significant work required.

Enhancement Group

The group met six times during the year. The main business concerned streaming equipment, the new noticeboard and the proposed toilet extension. Obtaining Planning Permission for the new noticeboard by Church Road was slow and costly, but eventually arrived and it is now in place. We obtained Faculty permission to install a new audio-visual cabinet, two cameras and a socket in St Bridget's, which are now in use. Many thanks to Chris Tann and Dave Wright for all their work and advice. We have been discussing the toilet for St Bridget's since at least 2010, but made some progress this year: an online consultation in April showed support, and the PCC are minded to proceed. The Diocesan Advisory Committee sent members to visit us in June and November, and discussed our Options Appraisal at their September meeting. They encourage us to go ahead, and at the time of writing, the PCC has agreed on a small extension adjacent to the north porch. It will require Planning and Faculty Permissions, and fund raising. Other business in 2022 included Defibrillators for both Caldy Church and St Bridget's Centre and a shelf for the Giving Station. We are still considering new carpets and decoration for St Bridget's, and repairing or replacing some of the microphones that we bought in 2017.

Priscilla Bench-Capon

St Bridget's churchyard

We had seven working parties last year, mainly clearing away ivy, brambles and Alexander weed. The turn out varied at each working party, but everybody enjoyed the company and a good chat over refreshments. Our thanks to all who have helped. We had some dead trees removed and this opened up several areas. Mike Brady managed to keep the grassed areas well maintained with strimming around

the headstones and looking after all the rose trees. Unfortunately he is currently unwell and not working. The churchyard is a beautiful space and many people visit and comment on how attractive it is. As we look to 2023, we are following an action plan which aims to develop a Spring and Summer meadow as well as introducing habitats for wildlife and a wider variety of wildflowers. Our thanks to Bill and Doreen Smith for all their work in the churchyard and in organising the working parties.

Caldy grounds

The grounds at Caldly have been beautifully maintained by our gardener John Husselbury, and we are sad that he has now retired from that role. New gardeners have been contracted to look after both St Bridget's and Caldly churchyards.



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Storytelling

Storytellers was ably led by Anne-Marie Holmes during 2022 before returning her focus to her A-levels. We thank her for all her creativity and effort with the church children. The 2022 Christmas play returned to a traditional take on the nativity based around a conversation between Jesus and Joseph, wonderfully acted by Steve and Will Longmore. The script allowed a range of participation by lots of children with the possibility of lines for those who wanted to say them. Since March 2023 Andrew Gibb and Carolyn Tallents have been employed to maintain and develop Family and Children provision for the church, which includes Storytellers.

Baby and toddler groups

The Caldly toddler group followed by STiCK continues to be enjoyed by a small but faithful number of parents and children. There is always a lovely atmosphere, and the families enjoyed celebrating the major Christian festivals with a visit to church followed by refreshments. We are very grateful to the wonderful volunteers who set up, brew up, sing up and clear up.

In September a new baby group began in St Bridget's centre. This was planned and run by two parents and was specifically for parents and babies who are under one. The aim is to provide a supportive and nurturing environment, sensory activities, early communication support through singing and play and an opportunity for parents to form friendships. Families seeking baptism are signposted to the group. The group has grown in numbers and is wonderful blessing to all involved.

School

2022 has seen the relationship between St Bridget's Church and school increasingly strengthen. The children in our school love visiting "their" church...it provides a source of excitement, awe, comfort and inspiration for them. Our children love seeing Reverend Alex and know her very well, she is a familiar face in our school. (One child was overheard saying to their parent, after seeing Reverend Alex, "That's MY vicar."!). We are so grateful to the many church members who have worked with the children this year and have made them feel so loved by their church.

Here are some of the events and initiatives that have happened this year:

✘ All Together Worship includes children and families from our school. This has gone from strength to strength in the past year ✘ Experience Easter saw every child visit the church to learn about the events of Holy Week. This was very special and the children learned so much through an unforgettable experience. We are very grateful to the church members who gave up their time to lead these activities ✘ Through funding from the St Bridget's Educational Trust, the Church has provided "Worship Bags" and Prayer Activity bags for every class. These support teachers when leading Collective Worship in their classroom. ✘ Members of the ministry team lead Collective Worship every week with the children ✘ School Council children went up the Church Tower to celebrate Ascension Day. Huge thank you to Greg and David ✘ Children lead church services at specific points of the Christian Calendar ✘ Four Year 4 children attend the Link Coffee Morning every week and help serve. A huge thanks to Mrs Marriott who organises this ✘ Church provides a beautiful service for our Year 6s when they leave school ✘ Reverend Alex leads staff "Breathing Space" on a half termly basis. This provides continuing professional

development for our teachers and time for reflection and prayer. ✂In October we celebrated the links between church and school with “Love Your Neighbour Sunday”. This service was planned and led by our School Council and was well attended and very much enjoyed ✂Church and school worked together once again in December to provide a Christingle Service. The church was packed out! Huge thanks to Mrs Longmore for organising this event✂ Children are invited to take Holy Communion receiving teaching in school over 6 weeks followed by a service attended by Year 3 and 4 children and families of those children receiving Holy Communion✂

We have achieved so much in the past year and I am continuously grateful for the love and support of our church, more importantly, I know that our children are too.

Miss Nadine Smith RE and Christian Ethos Lead Teacher

Sing Aloud

A new venture started in 2022 is our junior ‘Sing Aloud’ choir. Rehearsals are run by Alex, Immi Longmore and Natalie Davies. Natalie has written the following report.

Sing Aloud choir in 2022 has been really fun. We have sung in church services and weddings with some of the children singing amazing solos too! Alongside weekly sessions learning new songs, I have been taking the children out individually to work on their music theory in their white books. The children all really enjoy this and have made leaps and bounds in their knowledge already. We have 10 children in Sing Aloud now which isn’t a plethora but they certainly make a beautiful sound.



FINANCE

A very full review of finances is given in the Trustees Report.

The finance team meet regularly during the year to discuss the finances of both churches and St Bridget’s Centre. They bring a mixture of skills and wisdom and provide support to the Parish Treasurer. We currently spend more money than we receive but we have a theology of generosity and believe that if we are prayerfully

centred on making the love of God known then we will be resourced to do so. We receive no external funding and are entirely dependent on the generosity of our congregation and community for which we are hugely grateful.



Quiet Morning

NURTURE AND STUDY

In October over 20 of us met in St. Bridget's Centre to learn about becoming still and being open to God in nature and in Scripture. Being in silence together was a new experience for many of us. Some had been very apprehensive but were relieved to find that being quiet gave a sense of inner space and an opportunity to relax and to focus. It was helpful to have spaces for reflection in the Beacon Room and in church and to have space for collage and doodling. Those who came were keen to repeat the experience! We are very grateful to Anne Samuels for leading this morning.

'Listening in Lent'

During Lent 2022 a number of people met in small groups and followed a pattern of guided listening to God through the words of a hymn. During this Lent we adapted our mid-week Communion services to provide space to reflect on a verse from a psalm. The psalms were chosen to fit the Lenten season and the reflection offered opportunity to practice being quiet together and to listen to Scripture as if spoken directly to us. At St. Bridget's we had about 20 people each week – far more than usually attend Wednesday Communion. (The Lent lunch afterwards was an added attraction!)

Lent Bible Study Group

Joy Alcock's regular Bible study group has remained popular and follows a varied programme. It expanded to become a Lent group this year, led by a different ministry team member each week and looking at the Sunday Gospel readings. This seemed to work extremely well and was reckoned to be worth repeating.

God Knows

A monthly short discussion at Caldy following Tuesday Communion where we share questions about the Christian faith and how it relates to current affairs.

Canon Anne and Canon Ray Samuels



PASTORAL CARE

The team has continued to send cards and to contact those who are unwell, those moving house, and the bereaved. We have made enquiries about people we haven't seen for a while and sorted lifts to church when required. We try to keep things as personal as possible, all the cards are handwritten, and we hope to offer discreet support in fellowship. We have received positive comments from many of the recipients. As we look to 2023 we are exploring offering some more structured bereavement support.

If you know of anyone who would welcome a call or card, please let one of the Lay Pastoral team know.



SOCIAL AND OUTREACH

St Bridget's Centre

St Bridget's Centre is a wonderful resource for the community. We are very grateful to our centre manager Richard Williams and all our staff for enabling so many activities to take place in a great environment. Here's just a flavour of what goes on: Five Pilates classes at various times in the week, 4 different teachers ❖ Yoga – for healthy lower backs, for menopause, foundation course, with mindfulness, deep relaxation, mini retreats at weekends ❖ Kumon children's maths ❖ Wirral Academy of

Performing Arts children's music and drama❖Sing Aloud church youth choir❖11+ exam practice❖Bridge classes❖St Bridget's Pre School❖Children's birthday parties❖Baby group❖Link Café❖Knit and Natter, Craft and Chat❖Church refreshments❖Handbell ringing❖West Kirby Women's Institute❖Sourdough baking classes❖Wirral Bird Club❖Mothers' Union❖Men's Shed lunches❖Film nights❖West Kirby Museum❖Local history Lectures and exhibitions❖Quiz nights❖Craft workshops❖Wirral Ramblers orientation training.

The Link

The Link has returned to the bustling hive of social activity which existed prior to Covid. It is a wonderful opportunity part way through the week to meet up and check in with one another again and to make new friendships. It's often a time when 'business' takes place and there's chance to buy Fairtrade and eco-friendly products, enjoy the delights of Carole and John's fundraising stall and partake in great coffee and tea, not forgetting wonderful home baked goods from Sally Cashen and others. We are hugely grateful to Chris Andrews for organising the rota and for everyone who volunteers and makes the Link such a happy place and a blessing to our community.

Fairtrade

St Bridget's is a Fair-Trade church – which means that we try as far as possible to use fairly-traded items such as tea, coffee and sugar. There has been a Fair-Trade stall in the parish selling food and craft items for a number of years started by Sally Cashen. My main supplier, Traidcraft, went into administration earlier this year, but fortunately their pioneering work has encouraged other companies to develop sales of fairly traded goods, so the stall can continue. The stall is open in the Centre after the 10am service on Sundays and at the Link Coffee morning on Wednesdays. My thanks to all who support Fair Trade by their purchases. They make a real difference to the lives of many in the developing world.

Margaret Smith

Knit and Natter, Craft and Chat.

We are pleased to meet up once again each Wednesday now Covid has subsided. Our group enjoy knitting or working on other crafts. What we enjoy most is to natter and chat. You are welcome to join us at the Link on a Wednesday morning. It is a happy gathering to make friends and enjoy company.

Peggy Dodd

Handbell Ringers

Conducted by Janet Belton, the 8 members of the Handbell Ringers meet weekly in St Bridget's Centre. The group has more than 120 pieces in its repertoire both classical and popular, many appropriate not only to the various seasons and religious festivals, but also areas of the British Isles, and war-time favourites.

During the year, the Ringers played at Caldy Manor. The residents seemed to enjoy the older pieces, and many joined in, singing the lyrics with great enthusiasm. The proceeds of these recitals go to the St Bridget's church. In 2023 we hope to visit other residential homes and perform at the Summer Fair.

Sue Shaw

Earthfest

The annual People and Planet friendly festival, held on St Bridget's school field West Kirby returned on a small scale in 2022. There are hopes that the festival will continue with a little reimagining in 2023.

Summer Fair

A brilliant partnership was formed in 2022 between church and school and the Summer Fair returned. There was a wonderful atmosphere and a great basis to build on. We are very grateful to those from the church community and from school who made it such a successful and fun event.

Men (still) in (search of) a shed!

We have been meeting monthly in St. Bridget's Centre for lunch of soup and sandwiches. We hoped that our speakers would update us on problems facing people across the whole of Wirral. It had never been our intention to simply have a

“lunch club”. The membership has been slowly growing and has now reached eighteen.

On several occasions we have invited guest speakers who represented the Wirral YMCA, Debt Counselling, and the work of the Wirral Society. At one meeting we welcomed representatives of the Friends of Ashton Park and residents of Carpenters Lane area to consider possible options for use of the glebe land if planning for development is refused. We have worked closely with Kieran Hatton of “Connect Up”, an organisation charged with identifying isolated people and introducing them to a variety of activities. “Connect Up” are planning to “knock on doors” in West Kirby in August. As we look ahead to 2023 we will need to review such things as our name, our objectives, and whether we need to move from an informal structure to one which is more structured.

Edward Edwards

Mothers’ Union

During 2022 we have welcomed new members and by the end of the year there were 26 of us. Chris Andrews took over from Barbara Adams as our Treasurer in October and Carole Steel continues as secretary. We have good attendances at our meetings and visitors are always welcome to come along. During the year we have had many interesting speakers on a wide range of topics. We held our Wave of Prayer in the Lady Chapel on May 18 as we prayed for our Linked Dioceses around the world being reminded of the worldwide impact the MU has. In June we celebrated the Queen’s Jubilee with a bring and share lunch and there was lots of food and plenty of chatter. In November, 17 members enjoyed an early Christmas lunch at the The Ridger pub. Two of us attended the Diocesan Council meeting in Hartford, Cheshire, taking with us a carload of hats, scarves, baby clothes, baby toys and other gifts for the refugees who were being housed in hotels in Chester. Mothers’ Union is a global Christian movement working with people of all faiths and none to develop communities, strengthen families and advocate for change. If you are interested in joining us please speak to Carole Steele or ask for a programme of events

Carole Steel

Eco-Church – Caring for God’s Creation

My role at Parish Treasurer has rather overwhelmed my ability to progress our work on environmental matters. We have not formally progressed our Eco-Church work, but good progress is now being made to implement the recommendations we received regarding the management of St Bridget’s churchyard. Active management in line with the recommendations is being put in place, with a management plan being developed, and volunteers and St Bridget’s school being drawn in to assist. The Church of England has set a target of becoming carbon-neutral by 2030, and we need to ensure that we play our part in this. The criteria are focussed primarily on buildings, so the focus is narrower than Eco-church, and relates mainly to heating and lighting (gas and electricity usage).

We need to identify someone (or small team) to take the lead at both churches to progress all the work linked to our Eco-church aspirations, and our work towards being carbon-neutral. It is still our intention to achieve Eco-church Gold Award status, but this will require some commitment of time and effort

John Smith

Iona

We finally managed to get a group from the parish (and beyond) to Iona in May 2022, following several years without doing so, due to building work on Iona, Covid, and other health issues. A very fruitful week was again shared, with much appreciation of the fruits of the refurbishment of the accommodation at the Abbey. Friendships were renewed and commitment to work for justice, being and the integrity of creation reinforced.

It is likely that we will not be able to organise further group visits to Iona, as we age and travel arrangements become ever more convoluted but we hope that perhaps someone else may be willing to do so and maintain our active relationship. We are delighted that Mary Railton-Crowder and Graham Crowder hope to be able to offer a group visit to the Isle of Man in 2024.

John and Margaret Smith

Website and social media

Our thanks go to Barry Darby, supported by Sam Eastwood who endeavour to keep our website updated. We also have a Facebook page and Twitter account.

Parish Magazine 2022

The Parish Magazine is an important means of communication, keeping parishioners up to date with what is going on, and providing other interesting articles. In 2022 we published twelve monthly issues, both physically and on the parish website. Our Rector provides a letter each month, and a number of other interesting articles. Many people supply articles for the magazine each month for which we are grateful. Thanks to all of them for supplying this core material in good time every month. We have also included a variety of one-off articles which add interest and we are grateful to all who contribute. The five pages of advertising is now managed by John Smith and Paula Cobby and roughly covers cost of printing which is undertaken by Anne Waring. Jean Pilling and Jenny Cooper organise the distribution of hard copies. An electronic version is made available on the website which Barry Darby, our webmaster, organises. Thanks to Jean, Jenny and Barry and to all our distributors, and to Priscilla for her assistance. **Trevor Bench-Capon**

Electronic newsletter

Our Mailchimp account was set up in 2020, principally to distribute the weekly newsletter during the Covid pandemic, when we could not give out printed copies. I took over the job in September 2020. In January 2022 we had 181 subscribers; this had grown to 241 in December, and 250 at the time of writing. Each week about two thirds of these open the newsletter. Although lockdown is over, we have kept it going for several reasons. It is a valuable resource for those who cannot attend church in person that week. It comes out each Friday at 6pm, earlier than the printed version, and it saves the church money on printing. We can include hyperlinks to the Order of Service and further information. Moreover it reaches an audience beyond the regular worshippers, so it is part of our outreach ministry, and a way to keep in touch with people who have moved away or become housebound. As well as the

newsletter, Mailchimp has a Survey facility, which we used to consult about options for installing a church toilet. It is a secure service, compliant with Data Protection rules, and people may unsubscribe at any time.

A Church Near You is a directory of C of E churches, set up and maintained centrally, but edited by each parish: I do most of the editing here. In recent years it has expanded its facilities beyond the basic information, so we now have a calendar of services and events, newsletters and parish magazines, orders of service, and links to online giving, streamed services, and further resources. There is a large selection of tags, for example Family Friendly, Refreshments, Christmas Carols, Hymns, so that people can search online for the type of service they want, anywhere in England. The St Bridget's site receives over 700 page views each month, and Caldby about 200, with more at Christmas and Easter. **Priscilla Bench-Capon**

Churches Together in West Kirby

The churches in West Kirby range right across the spectrum, and it is not always easy to be entirely in step with each other. Despite the different approaches to living the Gospel and seeking to bring others to faith, much mutual support is provided and shared work undertaken.

As clergy come and go, the dynamics of the group inevitably change, but it is good to experience the different understandings of the faith which we share.

The Covid restrictions disrupted much of the shared activity, but this is now largely re-established, though other practical issues have caused restrictions.

The work on the sea defences and a predicted high tide ruled out the usual Good Friday Act of Witness. Lent activities were limited, though individual churches welcomed others to their planned activities. Praise in the Park last summer was well received, and Carols at Christmas and an Easter witness in the centre of West Kirby attracted interest and attention.

John Smith



WORSHIP AND PRAYER

We are very fortunate to have a gifted team of lay and ordained ministers which enables us to offer a variety of worship across both churches in the parish. The ministry team meets regularly each month and is a supportive group which reflects on worship and prayer, discusses resources for study and nurture and considers what we might offer to the people of the parish to help them encounter God in a variety of ways.

Music - Notes from St Bridget's organ bench!

We are incredibly fortunate to have Rob and Lynne playing the organ for us at 10am services at St Bridget's and also Clive Grey playing frequently at 6.30pm. Lynne and Rob have reflected on their time on the organ bench so far!

From Lynne: As part of a team I regularly play at Sunday morning services and, in preparation, also attend choir rehearsals. Being an organist involves leading choir and congregation in singing which, when I first began playing, was extremely daunting never having accompanied before. Plus, there were so many hymns to learn.

It was a chance conversation at an organ recital that led me to a series of lessons on the short Liverpool Organ Course at the Anglican and Metropolitan cathedrals. What a thrill it was to play those organs! Four years later, despite several setbacks not least the pandemic, I have made progress and grown in confidence and competence. I practise during the day whilst the church is open to visitors. From time to time a visitor will thank me for the music and then tell me their reason for visiting the church that day. Hearing their often poignant stories is a rare privilege and a direct result of being present playing the organ. I am grateful to the numerous people, many of whom are members of the congregation, for supporting and encouraging me this journey to becoming a church organist. **Lynne Saunders**

From Rob: The organ at St. Bridget's is a delight to play and I feel privileged to play an instrument that has been part of worship at St. Bridget's for over 100 years. I'm not a trained organist and have learnt 'on the job'. As a piano player, the notes are the same, but the technique of playing is different. It can feel a bit like you are sitting in a plane's cockpit with all the different stops and functions. Do I want a Diapason stop or a Gemshorn stop? Shall I play on the Great or the Swell? Shall I add a twelfth or fifteenth? I'm still learning which buttons to press and which buttons not to press! I've always wanted to be a proper organist - but that's just a pipe dream!

When living and teaching abroad, I was fortunate enough to play the organ each week in a small English-speaking Church in the Swiss Alps. This was at St. Peter's Church in Chateau-d'Oex. It was here I started to enjoy playing the organ and set up a singing group.

I enjoy rehearsing with the choir and playing for services when needed and it is a pleasure to be asked to play for weddings or other big Church events. I am glad that music plays an important part of worship at St. Bridget's and that many groups now contribute to the musical life of the Church (Church Choir, Altogether Worship Band, Sing Aloud Singers, St. Bridget's School Singers, Happiness Band) and that the organ still plays an important role.

Rob Gore

The choirs

Caldy and St Bridget's choir have been singing regularly at the 10am Sunday services and at several weddings during the year. The choir has grown during the year and now numbers up to 9. We were sorry when John Steel decided to step down but are pleased that Carole has stayed with us. At the beginning of the year, choir practices on Thursday evenings were led by Alex. Her infectious enthusiasm quickly encouraged us to work hard, improve our standard with an eagerness to try new pieces and anthems. We were pleased to be joined by additional members for the annual Service of Nine Lessons and Carols on the Sunday evening before Christmas, and enjoy singing together at joint services. As ever, we are very grateful to our organists throughout the year, at St Bridget's Rob, Lynne and Katinka for not

only accompanying the choir and congregation but for filling the church with some amazing organ voluntaries at the start and end of services. At Caldy we are grateful to John Tennant, Brian Richards, Katinka Mitchell and Stephen Claus for so ably accompanying us. We have enjoyed our links with the Sing Aloud choristers who join us for Festive services. It is lovely to see these young people at the start of their choral journey. Their singing of descants and solos had brought an added dimension to the music of the church. Katinka Mitchell has recently taken over from Alex as choir director and I am sure that under her leadership we will “ go forth and prosper” over the next 12 months.

Sue Shaw

The music group

Throughout the year the music group has provided a different and uplifting dimension to our worship. We are fortunate to have many musicians playing a variety of instruments including flute, recorder, ukelele, cahon, guitar, violin, keyboard and cymbals. Along with their singers the music group leads All Together Worship and delights the children from school, the congregation and, we hope, the angels in heaven!

Bell ringing

During 2022 the bell ringers have worked well together as a team. We regularly ring Plain Bob, Grandsire, Reverse Canterbury, Stedman Doubles, Cambridge Minor and Kent. We have also experimented with Grandsire Minor, Barking Little Bob and Norwich Surprise Minor. When we have 8 ringers we can ring touches of Grandsire or PB Major, plus Cambridge or Yorkshire spliced with Little Bob. We now have finally added Double Norwich to our repertoire. St Bridget's are in the top 10 quarter peal towers in the branch and 3 ringers, Janet, David and Tim are in the top 10 quarter peal ringers in the Chester Diocesan Guild. As well as ringing to mark both the Queen's platinum jubilee and then her death, other achievements worthy of note include ringing Huntly Castle Surprise Minor to welcome guide dog Huntly to the

tower and the band ringing a quarter which was jointly conducted by all. Our average is 7.6 ringers on a Tuesday and there are often more ringers than bells for a Sunday service which is wonderful. We have only missed 3 practice nights and 1 Sunday service which is an excellent record.

Janet Jones

St Bridget's Flower Guild 2023

The AGM held at the Rectory in February was well attended and we discussed arrangements for the coming year. Requests for flowers on the memorial table have proved very popular and it is advised to book early to avoid disappointment! We intend to use fresh flowers whenever possible, but as funds are tight it may be necessary to augment arrangements with artificial blooms. We welcome new members and any donations are always gratefully received.

Jen Chester

Both our churches are fortunate to have people skilled and enthusiastic about flowers. Week by week and on special occasions we give glory to God through the floral decorations and are grateful for the generosity of all who make this possible.

Preparing for worship

We have small but excellent team of people in both churches who help to set things up ready for services as well as keeping the churches clean and sparkling. The sacristans prepare everything needed by the ministers during both weekday and Sunday services and also help at baptisms. At weddings and funerals we have a team of vergers who are paid for the duties they undertake.

One of the ways we show our love of God is in how we care for and prepare our sacred spaces for worship. A huge thank you to those who help us in this duty and if you would like to help, training is provided!

CLOSING REMARKS

There are many people who deserve thanks; not all are mentioned in this review.

Apologies to any whose work or presence has been omitted - it was in error.

A huge thank you to all who play a part in the life of the parish.

For those who, unknown to any but God, slip in and pray,
we ask God's blessing.

For those who support us financially, we are immeasurably grateful,
For those who add their thoughts and support in ways which often go
unnoticed, know that you shape and sustain us.

For those who feel able to complain,
thank you for your courage and gentleness.

For those who turn up week by week and add to the praise and the lament,
the friendship and the fun, the nurture and care, we give thanks.

For those who are weary but keep offering their time, you are a delight.

For those who have not yet found their place, we welcome you.

*I thank my God for you every time I think of you; and every time I pray for you all,
I pray with joy because of the way in which you have helped me in the work of the gospel from the
very first day until now.*

Philippians 1:3-14