

Report on Regular Church Activities in 2023 for presentation at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting 18 March 2024

Bell Ringers - Peter Sanderson, Ringing Master

Whilst the weekly Sunday and Wednesday bellringing routine has continued unchanged again for a further year it's been a pleasure to welcome some new faces and to see the progress being made. In September, we entered the all-Yorkshire striking competition and were delighted to be placed 2nd, only just missing out on 1st place to Leeds Minster. We have once again rung the bells for every 10.30 am Sunday service and on other special occasions, including for seven weddings. We had a busy time ringing for the Coronation of King Charles in May both at Huntington and at Stockton-on-Forest.

The bells are in a good state of repair, but we continue to be plagued by the fly infestation which took up residence during lockdown.

On a more sombre note, we were greatly saddened by the death of Bob Meadows. Bob was a stalwart of the band, in the truest sense of the word, for more than forty-five years. The local team or ringers are a committed and happy group, ranging in age from 11 to 94. If anyone would like to learn to ring the bells then please do get in touch.

The Besom - Peter Aspin

The Besom is a national charity with bases all around the country. James Odgers founded the charity in 1987, after a trip to Hong Kong, working with Jackie Pullinger. He noticed that the gap between those who have and those who don't exists not only in Hong Kong, but all over the world.

The Besom exists to be a bridge between those in the Church who want to give. They do this by enabling church members to give their **time** (by volunteering for projects such as gardening, decorating, furniture delivering), **money**, **skills** and **items** of furniture to those who are in need.

The Co-ordinator at The Besom is Becky Watson. She and her team operate from their offices at The Living Word Church on Huntington Road. Becky has recently offered to visit churches in their Sunday Services to explain the work of The Besom in York. The best way to make contact is by email at info@thebesominyork.co.uk Otherwise by telephone: **07927 873407** or see the website: www.thebesominyork.co.uk They continue to use the large warehouse facility owned by The Island Charity on New Lane in Huntington.

Both All Saints and St. Andrew's were able to hold annual Toy Services in December. We received a large gift of toys which were collected and taken to the Besom Offices in time for Christmas distribution. Also in December, members of our Church - particularly the Small Groups - responded again to the call from Besom to put together gift hampers. These were delivered out to families by several volunteers from this and other York churches.

Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade – Robbie and Sarah O'Brien

2023 was an exciting year for the Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade in Huntington Parish. Robbie and Sarah restarted the company in April with a band of 12. We began rebuilding in the summer term which soon led to an increase in band members up to 15. We also started advertising for learners on instruments and finished the summer term with three additional learners!

Autumn saw another great term for the band. We played our first ever concert in Church in October, supporting the service with the provision of music, and showing off some of the pieces we had been working on. This was an emotional event for some of the past members of the Brigade and Parish Youth Band.

The term culminated in our Christmas concerts. We had our main event at St Andrew's which saw an audience of around 100, including the Lord Mayor and Sherriff of York. This was a great experience, and a massive confidence boost. We also played at Heworth Rugby Club and Hartrigg Oaks over the festive period, as well as providing the musical accompaniment for the Parish Carol Concert. We finished the year with 17 regular band members and 5 learners, so doubling in size over the year!

The Christmas concert also saw the world premiere of our company's march, Pentecost, composed for us by Ben Smith.

Four of our band members were accepted into the National Band and Drum School. This enables them to meet people from all around the country, coming together to play music. They joined the seven members of the band who were already national band members.

We also like to have fun, given we work hard and play hard! We had a trip to an escape room at the end of the summer term. We also arranged three theatre trips to see Grease, A Christmas Carol and Elf at the same time as supporting some of our members in their other hobbies. We also went ice skating to celebrate the hard work in all the Christmas concerts!

We opened the youth club side of the company which saw four young people turn up at the Church for our first night! Over the term we looked at the story of St Martin, our patron saint. We played music, had a science night, focused on Noah's Ark, and learnt some songs for the Christmas Concert. We ended the term with 9 regular young people attending Martins and, due to the age spread, we rebranded as Martins and Y-Team, with an age range of 4 – 10.

As a company we were also invited to support the "Generation Groove", (Haxby based community concert band) in their remembrance event. This saw some of the youth members and leaders creating a drumhead altar for the book of remembrance. This was a great event to be part of and an honour to be able to support other community groups.

Brigade would not run without the dedicated team of leaders and adults that support the work we do. Three of our leaders completed the young leader's course, run by the Brigade training team. We have also seen several young leaders step up, both in the band and in Martins and Y-Team, with special note to Ben Smith in the band and Rosie Williams for Martins and Y-Team. We are incredibly grateful to all our members. It has been great seeing both brand new members as well as families who had a previous affiliation with Brigade joining our ranks.

We have lots of exciting activities planned for 2024 including a band tour, numerous concerts, and a camp for the youth members, as well as keeping up our weekly meetings and looking to continue to swell our numbers. We can't wait to tell you about them all in next year's report!

If anyone would like further information, please drop us a message at Brigade@Huntingtonparish.org.uk

Cake and Company - Joan Sargent and Heather Richardson

We are delighted to report that Cake and Company have continued to be a blessing to the older members of our community. As in previous years, those who come include members of the wider community as well as those who are part of our church family including those with disabilities and their Carers. One of the blessings of this year has been journeying with families who have lost a loved one and who have come to Cake and Company. We have been privileged to take part in several funeral services. We see this as an important part of our ministry.

This year our excellent team of helpers has increased in number, and it has been great to have additional contributors to the 'thoughts for the day' as well as more people to help with transport and to sit and chat with the folk who come.

Each session starts with preparation: moving chairs and tables, slicing cake, preparing drinks but most importantly, a time of prayer when all the helpers gather. Prayer underpins all that we do, and we have seen so many answers to prayer, not least the new helpers. We've tried out some new activities, but the quiz remains the highlight of each session and the source of much fun. We've shared laughter and sometimes been moved to tears. There is a real sense of friendship and belonging in this group, and attendance continues to be strong. Please continue to pray for Cake and Company, for the opportunities it provides to share the love of Jesus with those who come. Thank you.

Foodbank - Liz Barker and Janet Stephen

Our parish continued to support the vital work of the York Foodbank during 2023. Church members have given generous donations of food, household essentials and financial support throughout another challenging year when many people are experiencing difficulties due to the economic crisis. The parish has also given financially as part of our annual church tithe. The total amount of food we donated this year was 1918.45kg which is nearly 360kg more than the previous year. This includes 483 kg of harvest festival donations from church members, Huntington Primary school, other church groups, plus Little Acorns (the nursery at Hartrigg Oaks).

Janet Stephen collects the donations from each church and takes them to the warehouse where she volunteers. There, all donations are date sorted and stored prior to going to the six distribution centres around York to be issued to clients. Over the last year we identified a gradual decline in donations against an increasing request for help. Increased donations at specific times like Harvest, the Tesco Donation-Drives and Christmas, help to keep our stocks at a reasonable level. In the past we have, at times, been in the position of being able to help neighbouring food banks out as we have had surplus but recently this has not been the case.

Liz, Joy and Sheila volunteer at the session on Wednesday afternoons at the Living Word Church in Huntington. This centre has continued to be one of the busiest in the city and in 2023 we processed 657 vouchers which fed 1019 adults and 890 children. Across all the York distribution centres 3473 vouchers were fulfilled which fed 9393 people. This was a 10% increase on 2022 figures. As well as the practical support of food and household items, clients can also access expert advice from a support worker who works for York Foodbank in conjunction with the Peasholme Charity and another support worker from the Citizens Advice Bureau. We continue to give clients cash vouchers for the Co-op so that they can top up their tins and packets with fresh produce. At the Living Word Foodbank clients are all welcome to use the Hub café and are given free hot drinks and cake or even a light meal.

Members of the Living Word Church are also around to chat and welcome them which creates a lovely welcoming atmosphere and chance to share our faith in a more natural relaxed setting. Thank you to everyone who donates, either at church, via one of the supermarket collection points or financially. We can testify that the donations are very much appreciated.

Messy Church – Dot Bevington

Messy church continued in 2023 to be a welcoming place with a warm atmosphere. The team of helpers are wonderful and miraculously we have just the right number each time. There are enough for us to be flexible so people can have months where they need to be elsewhere. There is always room for more if you feel God is asking you to join in. We particularly need lead cooks for the kitchen, so the present ones are not overworked!

Some families come regularly but we often have lovely surprises from families who have found out about us from different sources. It is particularly pleasing to welcome Baptism, Tots and Kidzklub families. We are busy but not overwhelmed which is a great place to be. Trusting God for numbers and family interactions is a big part of Messy Church!

The first part of the year we looked together at Jesus' parables. We made the decision not to run Messy Church in June, July, and August due to last year's experience of lower numbers as the weather improved. This was a good move and didn't affect our return numbers in September. We were even more enthusiastic! This will be our pattern in 2024 too. Church has other spiritual nourishment if families wish to seek it out. The option of a summer holiday "happening" is also a possibility for those not away.

We are continually reaching out to more people to join us through schools and social media as well as word of mouth. Continue to pray for those who know Jesus to be open in their conversations about their faith during the sessions and pray that people of all ages will come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Mission Prayer/Activity - Janet Stephen

The group continues to meet monthly. Numbers have increased by one this year - more people would always be welcome!

Each month we pray for our local mission activities carried out by the church, based on reports about youth, children and family activities and links with local schools. We pray for our overseas mission partners and also Ollie and Hailie Wright. Ollie is now working for JVI, a similar mission to IJM with whom he worked previously.

Jim Roberts was the speaker at Deeper in July when he was able to give more information about the current situation of ReVive, one of the overseas projects which the church supports. As well as being very informative he was able to answer questions asked. At the beginning of November, several of the group attended the Standing Strong event in Leeds run by Open Doors, another of the missions supported by the church. The focus was on the persecution in North Korea, and we were challenged by the testimony of a North Korean believer and encouraged to continue to pray for the persecuted church worldwide.

Pastoral Care Visiting Team - Glenise Thompson and Judy Lindsey

This year it has been a real encouragement to resume pastoral care on a face to face, personal front without restrictions or lockdowns. We have been able to meet regularly conducting home visits again for those unable to get to church and supporting the care and practical needs for members of our congregation. We have also resumed regular visits to care homes in York where several elderly members are now long-term residents.

Whilst the Pastoral Visiting Team itself has reduced in numbers at times, due to personal illness or family responsibilities, we consider that the whole church share in this important work, whether praying, shopping, cooking, home visiting, transporting to appointments, telephoning etc.

Our Small Groups, whom we consider to be the front line of pastoral care, and Staff Team also provided much needed care at times. The Telephone Prayer Chain operated as usual providing a means of urgent prayer and contact when needed.

We continue to receive many testimonies of kindnesses shown to one another and we are grateful to God for His many blessings to us and his protection on us in this important aspect of ministry.

Again, Judy and I would like to finish by thanking our brilliant pastoral team who work very hard doing what they can, along with several other people not on the team, but also doing so much to help. Why not come and join us? It is a great privilege to help look after our congregations.

New Worshiping Community – Presence - Rev'd. Chris Park

Presence is both an in-person and on-line group for young adults.

Presence continued to meet on alternate Sunday evenings throughout the year. However, with James Simister moving on it became apparent that it would have to stop, and the last official meeting happened just before Christmas.

Small Groups - see Rector's Report

St. Andrew's Building Extension and Refurbishment - Keith Blanshard

In 2023 significant progress was made in building the North aisle of St. Andrew's. We were blessed with grants, fund raising and kind donations by people and organisations. We were also blessed with volunteer skilled and unskilled labour to minimise the cost of this self-build project down without compromising on the vision for the building and its surroundings.

Brickwork started above ground level in February and continued until April. We were thankful for free scaffold hire. The window openings and undercroft doors were starting to take shape. The building of the insulated roof, roof trusses and roof lights continued during April and May. The larger windows and roof lights all positioned opposite each arch will give more daylight into the worship area. Recycled slate tiles were fitted in June. This gave us almost a waterproof building. We built a temporary exterior door to allow construction to continue without the need to gain access through the existing church and causing disruption while work carried on.

A temporary wall of plastic sheets and insulation was built on the inside of the existing building. This gave us the opportunity to remove the existing brickwork between the arches without affecting the activities of the existing building. Whilst it was a nervous time taking one brick out at a time, our excitement was two-fold: a) the infill brick arches were made to come out one day and were not fixed into the retained brickwork; and b) we uncovered 4 stone pillars built behind the external brickwork. These individual pillars were in very good condition and will be in-keeping with the existing church pillars after some cleaning and repair. After removing the old, temporary brickwork, built in 1937, we started to lay an insulated concrete floor in July.

Crittall windows were fitted into oak frames in August/September. Our focus then was the fitting out of the inside. This comprised of the first fix electrics and plumbing with a timber boarded ceiling. The cladding of the roof trusses started to take shape. We also carefully removed the old oak vestry screen from the existing building and reused it to form the new vestry in the extension. The advantage to this move is we will see more daylight in the worship area on the South side which is not usually seen. Our work and fundraising will continue into 2024 when this part of our improvement to St. Andrew's will be complete.

St Andrew's Tots and Tiny Tots Groups – Liz Barker / Joy Tiffin

On Wednesday mornings the Tots group meet, and our church space is full of little ones with their families, toys, noise and lots of fun. We have a weekly attendance of 30 to 40 children with lots more on our register. We continue to run a fun programme of activities with sensory trays, playdough, crafts and different toys out each week to fit a theme which is then drawn together by the story time and songs. Our themes this year have included Creation, Stories Jesus told, Our Senses and Our lives. We celebrated the King's coronation making crowns and role playing with the golden carriage and throne from the jubilee in 2022. During the summer half term, we went back outside to make the most of the fresh air, sunshine, space and freedom for more messy and physical activities and finished off with a lovely party. We also celebrated the festivals with sessions for Mother's Day, Easter, Harvest and Christmas and had a fun morning with our teddy bears for Children in Need. Our group donated food to add to our church harvest appeal for the foodbank and money for Children in Need. We have a large team of helpers and we work well together to cover the different tasks each week. We have fun and really enjoy the interaction with the children and their grownups. We offer any support we can. Be it a listening ear, gentle advice and reassurance, practical support and prayer.

Tiny Tots has been absorbed into Tots for now. This is working well, with the group of parents and babies growing and forming relationships with each other, and with us, in a space that is marked out for them. We are looking forward to being able to do this in the extension where parents will have the option of having their own space to chat while still feeling a part of the bigger group.

Towards the end of the year Liz met up with Mandy Smith from the diocese and we are looking forward to getting involved in a new York Toddler Group network which will be a meeting of those involved in groups across York. We have offered to host a meeting in the new year.

Tots is a place where we welcome our local community into our church, talk about God, tell stories from the bible, offer to pray for each other and share our faith, even if in a very gentle way. It's a pleasure and a privilege to play our part in "knowing Jesus and making him known in our community" through this group.

52nd York Brownies & 18th York Guides

Sally Jackson, Brownie & Guide Leader

2023 saw the start of renewed confidence in our members and the certainty to make plans. We maintained a steady membership for both units.

Jointly we marked Mother's Day, Easter, and Christmas with activities. We celebrated the Kings Coronation with a party. We visited Ten Pin Bowling, Flamingo Land, and a special cinema screening of Wish. We held a sleepover at Snowball Plantation and the Brownies enjoyed Encanto-Themed activities and the Guides engaged in a cookout lunch, escape room challenge, stencilling and decopatch crafts.

The Brownies gained their Jobs Badge looking at Dream Jobs, the skills needed and interviews. They did their First Aid Stage 3 making emergency kits & learning signs, symptoms, and treatments. They completed their aviation badge, exploring space, making teddy bear parachutes and planes. They cooked samores on their own mini barbecues, made hampers for the York foodbank and had a stall at the parish gala.

The Guides worked on their communications badge, looking at media messages, adapting scripts, creating art boards and designer drawings. Later in the year they became architects and created model buildings. They also devised a Newcastle Monopoly and held a Jelly Baby themed evening. During the summer they enjoyed tin can pancakes, tetra pack sausages and sponge pudding beetle. They also made egg parachutes, marble runs and completed a bear on camera wide game.

Youth & Children's Activities – James Simister

2023 was a full year for youth and children's activities with various changes throughout the year. Tom Walters began part time employment as a Youth & Children's Work Assistant in January 2023, initially to the end of July but ultimately this was extended to the end of December 2023. Tom's creative contribution in an employed capacity was greatly appreciated.

From January 2023, regular weekly groups that were running were: Monday Night Youth Group for younger youth, the Oasis Lunchtime Group in New Earswick Primary School, Kidz Klub for primary school aged children on Tuesdays, Tots on Wednesdays, the Wednesday drop-in group for year 12s, which ran until July 2023 (when we lost our leaders from the Belfrey because they all moved away) and the Youth Group for older youth on Thursdays. In January we also started a new youth drama group, which practised 2 or 3 times per month and then performed a drama within a Sunday morning church service every 4-6 weeks on average.

This group harnessed the dramatic skills of some of the young people as well as the experience and skills of the Rector, Ian, who led the group.

Regular church assemblies happened in Huntington Primary Academy with the 'Look into the Bible' Team leading KS1 assemblies and Ian Birkinshaw leading KS2 assemblies.

The Youth Brass Band stopped early in 2023 but soon afterwards Robbie & Sarah O'Brien re-established a Church Lads & Church Girls' Brigade Company, including music lessons, a band and a Martins group for children aged 5-10.

At Easter we got involved and took young people to a Unite event called Feaster, which was simply an Easter-themed Feast. Working with other York church youth leaders, we ran the first of a new termly youth worship night at Gateway Church in Acomb in June. The next of these was in October.

Between 17th April and 3rd June, I was granted six weeks of study leave during which I researched the question: "Are there identifiable factors that help young people stick with faith and church as they grow into adulthood?" The results of this then started to shape our thinking in this area.

In June we hosted a new American Youth Team from Biltmore Baptist Church for a week, taking them into schools and getting them involved in supporting our youth and children's groups. Early in July we took the Monday Night youth group to the Emmaus Centre at Wydale Hall for a weekend away, which we used as the Alpha Weekend Away as we were running youth alpha with that group at that time.

During the school summer break, for the 2nd year running, some leaders, young people and children were involved in the YCYH summer camps, which were once again great camps for young people and children. Alongside the Unite group of youth leaders we hosted Youthfest – a mini 'festival at home' for young people including fun, worship, social-action and a variety of activities, for the 3rd year running.

Through the autumn term the lads who had previously come to the Wednesday drop-in now came along to an occasional Friday lunch instead. The Older youth group on Thursday changed into a young adult small group, with all the regular members having turned 18. We welcomed new Year 7's into the Monday Night Youth Group where we initially ran a separate group for them. However, through the term we merged their group with the Year 8's to 11's group to form one group rather than two.

In early December the Unite youth leaders ran Christmasfest for the 2nd year running, which involved drama, social action and sharing the Christmas story in the city centre through multiple Nativity performances.

It was wonderful as a church to welcome New Earswick Key Stage 2 pupils and their parents, who filled St Andrew's for a carol service in mid-December as well as Huntington Primary Academy who we welcomed for two carol services in the week leading up to Christmas.