**St Andrew’s Annual Rector’s Report 2025**

It was Harold Wilson who is supposed to have said ‘A week is a long time in politics’ then it could be said that ‘A year seems like an eternity in the life of the church.’

So much has happened and is happening since our APCM last year. Minster Communities are rapidly coming upon us, a new Curate and concerns over the state of our church building are amongst some of the most important things that have happened.

However, I am always encouraged with seeing the little signs of hope and growth. There has been a steady trickle of new faces in our congregation. Connections with our local schools are increasing. The rejuvenation of our Sunday School, St Andrew’s Kidz, the continuing success of Little Friends and Messy Church. Our congregations are slowly growing in number, with both the 9am and 11am services seeing an average increase.

Our weekly pattern of morning and evening prayer and midweek communion see a faithful few who come and join in what I would call the ‘engine room’ of church life. Prayer should be at the heart of everything we do. All I can do is encourage you to join us and to pray for our village and benefice. Over the average week there are nine services which take place in the parish!

Recently we have seen our website updated which has been a huge improvement in our outward facing ministry and public profile. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Emma and Dave Adams along with assistance from Cam, our curate, in all the hard work they have put in. The site is still under construction and is constantly being modified.

I mentioned minster communities and I am thankful to John Cook and Jason Watkiss for representing St Andrew’s at all the meetings that have happened recently (I’m afraid to say that there are plenty more to come!). This will be one of the most significant changes in the life of the churches that this diocese will see in their lifetime. I have spoken about the fact we don’t know what our minster community will look like and how it will function because each one will depend on its own context. I would like to thank the wider PCC in engaging with the process.

I appreciate that these changes bring anxiety and concern, but I am confident, that with God’s help, we can face the future with confidence and, indeed, excitement. At the time of writing, we have just prepared our conversation prompts workbooks which will help focus our discussions going into the next stages of the process. Please remember that we are in this together with the help and guidance of God.

This past year has seen the arrival of our Curate, Cam Wiltshire-Plant. This has been a real joy and we have already benefited from Cam’s ministry in so many different ways.

Cam will be priested at the end of June and will be celebrating his first communion service at the benefice service on 29th June at Foston, where we will be welcoming Cam’s mum, who will be our preacher. This will be followed with a buffet lunch in The Bridge.

Our next stage is to start thinking about the state of the church building and the necessary fund raising that will need to happen. Unfortunately, all the churches in the benefice need work carried out of varying degrees, which means we all face challenging times in raising money.

Talking of fundraising, the events that have been held have been very successful, from meals at The Axe and Square, garden parties, beetle drives and quizzes. These have been supported and enjoyed by people from across our communities and have been a part of our outreach to the village.

Mentioning our buildings, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Geoff Kirk, Trev Ainge and Malcolm Payne, who have taken on responsibility for taking care of our properties and carrying out minor works.

We continue to face the challenge of paying our parish contribution, but if it wasn’t for the income from the Cornerstone hire, the rent of the flat and the beauty shop, things would look very different. However, I am encouraged to see that people continue to be generous and for that I am very grateful and thankful.

With safeguarding being a prominent topic recently in the news, it is important to remind everyone of their responsibility to take this matter seriously. If you have any role within the church community, such as being a PCC member or helping at Messy Church or Little Friends, please ensure that your training is current. If you are uncertain about your training status, please contact Dave or Jacqui McAughey, or myself for clarification.

The demands of benefice, deanery, and diocesan life are increasingly time-consuming and challenging. Currently, the deanery has three full-time incumbents for eight benefices, leading to increased responsibilities as area deans or assistant area deans. Additionally, my role on the Diocesan Advisory Committee involves advising on church building restorations and managing churchyards and memorials. Consequently, dedicating time to the benefice is becoming more difficult, and these challenges will likely grow as ordained ministry evolves within the diocese.

Finally, I want to thank all of you for what you do for the life of our church, in particular to Annie and Steve as Churchwardens. Your dedication and desire that our church community continues into the future inspires me as your Rector. I also want to thank our ministry team in supporting the services and other activities of the church, but above all I want to thank Claire in all that she does in supporting me and all the work she does behind the scenes. I pray for you every week and those prayers are being answered. All I ask in return is that you pray for me.

The Revd Richard Reakes

Rector