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Annual Reports 2025

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**This year the APCM is to be held on a Sunday – 18th May @ 10.30am**

Introduction to APCM booklet 2025

It’s that time of year when we gather as a church to review what has happened over the past twelve months and give thanks to God for all that He has done in our parish and benefice. But we also have one eye on the future and rededicate ourselves to His service.

I commend these reports to you and, as you read them, please pray for all those who give their times and talents for the sake of St Andrew’s. There are so many who do some amazing work for the sake of God’s Kingdom, but they don’t do it in their own strength but with the strength that God alone gives them, and they deserve our thanks and intercession.

As we enter into a new future with Minster Communities, let us build on the strengths we have to share with others whom we will be called to work alongside and be honest in the areas where we know we need help. As a church we can offer so much but let us remember the words of the hymn by Richard Gillard, ‘Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you; pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too’.

The Revd Richard Reakes

**Bellinger’s**

We continue to have a healthy attendance at practices and on Sunday Mornings. I have one new learner since the last APCM report who will be with us until the start of the next academic year but who has already come on amazingly. June 6th saw us participating in national ringing prior to the parish council's D-Day commemoration event on the paddock and we will be ringing for VE and VJ Days as they come up. I am delighted that a good number of our band have been out and about visiting other towers in the Diocese and attending the monthly Guild run learner’s practices.

The band now supports both the Countesthorpe and Willoughby 11am services regularly in line with the service schedule, and members are also to be found at Aylestone on occasion. I was delighted to be able to take a band over to Peatling Magna just before Christmas to support the locals there following the maintenance work that has enabled the bells to ring again.

Whilst the ringing room feels rather full-on occasion, there is always room for more! Ringing is a hobby that provides physical exercise, mental stimulation and a new social outlet. If you or anyone you know would like to see what's involved in learning to ring our lovely bells at Countesthorpe then get in contact!

John Cook, Tower Captain, St Andrews Countesthorpe.

**Pastoral Care**

*SERVICE OF LIGHT – “Love changes everything”*

Saturday 30th November 2024

In case anyone doesn’t know what, this service is, it’s for all those who have lost loved ones whether recently or some years ago.

Last years’ Service of Light was held on a Saturday afternoon breaking the tradition of having it on a Sunday. This proved to be popular with those attending and the people just kept coming….

in fact, 80+ people shared the afternoon with us. The church was decorated with flickering lights, hearts, sunflowers, a Garden of Remembrance, made by Jacky Sturrock, and so much more. Massive thanks go to all those who knitted and crocheted hearts and sunflowers and to the lady who made heart bunting….so many talented people not only in church but out in the community and beyond.

The service was made up of Times of Reflection, poems, hymns, video clips, prayers and opportunity to write the name of a loved one on a paper sunflower and lay it in the Garden of Remembrance. Following this everyone was encouraged to light a candle in remembrance and then to reflect on this act.

The Tree of Light was kindly donated once again by the Co-operative Funeral Care for which we were extremely grateful. The tree was full of lights and once the service had finished, everyone was encouraged to write the name of their loved one no longer with us, on a tag and hang it onto the tree. On leaving the church, everyone was invited to take a little bag containing a heart. As the service focused on love….the love for those who had died and the fact that God loved each one of those attending, they were encouraged to hang the heart up in their home or on their Christmas Tree as a reminder of how much they were loved.

This years’ service will be held on Saturday 22nd November at 3pm.

Blessings

**Gail Mackley, Associate Minister**

**Children’s Society**

Thank you to all who have collected coins in their home collection boxes this year. The total raised was £387. Also, there was a total of £368 in donations at the two Christingle services, making a grand total of £755. (Last year’s total £698.) This will be put to very good use by the Society, helping children and young people who are facing serious problems such as abuse and neglect. Over 60,000 children and young people have been helped in the last year!

If anyone would like any more information about the work of the Society, it can be found on their website (which also includes inspiring personal accounts by children who have been helped), or by phoning 0300 303 7000.

Thank you again to everyone who has supported the Society this year. If anyone would like a collection box, please let me know. Also, if anyone has a box which they are no longer using please could you return it to me – I know some people may now prefer to give via other methods, such as via the Society’s website.

Looking to the future: I have been the Box Coordinator for seven years now – I have not always been able to give as much attention to this role as I might have wished, as I have been Church treasurer at the same time, which I had not expected to be when I volunteered to be the Box Coordinator! If anyone would be willing to take on this role in my place, then please let me know. You can give it as much time as you wish in terms of additional fundraising efforts, but the basic role is to collect the boxes in once a year, count the contents and return the boxes to the box holders, and pay in the money to the bank. There are currently about 25 boxes in circulation, most held by Church members.

**Alison Dale**

**Church Flowers**

We hope the congregation appreciate the flowers in church every week. Volunteers renew the flowers every two weeks, sometimes a vase or arrangement, more at Easter. We have poppies for Remembrance weekend & artificial for the Christmas season.

Anyone is welcome to join or contribute money for the flowers for others to arrange.

**Diana Lee**

**Kids Group**

We have been overjoyed to see St Andrew's Kids begin this term, restarting St Andrew's historically strong Sunday children's provision. Seven children have been present in the sessions, with good numbers each week. There has generally been more children in church since the groups began, and it has enabled parents to enjoy worship safe in the knowledge that their children are getting excellent discipleship led by a wonderful team of volunteers.

We are now ready to welcome new worshippers with children to the church, knowing we can provide worship in which the whole family will enjoy and meet with God.

Thanks go to the fantastic team who have led the first few sessions brilliantly, they are creative, hard-working, and demonstrate Jesus' heart to call children to Himself.

**Rev'd Cam.**

**Little Friends**

Little Friends group runs every Thursday during term time 1-3 pm in the Bridge. It is an informal group for mums, dads, grandparents, carers, babies, and toddlers. We provide a light lunch (completely funded by the team and members on a voluntary basis) and space for families to come and ‘just be.’ We also have a weekly arts and craft activity, and a variety of age-appropriate toys to enjoy.

This small group is blossoming and friendships are developing. Mums and grandparents are becoming a great support for each other, and babies and toddlers are making friends…even going to each other’s birthday parties 😊

As a further support everyone is invited to join our ‘Little Friends Whatsapp Group’, where we can all share concerns and keep everyone updated. It is a real blessing to see God at work within this group. We always welcome volunteers so if anyone would like to join in with us, please let Gill Gillespie know. (Safeguarding training and DBS required)

**Jacqui, Gill and Jacky S**

**Churches in the Herald**

We are thankful that four pages contributed by the churches are still published in each issue of the Countesthorpe Herald - every two months.

Alison Dale, Edward Thomas and I act as the planning team for the Churches Pages. We would welcome the help of others. If you are interested, let us know. The Countesthorpe Herald is a lively newspaper and an asset to the community. It is good to be able to contribute to it and to have a space to preach the Gospel and advertise events.

**Eva Morris, Group Co-ordinator**

**Craft Group**

We are a bunch of ladies who enjoy crafting on a Tuesday afternoon 1.30pm-3.15pm meeting in the Bridge accept the first Tuesday in the month. This is when the Mother’s Union occupy the room. We are very friendly and always welcome newcomers. We support events to raise money for the Church funds with our crafts.

Marlyn

**Countesthorpe Community Garden at St Andrew’s**

Another year has passed in the garden, and we have welcomed Jenny to our team this year.

Work continues weekly – mainly weeding and sweeping! We continue to have visitors enjoying the peaceful safe space where children can run around the footpaths and search for the animal

statues.

We not only look after the Community Garden but also the planters and garden in the churchyard near the front door and the space alongside the ‘organ’ door. Weeding is always needed on the steps and the ramps, so we try and keep on top of this.

As usual we are there on a Wednesday morning where we work for about an hour, stop for coffee and cake (thank you Diana!!) and a chat and then do another hour before we tidy up and go home.

We hope everyone appreciates our efforts.

**Karen, Geoff, Diana, Ann & Jenny.**

**Friendship Teas**

2024 was another successful year for the ‘Monday Friendship Tea Group’. Along with our regular attendees, we have welcomed a few new faces.

There is always a good selection of scones and cakes (some home-made) along with plenty of Tea, Coffee and chatting.

There are seven helpers taking it in turns to produce the food each week. Most do not take out any expense, so we were able to donate £850.00 to the BRIDGE BUILDING FUND and expenses.

The year ended with a Christmas party, when helpers were presented with a gift.

Most who attend now would not know Aileen Heaton who recently died. Aileen was one of the original helpers, setting up the group in the Cornerstone after the weekday lunch group had to close.

**Diana Lee**

**Messy Church**

Our format has stayed the same during the last year. We meet at 4.00 (or thereabouts) on the third Saturday of the month in the church building for a creative time exploring the Scripture of the day. Around 5.00pm we all join together for a time of Celebration and thanks for all that God has done, followed by a meal in the Bridge.

Attendance has varied between 21 and 53 and we are delighted to have welcomed some new families through the year.

Since the last APCM we have:

Celebrated our wonderful world and thought about caring for our planet

Celebrated the Holy Spirit

Explored the stories of Jonah and Samson

Thought about Jesus as the Light of the World and how we can be lights in the world too

Looked at the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin

Celebrated our 11th birthday!

Our Christmas session was particularly well received and well attended, with lots of comments about the activities.

A HUGE thank you to our amazing team – we couldn’t do any of this without you. From those who prepare and lead activities, our wonderful chefs, our behind-the-scenes administrators to our setting up and clearing away helpers, you each bring you gifts, talents and time to Messy Church. You are all stars!

Sometimes we feel discouraged when attendance is low, but Jesus said that when two or three are gathered in his name, he is there. There are always more than two or three of us! We thank God for the blessings that Messy Church brings.

Something everyone can do to support the Messy Church Team is to pray – perhaps at the time the session is happening, or at any other time.

With thanks and blessings

**Helen and June**

**Sound and Projection Team**

Although the churchwarden team and others operate the sound and projection system for a variety of services and events there are still only three of us who project services onto the screen for the 11am service on a Sunday - Trevor Ainge, Christine Kay and myself. We would be so glad if more people joined us. It is an interesting task and brings with it the satisfaction of helping the congregation to worship.

You only need basic computer skills. We would show you how to use the software. Let us know if you are interested.

**Eva Morris, Group Co-ordinator**

**Mother’s Union**

Another successful year with the enrolment of Gaynor Ward-Sadly we lost a much-loved member of 60 years attendance with the death of Aileen Heaton. Also, the sad loss from the committee of Christine Claricoats-ably replaced with Wendy Cartwright.

We began the year with lunch at the Shires enjoyed by all. We followed on with a lively programme of speakers, including building links with our Methodist friends, hearing the work of their Deacon Sharon Dilley. Our highlight was the Rally in October with the Baldwin Boat Trust explaining their role. We had a good summer tea party in July with invited friends to join us. There are regular attendance and non-members at each meeting.

Our social involvement includes the away from home family holiday scheme, the Prem Baby Unit knitwear, gifts to the prison family visits, contacts with Women’s Aid, Refugee Aid and the Ukrainian Support. We also raise money for the work on the Bridge and other projects.

Over the year we make poesies for Mothering Sunday, plan services for lady day, Candlemass, World Day of Prayer and monetary support for Cam’s efforts to restore Youth work.

Now we launch into a new year of endeavour, and are glad w are still surviving and offering a friendly support with as wide undertaking as possible. Thanks to a dedicated committee.

**Joan Burn (Enrolling officer)**

**The Rainbow Shop (Christian Aid)**

The shop continues to be an important part of our community, and the dedicated team manage to sort and stock the shop with our good as new items. Donations to Christian Aid continue at a steady rate and this year we were able to send a total of £15,000 [our best year yet]. It is so good to support such an established, well trusted charity, giving aid and ongoing support in so many areas in the world, under the name of Christ.

There have been a few problems with staffing the shop, as inevitably our aging helpers have health problems to cope with, but there are some new people who are interested in helping who generally come from our local community. Juggling the rota of about 30 people with sometimes very short notice is quite a feat but there are helpers who step up at very short notice. A big thank you to everyone who helps and supports.

We currently have a vacancy for the role of secretary for the Rainbow shop. This involves taking an interest in the shop and its helpers and writing some notes during our Rainbow Shop meetings held 3-4 times a year. The meetings are open to any of the helpers, so we are a democratic and friendly group. If anyone is interested, please contact me.

The big news this year was in September we celebrated 40 years since the opening of the shop. We had a well-attended service with news from Christian Aid and interviews with Brian Davis and Jill Cramp, one of our original team. Then all shared a buffet and lovely cake provided by Yvonne. A happy day!

Over the 40 years there has been a change in demand for most of our fairtrade products and whole foods. Now these are generally easily available in most supermarkets, it seems the right time to stop stocking these items. We still want to promote fairtrade and will still use fairtrade in our beverages offered and in the church buildings. Please let me know if this will impact you.

We look forward to the start of next Christian Aid week with our spring fair on Saturday 10th May 10-1. As we no longer have enough workers to have an envelope collection in Countesthorpe, this is our way of making up for that. Bring your friends and neighbours as this is preferable to knocking on doors and better fun and sociable.

I do hope you manage to read this before our APCM as it is on 18th May, otherwise you will miss this happy event.

We are also hoping to have as many of our volunteers as possible to attend for some in house safeguarding training provided by the diocese. Presently trying to find a suitable Saturday.

Please keep donating good quality clothes and bric-à-brac, do keep dropping in to meet the many regulars we now have attending the shop and do keep praying for the shop and for the work of Christian Aid.

**Sally Bailey**

**Cherry Tree Residential Home Communion**

We started to go back into Cherry Tree’s in 2023, we go in on the first Friday of the months. We conduct a small service and communion in a small lounge, the numbers vary as it depends whether there’s any health issues or if they are awake. We usually have three or four and some are more talkative than others, although numbers don’t matter, we would like more, and we are always hopeful. The last two years we have had carol singing at Christmas which all seemed to enjoy. The staff are very friendly and helpful. We give thanks that we are now allowed in again, our love in Christ.

**Brenda, Richard & Gill**