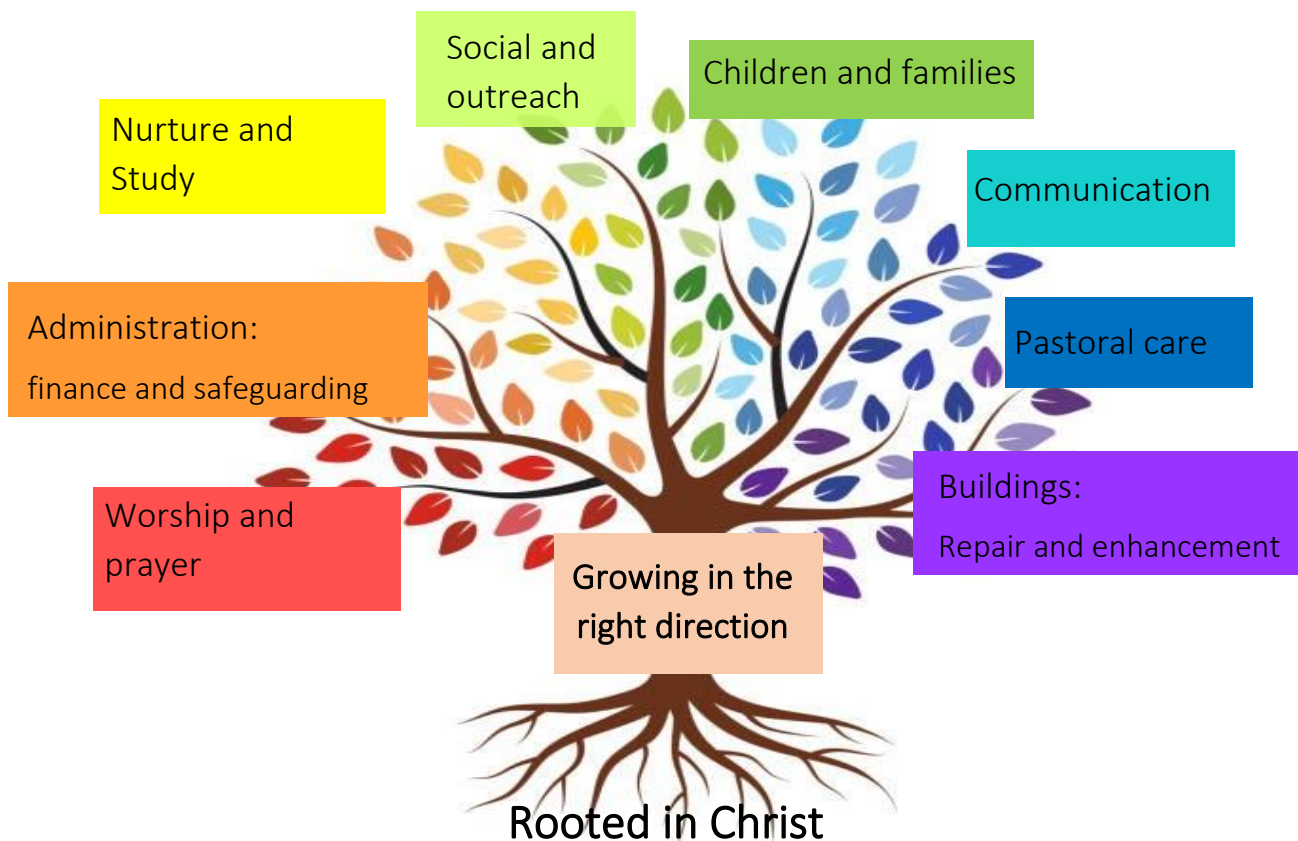


The Parish of St Bridget, West Kirby
with
Caldy, The Resurrection and All Saints

PARISH LIFE



OVERVIEW AND GROUP REPORTS

2024

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

During 2023 we have once again, had a wonderfully busy parish life in terms of both worship and social activities, ministry, and mission. I am indebted to the support of the ministry team as well as all who volunteer across the parish.

In our worship we have joyously celebrated Christian festivals and seen growing numbers at our main services in both churches. Amongst other services we also hosted the Mayor's Civic service, celebrated the coronation of King Charles III, and welcomed Bishop Mark Tanner to a service of All Together Worship. We have continued to enjoy the involvement of the school and there is always a positive atmosphere, both in the worship and over refreshments afterwards.

With the appointment of two part time Children and Families workers we have seen some very successful new initiatives which include a baby group, Toasty Tuesdays, a Summer Club, visits with the babies and toddlers to Caldy Manor Nursing home as well as repeating our popular Good Friday Activity morning and outdoor/indoor nativity service. We are delighted with the difference that the new Children and Families workers have made. During the year the number of requests for baptism has risen steadily and in June we also admitted 23 children to Holy Communion.

We continue to have excellent administrative support from our parish administrator as well as help in all sorts of ways from volunteers. The PCC has a wealth of skills, experience and wisdom and I often describe them as encouraging, supportive and courageous. At each PCC meeting we take one of the 'leaves' on our tree as a focus for discussion. During the year we have continued to develop smaller groups and teams so that each leaf is now represented. Our aim is that all our activity should be rooted in our mission to bring in God's Kingdom through living the gospel, rooted in Christ, and growing in the right direction.

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.

The churchyards are cared for by volunteers and paid gardeners as we continue to cherish and care for 'God's acre'.

Money is always a matter of interest and concern. Our parish treasurer has thankfully continued in the role and has once again enabled us to make wise and generous decisions. 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 we will receive the support we need. During 2023 we have financially supported 29 charities and projects, locally, nationally, and worldwide.

St Bridget's Centre continues to be a great blessing to the community. The Link café provides opportunities for the building and strengthening of friendships and community. We remain very grateful to all our volunteers and are delighted to welcome some new people in helping us keep this much valued resource.

We remain committed to running our churches in an eco-friendly way and cherishing God's earth and people. We continue to look 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 2023, 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.

Thank you to each and every one of you for making the church communities in our parish so encouraging, welcoming and inspiring and somewhere all may encounter the love of God.

Alex Williams Rector

CHURCHWARDEN'S REPORT

What do the churchwardens do? It's a question we're regularly asked. The churchwardens are appointed by the votes of the people on the Electoral Roll and, with the Rector, have ultimate responsibility for the church buildings and everything they contain and for the smooth running of the Parish. They have (in theory) a direct line to the bishop and must check any rowdiness in the churchyard during divine service! Importantly, the wardens have a duty of care to the Rector: though we fear we may have failed to stop her overworking (again)! Traditionally, one warden (Greg in our case) takes responsibility for the buildings and the other (Ann) for worship aspects. Greg has completed his fifth year and Ann her second as wardens. Throughout the year, our Rector has continued to work immensely hard and imaginatively so that we can join in worship that is thoughtful and sometimes challenging but never 'boring'. On a personal level, at the beginning of November 2023, the service of remembrance for those close to us, especially those who have died in the last two years, was deeply moving.

We are delighted that more children and their families attend services, in part due to our close connection with St Bridget's School. We hope that some youngsters will help as crucifers, so a lighter-weight processional cross has been made by a local craftsman and donated by a member of the congregation. We continue to try to involve people in all roles during services: sides people (aka welcomers), readers, intercessors, chalice ministers, and crucifers. We encourage anyone who can do so to take part in some way: we're particularly keen to develop the way we welcome people to our churches.

Over the last year, many of the services, including some weddings and funerals, have been successfully live-streamed and we are very grateful to Chris Tann for his work advising us on, and managing, our audiovisual systems. We are fortunate to have the benefit of his expertise and regular help. Greg is a regular 'live-streamer' when Chris is away.

In the year to come, we pray for growth: growth in the number and diversity of our congregations, growth in the numbers who are involved in all our activities, growth in our involvement in the local community, and, not least, growth in our faith. As churchwardens, we pray that God will continue to guide our Rector and those who assist her in her ministry and mission and that we and all the members of our churches will support them.

For information on the buildings and contents please also see 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 disposals during 2023 which require entry into the church log, but we have acquired a new wooden processional cross and new sound equipment.

Ann Holden and Gregory Buckridge

Parish Churchwardens



ADMINISTRATION

SAFEGUARDING REPORT.

How we live our lives within St Bridget's Church is integral to safeguarding and our Christian belief that we provide a welcome for all, value the dignity of every human being and do all that we can to protect each other. The PCC has approved, adopted and implemented the House of Bishops Safeguarding policies helping to promote a safer Church.

Safeguarding procedures are in place to deal promptly with any allegations or concerns. We undertake to promote and ensure that those in positions of trust and responsibility are trustworthy. We are compliant with Data protection policy including

recording/ filming/ photography of children and vulnerable adults. Relevant information is displayed throughout the Church buildings.

A parish handbook on safeguarding is available at the back of the Church for anyone to read and small pocket leaflets on safeguarding are also available. All parish officers and those in positions of trust and responsibility have completed their online learning with the Diocese of Chester ranging from Basic awareness to foundation and leadership safeguarding training The PCC at every meeting receive a progress report on safeguarding that they review and have the opportunity to ask any relevant questions.

Sue Shaw has worked tirelessly to collate the names of all the volunteers who work for the Church and ensure that the references are in place for them keeping all records up to date A special thanks to her for gently persuading all of those who needed to sign up and complete the online training and for keeping all of the relevant records.

There have been no reported safeguarding concerns during 2023 and I am confident that we would be “Green” on the Safeguarding Dashboard going forward into 2024.

Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility not just mine or the Rectors and if you have a concern please raise it; and even if you do not have a formal role within the Church please consider completing the Basic awareness on line training for safeguarding on the Diocesan website.

Rosemary Morgan

Parish Safeguarding Officer.

THE PARISH OFFICE

The Parish Office is the place to come if you want to book a room in St Bridget's Centre, leave donations for the Foodbank, make an enquiry about a wedding, arrange a funeral in church, reserve the church for a school rehearsal, find out when the Museum is open, want access to the kitchen before a social event, put your name down for a quiet day, order candles, read the meters, report a blocked toilet, ask when the church is open, find a family grave, give money for flowers, if you've lost a teddy bear at Toasty Tuesday, want to check how wide the Paschal candle is, buy a concert ticket ...

And always lots of phone calls – a couple of examples:

Exciting news: (name) ... is going to be knighted next month! It was announced in church this morning! Then another, follow up phone call: the news was misheard. The person concerned is going to be 90 next month.

A phone call from an association of northern universities: can we hire out your hall? We need a space where 60 people can sleep.

As parish administrator I deal with pretty much anything, really. **Paula Cobby**

FINANCE

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

We remain hugely grateful to John Smith the Parish Treasurer who has continued to guide us for another year. 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 very grateful.



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 Katinka, Rob and Lynne playing the organ for us at 10am services at St Bridget's and also Clive Grey playing frequently at 6.30pm. John Tennant, Stephen Claus and Katinka play at Caldy and Stephen has been very helpful in organising tuning and inspection of both organs. This has revealed the need for major work needed at St Bridget's in particular.

We are grateful for all who bring music alive for us in worship. Lynne and Rob have reflected on their time on the organ bench so far!

From Lynne:

I enjoy playing the church organ for the St Bridget's congregation during Sunday morning services and have continued to develop my hymn playing, including the choice of stops and use of pedals, as well as playing the correct number of verses most of the time!

One significant event this year was the smell of burning I noticed when using a particular stop which I casually mentioned to Alex. It was investigated and discovered that the ancient wiring inside the organ had become a hazard and there was a genuine risk of fire. Needless to say, essential emergency measures were put in place to make the organ safe but as highlighted the need for serious repair work if we are to have a fully functioning pipe organ to accompany our services in the long term.

It continues to be a privilege to be one of the team of organists at St Bridget's.

From Rob:

It is a privilege and a pleasure to play the organ at St. Bridget's. It is amazing to think that it was built in 1893 by Henry Willis & Sons and is still being used today. I like the fact that we play and sing a lot of different music at St. Bridget's. I enjoy playing the traditional hymns on Sundays and experimenting with the different sounds that the organ can make. It is also great fun playing with the Happiness Band for the 'All Together Worship' services and playing some more contemporary worship songs. It is wonderful to fill the Church with music!

The choirs

Katinka took over leading the choir in January 2023. She is working together with Alex to improve the standard of the choir by focusing on breathing, vowel sounds, pitch and dynamics. St. Bridget's with Caldy choir sing regularly at the 10am Sunday services and at several weddings during the year. The choir acquired three more members in the past year and the total number of choristers currently stands at twelve. We were sorry to see Caroline Loram step down.

In the past year Katinka and Alex have introduced some new repertoire including hymns, chants, descants, carols and anthems. The choir and Sing Aloud are now working towards making a more regular contribution to specific services with St Bridget's choir focussing on the first Sundays of the month. Special services have included the Christmas Carol Service and Easter Sunday. In the months leading up to Christmas both choirs worked really hard in extended choir practices to tackle the extensive Christmas programme. The choir also visited Caldy Manor Care Home to sing carols to the residents which was greatly appreciated. At Easter all the choirs and musicians joined together to provide a joyful celebration.

If anyone is interested in joining the choir, please speak to Katinka.

Katinka Mitchell

Sing Aloud

Our junior choir 'Sing Aloud' has 10 members, and their singing has developed well. They have been involved in leading two Sunday services, singing at weddings and also taking a significant part in service of All Together Worship and the celebration of Christmas. Sing Aloud is currently led by the Rector and Immi Longmore and they rehearse each week. We are hopeful that if we can have more adult help, we might work through more of the Voice for Life medal scheme but in the meantime, we continue to enjoy their contribution to worship and church life.

The music group.

Recently described as 'St Bridget's House Band', we are an informal all-age ensemble bound together by a love of music-making and a shared enthusiasm for exploring traditional and contemporary music from church traditions across the world. In addition to contributing to worship at St Bridget's we also 'moonlight' as The Happiness Band at various local events such as 'Praise in the Park' (hot & sticky) and carol singing outside Morrisons (wet & windy). More recently we were invited to be one of three bands playing at a Beatles Night at West Kirby Methodist Church. To say we enjoyed ourselves would possibly be the understatement of the century! We always have room for more singers and instrumentalists. We have a lot of fun and all ages and all abilities are welcome. If you think you might like to join us, please speak to either Andrew Gibb, Graham Crowder or myself.

Mary Railton-Crowder

Bell ringing

St Bridget's is extremely fortunate to have an active and enthusiastic band of ringers who practice every Tuesday evening and ring every Sunday morning for the 10am service, plus additional ringing as required for weddings, funerals and national events. When looking at the online database of notable ringing, St Bridget's featured on the first page of leading towers for quarter peals in 2023. A quarter peal is a special ringing performance lasting around 45 minutes and can be rung to celebrate

a specific event or occasion. 'Ring for the King' was one such event and 2 quarter peals were rung at St Bridget's to commemorate the coronation.

St Bridget's has 8 bells; 4 of which were cast in 1719, 1 was cast in 1854 and the remaining 3 were cast in 1889. The heaviest weighs 12 hundredweight or 1,367lbs or approximately 15,500 Cadbury Creme Eggs. As you might imagine, bells of this age need ongoing care and attention to keep them in good condition and the local ringers carry out regular maintenance to ensure they can continue to be rung for many years to come.

St Bridget's is a tower within the Wirral Branch of the Chester Guild of Church Bellringers and the Wirral Branch came 2nd in both of the Guild 8 and 10 Bell Striking competitions. Both bands included 3 St Bridget's ringers, and this demonstrates the skill and commitment within our tower. The team also enjoy ringing at other churches and during the summer there was a day trip into North Wales which included ringing at 2 towers, the obligatory pub lunch, and was then rounded off by an excellent social evening.

There is another tour to look forward to this summer and the band hope to continue making progress throughout 2024 with their ability to strike the bells well, plus expand their repertoire of methods (tunes) that they are able to ring.

Janet Jones

Flowers

Both our churches are fortunate to have people skilled and enthusiastic about flowers. We glorify and praise God's creation by decorating our church with flowers and plants throughout the year, except during Advent and Lent.

St Bridget's Flower Guild 2023

This is my last year as Chair of the Flower Guild and I should like to take this opportunity of thanking all the team for their help and support over the years. We held the AGM in January which was hosted by the Rector. It was felt that now was

an opportune time to ask members for any ideas and thoughts on how the Guild should continue and possibly make some changes towards being more sustainable in our flower arrangements. We are keen that people who have never arranged flowers may feel able to join us in this lovely activity.

Ever popular are requests for flowers on the memorial table and should you wish to remember a friend or a family member, please have a word with Paula Cobby. We are always open to new members and welcome any donation to the cost of flowers.

Jen Chester

Preparing for worship – the sacristans

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!



BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

See the trustees report for detail about St Bridget's church, Caldy church, St Bridget's Centre, Caldy hall and the parish tenanted property in Covertside.

We have a small team of volunteers who monitor the condition of the buildings, undertake repairs and make recommendations for any improvements or significant work required. The team have a wide range of skills. Most importantly though, dedication is required. This is best illustrated whenever we have to clean out all the gutters, hoppers, downpipes and drains. For some extraordinary reason, whenever we do this task, the weather is nearly always, wet or cold, sometimes both!

Greg Buckridge Churchwarden

Enhancement Group

Another busy year for the group, as we seek to improve our two church buildings and Caldys Hall. David Hind has joined us, bringing energy, experience, knowledge and contacts, helping us especially to make progress on Caldys's exterior lighting, the forthcoming Caldys broadband installation, and some work on Caldys Hall roof. Both church organs, particularly St Bridget's, have been inspected and found to need repair work; Caldys organ has been patched, and the PCC have agreed on a fundraising appeal for both organs – we have passed this to a separate new committee. The carpets and floor gratings at St Bridget's are in poor condition – the wardens fight trip hazards with sticky tape – so we are obtaining quotations for replacement carpets and seeking to rearrange parts of the gratings and cover the parts with holes in. Both churches have needed new microphones and we are grateful to Chris Tann for his advice and expertise. We are still working on plans for an extension adjoining St Bridget's north porch to accommodate a toilet. The Diocesan Advisory Committee support our proposal and submitted our outline plan to the heritage societies who are statutory consultees; they have asked for further architectural drawings and photos, to go to a second round of consultation. All three buildings that we care for are listed, and in conservation areas, so most of the work we do requires detailed applications for permission and must meet high standards.

Priscilla Bench-Capon, Enhancement Group Secretary

St Bridget's churchyard

We had 9 working parties last year, mainly clearing away ivy, brambles and some Alexander weed in the lower churchyard. The turn out varied at each working party, but everybody enjoyed the company and a good chat over refreshments.

Unfortunately, Mike Brady had to retire as our church gardener after 24 years because of health reasons, and we thank him for his work over the years. We now have Greasby Gardens cutting the grassed areas and trimming bushes. Our summer planting was enjoyed by all who walked through the churchyard. Our thanks

to Bill and Doreen Smith for all their work in the churchyard and in organising the working parties.

A small group have turned their attention to developing the lower churchyard with a focus on developing wildflower meadows and increasing biodiversity. They have marked out pathways to enable safer access for those wanting to visit and intend to use bark chippings to create these. There are plans to increase community involvement and a grant has been applied for to create a mindfulness walk and some seating sympathetic to the environment.

Caldy grounds

The grounds at Caldly are now maintained by Greasby Gardens and members of the congregation are supplying seasonal planting.



PASTORAL CARE

Our Pastoral Team has members from both Caldly Church and St Bridget's congregations. Our Church Family is a vibrant mix of ages and abilities, some of us may have no family, or no family nearby, we may be housebound or very active, but at some point, we all need a little support whatever our circumstances. The pastoral team relies on the intricate community of our congregation to alert us if a need arises. We seek to act with sensitivity, and we take advice from the safeguarding and Ministry team. The team's remit is to offer support in friendship: we do not have the ability or training to act as counsellors nor carers. The team helps to arrange visits from clergy, house Communions, lifts to church, help with watching church services on the many digital platforms, reaching out to church family members whom we haven't seen for a little while, alerting clergy to people who are poorly at home or who are in hospital and in certain circumstances we arrange lifts to appointments. Really, we try to do anything you would do for a friend, and we do this in the name of God. We also have a process of gentle contact over the year following a bereavement. We have had positive feedback from these contacts

especially from those bereaved who aren't our church family, we find this an important and essential part of our outreach. In our last contact (after one year), we send a pack with helpful information about our churches, official publications with contact details for various organisations that may be needed at some point and some prayer cards. If you know of someone who would benefit from anything our team has to offer or you yourself would welcome a call or have a request, please contact one of our team members.

Sally Cashen, on behalf of The Pastoral Team



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Our mission is to enable children and their families to experience something of the love of God and learn about what it means to live a Christian life. We try to provide opportunities for this from birth to secondary school and beyond. In 2023 the PCC took the decision to invest in this aspect of parish life by appointing two part time children's workers, funded initially from a legacy and now from parish reserves.

St Bridget's Baby Group

The St Bridget's Baby Group is for parents and their babies, up to the age of one. The group meets in the Church Centre every Friday morning in term time and aims to provide a friendly, supportive and nurturing environment. There are sensory toys and activities for the babies together with singing plus drinks and biscuits for the parents. Every term the group also visits Caldby Manor Care Home where the babies and their parents meet, chat, and sing with the residents.

Toasty Tuesdays

Toasty Tuesdays is a new initiative every Tuesday afternoon in term time from 3.30pm to 4.40pm. Children, mainly from St Bridget's Primary School, together with their parents, grandparents or carers, visit the church straight after school to eat toast, drink juice and play a variety of games which are set up inside the church. Members of the ministry team are available to chat. With a fantastic team of

volunteers Toasty Tuesday has become very popular with the children and their grown ups and now often has over 125 visitors every week. Our hope is that they have a great time and feel at home within a church building as well as providing opportunities for conversation!

Supper Sundays

Supper Sundays was developed in 2023 with the plan that it will take place once per term in the Church Centre on a Sunday afternoons. It's for families and children (from 0-11 years old) and is an opportunity for them to meet, play, eat supper and have a gentle introduction to exploring faith through bible stories and conversation.

St Bridget's Summer Club

We ran our first Summer Activity club in August 2023 on the school field for three mornings. The children enjoyed a wide range of activities including a 'smoothie - making-bike', sports, bird feeder making, crafts, music and lots of snacks. It was such a success that we plan to offer a whole week in 2024. Huge thanks to our many volunteers.

Storytelling

The Storytelling service for children takes place most Sundays in term time unless there is All Together Worship in church. Children gather with their families in church before the start of the 10 am service and then are led over to the church centre. The Storytelling service is informal, fun, short and uses a variety of interesting ways to explore the gospel message, from Lego to games. We usually have children aged from 3 to 12, and we sometimes split children for a short time, older from younger, to explore the message according to their abilities. We return to church at Communion time, to re-join parents and carers. There are always cakes made for each session, which the children seem to like!

Carolyn Tallents and Andrew Gibb Children and Families workers

Caldy toddler group and STiCK

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.

St Bridget's school

During 2023 we have continued to strengthen the relationships with our church school. The children regularly take part and lead services in church celebrating major festivals. The school council (children from each year group) have planned and led services on two occasions during 2023 and are learning about liturgy and crafting worship. They often focus on the refreshments 😊 and we have been delighted that the church family has provided refreshments for children and parents in St Bridget's centre after several school services.

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

- ✘ All Together Worship includes children and families from our school.
- ✘ Experience Easter saw every child visit the church to learn about the events of Holy Week. We are very grateful to the church members who gave up their time to lead these activities.
- ✘ Members of the ministry team lead Collective Worship every week with the children
- ✘ Reverend Ray lead 'here to listen' in school.
- ✘ School Council children went up the Church Tower to celebrate Ascension Day.
- ✘ 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 another successful "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



NURTURE AND STUDY

The Nurture and Study Group started meeting in September 2023 to explore what we can read/learn/discuss, which nurtures our faith and our relationship with God, They have looked at how we nurture our spiritual growth and appropriate study resources for the congregations.

The group has met 3 times in the last 12 months, it was agreed that there is some overlap with the Worship and Prayer group, so we are keeping them informed of the work we are proposing. The Group includes clergy and laity and they have been looking at:

- How we meet the needs of people who know or understand very little about
- God/Church/Faith **and** those who probably know and understand an awful lot.
- what courses or resources we could offer to help nurture faith
- how we provide specific teaching on topics such as why we do what we do in the Church of England, working out who God is calling us to be, and how we discover our Spiritual gifts.
- prayer, spiritual practises, mindfulness, and other areas that might help the congregation and the wider community to grow in their faith.
- how we offer one to one exploration of faith, for those on the margins of church or who have contact through life events eg funerals, baptisms and weddings.

- Bible study –building on the regular Bible study group hosted by Joy Alcock
- recommending reading material for folk who like to do stuff on their own and in their own time.

During the year there have been three mornings which enabled time to reflect and be quiet with God. These have been popular and we hope to offer similar sessions during 2024 We are very grateful to Anne and Ray Samuels for leading two of these mornings and Andrew Rudd who led a session on the Enneagram.

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.

We also have 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

SOCIAL AND OUTREACH



The social team

During 2023 a new team was formed with the aim of providing social opportunities to both the church family and the wider community. We were able to offer a quiz in Caldy Hall, a Beetle Drive, a Ceilidh and also support other social events such as the Summer Fair. We have become aware of the need for some new ideas, more volunteers and also better communication systems so that we reach people outside the regular church congregations.

We are very fortunate to have many regular social activities described below.

St. Bridget's Centre

St Bridget's Centre is a wonderful resource for the community. During 2023 the Centre continued to be well used, with most days and evenings fully booked. Weekends often have availability for hirers.

The main work undertaken was the installation of LED lighting which is now complete and working well.

Here's just a flavour of what goes on: Pilates ❖ Yoga ❖ 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 centre also hosts our **Fair-Trade** stall selling food and craft items The stall is open in the Centre after the 10am service on Sundays and at the Link Coffee morning on Wednesdays. Our thanks to Margaret Smith who runs the stall and all who support Fair Trade by their purchases. They make a real difference to the lives of many in the developing world.

The Centre is reliant on the cooperation of all concerned with its life and particular thanks are due to Paula Cobby for all her work dealing with bookings and enquiries, and Jamie Cook the caretaker, who both often go the extra mile to help us and others

Richard Williams Centre Manager

The Link Café 2023

Another successful year for our Wednesday morning Café in St Bridget's Centre. On a typical morning we start quietly, which gives the staff and a few early regulars the chance to chat, then traffic builds up, as the Steels' Sales Stall, Peggy Dodd's Knit and Natter Circle and Margaret Smith's Fair Trade stall arrive, and peaks when

children from St Bridget's School join the waiting staff, drawing in their families and making us very busy with toast orders. Numerous church meetings take place in the Café, as well as informal catching up on news and getting to know people. For many of us, it is a treat to have food and drink that someone else has prepared. We provide a play mat and toys for pre-school children, and Sally Cashen and others regularly bake lovely cakes for us to sell. Chris Andrew does a brilliant job managing the rota of volunteers, with help from Clare Ledingham, who has been great at bringing in new people. We are grateful to all these people and all the volunteer staff. Thanks to donations for the refreshments, we were able to pass £4763 surplus to the PCC over the year, 13% up on the previous year. £1800 of this came from the card machine. Early in the year we tried longer opening hours as part of the Warm Spaces initiative, but found there was little demand, so we now close at 12 noon, which seems to suit most people.

Priscilla Bench-Capon

Knit and Natter, Craft and Chat.

We continue to enjoy each other's company at the meeting of the Link each Wednesday morning. It's always fun to know what different projects we are working on. There are now fewer knitters but we still continue with the project of 'Twiddle Muffs'. These go out to residential homes; some to homes where our knitters are now resident. It is good for them to still feel part of the group! We still knit small squares which we sew together to form lap blankets to keep residents warm. Meanwhile some who come along bring embroidery and crochet projects. However, the main interest is still to natter and chat.

We warmly welcome you and invite you to come and join us.

Peggy Dodd

Handbell Ringers

Conducted by Janet Belton, the nine members of the Handbell Ringers continue to 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. We are indebted to John Lindsay, a member of our group but also the Musical Director of the Post Sunlight Handbell Ringers, who has generously shared many of the arrangements he has done for Port Sunlight, further enlarging our repertoire. During the year, the Ringers played at Caldry 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 Organ appeal. We have bookings at Hoylake Cottage and again at Caldry Manor in June,

Sue Shaw

Earthfest

The annual People and Planet friendly festival, held on St Bridget's school field West Kirby returned in September 2023 and proved very popular. There was a wider range of stalls and a great atmosphere. We hope this will continue to grow and not only be an enjoyable event but also increase our awareness of the needs of our planet.

Summer Fair

The annual Summer Fair is a wonderful event bringing together the church and school community of St Bridget's. There are the traditional stalls selling cakes, jam, plants, books and much more, dancing and singing by youngsters as well as groups within the community and a splendid afternoon tea and refreshments provided. A wonderful gathering for all the community to enjoy.

Men in sheds

This idea began in Australia and has spread widely. The objective is to provide an opportunity for retired men or unemployed men to meet and share their skills and experience. The St. Bridget's "Shed" has recently celebrated its second anniversary. Over the past two years our membership has grown slowly but steadily. Our link to Wirral Public Health Department's "Connectup" organisation, led by Kieran Hatton, has helped to spread knowledge of our existence within the

West Kirby community. We have continued to meet monthly, on the third Wednesday in the Hilbre Room at St Bridget's Centre. We meet at 12 noon.

Normally meetings end about 1.30pm. Soup is provided and members are asked to bring their own sandwiches. We have welcomed a range of speakers with subjects ranging from Debt Counselling Services, planning proposals for Wirral, possible community use of the glebe land to an international Girl Guide Camp in Canada. Our first outing was to Birkenhead Priory. Plans are afoot to add Crown Green Bowling to our activities and to assess the possibility of walking, cycling and golf groups. Most of our increase in membership has been due to introduction by existing members. However, all are welcome to join us even if it is only for a "taster".

More information can be obtained from the Parish Office (625 2739)

Edward Edwards

Mothers' Union

Mothers' Union is a World Wide Christian organization and has members in many countries. You don't have to be a mother or female to be a member and everyone is welcome to come to our meetings. We meet once a month on the second Tuesday afternoon and aim to have one third faith, one third fun and one third fellowship at our meetings. During the last year we had speakers on Fair Trade /Trade Craft, Hearing/Assistance dogs, local planning applications and learnt about the history of smallpox. Made prayer dishes, held our Wave of Prayer in the Lady Chapel in church. Some members attended the Diocesan Festival in Handbridge, Chester, led by the Bishop of Chester. We had a bring and share lunch in June and had a meal

out in November. Although we don't usually meet in August last year we met in a committee member's apartment for afternoon tea to raise money for the Mothers' Union Appeal, 'Summer of Hope'. We are a friendly bunch so do come along and give us a try. **Carole Steel** Secretary

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

Churches Together in West Kirby (CTWK)

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.

During 2023 CTWK provided a visible presence at Christmas, singing carols in West Kirby, organised a prayer walk travelling to all the churches and booked a theatre company to perform the story of Corrie Ten Boom 'No Hiding Place' which was well supported. The chair of the group, Dirk Utterdijk stepped down and a new chairperson has been appointed for 2024.

COMMUNICATION

We have become increasingly aware that whilst huge effort is put in to planning and delivering a wide range of activities, we are not always very good at advertising them, or telling people about who we are and what we do. In response to this we are looking at how we can improve our communication both within the parish and further afield.

Website and social media

During 2023 Barry Darby continued to keep our website updated, supported by Sam Eastwood. We have also made use of A Church Near You, the Church of England's website for parishes to provide up to date information about services and regular events. We also have a Facebook page, Instagram and Twitter account. In 2024 we hope to launch a new website and extend our use of A Church Near You.

We are very grateful for all the work our volunteers have undertaken during 2023.

Parish Magazine 2023

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 2023 we published twelve monthly issues, normally each of 20 pages, both in print and online. Our Rector, the Rev'd Alex Williams, provided a rector's letter each month, and a number of other articles relating to parish activities. The Rev'd David Chester also gave us a letter each month. Paula Cobby, the Parish Administrator, provided the Diary, the record of baptisms, marriages and funerals,

and a monthly list of Bible readings, Carole Steel provided a Mothers' Union report and Syd Ford wrote a Caldys page. Thanks to all of them for supplying this core material in good time every month. We have also printed a variety of one-off articles. These contributions are welcome and add variety and interest. Thanks to all who have contributed. The advertising is now managed by John Smith and Paula Cobby. We have five pages of advertising, which roughly covers the printing costs.

Anne Waring continued to do the printing on the photocopier in the Parish office. Many thanks to Anne: this arrangement works smoothly and produces a good quality product. Each month the magazine is uploaded to the parish website and to A Church Near You. Barry Darby, our webmaster has now retired from this activity, so thanks to him for his work over the years. Thanks also to all our distributors, and to my wife Priscilla for her assistance.

Trevor Bench-Capon

Electronic weekly newsletter 2023

Each week on Fridays we circulate the parish newsletter by email, using the free Mailchimp service. Cathy Bryan set the account up for us in 2020, during Covid when the church was closed and our usual channels of communication were suspended. By the end of 2023, our circulation list had grown to 277, with 53 new subscribers during the year. Paula Cobby in the Parish Office produces the content in a printer-friendly version; I reformat it for Mailchimp and add hyperlinks, such as to the Order of Service and our

YouTube channel, for those who worship with us online. Usually it goes fairly smoothly, but occasionally we have had to send out stop-press corrections, and if I am away on a Friday, the best I can do is to circulate a short email with a link to the print version. People who are not online can still pick up a paper newsletter in church, and Paula organises home delivery for a few of our church family who have requested it.

A Church Near You

AChurchNearYou.com is the Church of England's official church finder tool, and it also offers free websites for churches and benefices. In recent years it has developed from a site offering basic location and contact details, and we are now able to advertise all our services and events, upload the newsletter, magazine, orders of service and other documents, and provide hyperlinks to join our services online and to donate online. It is easy to update and we do this each week. It complements the Parish website, which keeps more permanent content. Among its useful features is the large selection of tags which help people who are searching, such as Easter, Family Friendly, Gluten free Communion, Event held in a pub, Refreshments, Book of Common Prayer, Christmas Carols. At the time of writing, achurchnearyou.com/st-bridget-west-kirby had received 14,712 page views in the past year, and achurchnearyou.com/-all-saints-caldy 6,805.

Priscilla Bench-Capon ACNY editor

CLOSING REMARKS

There are many people who deserve thanks; not all are mentioned in this review although many have contributed to it.

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
and pray you feel at home with us and God.

*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