

# Church Activities report 2024

## Vicar's Introduction

One of the things that encouraged me when writing the Review of the Year for the official TAR report (Trustees Annual Review) was how much cross over there was between that and the section on the business carried out by the PCC (Parochial Church Council) over the same period.

The PCC help both set the vision of the church and work out the nuts and bolts of how to make it happen. It is rather like when the Apostles chose 7 Deacons in the books of Acts to help with the practical work of the church, they looked for people filled with this Holy Spirit.

One of the things I will miss most as Bryan steps down from his lengthy service as Churchwarden is the fact that as well as being very efficient with the administration and bringing a good dose of common sense to the practicalities of caring for our buildings he was always open to the Holy Spirit and not scared to respond courageously when he felt God prompting him to do so. He has brought great spiritual wisdom to that role and as we look for two new people to step up as Churchwardens I shall be looking for similar qualities.

Similarly when reading through this very encouraging church activities report, they are not the things we do in addition to the mission of our church – they ARE the mission of our church. The wonderful volunteers who make all this happen are not just serving St Oswald's or the Fulford community they are serving God by generously sharing their time, skills and energy.

Every smile, every welcome, every action is an overflow of the love of God and an expression of His care for His creation.

I am very fond of quoting from James chapter 2 and especially verse 18...

"But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.'

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds."

Through these activities we are able to live out our mission statement, "To reach out to the Community and beyond with the Christian Gospel, witnessing to God's love through word and action, from an accessible and welcoming centre for prayer, worship, teaching and fellowship."

And put into action our strap line to Act Justly, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly with God.

So to each and every volunteer may I say on behalf of us all may I say a massive Thank You!

I hope you enjoy reading these reports and are as encouraged as I am at all that God is doing amongst us.

Yours in Christ, Sue Sheriff

Rev Canon, Vicar of St Oswald's Church and Fulford Parish

## **Ministry Team**

Jackie Tuvey-Smith continued her training to be a Licensed Lay Minister which included a placement with St Hilda's Tang Hall from the beginning of the year up until Easter. This was a wonderful opportunity for her, although she was greatly missed at St Oswald's. She was officially licensed later in the year at a Celebration of Lay Ministries Service at York Minster on Saturday 14 September, the result of a lot of study and practical training experience.

In February Ben Kybett took up the role of Authorised Lay Minister, leading services at St Oswald's. He was commissioned during one of our Sunday morning services and will hopefully be officially recognised at the Celebration of Lay Ministries Service in 2025 at York Minster.

Rev Gill Smith-Riley stepped back from up-front ministry and preached her final sermon at St Oswald's after a 60 year preaching ministry. She had been Ordained as Deacon in 1994, Priest in 1995, and before that had served as a Parish Worker. Alongside her late husband Rev Ray Smith she served in both the East End of London and Chile. Gill arrived in Fulford during the Covid pandemic and later in 2024 Rev Gill and her husband John moved to Scarborough. We were very grateful for their ministry amongst us.

Throughout 2024 we anticipated that Rev Canon Sue Sheriff would be completing her term as Interim Minister and leaving St Oswald's at the end of the year. A lot of effort and energy was put into preparing to find her replacement. The PCC followed the procedure set out in 'Making Great Appointments in the Church' which included circulating a questionnaire amongst the congregation to see how we saw ourselves. We also gathered comments from our partners in the community and from people attending the Fulford Show on August bank holiday. The comments were both humbling and encouraging as we were consistently told how highly the church was regarded in the community. This led to us putting together an exciting, and very honest, parish profile, which in turn led the Archdeacon to question whether Sue should consider staying at St Oswald's. After a lot of thought, prayer and discussion it was decided at the end of the year that this was all part of God's plan and she was offered and accepted the post of Incumbent of the parish of Fulford in December.

Leading of services at St Oswald's was supported by a number of stipendary, self-supporting and retired clergy to cover clergy holidays and time away with the Revitalise initiative. The wisdom and variety they brought was greatly appreciated

## **Housegroups**

We started the year by considering by reflecting on the talks from a Sunday morning. This gave the opportunity to think more deeply about the scriptures and Rev Sue or Rev Gill's interpretation of them.

During Lent we followed the Come and See course. Unfortunately, we were not able to follow our usual pattern of meeting at lunchtime for homemade soup before the study, so instead we studied the material in our normal Housegroups. The course was devised by the Diocese of Exeter especially for Lent and was equally suitable for enquirers and those well established in their faith.

After Easter we looked at Book 8 of the Pilgrim Course on Church and Kingdom. This material is produced by the Church of England and like Come and See included video materials to support the Bible study and accompanying booklet.

In September we started studying the Acts of the Apostles, learning about the early church and the spread of the Gospel, a study which will continue into the New Year. For this study we followed the questions set in the Serendipity Bible, a Bible designed for small groups.

All the materials we study in Housegroups can be adapted to suit the depth of Christian experience of the group members. Each group is a safe environment to study together, to pray together and to support each other as we grow in faith.

## **Jackie Tuvey-Smith**

### **Mission to Seafarers**

Saint Oswald's church nominated charity by the congregation.

The Mission to Seafarers provides help and support to the 1.89 million crewman and women who face danger every day to keep our global economy afloat.

We continue to support the charity for the next year by our share giving. We have a Sea Sunday service each year in July "Sea Sunday". This is followed by a cake stall raising £106:15 donations this year

The Mission to Seafarers (MtS) information board at the back of church is regularly updated.

MtS monthly newsletter and Flying Angels magazine which provides up to date news can be accessed on the notice board and via the church Web site.

Thank you for your continued support.

## **Wendy Henwood**

### **Pebbles**

Pebbles continues to run on a Sunday morning, with children aged 2 to 6 going out to the church hall and into the Pebbles room together, during the main service. The children are always very excited to go up to the front of church at the end of the service once we return, in order to proudly show their craft off, and tell everyone what they have been learning about - and they are definitely gaining confidence speaking into the microphone in order to do this!!

In the group, we follow the 'Roots' material online and cover the theme and readings from the main Church service. We start with a Bible story and often complete a craft related to the story we have learnt about - lots of sticking and drawing, before having free play with the toys in the Pebbles room if we have time at the end. We have been known to have a song or two to dance along to as well before going back into the Church before the end of the service.

We have a really wonderful group of children who are enthusiastic and keen to engage in the activities. We have a lot of fun each week, with relationships building between the children, and relationships with the leaders/helpers too which is lovely to see.

We have sadly struggled to cover some weeks due to limited numbers of helpers/leaders available, and are relying on a few people to cover a busy rota - often needing to hold Pebbles in the Hall alongside Explorers. We are very pleased to welcome back Evelyn Courcier to the team who will help once a month. We are hopeful that others will come forward to help with this important part of the Church's ministry after the recent plea from Rev Sue.

## **Ali Tuvey-Smith, Jill McCreedy and Elizabeth Brown**

### **Explorers**

We have a group of fantastic children who are our young Explorers. We follow the lectionary and relay Bible messages with a craft and games that relate to the readings. We encourage discussion and fun. There are a wide variety of craft materials kept in the hall for the sessions.

The children delight in coming in to church to say what they have been doing. It is a joy and a privilege to be with them in the hall during the Sunday service. There are friendships developing and it is wonderful to hear the children's discussions.

We have a brilliant team of helpers and leaders but we have been stretched and as a result have had to reduce the number of sessions to the first and third Sunday of the month. We would very much welcome anyone who feels that they would like to get involved to come and join us. Have a chat with Rev Sue, Richard and Lynne Burrows or Kathryn Wells.

## **Kathryn Wells**

### **Wild and Muddy Forest church at St Oswald's Church**

Wild and Muddy Forest church has continued to grow and flourish in the muddy outdoors, and we look forward to seeing each other at our meetings in the church garden area whatever the weather. We have gained and lost some families and then new families come along often by word of mouth. Now we have 28 children on the books who bring their grown-ups to the 1 ½ hour session on the last Saturday of the month.

We have 11 amazing church helpers who are great at encouraging and talking to our forest church families and we all have fun making and creating in the great outdoors. Most participants are still from the community which we are thrilled about. We have been out in all weathers and used the big tarpaulin in rain which has worked well

as a shelter along with a gazebo over the tool area. Although we have had more gales this year forest church sessions have been unaffected by these thankfully.

We remade our scarecrow and gave him straw stuffing so the plastic bags would not degrade and add into the soil below it. We have continued to make things from recycled products, our bird feeders from tin cans being a good example. We have sown seeds and bulbs and watched them grow and flower, although the slugs ate a lot! This year we grew onions, garlic, runner beans, tomatoes and potatoes, made soup from our harvest, made nettle fertilizer- a very popular stirring activity, watered everything, another very popular activity, made a new willow den ( third time lucky!), made a butterfly house and bee baths, peeled sticks and made staffs, wands, fishing rods and many other amazing creations and just loved being outside and enjoying and appreciating nature and each other. We had another very successful wreath making session before Christmas and had a very successful decorating wreath session at the Christmas fair attended by many families from Forest church and Tots. The children have recently been involved in making some flower arrangements using a grid system (not oasis), using colourful twigs and foliage and daffodils to decorate the church with. We hope this will become a monthly activity.

We are redoing some of our church garden borders and the children will be involved in planting perennials to give more colour to the borders, but these plants have also been chosen for attracting bees and butterflies too to increase the biodiversity of our gardens. They have also been chosen for cutting flowers and foliage for church flower decoration, so we use less hot house flowers and try to decrease our carbon footprint in this area.

We always start our sessions with singing, and mindfulness and noticing what has changed around us. This engaging with nature powerfully reminds us of a loving Creator God whose love never fails. We end our sessions with hot chocolate and vegan cookies each week before our sing song with clocky sticks and appreciating the children's creations and end with a Celtic blessing or two.

### **Pippa Ensor**

Deep peace of the flowing air to you  
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you  
Deep peace of the shining stars to you  
Deep peace of the gentle night to you  
Moon and stars pour their healing light  
on you  
Deep peace of Christ  
Of Christ, the light of the World to you  
Deep peace of Christ to you.

### **St Oswald's Tots Group**

St Oswald's tots group runs every Thursday morning in term-time in the church hall. It attracts children from birth to school and their parents and carers. The group is free and open to everyone. We have areas for babies, reading, toy kitchen activities, ball pool, a ride on train, a slide and building bricks and transport. We have a weekly craft table and refreshments for children and adults. This year we introduced a monthly sensory play session at the craft table. We have a story, singing and worship session at the end. We use the Jump In material developed by the Salvationist and the Diocese of Worcester's Little Seeds as the basis for our story and craft alongside This material is rooted in the bible. In 2024 we covered, amongst other things, shapes, weather, springtime and how do you feel? We have an end of term party each term. The summer party was held in the church grounds and included a visit from the ice cream van! Father Christmas, one of his elves and Rudolph visited the Christmas party (we are very grateful to two of our church members!!). This is a lovely group to be part of. We have an amazing group of volunteers who run it each week. Parents and carers comment on how friendly and welcoming a group it is and how much they appreciate it. The children are delightful and clearly enjoy coming each week.

### **Sue Baughan**

## **Time Out**

We have enjoyed many happy Time Out Thursday afternoons during 2024. Our guests this year have come from the Ouseview, Fulford and Broadway Lodge care homes as well as from the local Fulford community. The new ramp at the back of the church hall has greatly improved our access arrangements.

Highlights of 2024 have been the school choirs and the dementia friendly Christmas carol service held in December in partnership with Bronte House. We were very privileged during the year to have children singing for us from the York Steiner School, St. Oswald's CE Primary School and Fishergate Primary School. The strawberry tea was held slightly earlier in June this year and remained another favourite. Steve Cassidy also played and sang for Time Out in November which everyone very much enjoyed.

The Time Out team includes a great mix of talents from singing, playing instruments and giving humorous readings to wheelchair pushing, baking and serving afternoon teas. We are always on the look out for new helpers and also suggestions for entertainment for the Time out afternoons. We are so grateful to all the musicians who give up their time to come and entertain the guests and us at Time Out.

**Angela McClean**

## **Tuesday café**

This is my second year running the St Oswald's Community Café on Tuesday mornings.

Our aim is to provide a community space for anyone wanting conversation, company, quiet space, hot drinks and cakes. Our customers are friends who we love to see each week, young and old, old and new.

This year we have introduced old fashioned embroidered table cloths and kept the fresh flowers to make our customers feel very welcome. We have grown in numbers but our commitment to the community is the most important thing we do. To add to this our local Sainsburys on Fulford Road is supporting our food share table by having a box in store for their customers to contribute when they can. In turn some of their customers are now attending the café.

The Tuesday café would not be possible without the wonderful volunteers who come each week to serve, support and talk to our customers. Lending an ear for those who are on their own and/or lonely is so important and they help make the welcoming atmosphere. Thank you to Jackie, Evelyn, Wendy, Louise, Sheila, David and very new volunteer Milly for keeping me going and your commitment to the Tuesday Community Café.

**Carolyn Blain**

## **Wednesday Café**

It must be said that without the support of Carolyn who does the weekly/monthly shopping and the wonderful team of registered volunteer bakers there would be no café at St. Oswald's.

The team of bakers consists of 6 regular bakers and a couple of others who step in to support at odd times. The bakers are all registered with York City Council and bake, at home, on a monthly basis ensuring that their products are clearly labelled and stored in the café freezer for the beginning of each month. They produce a wide variety of scones, cakes, biscuits and pastries which are always well received. Thanks to Terina, the bakers are paid a nominal sum each month. If anyone would like to join this team, then please chat to one of the café team.

The week to week staffing of the Wednesday café is done by a regular team of 5/6 people. Although we do not open until 10 am we make a point of having a coffee at 9.30. This gives us the opportunity to update calendars, talk through any new training or just simply have fun. We have become firm friends and look forward to meeting not only on a Wednesday but socially as well.

We also have a team of regular customers who stay behind to help us clear away. Wiping and folding tables, bringing in advertising banners and generally returning the hall back to normal ready for



Thursday activities. This great team of often around 4 people help to ensure a clean, tidy hall and enable us all to get home for lunch.

Wednesday café has become a vibrant meeting of a wide variety of people both from the village and surrounding area. It is a place where customers come to socialise with friends or make new ones. Customers range from the very young to those of a more mature age. It is common for all our tables to be occupied in both rooms of the church hall. Throughout the year we have regularly taken over £100 per session. Not bad when each item is still only £1.

Once a month the health walkers meet at the café at around 10am, go off on an hours gentle walk somewhere local and then gather for coffee and cakes for the last hour of the Wednesday café. The church Wednesday morning service has supported us from the beginning and we are delighted to welcome them. Alice Hawken, Local Area Co-Ordinator from the York City Council is in attendance weekly. She offers a wide range of advice and support for those who need it. It is usual that she has made prior arrangements to meet with people but is always readily available. Fulford Parish Council also have a regular slot where they are available to answer residents queries along with Ward Surgery consultations.. OCAY and Heath Watch also make use of the Café. Toni our local PCSO tries to call in on a regular basis. She has a bubbly personality and mixes well with customers. She also supports our Warm Space events and usually supplies some activities for children.

It really is a café for the Community and we are proud to be part of a very happy team.

The Wednesday friends – Barbara, Trevor, Frances, Anne, Christine, Louis, Anne, Barbara, Ian.

Thanks to all.

## **Barbara King**

### **Good Place, Warm Space**

Good Place, Warm Space has been a successful event running for one day in the school holidays. Regular café goers and family's attend to see friends, play together, have help from the food share table to get them over the holidays, keep warm and make new friends. It is a very relaxed atmosphere with games for the children (and adults!), lively chat, hot drinks, cakes and a 'pay as you can' system.

Thank you to all the helpers who come along and make the mornings good fun and worthwhile.

We've had visits from Sarah at Belles Bikes and our local area co-ordinator from CYC Alice Hawken to whom we are very grateful.

Thank you also to CYC for the grants which help us provide this service to our community.

## **Carolyn Blain**

### **The Use of the Church Hall**

It is still important to note that lockdown jolted our hall hire – both commercial use and church-based. Although we were able to restart in the autumn of 2022 many of our former hall hirers had found venues elsewhere and we needed to start afresh but cautiously and at a reduced hall hire charge. By 2023 we were ready to restart most church-based activities including the Village Café held on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings; and expanded the number of regular and occasional hall hirers. Thus, the time of our AGM in 2023, we had a fairly full use of the hall and this continues today.

As to income from commercial hall hire -at the end of 2021 it was £1,500, at the end of the 2023 calendar year it had risen to £6,507 at the end of 2024 calendar year to £9,178.50 (with an additional £300 or so to be paid in arrears). This is a such a good amount considering our low rate of hire (£15/hour); and though there are discussions afoot about raising the rate no decision has yet been taken.

It is helpful to review the use of the church hall both commercial hire and church-based (free let) activities:

1. Monday mornings are usually the time when our cleaner is in the church hall and therefore the hall is not hired out.

2. Monday afternoons used for TABLE TENNIS session organised by Keith and Jean Hood.
3. Monday evening is ZUMBA with Sam Harrison for 1 hour. She live-streams her session for those unable to attend in person and is grateful for the WI-FI facility we have in the church hall.
4. On Tuesday morning is the TUESDAY CAFÉ from 10am to noon which, from September 2023 is led by Carolyn Blain and her team. Recently, a care home has brought residents in as a treat; and occasionally there is visit by a community liaison officer or community police. Once a month, the Church Magazine team use the church hall during café hours to compile the parish magazine. Our BABY CAFÉ for young babies and their parents/carers is now a play area for young children as well.
5. Tuesday afternoon and evening. Occasionally there is church-based activity on Tuesday afternoons and the PCC meets every other month in the evenings. The Local History Society sometimes have a meeting on Tuesday evening.
6. On Wednesday morning is the WEDNESDAY CAFÉ from 10am to noon led by Barbara King and her team of helpers. Many groups drop into this café, as do the Community Police and the Local Councillors.
7. Starting in October 2023, there has been a WARM SPACE CAFÉ during school term breaks organised by Carolyn Blain and Victoria Burle. Sometimes this is held on Tuesdays, Wednesday and/or Thursday mornings and attracts many children and youths not able to come during school terms.
8. Wednesday early afternoon is an AFTER-SCHOOL KARATE session with Simon Flint for about an hour; followed in the evening by a 2-hour session run by YORK SHOTOKAN KARATE by Michael Dean and Keith Gullan.
9. Thursday morning is reserved for our ST OSWALD'S TOTS drop in which is very popular with young children, parents and carers and features snacks, lots of toys, a story and songs.
10. Thursday afternoon has a new FULFORD ART CLUB session (organised by Louise Wheatley) which is open to all those who dabble in art – they meet two or three times a month usually 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays. The leaves the last Thursday of the Month for our own TIME OUT FOR SENIORS, another very popular church initiative.
11. On Thursday evenings the GARRISON GUIDES, led by Charli Goodfellow, meet for one and a half hours.
12. In March 2024 a new Friday mornings session started for young children called RYTHYM TIME organised by Victoria Ranner which runs during school terms. On the occasional half-term breaks there might be a session of CHILDREN'S CRAFTS, run by Anthea Stock or SEWING SESSIONS led by Holly Davies (Thread and Press). Both of these occasional sessions also take place on different days of the week depending on availability.
13. Friday afternoons are still available for regular use and there is a possibility that there can be Dementia Support sessions, organised by one of the local organisations.
14. Friday evenings has an early session with GARRISON BEAVER SCOUTS led by Derick Mollans and Gemma Stevens and this is followed by a late evening session of IAIDO MARTIAL ARTS run by Ashley Hardwick. It is very difficult to hire out Friday evenings and these are very good sources of income and which meet the needs of other groups in the community.
15. On Saturday there is a variety of different use. Once a month is the LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY holds morning 10am to noon and there are occasionally longer session for a Conference. From September 2024, the PITUTARY SUPPORT GROUP started to use our hall for their occasional meetings and participants come from miles away just to reconnect with others. This is organised by Dr Dominika Butler, *Postdoctoral Research Associate, Department of Biology* at the University of York. Other Saturday mornings are used for fund-raising events (for example ST LEONARD'S HOSPICE COFFEE MORNING) and craft and sewing sessions; and sometimes A MUSIC RECITAL.
16. In December 2024, the YORK MYSTERY PLAYS used our church hall for a rehearsal on a Tuesday night and for both matinee and evening performances. A truly memorable occasions.
17. CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAY PARTIES take place on Saturday mornings and afternoons and on Sunday afternoons. We have a safe venue which is large enough for an indoor medium-sized bouncy castle or space for soft play and running around. Our church-based, very popular, MUDDY CHURCH meets on the last Saturday of the month and though they are outside for 99% of the time, they do have access to the church hall.
18. Very occasionally, the church hall is hired out on a Saturday evening for a FAMILY PARTY OR WINE-TASTING (no alcohol can be sold); and there are also occasional DANCE PRACTICE SESSIONS OR MUSIC REHEARSALS. We hope in the future however, to have occasional church-based activities for example a QUIZ NIGHT.
19. On Sunday, we have our children's groups which meet in both the Pebbles Room and the Main Hall for and then there is the regular AFTER CHURCH REFRESHMENTS. Although there might be a CHILD'S BIRTHDAY PARTY in the afternoon, apart from this there are only occasional bookings such as the LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY CHRISTMAS SOCIAL and CHRISTENING PARTIES.

From the above, I think it can be seen that we have a wide variety of activities that take place in our church hall that serve various parts of our community from the very young to the elderly. I WANT TO THANK ALL OUR HALL HIRERS for their prompt payments and responsible attitudes and their concern for their group and the church hall

itself. THANK YOU also to all those who organise and help run our CHURCH-BASED ACTIVITIES. BUT equally import to thank is our Treasurer who deserves our heart-felt gratitude for her skill in sorting out the payments which come by BACs, cash, cheque and card.

Finally, although our Mission Statement has changed, our hall use reflects *“reaching out to the community and beyond with the Christian gospel, witnessing to god’s love thorough word and action, from an accessible and welcoming centre for prayer, worship, teaching and fellowship.*

**Louise Wheatley Church Hall Bookings Secretary**