



## Activities Report for 2023

## **ALPHA**

*Revd Will Pearson Gee*

We ran three Alpha courses in 2023: one in Farsi and two others.

The Farsi course was well attended by our Persian asylum-seekers and the 'Holy Spirit Day' was run by an Iranian pastor who came up from London. Several of the men were subsequently baptised and confirmed. It was a huge success leading many into a relationship with Jesus.

Later in the year we ran two courses in the Michaelmas term, one on a Friday and one on a Sunday afternoon. Both attracted good numbers and people came to faith and relationships deepened.

The Sunday course ended up running into 2024. Alpha continues to work well for BPC and the availability of the excellent videos makes running courses very straightforward.

## **BELLRINGERS**

*Andrew Spencer*

We have continued our arrangements ringing the bells for services on a rota by sharing our bellringers with Maids Moreton and Stowe. We have also rung the bells for many weddings during the year along with a number of University graduation and matriculation ceremonies.

In May we rang the bells for the coronation civic service and then followed up with a quarter peal later. Three of our local ringers rang in the quarter with other Oxford diocese ringers helping us. Several of our ringers contributed to ringing at other churches to support a call to have the bells rung everywhere in the diocese for the coronation.

Our training of new ringers has been effective. We now have 3 new members, and they are making a real contribution to our service ringing, and we hope they can help keep it going in the future.

### **BITTERNES AFLOAT**

*Will Trevitt*

Bitternes Afloat is a Christian Sailing Cruise for 11–18-year-olds, run every Easter on the Norfolk Broads.

We take young people primarily from our partner churches, of which Buckingham Parish Church is one. Each day of the week we aim to encounter God through morning bible study and evening activities and to learn how to sail on the waterways of the Broads.

In 2023, we took 8 young people from Buckingham and the surrounding area.

The entire week we looked at Christmas, doing this at Easter allowed us to strip out the commercialism and focus on the central story and message, which naturally led to discussing the whole gospel. We took

a section of the Christmas story each day and looked at what it tells us of God's intentions and what we should do in response.

We also ran our young adults cruise and having covered Christmas at Easter we decided to look at the Easter story in July.

### **BPC KIDS & FAMILIES**

*Lucia Pearson-Gee*

We have seen a steady increase of children attending the 11am family service which provides four separate teaching groups:

**Bubbles-** age 0-3 held in the Tower room and is mainly parent led with an overseer. There is an average of 5 children each week, peaking in October with 9 attending.

**Splash-** ages 3-5, the first half of the year saw an average of 6 children which has since increased to 10 coming each week and is very boy heavy.

**Streams-**school Year group 1,2,3, has had a steady increase to 10-12 children each week with 60%girls/ 40%boys.

**Wave-**school Year group 4,5,6 Average weekly attendance is 12-14 children. Peaking at 17 kids on the back of a Lighthouse promotion.

**Oceans**-At the 6pm we run a group for School Years 3-6 with an average of 6 girls attending each week. Occasionally we have one or two boys but it's rare.

**Energise/Lighthouse** Energise continued weekly on Wednesdays at 3.30-5.15pm until September when we had a rethink of how to continue in a more spiritual way so we re-branded and launched "Lighthouse". This adapted ministry provided more structured weekly crafts with a theme/interactive talk and worship followed by a two-course free meal seeing an average of 35 Children and 18-20 parents each week.

**Light Party** – on 31<sup>st</sup> October, we had over 75 kids and their parents/carers come to enjoy a fun-filled evening of dress-up, activities, crafts, worship and delicious food.

For **Easter Cracked**, Buckingham Primary School and George Greenville came in with 92, Year 6, kids to understand more about the Easter story.

**Christmas Unwrapped** – we had five of the Buckingham primary schools bring their Year 4's to learn about the meaning of Christmas, 248 kids came.

### **BPC YOUTH & STUDENTS**

***Sam Graham***

The Youth ministry had a great year in 2023 as we looked to fulfil our vision of encouraging young people to **Know** God, **Love** God and **Live for** God.

The **Students Connect Group** has been re-launched as of October 2023 with a group of students who have begun to attend BPC. Between October and December this group grew to 8 students and looks to share food, scripture and prayer together.

**The Way** provides the youth provision for the 9am and 6pm services for those in school years 7-13. The groups follow a curriculum called “Grow Students” that provides teaching series for 51 weeks of the year. We have made the change to follow separate teaching to the services which aim to provide young people with teaching that is relevant and specific to their needs in today’s world.

The number of young people at the 9am services has grown as well as seeing a new young people join the 6pm service as well.

**Youth Hub** has now completed its first full year in its current format. As well as bible studies and prayer evening, we have also hosted themed activity evenings that have attracted new young people to join the group.

**The Youth Café** has had a successful 2023 seeing up to 45 young people regularly come in to hang out. We have seen the number of young people not only stay but increase and therefore the conversations about faith and Jesus grow. In the summer of 2023, we had multiple leaders pull out from helping at Youth Café.

However, from October 2023, Project Street Life has taken over the running of Youth Café and seen further growth. BPC still is involved in the project.

**Schools' work** had some progress in 2023. We have committed to pray for the schools for the year while creating a strategy for school engagement. While partnering with Project Street Life, we have begun regular detached work after school where we have met lots of young people. In these spaces we have asked the young people what they would like to see the church offer the secondary schools.

**DTI** (Dreaming the Impossible) is a youth Festival. In 2023 we took a group of young people to DTI for the second time. This year we took 50% more young people than 2022. The young people encountered God by his Holy Spirit and the six days away saw great growth in our relationships. They came back hungry to know more about God and who he is.

**Youth Nights** has been a great follow up to DTI as all the young people who went to the festival attended. Youth Nights continued a Christian teaching focus in 2023 with worship, teaching and responses as well as the big activities. Youth Nights saw 30 young people sign up, while some were not Christian but attended the whole week. At the end of the week, we hosted an evangelistic event at Coffee#1 including a silent disco. This event saw all the young people bring

a non-Christian friend, who heard the gospel for the first time.

## **CHURCH CHOIR**

*Robert Tucker*

We are a highly motivated chorister team, dedicated to supporting worship. The choir trains to a high level; instilling valuable musical and life skills. Both long-serving and young choristers give an extraordinary level of commitment and continue to flourish as a result, particularly the children. We are enriched by new choristers joining us again this year. We recently signed up for the RSCM's new digital Voice for Life study programme.

We give thanks for Gill and Ester's sterling contribution on their retirement, and for the leadership provided by Emmeline, our Head Chorister, who will stand down in preparation for her A-levels.

The choir celebrated the coronation of Charles III, singing a new work commissioned by the RSCM. Choir events also build our fellowship together: the choir dinner, a bowling trip, the choir tuck shop, and the occasional MacDonald's breakfast!

## **CHURCH FLOWERS**

*Susan Mileham*

There's the Flower Team of around 18 active members and then there's the one-woman wonder! This lady makes every meal table a delight with fresh flowers for Community Lunch, Harvest Festival, the Marriage Course and many other events. She also takes her turn on the rotas for chancel and dais arrangements and then fills any gaps that occur. We are greatly blessed by Ann Simmon's generosity.

The rest of the team continue to create lovely displays with fresh flowers and foliage throughout the year, increasingly experimenting with containers and materials. Our local charity shops are fruitful hunting grounds!

A number of people have had to step back as health and family matters have limited their availability.

## **CHURCH OFFICE**

*Jan Ballantyne*

The office team – Anne Exelby, Ibbey Graham, Ray Mitchell and Gill Stopps have continued to give generously of their time and skills to ensure that we meet the increasing administrative demands which support the growing church community and the vision for Buckingham. My grateful thanks to this wonderful team.

## **CONNECT GROUPS**

*Mandy Hagon*

Connect Groups have continued to thrive with 20 groups running.

The structure of support for leaders and groups is a shared responsibility between Keith and Mandy Hagon, Jo Wigley and Heidi Buchan. Keith and Mandy facilitate and train leaders, providing termly study materials. Jo deals with placing people into groups, identifying new leaders and care responsibilities whilst Heidi looks after the administration. Our joint responsibility is to ensure that leaders and groups are trained, equipped and well supported.

Connect Groups play an important role in church life. They are the basis of pastoral care, discipleship and growth, nurturing and prayer.

We aim to start new groups each year, to cater for those joining the church or completing Alpha courses.

In October a very successful church-wide leaders and potential leaders' event was held, bringing all BPC leaders together for a time of refreshment, growth and teaching.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Connect Group leaders for their dedication and commitment in this vital ministry.

## **CREATED CREATIVE**

*Emma Elias*

Created Creative is a Christian creativity charity working in partnership with BPC.

2023 has been an encouraging year. We have been involved with:

- Training a new church in Oxfordshire, who now run their own monthly creativity sessions for their local congregation and community.
- A trip to the Middle East, where we ran a two-day healing through creativity retreat for local people.
- A trip to Romania to visit a ministry that reaches out to families struggling with cancer. Two of our team went, taking creativity materials, running sessions, and training their team.
- Monthly online creativity sessions for people in the UK and overseas. A session includes worship, sharing of scripture, creative starting points, creativity time, feedback, and prayer time.

Created Creative thanks BPC for their prayers and support of this ministry.

**GREEK, HEBREW & LATIN**    *+Andrew Shergold & Steve  
Watkins  
Greek Group*

**Greek Group**

We now have:

- Two Advanced Greek Groups
- An Intermediate Greek Group
- A Beginners' Greek Group

All meetings are now conducted via Zoom; to maintain personal contact, we run two 'symposia' during the year, the first in February in Hilary Term and the second in November in Michaelmas term.

We also arrange a Conference every year, usually in May at High Leigh in Hertfordshire.

There are 9 students in the two advanced groups, and we meet on Monday evenings in two sessions from 6:00pm – 8:15pm. This format works very well, and it enables students to take the lessons remotely; this is especially useful as we now have students from England, Wales and Scotland. Last year one Advanced Group studied Galatians and the other Group studied 1 Peter.

The Beginners' (4 students) and Intermediate Groups (7 students) are engaged in learning the language.

## **Hebrew Group**

At present there is one Beginners' group on Thursday from 5:00pm – 6:00pm meeting over Zoom.

For learning Hebrew, we use 'The First Hebrew Primer' by Simon, Resnikoff and Motzkin.

It is hoped to start an Advanced Hebrew group soon studying Isaiah 61; this will meet every two weeks meeting on Friday afternoon.

The academic year is divided into three terms:

Hilary                      January – March

Trinity                     April –July

Michaelmas              September – December

## **Latin Group**

We meet via zoom on Friday afternoons from 4:00pm – 6:00pm; at the present we are not meeting but will resume towards the end of April.

The group reads through two of the following in a session:

- 'Unseens' – selected short passages from various Latin Authors
- Latin Prose Composition by North & Hillard
- Vergil or Ovid, or a part of the Vulgate

In the past the Advanced group have read through Vergil Aeneid Books II, III, IV and V, Ovid Metamorphoses Book XIV and some poems from Catullus. We will resume with Tobit from the Vulgate

### **MISSION & OUTREACH**

***Keith Croxton***

Mission and Outreach is a subgroup of the PCC, mandated to discern and respond to the spiritual and social needs in the community: reaching out to share God's love and compassion with others as well as supporting the wider mission of the church.

It oversees the following:

- The Centre
- Distribution of the Tithes supporting our Mission Partners
- Bradford Link
- Men's Ministry
- Buckingham Food Bank
- Tuesday Lunch
- Saturday Morning Coffee Service
- Mission to the Elderly
- Alpha
- Minibus
- Parish Weekends

The Centre seeks to provide a sacred place in the heart of the town where the love of Jesus can be experienced, and activities take place providing support to the community. The following Church groups have used The Centre during 2023:

- Coffee and Company
- Tea and Chat
- Food Bank
- Alpha Courses
- Youth Cafe
- Sew Lovely
- Greek/Hebrew symposiums
- 9 am congregational lunches
- CAP

In addition, a variety of community groups, who are serving the community, use The Centre, the full list is on The Centre web site.

### **CAP Life Skills**

***Brian Hubbard***

Sadly, during 2023 we were unable to attract sufficient interest in CAP Life Skills to make a worthwhile group. Therefore, the church has decided to discontinue links with the Christians Against Poverty charity. Our thanks go to all those who've supported the project.

### **Community Lunch**

***Sheila Handley***

The Community Lunch is going very well. Our weekly numbers are now between 77 and 80, having lost most of our refugee friends.

We have welcomed new helpers and soup makers, but we are always glad to add more to our number. We continue to have a regular arrangement to collect

Aldi's surplus fruit and veg, Lidl frozen surplus and Sainsbury's surplus bakery goods. Some is used for the lunch and the rest is given away to the diners.

Donations continue to be healthy, covering costs and allowing surplus to be used for kitchen equipment and other related needs, such as supporting the minibus.

Christmas lunch was enjoyed by 104, plus the 20 helpers, with the U3A music ensemble leading the community singing. The tea trolley has been a welcome addition to the team!! Thank you again to everyone for your continued support.

### **Men's Ministry**

*Andrew Gibson*

This last year the Men's Ministry has been in need of inspiration and redirection; as a result, it has not been as active as usual. We were limited to a few Men's Curry nights and a successful Breakfast when posies were assembled for Mothering Sunday.

We do need to inject new life into Men's Ministry, so we are open to suggestions and ideas as well as new, young and enthusiastic men to help give it a fresh look and direction.

I will be delighted to hear from any of you who want to step forward.

## **Women's Fellowship**

*Nicky Bereit*

I have created a number of regular events with the Book clubs (Afternoon and Evening) run by Flo and Ibbby. These have had a regular if somewhat small attendance between 3 and 10 people.

The walks have been some of the most popular activities, with us visiting Stowe and Evenley Woods near Brackley. They usually get about 10 walkers and then approx. 15 - 20, who join us in the cafe afterwards.

Our first Beetle Drive saw about 15 people join us and it was very well run by Lara. We had a thoroughly enjoyable summer cycle ride led by Glynnis, which 3 of us attended.

Debbie's Discussion dinners have continued to be popular and a fantastic way to explore how Christianity can be applied in our everyday lives.

Before Christmas we ran an 'introduction to Bridge' course lead by Margot which lasted about 5 weeks and brought a range of people together.

I always welcome new ideas if people are happy to help lead.

## **PRAYER & PRAISE**

*Paul Wallace*

Prayer and Praise takes place on the first Monday of each month, to worship, to give thanks, and to pray for the needs of the ministries within Buckingham Parish Church and of the World.

Two monthly leaflets are prepared, outlining the prayer needs of the Church and of the Mission and Outreach Group, which is responsible for looking after our wider mission and pastoral activities. It now includes our linked church St. John's Great Horton. Copies are also on the Church website and in church as a guide for prayer during the month.

Prayer and Praise is a relaxed informal time where we worship God and pray. We are a committed group of intercessors, and we would love others to join us. There is also a group which meets every Friday evening on Zoom, for half an hour only, to pray specifically for the services taking place on the following Sunday. As ever we would welcome others to join us.

## **PRAYER MINISTRY**

*Revd Chris Murray*

The team is a little smaller than it was, at 20, 14 ladies and 4 gentlemen. One member, at least, has dropped out temporarily, for family reasons.

We also have 5 people who have expressed interest, who will be slotted into the rota with more

experienced members, for 'on the job training,' after some initial teaching.

My emphasis in conversations and correspondence has been on the importance of our trying to listen for God's directing, and to allow him to work, without too many words from us! After all, 'The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power.' (1Cor 2:4 and 4:20)

The Sunday prayer ministry is being made use of more, including after the 11 am service, for which we do still need more prayer ministers.

It is a real blessing that Will has introduced opportunities for people to pray for one another during the 6 pm service, as all of us are called to 'pray for one another.' (James 5:16)

Healing through prayer was one of the main factors in people coming to Faith in the first 3 or 4 centuries of the church, as in Acts, and continues to be in China and other countries today.

Thank you for your prayers for us. Please continue to pray for more of the Holy Spirit's healing power, for the team to be living close to Jesus, and for more of our brothers and sisters to feel and respond to God's call to this precious ministry, especially our brothers.

## **SERVICE ASSISTANTS**

*Gerry Causer*

(Sides People, Chalice Assistants, Servers, and Service Wardens)

This team primarily operates for the 9am service, but much of the background work – providing the supplies used for the other Communion services is also dealt with by this team.

During 2023, one significant thing did not change - the way Communion is distributed. After multiple changes in the preceding two years necessitated by Covid, we have settled into a method that seems sensible and workable, even if not totally compliant with C of E regs!

What has changed is that we now include a Service Warden at the 9am service to provide an oversight and to help everything run smoothly, ensuring everyone and everything is in place before the service, and anything unexpected during the service is dealt with. The nature of this role requires someone with a good working knowledge of the church. As it happens these people are from the pool of servers.

Fortunately, during the year five new chalice assistants, and four new sides people have come forward, although two other sides people have now stepped down. The size of the congregation at 9am has continued to grow and I see new faces from time

to time. If you are new, I do hope the team have made you welcome.

If you would like an easy way to get to know more people in the congregation – the Welcomer / Sides Person role is a straightforward easy way of doing so. Please do not wait to be asked!

There are currently 28 people in the Service Assistants team. The average attendance at the 9am service is 84. If you consider the choir, hospitality, prayer ministry and flower arrangers, then you can see a very high level of participation by the congregation in our service.

## **SERVICES**

*Revd Will Pearson Gee*

### **9am Service**

The 9am traditional service enjoyed an unexpected boost due to a large number of asylum-seekers worshipping with us. The congregation welcomed them warmly and they soon became a huge help across many of BPC's ministries. We purchased equipment so that they could listen to the sermons translated into Farsi and we handed out the readings in Farsi.

The 9am Planning Team continued to meet and planned a variety of healing services as well as occasional 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday Celtic services that make great use of lay leaders. All services were live streamed to a high standard and enjoyed by many from the

comfort of their homes. We continued to offer communion by intinction.

The occasional shared lunches have been well attended. Over the summer holidays we planned a bespoke sermon series and included discussion periods and lunches after the services which were well received.

In summary the 9am has grown and thrived throughout the year and remains a life-giving congregation that welcomes all who appreciate traditional liturgy, great music and inspiring teaching.

### **11am Service**

The 11am has experienced steady growth and has become a far more diverse congregation. The 11am follows a set pattern of children's groups on all Sundays except the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, when there is an 'All Together Service'. This now follows a tried and tested pattern with two talks – one all-age and then while the children do a craft activity – another aimed at the adults. Attendance has grown showing that this is a popular service. Holy Communion is celebrated on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday. The band is well resourced, and all services were live streamed to a high standard.

### **6pm Service**

The 6pm service has grown back to its pre-pandemic size. Holy Communion continues to be celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday. The longer talks and extended

worship are as popular as ever and we seek to 'lean in' to the Holy Spirit more and more as people get used to prayer ministry. The worship band continued to improve and has learned many new songs.

All services were live streamed to a high standard and the quality of production has increased. There was a healthy online participation, which has dwindled as more and more have returned to physical worship. The YouTube recordings are well viewed as people catch-up on the teaching.

### **10am Midweek Service**

The 10am Wednesday service is now larger than it was pre-pandemic. The Chancel remains a beautiful setting which has attracted new worshippers. The early start of the 9am has meant that this service is a good alternative. The services are usually led by the retired clergy who love the service and the fellowship amongst the congregation is strong. On the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday refreshments are served after the service.

### **SUNDAY OPERATIONS**

*Andrew Gibson*

I supervise the rotas for Sunday Services and manage a few myself, to ensure the smooth running of services. There are a lot of people working behind the scenes and most operations at BPC are now managed within Church Suite.

## **WORSHIP & PRODUCTION**

*Ali Burt*

We welcomed 9 new individuals onto the teams throughout the year, providing an opportunity to train new people, build up our youth as they serve, and be part of the congregation every once in a while.

We continued to invest in the livestream and video technology with additional discrete cameras that have increased our versatility and opened better paths for streaming external events such as weddings and funerals.

We also invested in an electronic drum kit, which has greatly simplified set ups, and improved the sound for our musical worship by cutting down on unhelpful loud sounds.

The livestream continues to be a success as we stream almost every single church service. In 2023 we had over 20,000 views on the BPC YouTube Page.

All that we have achieved throughout 2023 would not have been possible without the hard work and dedicated service of Mark Chapman and Mike Roskell.