

# Annual Report 2021



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## Alpha

During lockdown we ran Alpha online but, in Autumn 2021, it was good to be able to offer the course in-person again. We teamed up with 4 churches for the launch evening and a former curate, Jonny Dade, came back to speak. The course then launched with 3 groups being led by members of St Giles and Broadmead Community Church. This 'partnership approach' was a real blessing and brought us closer together as 2 churches.

Around 30 people came faithfully, week by week, and it was a joy to see several people praying a prayer of commitment on the Holy Spirit Day. Others were renewed in their faith and at the celebration evening (held over to January 2022) there were lots of stories of change and transformation. Two attendees have now started their own Alpha course in January with an 'Alpha breakfast'! The rest are reading Andrew Ollerton's book: 'The Bible, A Story that makes sense of Life' and meet weekly to discuss answers to the provided questions.

Alpha works! Alpha continues to be a blessing! Alpha is all about Jesus! May God continue to use the Alpha Course at St Giles and in Northampton.

*Steve Kelly*

## Audio Visual & Production

The last few years have seen us embrace new challenges and new ways of serving.

God has taken the Audio Visual ministry outside of the church building and into the churchyard, through events such as the Summer Bonanza and the Carol Service.

We have been blessed with some outstanding work providing an online-church offering, and this year we will be going one step further with the introduction of a full live-streaming setup, allowing St Giles to shine God's light worldwide!

The team have really stepped up assisting the Worship team during their practices, as well as making sure someone is available to support at weddings, blessings, and one-off events.

I'd like to thank Duncan for his dedication and hard work leading the team, and I am excited to see what God has in store going forward.

*Stephen Hewitson*

## Bereavement Journey Course

We ran courses of the Bereavement Journey in the Spring and Autumn of 2021.

The Course consists of 5 weeks focussing specifically on the Bereavement Journey with an optional sixth week dealing with faith questions. Each session consists of a video followed by small group discussion. The course material is excellent and the feedback from the guests has been positive and appreciative.

Because of the pandemic we have run the courses online using Zoom and have had a total of 20 guests in all. At a time when bereavement is an all too common event these courses have proved very timely.

We plan to run future courses and will publish details in due course. Our thanks to everyone who has helped and prayed for the courses and the guests.

*Simon and Denise Bridgens*

## Bible School

We were planning to run a Bible School course in the summer of 2020 but the pandemic and subsequent lockdown meant that we had to cancel. Since then the Bible School has been effectively “mothballed”. My feeling has been that there is a special dynamic in meeting together to study God’s word and to enjoy fellowship around cake and coffee which could not be replicated if we went online. There is so much available online anyway.

However do remember that there are recordings of past series on our website to listen to and pray that God will make the reopening of the School possible in the future.

*Simon Bridgens*

## Children and Families

2021 started with all our groups meeting online.

The warmer weather in April allowed us to “reset” Toddle In, this meant using the outdoor space at the Centre with a smaller group of carers and children attending, some babies born in lockdown meeting children other than their siblings for the first time!

In June we added a Friday Toddle In session including a Bible story time and a craft! Over time, singing and refreshments have been added in and as the weather has turned colder we moved back indoors. For the first time, we held our Christmas party in the Church building and everyone had a wonderful time!

After some outdoor family socials, our Sunday children’s groups started again in September and it was great to be back face to face. Groups have been affected by leaders or children needing to self isolate, but in our times together it has been brilliant to see the children reading the Bible together and asking some great questions as we think about and learn from God’s Big Story together.

*Jo Smith*

## Churchwardens

As church wardens we are elected by the church members and responsible to the Bishop. It is our duty to provide support to the vicar in every way possible and ensure that nothing stops the delivery of our regular services of worship. Over the year we have continued to support Steve, and the PCC as they have sought to navigate our way through the challenges that Covid has presented. We are always available to hear your views, thoughts, ideas and feedback and are happy to hear from anyone who can offer time to join the many church members who serve faithfully each week in a variety of roles. We'd especially like to thank the small team of deputy wardens for their support and hard work in ensuring that all our services run smoothly.

*David Lidbetter and Alison Steele*

## Creation Care and Renewal

There has been a growing awareness over this year of how precious Creation is.

We had a Creation Care focus on Harvest Sunday exploring Psalm 65, 'The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders... you call forth songs of joy', and how caring for God's Creation is part of our worship and discipleship. We also had Climate Sunday service with a message from Tearfund to coincide with COP26 and then a service focussing on our partnership with Tearfund and the Diocese of Kitgum in Uganda. The message from Kitgum demonstrated that many parts of the world are really struggling with the effects of climate change, it is an environmental and a justice issue.

Closer to home, St Giles Community group has secured funding for 6 trees to be planted in the churchyard and a wildflower meadow strip was sown on Easter Saturday. Thank you to Rocky Coles for his hard work and enthusiasm in making this possible. We also had a 'Plastic Free Advent Challenge!' Thank you Jess and Cat.

Looking ahead we would like to focus on the bigger picture partnering with Tearfund's campaign for Climate Justice as well as the smaller picture, what Creation Care and Renewal looks like at St Giles and in our daily walk with the Lord.

*Ali Wagner*

## House of Prayer

Following times of prayer established in response to the pandemic, a small team started to consider what a House of Prayer might look like at St Giles.

We have established zoom prayers each morning, Monday to Friday, and further prayer on Thursday evenings. These sessions are largely intercessory, although we always take time to praise God, remembering who it is we are there for. On Thursday evenings, we also include a time of intentionally listening to God. These sessions are bearing fruit – one person is certain that they were not hospitalised in Covid because of our prayers and persistence.

Our aim now is to enable all of us to engage proactively in prayer. Currently we are experimenting with the prayers in our services. Any thoughts to the team - Rachel White, Denise Bridgens, Carole Dexter, Helen Hewitson and Dave Allen. My immense thanks to the team for their hard work and dedication this year, to Steve Kelly for his vision, and to all those who have led our prayers, or prayed in any way. God is good!

*Rachel White*

## Men @ St Giles

We re-launched the Men's ministry in April with a new look leadership team featuring Mike Cope, Richard Poole and myself, Peter Day. It's been great getting to know each other, and thinking and praying about the vision for the Men's Ministry at St Giles.

Since April we have arranged a variety of events, online and in person, these have included anything from hosting comedian Andy Kind on Zoom, to pub nights, a men's brunch and footgolf; it's been a real joy getting to see some new and old faces again in person.

As we look ahead to 2022 we have some exciting things lined up. We are really keen to have a monthly meeting at the church centre where we can have fun, build strong friendships and prayerfully support one another.

Look out for upcoming men's events in the news sheet and on ChurchSuite.

*Pete Day*

## Mission on our Doorstep

MOOD aims to keep local mission needs in the congregation's minds as well as supporting (by prayer and financial gifts) a number of national organisations which we have contact with as a church and who supply us with support and resources.

No Harvest collection was arranged this year, but despite lockdowns we have managed to collect donations for Eve (toys, seasonal food and toiletries) and Baby Basics (supplies for new babies and their mums) at Mothering Sunday, Easter and Christmas, which have been much appreciated. We continue to explore practical ways of supporting the local organisations we have contact with.

Ruth Alexander's role with FISH is increasing our awareness of this area of mission.

*Carol Halliday*

## Music and Worship

Well what a couple of years we've had! During lockdown, members of the St Giles Worship Team that were able, worked together remotely to produce recordings of worship songs and videos that could be used in the online services. This was both very challenging, working very differently producing music, but also very rewarding knowing that people accessing the online services appreciated hearing known musicians and voices from the St Giles family. As our contribution to the Together '21 campaign, we put the recordings together to produce a St Giles Lockdown Worship cd and through this we raised £410! Emerging from lockdown has been very tentative, trying to play together whilst observing all Covid precautions. Also, praise the Lord, Sachie has responded to the call to lead worship and a new band has emerged to help cover the morning services. The Children's Music Group decided that the name did not fit any more, so it is now more appropriately called the All Age Worship Band, and we have been thrilled to have been joined by Clive, Caspian and Dominic helping with drums/percussion. It is a blessing to back together again leading sung worship.

*Elizabeth Allenby*

## Pastoral Prayer and Occasional Offices

The Pastoral prayer team have continued to pray during the last year, but with some adaptations! During "lockdown" requests for prayer came in by email and this has continued providing a helpful way for people to ask for prayer. We are very grateful that we can now offer prayer at our morning services on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month when we usually have communion. Prayer is available in the side chapel either during communion or after the service.

We have also offered prayer ministry during the week via zoom to a small number of people who have requested it.

As a team we have met monthly via zoom for fellowship, support and prayer. Thank you to all team members for their commitment this year and especially to Brenda Anderton, Mike Kingman and Serena Yong who help to lead the group.

It is always a privilege to pray for people and we look forward to continuing the ministry in 2022.

*Denise Bridgens*

In spite of considerable restrictions last year we had the joy of 5 baptisms (3 infants and 2 adults). It was a very special evening service when Tatenda and Tina were baptised by full immersion, Ali's first experience of baptising adults. We also celebrated one wedding and one wedding blessing.

Unsurprisingly, it was a year of considerable loss, 6 funerals were held at the church and 9 at the crematorium. Ali and Steve also took funerals in the deanery, for churches in interregnum. It is always a privilege to journey alongside others at times of great joy and great loss; the hope of Jesus' life, death and resurrection speaks into these situations in a fresh way each time.

Thank you to Cathy Chew and Serena Yong for assisting so sensitively at these services and also thank you to those providing pastoral hospitality. Tea and cake are a ministry in themselves and are much appreciated.

*Ali Wagner*

## PCC

The PCC met six times during 2021. Meetings were held on zoom or in-person according to our assessment of COVID-19 risks. Issues discussed and dealt with at these meetings included:

- Lockdown and COVID-19
- Leading through the recovery phase
- House of Prayer vision
- Together 21
- Churchyard and St Giles community group
- Children & families ministry (including 'regathering')
- Student Ministry
- Collingtree Outreach
- Vision for a Wellbeing Hub
- Christmas Services and other arrangements
- 2022 Budget

Regular reports were received from the following committees:

Exec, Finance, Property, World Mission, Mission on Our Doorstep, Collingtree and Safeguarding. Minutes from Deanery Synod meetings were shared when received.

The most recent PCC minutes are displayed on the notice board in church.

Renee Dixon stepped back from the role of PCC secretary following her retirement. The role has been taken up by Helen Hewitson who has quickly established herself and brings care and skill to the role.

We give thanks to God for all the 21 PCC members who give their time to PCC business.

*Steve Kelly*

## Property Committee

2021 has been a quiet year on the buildings and fabric front. We have continued with ongoing planned maintenance but have not been involved in any significant capital projects.

Energy costs are a current focus - our energy supplier with whom we had a fixed price, two year contract, ceased trading in the autumn. We have an arrangement now in place with a new energy supplier, but at a significantly increased cost.

This coming year we will be seeking to address more of the issues raised in the last Quinquennial inspection to maintain our historic building as previous generations have faithfully done.

We are grateful, as always, for the work done by Rob Brown and Mike Holmes.

*Duncan Halliday*

## Schools

All school visits had been on hold since March 2020, but in June 2021 schools began to allow visitors again. Beth was able to support the Lighthouse Trust in running transition workshops for year six children in a number of primary schools.

Our Partnership with Lighthouse Trust has continued to grow through this year. We have a number of plans to develop our work in schools in 2022. We will be collaborating with Lighthouse Trust and a number of other local churches to support more schools around Northampton this year. These plans include improved transitions workshops for year 6 and a new look Christmas Experience.

Beth and Ali have also been able to go back into Abington Vale Primary School Stirling Campus to do assemblies for the first time since 2020.

*Beth Whaites*

## Seniors Ministry

Although various activities in this area have not restarted, there have been a number of developments in the past few months. In early December, Alle Dekenah and Liz Kitwood planned and produced afternoon tea-style refreshments to follow the Service of Reflection and Hope which were much appreciated, especially by the seniors who attended that service. We are considering similar ideas for the spring/summer.

At Christmas, a small team led a 'nativity service' at Cliftonville care home and we have been invited to return to Cliftonville and to Spencer House for further, regular services. There is a need to recruit new team members for this to happen. Nicola is exploring the Bible Reading Fellowship's 'Anna Chaplaincy' model which supports people coming alongside the elderly, particularly in care homes.

The senior fellowship led by Doreen and Michael Mabbutt, has restarted meetings and in recent months they have seen a number of new people joining, which has been encouraging. The Thursday communion service also counts around 20 seniors among its regular attenders.

*Nicola*

*Aylett*

## Small Groups

We have 14 homegroups as shown on the ChurchSuite application, including Students, Young Adults and Collingtree. When Maggie retired from her role as Assistant Minister, Steve took on the oversight, assisted by our curate, Ali Wagner.

Several groups have thrived in lockdown and have continued to use zoom. This enables those who are housebound or caring for children to attend more regularly. Group leaders have done an amazing job to support their groups during this challenging time.

The clergy team have continued to support homegroup leaders with study materials based on the Sunday sermons as follows:-

- **All Things New** - the Big Church Read, based on Pete Hughes' book
- Studies in **Mark's gospel**
- The secret of contentment in the book of **Philippians**
- **Advent and Christmas** series – faithfulness, hope, forgiveness and love

Some groups have gone 'off piste' to take advantage of zoom courses, such as Discipleship Explored and the Prayer Course, to enable their group members to grow as disciples.

We give thanks for all our groups and for the leaders who prayerfully and faithfully guide and direct them.

*Steve Kelly*

## St Columba, Collingtree

I have been at St Columba, Collingtree for around 30 months now. Despite most of this time being during the pandemic, some significant progress has been made.

We now have some people from St Giles attending and assisting in different ways. We have a zoom home group that provides bible study, prayer and support. This is open to people from St Giles and St Columba. I have set up an outreach group to consider how we reach out to the parish, especially the new housing developments. We are currently developing a welcome pack for distribution. We have been successful in applying for a New Wine Church Planting grant (£10,000) and we intend to use this primarily to support a families and schools worker. We plan to appoint church wardens to the PCC at the APCM (we don't have any at the moment) and we also hope to see some new faces join the church council.

There is however some resistance to change. We pray that God will continue to bless St Columba Collingtree, and we thank St Giles for their ongoing support.

## Student Ministry

Since I was employed with St Giles and FISH in Aug 2021, we have seen the Student ministry grow. Connecting with 70-80 Students for our Global Café events each Monday through FISH. We have had students participate in mission events such as apple picking and litter picking. Then we have had a few outings and attended different events such the Racecourse fireworks and UoN football games.

We have also had over 25 students visit St Giles over the course of the term. From that, we have 5 students that are coming weekly to church, or to the Young Adult's home group. I have started sitting with a few of the women that go to the UoN during the week as separate discipleship times.

We hold a monthly prayer night on Campus, inviting church leaders from in and around Northampton. From this we have made many connections.

I have since added Young Adults to my job role. With this, we are looking at what it would be to incorporate YA and Students to the St Giles vision of having a house of prayer.

*Ruth Alexander*

## Thursday Communion Service and Fellowship

Thursday Communion services resumed in Church in mid-April 2021. Since then, numbers have averaged around 23 people. We have welcomed some older St Giles people who have not yet felt able to return on a Sunday.

In the Autumn, we had a preaching series on the 'I am' sayings of Jesus. From January to April this year we are following the early life of Jesus, along with the 'Psalms of Ascent'. In January, Steve authorised the purchase of a set of small communion cups, so we could resume serving bread and wine. This has been greatly appreciated, and has been manageable because of the small size of the congregation. I am grateful to Serena Yong and Cathy Chew who have stepped up to help with this. We have also started sharing refreshments around tables at the back of church, after the service, which has greatly encouraged fellowship.

*Nicola Aylett*

## Together '21

T21 itself was a partial success - but the desired outcome was more than met. We set out to raise over £50,000 by inviting church members to volunteer to help. Results were positive but mixed (also affected by continuing Covid circumstances). Some fund-raising activities consumed a lot of effort for small, but valuable, results (eg events), others less effort for much bigger results (eg giving). It is difficult to know the final result as it is hard for instance to attribute giving increases wholly to T21. We would estimate that the initiative raised probably between £15,000 and £25,000. One major point worth making is that we all acted to address the deficit and in so doing, working as part of God's will, our intent and industry was rewarded both by unanticipated financial gifts and the lower outgoings, resulting in us ending the year with a substantial surplus rather than the feared deficit.

*Steve Pentland*

## Treasurer

Regular income was maintained in 2021 and was significantly above that budgeted for, thanks to the generous giving of our members and the successful Together '21 programme to bring the congregation back together. Several teams led initiatives which contributed to the turnaround. This allowed us to balance our day-to-day income and expenditure budgets in 2021, and God really blessed and provided for us in this challenging time of the pandemic. At the beginning of 2021, we forecasted a deficit of almost £43K. Overall, our total year-to-date actuals were towards £75,000 in the positive. Copies of the audited accounts for 2021 will be available to view on our website from late March.

*Anne Jackson*

## Uniformed Organisations - Scouts

2<sup>nd</sup> Northampton (St Giles) Scout group moved to online gatherings during the lockdowns.

As restrictions gradually eased, the Beaver, Cub and Scout sections with careful planning started to meet outdoors for games, activities, hikes and cycling activities.

At the end of November the Beavers and Cubs enjoyed a space themed sleepover in the Church Centre – a first “night away” for some!

Girls and boys are welcome to join in with the fun on Thursdays (6-7pm for Beavers, 7-8.15pm for Cubs and Scouts) Adults are welcome to volunteer in the sections or to join the Trustees. Please contact [jo@stgilesnorthampton.org.uk](mailto:jo@stgilesnorthampton.org.uk) for further details.

*Jo Smith*

## Uniformed Organisations – 19<sup>th</sup> Northampton St Giles Guiding

We started the year, as we had finished 2020, on zoom, before in April meeting face to face in the yard. It was lovely to see the girls. We worked on skill builders, which develop the girls, and activity cards that made a mess!

June we had a visit from our Midlands Region commissioner as she was touring the region.

In July we took part in a sponsored walk for Water Aid, raising £245 plus Gift Aid for them.

We finished this term all together on the Meadow and had 17 girls and two new leaders make their Promise.

In August we held a virtual sleepover with the Brownies; the leaders liked this as we got a full night's sleep!

September saw all sections at camp. The theme was 'Around the World' in 48 hours and 6 countries visited. Food and craft from each country and of course we boarded a plane to get to each one. Magpie completed and passed her camper's licence. A weekend of fun and laughter.

September to December we met back in the centre continuing with skill builders and activity cards. A Scottish evening with craft and battered Mars Bars from the chip shop, which went down well! Christmas craft and to end the year a trip to the panto at the Derngate.

In November Brown Owl, Helen Hayward, was presented her 40 years' service award by her own Brown Owl, Delia Askew, who Helen took over from here at St. Giles.

All in all, a fun packed year in different circumstances but we keep our Guiding light burning brightly and see what 2022 brings.

*Helen Hayward*

## Welcome and Hospitality

As overseer of the welcome ministry at St Giles it has been an interesting (and challenging) time to welcome new people into the church. I have had the real pleasure of working closely with my co-leader Alle Dekanah and creatively thinking about ways we can make sure people feel welcomed into the church in a safe way.

In September we hosted a barbecue for the welcome team which was a great opportunity to get to know each other a bit more and discuss and pray about how we can be a more welcoming church.

As we look ahead we are prayerfully considering how we can do more to welcome newcomers into the church to make them feel part of the St Giles family.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with myself or Alle if you are interesting in serving on the welcome team. It's such a joy doing this ministry and getting to know more people in the church.

*Pete Day and Alle Dekanah*

## Wellbeing Cafe

The Wellbeing Café re-opened in Church in April 2021, and has continued to meet weekly (except Bank Holidays) apart from a short break in December/ January when we closed due to concerns over Omicron. Over the past year, numbers have ranged from 13 to 22, with a consistent core every week. We are now serving refreshments in a 'covid-aware' way. We also continue to offer a range of one-person activities, at well-spaced tables. One group has re-started card games 'at their own risk'. Some of our pre-Covid regulars have not returned because we are not able to offer the full range of games, or because they are not yet ready. Looking ahead, there is a need to strengthen the team; to 'refresh' our prayer time material; and to prepare for growth. We look forward to discovering more of the part we can play in the development of the 'Wellbeing Hub'.

*Nicola Aylett*

## Women @ St Giles

As for many, the restrictions on social gatherings curtailed our (Women's Ministry) activities greatly in 2021. Even once rules were relaxed the challenge was to find an appropriate balance between contact and safety and to take account of each other's concerns.

We are acutely aware of people's need to stay connected and early last year set up a 'Face to Face' WhatsApp group for those who wished to meet up as soon as restrictions allowed.

We had several (frankly freezing) walks around Abington Park and alfresco coffees before forming our Wednesday morning 'Women's Support Group' - a hybrid zoom. Once we are able to meet in person, we started our group meeting in the Hughes Hall from 10.30-12 each week. This has been a constant

since 12<sup>th</sup> May and has been a joyous source of fellowship, laughter and support. Everyone is welcome to join us (or on zoom), do come along if you can!

We did manage to put on one of our larger evening events in November (although on a much restricted scale and in a much more distanced way than usual). Sine spoke wonderfully to us on well-being which sparked fantastic conversations round the tables and provided a salient starting point for us thinking about this topic as a wider church. All our activities this year have focused largely on this area - seeking to love and support each other by staying connected.

We recognise that loneliness is a huge issue for many of us and encourage you to get in contact with us; come along on a Wednesday, join our Monday evening zoom book group or come on a pub evening with us - hopefully they can't be too far off now! One thing we have all discovered through these last 12 months is the enormous benefit to be derived from a cup of tea and a good laugh (even if it is on zoom)!

*Vikki Beale*

## World Mission

Our Mission Partners all continued well with their ministries during the year; affected in varying degrees by covid restrictions, they were able to adapt their activity accordingly. For some, operating online led to expansion in the reach of their ministry.

Ann had an extended period in the UK with a very good level of engagement with us in person and on zoom. Peter and Gill were also able to visit. Others were disappointed at not being able to come, but hope to this year.

We continued to support Tearfund's work in Kitgum diocese of Uganda, and the Barnabas Fund. It was agreed we would switch our regular support for the persecuted church to Open Doors from Barnabas at the end of the year.

A Lent project with Open Doors featuring N Korea raised £4695.00.

With a reduced budget of £31,448 for the year, support payments to our Mission Partners, Tearfund and Barnabas Fund were maintained but no discretionary payments were possible.

Mission Partners have been included in the House of Prayer initiative, and WMG met periodically for prayer.

*Liz Kitwood*

## Young Adults

2021 has been another challenging year for all of us. In young adults we started the year back on zoom, a frustration for many, but a useful tool to allow us to keep meeting while locked down. We took part in the Big Church Read, looking at all things new which brought a lot of encouragement & hope to the group.

Later in the year it was a great joy to start meeting back together in person and really helped bring the community back together again.

We have run our own version of the prayer course, followed an open doors study series on the persecuted church, had several prayer & praise sessions and a very interactive Q&A evening!

The prayer & praise sessions have been a particular blessing, when we are able to take time out and focus on God. It's been great to be able to create a space where we can do this.

We're looking forward to 2022 when we plan to go on our first weekend away in 2 years! Also, there will be a lot more opportunity for doing things face to face and continuing to build relationships and hopefully some more outreach, particularly linking in with students.

*Jess Newlove*

## Youth Work

Youth work in 2021 has been a time of changes. We started the year meeting on Zoom and finished meeting back in person in the church centre.

From January to July we were meeting on Zoom once a week with Just Girls and Boys Zone, as the restrictions began to lift we had a couple of socials before the school holidays where all of our young people were able to get together for the first time since March 2020.

Since September Just Girls and our Sunday morning groups have been running in person again. We have not been able to run boys' Zone since September and are looking for two male leaders to allow this group to start again.

*Beth Whaites*