

General Report on the Life of the Church for the ACGM 11th May 2025

The last year has been a time of growth and change, and at times also loss and uncertainty, and in all these aspects of our church life we are immeasurably grateful for the love and strength of our community at SAPLC. Over the last year we have lost several beloved friends and as we reflect on this time, we remember them with love and gratitude.

We are writing this report as Naomi is currently on a period of extended leave and we would like to record our thanks to all those who are supporting and sustaining the work of the church in her absence. We particularly welcome Joy Rulton to SAPLC and thank her for the work she is doing with us. We are enormously grateful to all those who have led and contributed to our worship and would like to especially thank Cheryl Collins for her leadership of our Easter services, and additionally Mike Wildgust and Jane Brooke for the work they are doing to sustain the Wednesday Holy Communion. We thank Julie Jordan-Brown for her time as a warden, and for all she has brought to this role.

Wednesday Holy Communion, and Taize services in Advent and Lent continue to be highly valued and in the last year two new Thursday evening services have started: Holy Communion and Sacred Space, both taking place once a month. These services have been warmly received and all are welcome to come and experience these.

In our musical life, we are delighted to have been joined by Liz Bentley and we have enjoyed getting to know her and receiving her musical offering at our services. It was wonderful to have had a choir at Christmas and Easter, and we remain extremely grateful for the regular contribution of the band to our worship. We were also extremely glad to have Steel City Choristers come to share a wonderful Choral Evensong with us.

Following some of the suggestions which came from a working group last summer, we have been focussing on our commitment to being an Inclusive Church and have started to organise some additional events to explore these themes. We now have a noticeboard at the back of church which we can use to provide information, and we are working on transforming the old creche area into a relaxed and welcoming space for people who find it challenging to be in the Sanctuary during services. Many thanks to Theo Strong who is leading this work.

As part of being a welcoming and inclusive congregation, we enjoy the opportunity to eat and drink together. We have changed the way in which we enjoy refreshments after the services which has allowed us to use the space more flexibly. Many people have commented that this allows them to engage more widely with others. Our Soup and Puddings lunches continue with Ruth Groves having handed this over to Mary Mitchell and Jan Owen. We are extremely grateful to Ruth for her contribution over many years to this and thank Mary and Jan for taking this on. We had a very successful visit from the Saltmine theatre company in December, and it was fantastic to have so many visitors to the church. Although we will not be having the church weekend at home in June as we had planned, we will still be having a church social event which we look forward to as another opportunity to enjoy fellowship together. The Tuesday café has adapted to changing needs and continues to be a strong and supportive group. We are extremely grateful to the volunteers who provide such a warm welcome.

The Eco group continue to do excellent work to increase our awareness of environmental issues, and work to reduce our carbon footprint at SAPLC. This year we have seen two very successful repair cafes, and we hope that these will become a regular feature.

Our children have also grown and developed over the last year and continue to be an enthusiastic and joyful part of our church life. We have renovated the Junior Church room and now have a dedicated area for children within the Sanctuary. As well as weekly Junior Church activities, we have had a pancake party, Epiphany party and Easter activities on Easter Saturday and we are, as always, hugely grateful to all those who

contribute to this aspect of our ministry: through volunteering to help in the sessions, praying for the children, and welcoming the children each week. Our children are very confident that they are loved by their church family!

We were delighted about the enthusiasm from the congregation for the Lay Worker post, and the generosity to financially support this, alongside the grants we have received. We interviewed two very strong candidates for this post, and we are delighted to have offered the post to one of them and look forward to working with them and, as part of this work, developing our links with Highfield Trinity Church.

In the last year Anne Hollows has taken over as Safeguarding lead from Janet Loughridge who had worked tirelessly in this role for many years. We thank Janet for her work and Anne for taking this role on. There are some aspects of our church life that we need more help with. We particularly need a health and safety officer, a property steward, and someone who could help with the data management around the GDPR regulations. If you think you might be interested in any of these roles, please speak to one of us, as we would be very willing to discuss how the jobs that need to be filled could be adapted to fit the time people have to offer.

We rejoice together in the life of our church and the richness of our community. We recognise also that this is a time of some uncertainty, and we would encourage anyone who is feeling uncertain or anxious to let someone know about this so that we can offer our support.

Anna Calvert, Chair of the ECC.

Jan Owen, Mary Mitchell, Alastair Morris, Julie Jordan-Brown, Stewards and Wardens.

May 2025

