

# The Chronicles 2025



Portishead Church of England  
*Growing & Going in God's Love*

## Introduction to The Chronicles 2025

When we applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for our Storyboat project in 2019, we were asked to give the value of our volunteers' time donated to the church. Our estimation was over £50,000 each year. I was fascinated to discover recently the value of churches' contribution to the UK. Last year independent economic analysis commissioned by the National Churches Trust put the economic and social value of churches to the country at £55 billion a year. You might want to read that figure again. It is an extraordinary amount.

Churches contribute to the health and well-being of individuals and communities in a variety of ways. Some of those are high profile and conspicuous, some distinctly hidden (do you know who cleans the toilets in our churches?). Some people are able to give substantial amounts of money or to give sacrificially (the two are not always the same) to support God's ministry and mission in Portishead. Many give generously and sacrificially of their time, gifts and expertise. Whatever you give to God's work here, thank you.

Why do we give time, talents and money to support the church? We give because we are excited by the impact that the church makes on people's lives, enabling them to experience and come to know the love of Christ and to take a step into the life in all its fullness that he offers. We give because we know that all that we have is a gift from God and that in giving we are blessed.

The descriptions of different aspects of the life of our church contained in this year's Chronicles are a fantastic reminder of the vitality, life and impact of the church. Thank you to everybody. It is a joy to be part of this courageous, compassionate, generous and joyful Christ-shaped community.

With God's blessing

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob".

## **Baptisms 2025 – Gill Ogden**

We are blessed to welcome families who come to us asking for Baptism for their babies and children.

Baptism numbers have dropped in the last couple of years, so Baptism prep is now done individually by the Clergy who is due to conduct the service. This does now enable the Baptism service to be more personal to the individual family.

Baptisms still happen mostly on a Sunday afternoon. Some church families may have a Baptism in the 9.45am service and there have been a few sea Baptisms over the past few years.

We invite families to bring their child to a church service, usually the 9.45am Special, to be welcomed into the Church family where we will give them a Children's Bible.

Gill C & Lesley F keep in contact with families by sending Birthday cards and invites to Baptism anniversaries in the 9.45 service and we keep families updated with all the relevant church family events.

We pray that this will set the seed for children and their families, that they might come to and engage with church activities to begin their faith journey.

## **Bell Ringers – Mary Gilbert (Tower Correspondent)**

The Portishead ringers have had quite an eventful year. A year or two ago, the sixth bell was deemed to be unfit to ring due to a dangerous crack appearing. So we set about fundraising, culminating in instructing Matthew Higby, bell hanger, to go ahead with the work. A new bell was cast in Milan. We are now enjoying ringing on all eight bells once again and have completed several quarter peals since completion of the work. We are now raising money for new bell ropes!

Even though our ringing was severely affected while the sixth bell was out of action, we still managed to ring each Sunday, usually before the 9.45 service.

Our two 'new' ringers are progressing well and enjoying the challenge (I think)! We always welcome anyone who would like to have a go. Just come along to any Tuesday evening practice from 7.30-9.

We enjoyed several visits from the local Cubs and Beavers who chimed the bells and engaged in craft work.

In March we enjoyed a long weekend in Scotland ringing in Inverness cathedral and on two or three mini-rings. Our trip was rounded off by a trip on the train via the Glenfinnan viaduct, of Harry Potter fame!

## **Bereavement Support Group - Tonya**

We are thankful for the team who support, give their time and their talents as the group meets at St Nicholas' Church at 2.30pm on the second Tuesday of each month.

Please pray that it continues. At the moment, only one person comes along. We know there is need, finding a way to reach folk is something we need to explore further.

### **Betwixt and Between (BnB) – Simon & Sarah Stevens**

BnB is the monthly opportunity to reflect on the last Café Church and to plan for the next. We are thankful for the openness of those who come (all are welcome) and to the ways in which God can speak through all manner of topics. We hope that the bonds of fellowship would grow during the next year and that we would be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Please pray that Café Church would continue to minister to all ages and to all the groups of people that come.

### **CAP - Tonya**

Many people are at breaking point due to unmanageable debts and other issues. They live in fear of post coming through the letter box, of phone calls and texts and of enforcement agents at the door. They live with their curtains closed and in fear of confrontation. It affects their physical and mental health. We meet with people and let them talk and make some sort of sense of how they got to where they are. Then we give them a plan and route out of the chaos.

We are thankful that CAP gives us a chance to meet the real poverty in our neighbourhood. We meet their physical needs and also their emotional and spiritual deprivation. We aim to build people up and to restore their confidence in themselves. It is heartwarming to see the change in their physical environment as they begin to realise they are not alone after all and they can take care of themselves and their homes.

Many clients are suicidal. It is seen by society as a way out. Many people feel great shame at being in debt. We have professional people in good jobs and those who have never worked who are at breaking point. To lift the darkness, we need your prayers for these people who maybe unknown to us but never forgotten by God. Please pray for them to have the confidence to reach out and seek help. Pray for us to have the right words, and to be there to help them rebuild their shattered lives.

### **Church Tots - Lesley Flanders & Gill Colston**

Church Tots meets on Tuesday afternoons in term times for parents, grandparents, carers and their children (up to school age) for some action songs, a bible story, short prayer and a craft activity. This is followed by a drink and biscuit and toy time for the children and a cup of tea and time to chat for the adults while the children play.

We are a friendly welcoming group which is valued by those who attend and we are grateful for the support of those who come regularly, but over the years the numbers attending have become fewer.

We would love to be joined by more families and would ask for prayers to help us know how we can adapt to achieve this and develop further.

### **Eco Group - Lindsay**

The Eco Group has been active for less than a year, and we are deeply grateful for the enthusiasm and involvement of the church community in the Eco Church initiative. It has been encouraging to see engagement not only within our congregation but also with local schools, community groups, and other churches in the parish. This shared commitment to caring for creation has strengthened our connections and inspired action.

Looking ahead, we are excited to develop new projects that will further raise awareness of Eco Church and encourage sustainable living. One focus will be exploring ways to promote environmentally friendly lifestyles within our community. Additionally, we hope to introduce sustainable church flowers, ensuring that even our places of worship reflect our commitment to caring for creation.

We ask for prayers for our fragile world and for the small steps we take as a community to make a difference.

### **Ethics Forum - David Tyers**

We aim to hold two meetings per year focusing on contemporary ethical topics. Each session is led by an 'expert' speaker who delivers a presentation followed by a Q&A and Discussion. Our goal is to make the sessions accessible to a broad segment of the community while avoiding a solely Christian perspective.

Over the past year, we have explored two areas: Mental Capacity and International Law. We are grateful to have found excellent speakers willing to donate their time voluntarily without a fee. However, we typically offer a modest donation to a charity of the speaker's choice.

We would appreciate prayers for the planning group's wisdom in selecting suitable topics and speakers who can provide a balanced yet challenging overview of the subject.

### **Gordano School Chaplain - Simon Stevens**

We were sad when Gordano School felt unable to sustain the chaplaincy post, though we remain grateful for all that Becky Cox was able to do. God, though, has continued to work and a number of avenues have opened up.

1. Verity has been appointed as a Flourish Chaplain at both Gordano and Chew Valley secondary schools
2. The RE/PSHE team at Gordano are keen to have visits from Saltmine Theatre Company.
3. We have made a link with Transforming Lives for Good. This will provide mentoring opportunities for church members to be involved with both primary schools in Portishead and at Gordano School.

Please give thanks for these activities and for the willing leaders. Please pray for all these to develop in line with God's will. Please also pray that the messages of hope and unconditional love will come through loud and clear. As many of these are inter-church

activities and also involve large complex schools, please also pray that communication will be straightforward!

### **Haven – Rob Eastwood Dewing**

Haven was conceived out of my experience of mindfulness and contemplative prayer. Many have found mindfulness a useful tool especially in the days during and after Covid when levels of anxiety were so high. Contemplative prayer sometimes feels like one of the Church's best kept secrets. It combines all the benefits of mindfulness with connection with our loving Creator and Sustainer. What is more it is rooted in Centuries of Christian wisdom.

Haven takes place at 6.00pm on the Third Sunday of the month in St Peter's Church. It consists of 45 minutes of silence, mindfulness music and gently guided prayer. Every month a small group gather and spend a little time exploring a theme and connecting with God. Nobody will ask you to speak – it is just a chance to be. It is a joy to see people spending time in a quiet, gently doing business with God. We would love to see a few more people join us.

### **Home Groups - Andrew and Margaret Halestrap**

#### **Tuesday Evening Home Group**

We are a new home group that started in the late autumn and now have ten members. We meet weekly on Tuesday Evenings from 8 - 9.30 during term time and start by catching up over coffee, tea and cookies before studying a passage of the Bible together.

Last term we looked at Paul's letter to the Philippians and this term we are working our way through Marks Gospel. We finish with a time of sharing items for prayer and thanks before committing these and what we have learned from the Bible passage to God in prayer. We aim to have a meal together once a term to which partners who are not members of the group are invited.

We are thankful for the way the group has developed and for the encouragement, challenge and pastoral support it brings to each of us as we learn together what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Our prayer is that we will continue to grow in our faith and understanding as we study the Bible together and support each other in the joys and challenges that life brings.

#### **Thursday morning Home Group - Alison Stubbs**

We have always been a group more about fellowship and prayer than about academic study, and we thank God for the support and encouragement we have been able to give and receive over the past 12 months. However we have also learnt a lot from the 'Lifebuilder' notes we have followed in that time - especially from our current series on 'The Sermon on The Mount' (and a previous one entitled 'Growing Older and Wiser!')

### **Monday Home Group - John Knightbridge**

On Monday evenings in school term time a group of us meet for Bible study and prayer. We also give time to share our latest news and concerns.

We usually follow a theme, which lasts for a number of weeks, from a published Bible Study Guide. During 2024 we have discussed the themes of 'Integrity', 'Hope' & 'Spiritual Gifts' as well as studying a number of verses from Proverbs.

There is plenty of time to discuss our varied thoughts and feelings, enabling us all to grow in our Christian faith, for which we are very thankful.

We give thanks to God for his Word and the mutual support and friendship we share. We pray that this will continue in 2025.

If you are not part of a Home Group we would recommend you joining one! Every blessing.

### **Home Group at the Finches – Graham Finch**

2024 has been a fruitful year for our group. Attendance remained steady at around 9 and occasionally 11 if we all attend, and we have one "virtual" member who participates online.

We meet usually twice per month, with a break in August and this year we have dipped into Acts, (we paused for Lent so we could participate in the Parish Lent course), Psalms, and the book of James.

Beginning with prayer, we read the passage aloud and then discuss what we have gleaned from the words. We spend about an hour in discussion. By getting and offering different views and asking questions we get so much more from our study of scripture.

At the first meeting in the month, we share coffee and biscuits, then at the second we share a simple jacket potato meal. In this way we can nurture our fellowship and care for each other.

We support each other in prayer. There has been need for those unwell, operations and, joyously, we had a wedding to celebrate from within our group. It is wonderful to be able to share our joys and concerns in prayer and we thank God for all his blessings on us.

We pray that our group can continue to enjoy our time together and that God will open our minds to delve deeper into His Word.

Please pray for all our home groups as we go into 2025.

### **Tuesday Morning Home Group – Mary Duncan**

The group started life as concentrating on bible study. We are thankful to God that as well as studying his word we have become a fellowship group sharing our blessings and our sorrows in a safe space. The support and care for each other is invaluable

Over the next year we hope to deepen our faith and continue to support each other.

We ask for prayer that we will be true disciples, learn from our Lord and be bold in sharing the message of God's love to all we meet.

### **Home Group – Rodney Wheeler**

Our small group took several weeks to read and discuss the two Letters from St Peter to his scattered followers for whom he specially wished Grace and Peace from his and their God above. He particularly wished that they would build up seven key Christian characteristics, ending with Love. We prayed together and tried to encourage each other to follow suit.

We then spent several weeks studying sections from the second half of Isaiah, looking particularly at and for OT pointers towards the first and second coming of the Lord Jesus. This proved to be a relatively difficult task partly because of the repetitious nature of the writing and also because Isaiah was even more concerned with what was then the future release of the Jews from their Babylonian captivity. (Perhaps the OT prophets are best studied privately at home with a bandage around the ears).

We then changed tack and followed a text book entitled 'The seven great 'I am's claimed by Jesus" as listed in St John's gospel. In fact we found about twice that number of 'I am' claims if we included verses equivalent to an 'I am' claim.

We then watched and listened to a series of extremely well produced videos from the Bible Society entitled 'The Bible Course' in which the overall messages from the Bible were distilled into just 8 very tight but rigorous sessions, emphasising the togetherness of God's message to his world. This has put us in the right frame of mind to join the rest of the parish in studying during Lent another video-based course on Prayer.

### **Lighthouse Café – Gill Colston**

The Lighthouse Café opened in 2014 and celebrated the 10th anniversary last year.

Over the years many people have been welcomed to the Café and enjoyed tea, coffee and homemade cakes. There is always someone to chat to and many otherwise lonely people are grateful for the welcome and companionship they receive. We are able to offer lifts to a small number of visitors who would not otherwise be able to attend.

We are so grateful to all our volunteers, whether welcome's, kitchen helpers, cake makers or drivers. Additional help for any of these roles is always welcome and your prayers are asked that we will be able to continue to run the café in the future. Please contact Gill if you would like any further information.

### **Lighthouse Carer's Group – Pearl Walker**

We are grateful to those who regularly help us at the monthly meetings. It is a great encouragement.

The Trustees are John Neate, Jennie McDuff, and Pearl Walker.

As far as is possible, we try to have one to one care for those with dementia, and this leaves the carers to enjoy refreshments, and chat with other carers, and also with Vicky, and other professionals who come to give a listening ear, and advice.

We also have a number of carers, whose loved ones are now being looked after in Residential Homes, who come along to enjoy a natter with others who are in the 'same

boat'. As we are an independent group, we receive a grant from a local charity, and this enables us to provide equipment needed, as well as paying Vicky an allowance for her professional leadership and paying the church for the heating etc.. Last year, Rosemary and Paul Reid, organised a concert, which boosted our funds, when they were getting rather low, and we are grateful to them.

This group is vitally important to those who come along. They so appreciate the love and help they are given. Anyone interested should please speak with one of the Trustees.

### **Llads – Ed Broyd**

Once again this year Llads proved to be a valuable community group operating with a small but very efficient group of volunteers from the congregations of both St Peter's and St Nicholas'. On the second Saturday of each month, between 15-20 fathers brought their children to the St Barnabas Children's Centre for an hour or so of fun activities, delicious drinks and snacks and (most importantly) quality time with each other and a supportive peer group. We have hosted families from across the local area and we have seen an increase in this since similar groups in Clevedon and Nailsea stopped operating, either through lack of volunteer support or through lack of funds. We thank God that our group has been able to continue to flourish so positively.

Over the coming year I hope that we continue to develop the relationships we have with the families that use our group, as well as providing a safe space for new members to come and join our community. I hope also that others can see that volunteering can be as simple as giving two hours a month to the parish community. I would ask that you hold in your prayers those fathers and families who use our group as a welcoming haven in what might be an otherwise unpredictable and challenging set of circumstances.

### **Martha's Kitchen - Lindsay**

The kitchen is open Tuesday mornings during the school holidays and the atmosphere is lively and bustling as families arrive. Amidst the noise and chaos, we are deeply grateful to God for our dedicated volunteers and the growing rhythm of prayer and reflection within our team. The generosity of local businesses and community organizations has been a tremendous blessing this year, allowing us to continue serving those in need.

We are especially thankful for the ecumenical and prayerful spirit that unites us in our mission. As we look ahead, our focus remains on strengthening what we already do well. With Lindsay's curacy coming to an end, succession planning becomes essential to ensure continuity in our efforts.

Please pray for the families we meet, that their hearts may be open and curious about the stories of Jesus.

### **Millennium Garden - Jane Pagano**

The garden is now 25 years old. Quite a milestone!

It continues to be very well used for exercise or quietly having lunch or a picnic.

Portishead in Bloom use the garden as their headquarters for their Open Gardens weekend, which will be on June 7th and 8th this year.

The garden is also used by many church members and groups for teas, picnics and play.

Revd. Lindsay has made great improvements with the compost area, and we now have several bins. Lindsay loves composting, I do not! We recently spread some of the homemade compost on the garden.

Phil Margerison has taken over all the mowing and also maintains the hedges and large shrubs.

Portishead in Bloom have about 4 work parties a year in the garden which is a great help. We always need more help with general ongoing maintenance.

Some of the plants are past their best after all these years and it would be good to revitalise some areas. If anyone has spare plants, please let me know.

#### ***Mother's Union - Anne Lewins – Branch Leader***

This year we have had an interesting programme of talks and fundraising events for the work of Mother's Union both in this country and abroad. Our aim was to promote literacy and numeracy of women and children across the world by enabling and paying for trainers and also as a voice for them at the United Nations whenever it was on their Agenda.

Many of our members are involved in church activities. Please pray for new members as our group are growing less able. This is a national problem and in 2025 we are promoting membership to make sure that our work at home and abroad will continue.

Sadly we have lost four members this year to death and dementia and they are sadly missed by us all having been members for many years.

All are welcome at our meetings held monthly on the fourth Thursday of the month at 2.30pm at St. Peter's Church (programmes are on our notice boards)

#### ***Muddy Play Days - Lindsay***

Muddy Play Days (some Wednesday afternoons during the school holidays) provide a wonderful space where families can enjoy nature, embrace creativity, and experience the freedom of outdoor play. Thankful for the relaxed and informal leadership style which fosters an environment where children can explore, get messy, and truly engage with the world around them. It is heartwarming to see families spending quality time together, immersed in creation, and appreciating the beauty of the outdoors.

Looking ahead to the coming year, the goal is to continue building on this foundation while finding new and imaginative ways to weave the stories of Jesus into the experience of muddy play.

We ask for prayers that this ecumenical team will receive the necessary funding and resources to sustain and grow this initiative. May the families who participate in Muddy Play Days develop lasting bonds with creation and each other, experiencing the wonder and joy that comes from outdoor play. This unique space offers not only fun but also meaningful moments of connection, learning, and spiritual growth in an open and welcoming environment.

### **Pastoral Assistants – Tonya**

I am so thankful for all the pastoral work which happens in this parish, day in, day out. Some seen, some unseen. The work that the Pastoral Team does includes: Communions in Care Home; Visiting the sick; Being with the Bereaved; Caring over a cuppa and so much more. The Pastoral Team is a joy to be a part of. We meet every 6 weeks to review, share, learn and pray together giving thanks for those we spend time with and giving thanks for each other.

We would like to see new Pastoral Assistants trained by the end of the year.

Please pray that each pastoral encounter we all have honours God.

### **Pebbles - Alison Stubbs**

We thank God for some new leaders and helpers! Whilst having to use the Clergy Vestry for story and discussion time when we can't be outside gives us limited space, it is manageable for the numbers of children currently attending. We are excited to try the rearranged craft area, which will enable us to keep a table in place between sessions, with our basic crayons, glue and scissors to hand. This will save time setting up, and also avoid barging through the coffee queue at the end of the service.

Please pray for continued inspiration as we lead, and for the children to be able to attend regularly so that we can get to know them better. More helpers would also mean the possibility of adding an extra monthly session. A proper space of our own would be ideal - which would become a necessity if numbers of children attending were to increase. But most of all, pray for our children, that they will know that they are loved and valued, and that their names are 'written in the palm of God's hand'.

### **Refresh - Mark**

Refresh is such a special place where parents, grandparents and carers can bring their babies and toddlers into St Peter's Church on a Tuesday morning. We are so thankful for the relationships formed, the journey's shared and the support and encouragement shown - usually over a coffee and slice of Gill's wonderful cake! It always makes me smile to see the church building filled with such colour, vibrancy and joy. It has been a privilege to walk with some families over a number of years and to be able to welcome new families who have just started attending.

There is a transient nature to such a group as children grow up and go to school. We'd appreciate prayer for how we can maintain connections with families we have built strong relationships with and that they might deepen their connection with the wider church family through ministry such as The Gathering and 9.45am Special.

### **Setting Sail – Rob Eastwood Dewing**

Setting Sail was conceived as an opportunity to explore together some of the foundations of the Christian Faith. It is aimed particularly at those who are exploring the possibility of faith. Over 5 weeks we look at God as Creator, Son and Spirit as well as Community and Service. It begins where people are and give some simple exercises to try at home to enable us to open ourselves up to the God who, as we believe, longs to be in a relationship with us.

We have had two small Setting Sail groups which I have led. Thanks to Trish Margerison who joined me on the most recent. It has been an encouragement to see participants being open (with one another and to God) and to see faith grow within them. I am thankful to God for their involvement and engagement. Please pray for them.

### **St. Nicholas Choir - Roy Jukes**

St. Nicholas Choir is small in numbers (nine members normally, but ten on the third Sunday of the month when I am relegated to the choir pews) but enthusiastic in leading the singing during Sunday worship. We meet to rehearse in the Lady Chapel at 4.30pm on Thursday afternoons.

Over the years patterns of worship have changed and the requirement for an introit and anthem at each service have long gone. The annual choir festival at Wells and the yearly Deanery Festival have become a thing of the past. The presentation of a Good Friday cantata is no longer possible and the incentive to prepare for these events is no longer with us.

Nevertheless we will work to the best of our ability to play our part in the work of the church. Short anthems arranged for the voices available and the introduction of new hymns and others no longer available in the books we use are introduced during the taking of communion and we pray that our efforts are an acceptable part of morning worship.

### **St. Peter's Choir - Andrew Curtis**

St. Peter's choir lead the music at 11.30 every Sunday singing in harmony with organ accompaniment. We sing at Evensong once a month.

It would be wonderful to see an increase in choir members. To encourage some interest the church held a "Hymns & Pimms" event in June and invited additional singers to take part. We were thrilled to have a large choir for the afternoon event and the singing was wonderful but no one agreed to join the choir on a regular basis. If you feel moved to sing with us, please step forward! We meet on Fridays to practise.

Finally, I thank the choir and additional singers for the work put into the Christmas Carol Service. Please pray for the choir and for those who are thinking about joining us.

## **St. Peter's Music Group - Alice Vickers**

The music group exists to lead the musical part of worship at the 9:45 family service each week. There have been some changes since Cathy stepped down from leading the music group.

We are thankful to God for:

- Cathy, who led the group faithfully for many years
- Jon Fairhurst setting up a second group to lead the music, and the new musicians who have joined that group
- the privilege of helping to lead people to worship in God's presence
- the enthusiasm, encouragement and commitment of all the singers and musicians in both groups, developing the music groups
- to encourage more people to become involved, especially younger members
- to be alert to those who have musical and leadership skills
- to ensure we use a range of the best worship music both familiar and new
- to have a third worship group with its own leader

## **Star Trail 2024 – Graham Finch**

25th to 30th November. Prayers answered in an awesome way.

Judging by the wonderful comments and feedback we have received from visitors, we seem to have succeeded in our objective to tell the story of the birth of our saviour to many people, old and young, in our town.

An incredible amount of work goes into delivering Star Trail. The whole parish contribute by prayer and in many other practical ways. It reflects the amazing things that we, as a church family, led by the Spirit, can achieve.

When everything is ready, and we are about to "go live", there is a buzz of excitement and expectation. Before each session starts, we offer the Star Trail prayer that goes like this.

*Lord Jesus, we ask for your blessing as we tell the story of your coming to be among us on Earth.*

*We pray that we might relate the truth and the purpose of your birth to those who will visit the church over the coming days. May they be inspired to learn more about the absolute, unlimited love and friendship that you have for all humankind.*

*By Your grace, grant all of us energy, enthusiasm and wisdom to deliver our message with confidence and joy. In Your name we pray Lord, Amen*

God answered our prayers so much more than we could have imagined.

There was joy in our delivery of the message, and incredible energy despite the efforts needed by so many to make it all work. When problems arose, we overcame them. Our schools came and shared the good news, two schools from Wraxall and Portbury came for the first time. More than 100 people at each of the public sessions came.

Throughout the week, the Spirit worked through us and for that we thank the Lord.

As we move forward, we pray that new people will join our core planning team. There is always a warm welcome for new volunteers (and cake of course!)

### **Summer Show - Lindsay**

The Portishead Summer Show is always a fantastic opportunity for the church to engage with the wider community, and 2024 was no exception. The parish stand embodied the church's mission to care for creation in a truly creative and engaging way. Built entirely from reclaimed materials, the stand demonstrated that even discarded items can find new purpose - just as, with God, far more can be restored and renewed than we can ever imagine.

We are deeply grateful for the chance to be part of the summer show, which has a real feel of an old-fashioned village fete. The very process of preparing and constructing the stand was a missional act in itself, bringing together local primary schools, youth groups, community organizations, church groups, and other churches. This collaborative effort not only highlighted the importance of sustainability but also strengthened relationships across our town.

The impact of this creative expression of mission was deeply felt by those who visited and took part. Moving forward, we hope to build upon these connections, ensuring that this initiative continues to flourish. We pray for fresh inspiration, resources, and opportunities to sustain and expand this meaningful work in the years ahead.

### **Table Talk – Mark**

Table Talk offers the chance to meet with others, share coffee and cake together and talk about things that matter. We get together once a month in the community room at Portishead Library, and use 'Table Talk' cards to provoke conversation around a variety of issues. These have included themes such as hope, justice, bereavement and wellbeing.

We are thankful to see God at work in the deepening of relationships among those who attend. A gift of this space is that it allows people to share their stories together and to be as open and vulnerable as they feel safe to do so. We don't shy away from talking about difficult things and the conversation is always life-giving. Even when there is disagreement, people's views and experiences are always heard and held with grace and care.

Please pray that Table Talk would continue to be a safe space for people to share in this way, for the strength of relationships to continue to grow, and that it also might be accessible for any who would value being a part of such a group.

### **The Gathering – Mark**

The Gathering is a Messy Church which creates space for all who attend to encounter and deepen their connection with God and each other through songs, stories, food, crafts and fun. Meeting in St Peter's School, it is a welcoming, joyful, creative and intergenerational community, and is particularly accessible for those who might not attend more traditional forms of church.

We are thankful to have been able to welcome a host of new families over the past twelve months and to see them grow together. It has been wonderful to see the joy as those of all ages participate in the action songs, create arts and crafts, take part in the team challenges or simply get to know each other over a coffee.

Please pray that The Gathering would continue to be a hospitable place for newcomers whilst also deepening existing connections. Please pray that we might foster links with the wider church activities and enable people who do not attend church to find a space to explore faith.

### **The 9.45 Sunday Special Service – Tonya**

Where to start... we are thankful for the families who come along; for it being an intergenerational place, for toast and coffee before the service; for those who help in making this service possible; for the joy and energy each child brings; for being able to tell the Gospel afresh to a new generation.

Our prayer is that it continues, that those who don't know God may come and find a place of welcome. That our baptism families may become an integral part of the service.

Please pray that Gods hand remains on it.  
For every person who comes to this service.  
That we will all twinkle and shine with Gods love.

### **The Poetry Group – Sue Giles**

The poetry group meets on the first Wednesday of each month and is for those who enjoy hearing and reading poetry aloud.

Each month a topic is chosen and during the weeks before the next meeting, members source poems on that topic. This gives the opportunity to rediscover old favourites as well discover more modern poems. The offerings make us laugh and cry and result in much discussion.

Mary Oliver says of poetry, "Poetry is prayer. It is passion and story and music. It is beauty, comfort. It is agitation, declaration. It is thanksgiving". We certainly find that it can be all these things.

We are very thankful for the opportunity to share poetry together and find it a great blessing. We are always very pleased to welcome new members. If you think that poetry is for you and you would like to join us we would be delighted.

## **Wild Church Youth – Mark**

Wild Church Youth uses outside spaces to help the young people connect with God through being in nature. We work in partnership with Sarah from GVC and Paul Revill, local Baptist Pioneer, and have used many different activities from bible stories on the beach, pilgrim walks around Portishead to marshmallows over a fire in the Glade. Deepening discipleship among our young people is a key part of who we are and we'd love you to continue to pray for their growing faith.

## **Willow gardens – Lindsay**

We are deeply thankful that the garden continues to grow - both physically and spiritually. It has become a cherished space where those who attend truly value the time spent together, nurturing both the land and their sense of community. Over the past year, we have planted an orchard and begun developing a community compost area, further enriching the garden's purpose.

This ecumenical project may seem small, but it is making a meaningful impact on those who take part, fostering connection, well-being, and a greater appreciation for creation. At the same time, it is helping to increase biodiversity in the area, contributing to the health of the environment.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to strengthening what we already do well. With Lindsay's curacy coming to an end, succession planning will be key to ensuring that the work we have started continues to flourish.

Please pray that the simple, everyday acts of care in the garden will continue to touch lives in small yet profound ways, bringing growth, renewal, and a deeper awareness of God's presence in all we do.

## **Wonderings – Lindsay**

We meet at 8pm by zoom on the third Wednesday of the month and are thankful for the openness and deep level of trust and sharing that emerges when we ponder a passage of scripture together, for the conversations and friendship. It's a safe space and something that we look forward to each month just being with each other in a prayerful accepting space.

It would be good over the next year if we could just maintain what we are doing and maybe have an annual meeting in person every so often.

Please pray that this little group can remain a place of friendship and sharing and a welcoming space for all who wish to ponder and wonder.

## **Young people in Year 6 & above - Mark**

We have continued to create opportunities for young people in school years 6 and above to meet together, dig into the bible, pray together and support each other on their faith journeys. Youth Church meets twice a month on a Sunday morning during the 9.45am service and it has been wonderful to see the young people connecting with each other and wrestling with issues of faith. We are so thankful for the wonderful volunteers who put such passion and effort into planning creative and fun sessions and supporting the young people.