



ST AUGUSTINE'S

Thorpe Bay

PARISH CHURCH OF ST AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY THORPE BAY

Registered charity number 1128847

Annual Reports and Financial statements of the Parochial Church Council for the year ended 31st December 2025

Vicar

The Reverend David Willis
86 Tyrone Road
Southend-on-Sea, SS1 3HB

Bankers

Barclays Bank PLC
127 High Street
Southend-on-Sea, SS1 1LH

Independent Examiner

Mr Graham Lane FCA
43, Tyrone Road
Southend-on-Sea, SS1 3HE

Our website

www.st-augustines.info

Report on the Activities of the PCC

St Augustine's Parochial Church Council (the PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the Incumbent, the Reverend David Willis, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. As well as the Church itself, the PCC is also responsible for maintaining the Church Hall in Johnstone Road. The general functions of the PCC are stated within section 2 of the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956.

Objectives & Activities

The PCC of St Augustine's, Thorpe Bay, is committed to enabling as many people as possible to encounter God through worship, prayer, and community life, and to become part of the church community. In planning its work, the PCC has taken full account of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, particularly in relation to the advancement of religion. Our worship and services put faith into practice through scripture, prayer, music, and sacrament. We seek to help people live out their Christian faith in everyday life through:

- Regular worship and prayer, providing opportunities to grow in faith and understanding of the Gospel;
- Pastoral care for all, offering support and compassion to those in need across the parish;
- Active mission and outreach, working in partnership with the wider community and sharing God's love through hospitality, welcome, and service.

To facilitate this work, it is vital that we maintain the fabric of both the Church and the Hall.

Achievements & Performance

Worship, Prayer and Christian Growth

Worship and prayer at St Augustine's Church are rooted in the Anglican tradition, offering a rhythm of services that nurture both personal devotion and communal faith. The regular schedule includes Sunday Holy Communion at 8:00am (Book of Common Prayer), Parish Communion at 10:00am, and Evensong at 6:30pm. Midweek worship is normally Holy Communion on Wednesdays at 10:00am, along with Morning and Evening Prayer from Monday to Thursday at 8:30am and 5:00pm, respectively. The church also observes key liturgical seasons with special services during Holy Week, Easter, Advent and at Christmas, along with special services for occasions such as Mothering Sunday and Harvest Festival. During the year we held specific services with a focus on inviting members of the community who may not usually attend church. These included a Guest Service where the elements of the service were explained as we went along, a service for All Souls' Day, and an informal Carol Singing event with mulled wine and mince pies. During December over 2500 people attended a festive service including services for local schools and the Southend RNLI. We were particularly

pleased to see such a full church on Easter Sunday, when the 10am service was attended by 220 people. As well as our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones of the journey through life. There have been 17 Baptisms, 7 Confirmations, 4 weddings, 1 funeral held in church and 6 funerals taken by St Augustine's clergy at the Crematorium.

St Augustine's continues to be a place where people are invited to encounter God in worship and grow in faith together. Opportunities for personal growth included a Lent course on the book 'Being Christian' by Rowan Williams. In June a new Bible Study Group began meeting fortnightly in the church studying Luke's Gospel to begin with.

In addition to services at St Augustine's, the vicar took Easter and Christmas services in two local retirement homes, as well as assemblies and acts of corporate worship at three schools. He was also pleased to continue to offer some of his time to Southend Lifeboat Station as their chaplain.

Those who are unable to come to Church are not forgotten. The clergy and Lay Eucharistic Ministers exercise a ministry of visiting the housebound and taking communion to those at home and in hospital.

Mission, Evangelism, Fellowship, and Community Engagement

2025 marked the 90th Birthday of our wonderful church building. This was celebrated by a special service and lunch in May. The Bishop of Bradwell, the Right Reverend Adam Atkinson came to lead the service and to preach. The event was a wonderful testament to our growing and happy church.

Also in May, the PCC undertook a project to increase our offering of social activities to increase opportunities for fellowship between members of the church, for fund-raising, and perhaps most importantly to generate greater engagement with the local community. This began with the PCC and the wider congregation being asked to offer ideas for activities (regular or one-off) that they would like to see St Augustine's offer. From these suggestions a short-list was produced and a calendar of events decided upon. In 2025, social events included a Harvest Supper, a Curry evening, a new monthly games club, a Desert Island Discs evening, and a wreath making workshop. These events and others have fulfilled the intended purposes of increasing fellowship, raising money, and meeting members of the wider community.

In June, St Augustine's was pleased to offer another Church Fete in the grounds of the church. The sun shone and local residents enjoyed hot and cold food, entertainment, stalls, games, and bouncy castles. This event alone raised over £3200 towards the mission and ministry of the church.

In December, St Augustine's once again partnered with the Safe Harbour Bereavement Group to host a Christmas Friendship Party especially aimed at those who might otherwise be on their own. The free event which included food and drink, music, singing and games was supported by the McCarthy Stone Foundation, and our local Tesco store.

Throughout 2025 our fun singing group, 'Simply Sing' met each Wednesday afternoon. Run in partnership with a local business, 'Simply Stride', the group offers a wonderful mix of singing, stretching and fun and is open to all. The group offers a warm and welcoming atmosphere for all which is evidenced by the care and inclusion of those with dementia, Parkinsons, and other physical or mental conditions.

Helping those in need is a demonstration of our faith. During 2025, St Augustine's maintained its giving to charities including the Royal British Legion, Christian Aid, and HARP (Southend's leading Homelessness Charity). The latter of these was supported by the congregation and community through donations of food at Harvest, and items for the women helped by the charity on Mothering Sunday.

The church magazine 'Roundabout' continues to be published bi-monthly and reaches well beyond the congregation offering information and enjoyment. Editor Geoffrey Mann reports, "We welcome the vicar's regular letter together and other contributions from readers. Thanks to the generosity of readers and advertisers (annually or bi-monthly), the magazine more than pays its way financially."

The Church Hall continues to be a wonderful resource for many local groups and charities. Hirers include the Scouts and Guides, U3A, the Women's Institute, Safe Harbour Bereavement Group, fitness groups and others. We have a very good relationship with the Thorpe Bay Floral Arrangement Group, who greatly enjoy putting arrangements into the church for festivals and special occasions.

Safeguarding

The PCC is very grateful to Megan Dugdale and Linda Barnard (Parish Safeguarding Officer and Lead Recruiter respectively). The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. A full report from Megan is included in the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) papers.

Volunteers

The members of the PCC would like to thank all the volunteers who work so tirelessly to make our Church a lively and vibrant community. Particular thanks go to our Churchwardens during 2025 - Tricia Muzalewski and Paul Chisnell for the first part of the year and Sally Carr and Les Harrod thereafter. The PCC is also very grateful to the assistant clergy who have helped during the year, Revd. Frank Smith, Revd. Canon Michael Ballard, Revd Chukwudum Chimaeze (who was on placement in the parish for the first half of the year), and also to our Authorised Lay Preacher, Dr Linda Barnard.

Financial Report

This will be added to the final version of this report when it has been received.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) operates under the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 and the Church Representation Rules. The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC is a charity registered with the Charity Commission - registered charity number 1128847.

PCC members are appointed in accordance with the Church of England Representation Rules 2006 and are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. All those who attend are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and to consider standing for election to the PCC.

Individual members of the PCC receive external training as and when deemed appropriate by the PCC.

Day to Day management of the church was exercised by the standing committee, the only committee required by law. It has the power to transact PCC Business between PCC meetings and considers strategic issues which may affect the church. Members of the Standing Committee are the Incumbent, Churchwardens, Secretary and Treasurer.

Administrative Information

The Church is situated on St Augustine's Avenue, Thorpe Bay, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 3JQ and is part of the Deanery of Southend, in the Diocese of Chelmsford within the Church of England. The correspondence address is 86 Tyrone Road, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 3HB. Telephone 01703 587597.

Charity Trustees on the PCC who have served from 1st January 2025 until the date this report was approved were:

Ex Officio

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Rev'd David Willis | Incumbent and Chair | |
| Mrs Sally Carr | Churchwarden | <i>from 25/5/25</i> |
| Dr Paul Chisnell | Churchwarden | <i>until 25/5/25</i> |
| Mr Leslie Harrod | Churchwarden and Vice Chair | <i>from 25/5/25</i> |
| Mrs Patricia Muzalewski | Churchwarden and Vice Chair | <i>until 25/5/25</i> |

Deanery Synod Elected Representatives

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Dr Linda Barnard | Authorised Lay Preacher |
| Mr Martin Everett | Assistant Churchwarden |
| Mr John Gray | |

Elected Members

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Mr John Biggs | Assistant Churchwarden | |
| Mrs Barbara Black | | |
| Mrs M Dugdale | Parish Safeguarding Officer | |
| Mr Paul Dyer | Treasurer | <i>until 29/9/25</i> |
| Mrs Suzanne Dyer | Secretary | <i>until 29/9/25</i> |
| Mrs Lesley Hayes | Secretary from 23/3/26 | <i>from 25/5/25</i> |
| Mrs Susan Johnston | | |
| Mrs Catrina Lambert | | <i>from 25/5/25</i> |
| Mrs Margaret Ridley | | |
| Mr Ian Stobart | | |
| Mr Barrington Wadley-Smith | Assistant Churchwarden | |

Co-opted Members

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Mrs Patricia Muzalewski | | <i>from 21/07/25</i> |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------|

Churchwardens' Report

Church Building Fabric

Several minor issues have arisen and been dealt with during the year. These include blocked rainware and gutters, damaged flashing, and damaged tiles to the southern aspect, causing localised dampness and blown plaster at height above the Vicars stall. The rainware and gutters have been cleared, flashing replaced and new tiles fitted. The internal plaster was repaired and the affected wall repainted. Our thanks go to Fr Frank for arranging the contractor.

Following a visual inspection of the building undertaken during February 2026, no major concerns were noted, but the pointing to the southern wall particularly appears to be deteriorating and will need repointing in the next year or two when funds permit.

Internal Fixtures, Fittings and Furniture

Visual inspections have been carried out periodically throughout the year and generally the fixtures fittings and furniture have been found in good order with no significant work required. The new chairs are so far unblemished even after several services where candles featured.

Church Grounds

The considerable area of grass surrounding the church has required cutting regularly through the growing season, which has been undertaken by Gardeners employed at cost. Unfortunately, the gardeners used are retiring and we have been seeking another to undertake the work. To date quotes have been received from 3 with one being significantly more expensive than the current cost and the cheapest showing a saving of £280 per annum. Serious consideration has been given to undertaking the grass cutting ourselves, with a rota of volunteers, but a number of issues which would need further investigation meant that for 2026 at least this was not a viable option.

The trees and bushes were trimmed back as necessary prior to our summer fete, but these will need to be checked again following church guidance some time over the next 12 months.

Church Records

Church records dating back in several instances to the early 1900's have been held in church, and these have been reviewed against official guidance relating to retention and disposal of records by churches. This has resulted in two car boot loads of parish records, taken to Essex Records Office in Chelmsford who act as the Diocesan Archivists. This is an ongoing exercise and further trips to Chelmsford are certain. This exercise is also producing a significant quantity of paper records which must be shredded, and we are currently looking for a commercial shredding Company to use.

General Storage

The storeroom above the choir Vestry has been tidied up, the contents of the storage cupboards checked, and old disused items surplus to requirements disposed of. The Deanery Orchestra who use our church for rehearsals have taken space in the storeroom, to store music

and instruments and are paying rent to do so. Storage elsewhere in church will be similarly tidied and cleared of items surplus to requirements over the coming months.

Church Hall

The hall fabric remains in reasonable condition with no significant work required. The frontage to Johnstone Road has been painted by a friendly neighbour at no cost to the church. Internally, we are looking to hire out the rear room on its own which requires changing the exit door to the east of the kitchen. Quotes are being sought for this work currently.

A significant number of the hall chairs have been found to be broken, and therefore removed and scrapped. The remaining chairs are not expected to remain serviceable for much longer and new chairs have since been purchased which are of superior quality and comfort.

Sally Carr & Les Harrod

Churchwardens

Deanery Synod Report

There have been three meetings this year at the following locations:

11th February St Augustine's Church Thorpe Bay

11th June St Andrew's Church South Shoebury

13th November St Mary's Church Prittlewell

Each meeting included various acts of worship alongside short talks reflecting on the life and work of the Church, providing both spiritual enrichment and opportunities for shared learning,

Financially, the year saw minimal changes to accounts, with only a small amount of credit interest recorded. The primary financial focus remained on the payment of deanery parish shares. By the end of the year, the target set was 93%, with the actual achievement of 87%. This shortfall reflects the financial challenges experienced by some churches within the deanery.

A significant development early in the year was the licencing of Sue Lucas as Archdeacon of Southend,

At the February meeting Sandra Eldridge, the Diocesan Environment Officer, spoke enthusiastically about the need of Parishes to be aware of the effects of climate change. She gave examples of ways a reduction in carbon emissions could be achieved.

In June Bishop Adam (+Bradwell) spoke on the theme of friendship and the importance of investing in relationships

At the November Meeting Revd. Dave Willis and Sandra Baines spoke on clergy and laity wellbeing, with a focus on support within church roles.

There were also a number of updates and shared events across the deanery. Notably, Tom Loh organised a coach trip to the Bradwell Pilgrimage Day. Regular updates were provided regarding vacancies and changes in church roles, including those moving out of the deanery and others exploring new ministries. Deanery prayers, prepared by Sandra Baines, were shared regularly via email.

Further updates were received from Diocesan Synod (via John Tipping) and General Synod (via Canon Robert Hammond) ensuring the deanery remained informed of wider Church developments.

Canon Linda Barnard

John Gray

Martin Everett

Deanery Synod representatives

Safeguarding Report

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) confirms that it has complied with the duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Our parish safeguarding policy is reviewed annually and is prominently displayed at the entrance of the church and on our website.

Our primary objective remains the cultivation of a safe, transparent, and welcoming environment for all members of our community, particularly children and vulnerable adults.

Transition to the Diocese Safeguarding Portal

A major focus of our administrative work this year has been the migration to and implementation of the new Safeguarding Portal from the Diocese. We have been systematically working through the portal to ensure we are in compliance.

Training and Development Updates

In accordance with the *Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework*, training requirements have been updated. We have successfully transitioned our training logs online.

- **Core Modules:** All active volunteers have completed or refreshed their "Basic Awareness" and "Foundations" training.
- **Specialized Training:** We have encouraged the completion of the "Domestic Abuse Awareness" module to broaden and identify diverse safeguarding concerns.

Incident Reporting and Casework

There was one safeguarding concern raised during 2025.

"The care and protection of children, young people, and adults involved in Church activities is the responsibility of everyone who participates in the life of the Church."

Megan Dugdale

Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)

Social Activities Report

Last June Janice and I were tasked with collating the suggestions for future community, stewarding, social events made by members of the PCC and those who had attended the special consultation organized by Rev Dave. A proposed 3 year calendar was presented to the congregation following a Sunday service and volunteers sought to take responsibility for the organization of some of these events or indeed new ideas. Soon there was a vibrant social calendar which invited members of the congregation and the local community to join.

The year started with a Harvest Festival supper and quiz organized by the Vicar and was soon followed by a Curry evening at local restaurant Masoom organized by Father Frank. October saw the launch of the monthly Games Club, organised by Wendy Hooper, which meets in the church hall on the 4th Friday of the month.

November saw the first of a Desert Island Discs evening during which a dozen members introduced a piece of music which was particularly important to them. These varied from the humorous such as The Gasman Cometh by Flanders and Swann, to the classical such as Nimrod played by the Grimethorpe Colliery Band, to the modern such as You Raise Me Up by Westlife and the unusual such as Nessum Dorma performed by Guitarist Jeff Beck. The introductions were equally varied and heartfelt.

Another initiative, organized by Janice Price and Mandy Sylvester, was the afternoon during which local residents joined members of the St. Augustine's congregation to make their own Christmas Wreaths under the expert tuition of Sylv Kittle of Thorpe bay Flowers.

In addition Michelle Brooks organized an afternoon where members could bring their Christmas Presents to be wrapped whilst enjoying festive drinks!

Since the beginning of 2026 St Augustine's has enjoyed several more and varied events which have not only raised money but have continued to encourage an increased community spirit both for the congregation but also for the wider community.

A fun-filled not Twelfth Night party, organised by Wendy Hooper which offered tasty food, the tradition of crowning the King and Queen for the evening as well as traditional games and quizzes.

The Table Sale, organised by Sue Johnston, certainly brought locals to enjoy the opportunity to buy many craft articles and good quality items no longer needed by the vendors.

A dinner just prior to the Chinese New Year introduced many of the congregation to Mr Ping's in Southchurch but what was really enjoyed, apart from some excellent Chinese food was seeing members of the congregation making the most of the opportunity to talk with others they did not know!

A fish and chip supper linked with Beetle Drive, again organised by Wendy, was another opportunity for friends to enjoy each other's company and revisit a traditional game!

Looking to the future we can envisage even greater numbers joining us for a variety of events

A Tea Dance!! I hope some are practising their skills or if not they are of course welcome to come along just to enjoy delicious tea treats and good company.

A Patronal Ploughman's lunch when once again St Augustine's will join together and share a common identity whilst always being open for our neighbours and friends

The Summer Fete is always a great event when we enjoy entertainment, sell our plants, crafts, cakes and get to meet some of our neighbours.

The Autumn will see a return of Dessert Island Discs and a new event in October, a Gin Tasting by the Pigs Bay Distillery. Also under consideration is a Remembrance event which would not only involve members sharing their WW2 experiences but seeing how one family lived on the menus of the war years but in the Sixties!

Of course there will be at least one more Indian meal and possibly other new initiatives.

Thanks are due to Wendy, Janice, Mandy, Michelle, Sue, Barbara and the Fete team and Fr Frank.

Hopefully a few more members of the St Augustine's family might be encouraged to organise an event.

Catrina Lambert

PCC Member

The Christmas Friendship Party

The feedback on the day and since the event was most positive with many asking us for the event to be repeated in 2026. The time was enjoyed and welcomed by many people who don't normally mix with others, and it showed on their faces with big smiles and lots of noise.

The Christmas gathering brought together a wonderful group of older adults for a few hours filled with warmth, laughter, and genuine connection. The atmosphere was festive from the moment guests arrived, with a sense of anticipation for time spent in good company. The relaxed setting encouraged conversation, and the room was filled with lively chatter throughout the event. Light music followed by carol singing, and a few rounds of bingo added fun and laughter to the afternoon. The music, (especially classic Christmas songs) created a warm and familiar atmosphere and everyone enjoyed singing along (which has the added benefit of being good for the lungs). Many expressed that the best part of the party was simply spending time with others, being able to talk to representatives of the local services and to find out what help is available, especially during a season that can feel lonely for some. The variety and quality of sandwiches, cakes, crisps and sweets were frequently mentioned as a highlight especially being waited on by the Elves.

The Christmas party was a heart-warming success, offering older adults a meaningful opportunity to connect, celebrate, and enjoy the holiday season together. The event left guests feeling uplifted, appreciated, cared for with a feeling of love and being loved. It also gave carers and family members who came along to support a parent a chance to see them enjoying themselves and hopefully encouraging them to join in other local events and meet-ups like coffee mornings and games afternoons.

Barbara Black

PCC Member

Bible Study Group Report

The St Augustine's Bible Study Group was launched in June 2025 following the well-attended and received Lent Course, the original group numbering 15. It had been decided that the fortnightly meetings would concentrate on the study of St Luke's Gospel, discussion directed by Tom Wright's Study

During the past months we have looked carefully each week at a single chapter and because the members' knowledge of the Bible varies considerably discussion has been held in a relaxed way allowing the sharing of our interpretation of sections of the Gospel as well as our own experiences.

Whilst some weeks the discussion flowed easily at other times the subject matter proved difficult, but we are never afraid to voice our uncertainty of thought. We are confident in each other's company, and no-one is judgemental.

Anyone is welcome to come along to join the discussion. Attendance each week varies as members have medical appointments or go on holiday, but Rev Dave's presence is always appreciated to guide our thoughts and to offer his knowledge to strengthen our understanding. We much welcomed the addition of his large canvas copy of Rembrandt's painting of The Prodigal Son when discussing this parable!

Comments from members of the group:

"My first session, I was apprehensive ...I was made welcome by everyone ...it was fascinating to see what others thought of the passage we were reading..."

"Having had little opportunity to study the Bible ...learning how to interpret it, my mind was opened to so much"

"I enjoy studying the Bible in a group because you always learn something that you hadn't considered"

"For a few questions I had no idea what to say but there is always someone willing to give perspective to the passage or relate an interesting story"

"It's good to use the study guide as it often provides some context that you don't get solely from the Bible"

"Sometime the study guide confuses us more than the original Bible text but although we may disagree with each other we are in fellowship and there is always laughter during the sessions"

Catrina Lambert

Bible Study Group Convener and PCC Member

Choir and Organ Report

The choir continues to play an important and valued role in supporting worship at St Augustine's. Although small in number, it provides a consistent and dependable musical contribution to our services, helping to lead congregational singing and enhance the overall quality of worship.

Choir Life and Worship

The core choir consists of around 10 regular members, with typically 6–7 singers present on a Sunday. The majority sing soprano, with the remaining singers sharing alto, tenor and bass lines as required. This flexibility is essential in enabling the choir to function week by week.

The choir supports the hymns and communion setting each Sunday and sings an anthem (or sometimes a simpler worship song when numbers are reduced).

Where numbers allow, we are proud to sing in full SATB, including unaccompanied repertoire. This is something the choir does well and enjoys, and it represents a significant musical achievement for a group of our size.

Although there is no formal choir for Evensong, members of the choir are usually present and support the service, enabling the sung responses to be led with confidence.

The choir operates with a deliberately flexible and inclusive approach. Members are not expected to attend every week, recognising the realities of modern commitments, and music is shared in advance via WhatsApp with a short rehearsal before the Sunday service. Repertoire is adapted as needed on the day depending on who is present.

We warmly welcome new members at any time. The ability to read music is not required; enthusiasm and a willingness to contribute are far more important, and we actively encourage anyone who enjoys singing to join us.

A weekly Friday evening rehearsal has been available particularly to support those less confident in reading music, although attendance at this has been variable in recent months.

Junior Choir

When I began in post in 2011, a junior choir was established to reintroduce children's singing into the musical life of the church after a long absence. This was initially very successful, with 10 girls participating at peak. The group sang regularly at Sunday services and contributed a junior choir-only song/anthem at Crib services. The junior choir achieved a great deal musically, with all members gaining their RSCM Voice for Life White Award and several progressing to Light Blue. It was sustained over several years, including three consecutive Christmas seasons.

Inevitably, numbers declined over time, and the subsequent loss of the Sunday School has made recruitment more difficult. In addition, there are a number of well-established children's choirs locally. However, this remains an area we would very much like to revisit in the future, and I am very keen to contribute in the church's wider work to engaging with young people.

Special Services

The choir continues to support weddings and funerals at St Augustine's, providing confident leadership of hymns and helping to ensure that these important occasions are well supported musically.

At Christmas and other major services, the choir is augmented by additional singers. Our annual Service of Nine Lessons and Carols remains a highlight of the year, with a larger body of singers, more extensive repertoire, and a number of choir-only items and descants. This service is consistently well received and appreciated by the congregation.

Looking Ahead

We are keen to explore opportunities for growth and development. This includes supporting the church's wider efforts to engage young people, and potentially re-establishing a junior choir if circumstances allow.

We are also planning occasional workshops, including one aimed at encouraging and supporting male singers who do not read music, building on a previous successful session where participants learnt the bass part of Handel's Hallelujah Chorus.

Above all, we remain committed to maintaining a welcoming and sustainable choir which continues to support worship to the best of its ability.

The Organ

St Augustine's is fortunate to have a pipe organ at a time when many churches have been forced to replace theirs with electronic instruments. The organ continues to be used regularly for services and has also supported visiting choirs and occasional recitals in the past.

The console was overhauled in approximately 2014; however, a number of issues have since developed which are increasingly affecting reliability and playability. These include problems with the swell-to-great coupling and piston system, which make the instrument difficult to use effectively in its current state.

We are grateful to our new organ tuners for their ongoing support, and a further visit is scheduled shortly to assess and address these issues. It is likely that some level of future investment will be required to ensure the organ remains fully functional for the long term.

Thanks

Finally, sincere thanks go to all members of the choir for their continued commitment, flexibility and willingness to contribute week by week. Their contribution is greatly valued and makes a real difference to the worshipping life of the church.

Lorraine Everett

Organist

Bell Ringers Report

It is a pleasure to report that all 8 bells have been rung for most Sunday services this year as well as to mark specific occasions including weddings and funerals etc. This is entirely thanks to the commitment and dedication of our band of ringers, who willingly climb stairs, defy common sense, and occasionally remember which rope they're holding!

While we haven't yet lured any brand-new recruits into the tower so far this year (we're actively working on it), our latest learners are progressing splendidly. In fact, Gillian and Margaret have both conquered the legendary quarter peal. For the uninitiated, that's 1,260 changes, rung continuously for about 45 minutes—basically the bellringing equivalent of running a small marathon, but with ropes and fewer bananas. It's a serious achievement and not for the faint-hearted... though we promise it's more fun than it sounds.

The summer fete once again proved that people are very curious about what goes on up the tower to see the actual bells and the ringing chamber. Many ventured up for the first time—some even came back down smiling! A few expressed interest in learning, which is excellent news, because we are always on the lookout for new recruits. Change ringing is an ancient and fascinating art, suitable for all ages.

Steve has served as Tower Captain for 50 years. His unwavering dedication and patience in training and supporting others—many of whom have come and gone—have helped sustain a friendly, sociable ringing environment that regularly attracts visitors from neighbouring towers.

John, our Steeplekeeper for an equally impressive length of time, ensures that everything in and above the tower is kept in excellent order. He diligently maintains the fittings and attends to the raising and lowering of the flag as required.

And where might bellringing take you? Well—far beyond the tower. It's a hobby that opens doors (and towers) across the country and even the world. From local churches to grand cathedrals, and as far afield as America and Australia, there are bells waiting to be rung and tea waiting to be drunk.

This year, we bravely entered teams into the District call change and method ringing competitions for the first time in many years. While victory narrowly escaped us (we like to think we were “saving our best for next year”), we did come away with a certificate confirming that we showed up—which, frankly, is half the battle. On the bright side, we redeemed ourselves at a quiz night, finishing a very respectable second to the Basildon ringers. Clearly, our knowledge of obscure facts is stronger than our competitive nerves. For those who want to meet some new friends, there is a busy schedule of social activities including district ringing meetings, additional practice sessions, training courses, tours and an Annual Dinner to boot – so much going on that you can join in as little or as much as you like.

Meanwhile, our handbell group continues to thrive. This is bellringing's slightly more relaxed cousin—played sitting down, but don't be fooled: it's a proper mental workout. Each ringer handles two bells, weaving intricate patterns with the rest of the group. It's a bit like juggling... but with sound. Several members have also achieved their first “in-hand” quarter peals, proving that sitting down does not mean taking it easy.

In closing, a huge thank you to all our ringers for their enthusiasm, commitment, and ability to keep the bells (mostly) under control. Congratulations also to our newer members as they hit

personal milestones—bellringing is a journey, and there's always something new to learn in an encouraging and welcoming environment.

And now, your invitation...

Wednesday practice night is open to absolutely everyone and there's chocolates too. Curious? Come along. Nervous? Even better—we were all beginners once. No experience needed, just a willingness to climb a few stairs and give it a go!

If you've ever fancied trying something a bit different—something historic, slightly quirky and surprisingly social, this might just be for you.

For more information about our own local association, The Essex Association of Change Ringers, search www.eacr.org.uk

Come and join us...the bells are waiting.

Steve Halliwell (Tower Captain) and the Bell Ringers

5th Thorpe Bay Brownies

Report

We started the year off with 17 Brownies and 3 leaders. We meet in the church hall on a Wednesday during term time.

Spring term

- We did the Inventing badge, learning about women inventors and the girls made their own inventions. For example Cups that diluted their squash as they drank it. A Vending machine that made snacks on demand.
- We learnt about Penguins – there are 18 different types and 14 of them are ‘near threatened to endangered’
- We also did the Snake Challenge badge learning about native snakes, made a pipe cleaner snake and a snake made out of fruit which the girls loved.
- Attended Mother’s Day church parade.
- Brown Owl had her baby.

Summer term

- We did the Summer Quest badge and made kites which we flew down at the green.
- We made hobby horses and held a gymkhana where the girls had to jump over an obstacle course.
- We did the Languages badge – learning different ways to say hello
- We held our sports day at the green. Everyone had a good time racing and rolling down the hill.
- We had couple of outings one to Gunners Park trying to listen to different bird songs.
- And a visit to the beach to make nature pictures.
- Finishing off the term with a water games evening where everyone was soaked,
- A Wimbledon style evening where the girls made their own rackets and a garden party with ice cream sundaes.

Autumn term

- We visited the church as part of our Local History badge.
- Attended Harvest Festival church parade where the girls drew pictures to the hymn We plough the fields and scatter.
- The girls enjoyed a film night.
- Attended Remembrance Church Parade where the girls did a reading.
- We went to Kids Kingdom as part of their fundraiser for Guideacres our local campsite.
- We enjoyed looking at the stars and drinking hot chocolate.

Leslie Raggett

Unit Leader

5th Thorpe Bay Guides

Report

We started the year with 22 Guides and 2 leaders. We meet in the church hall on a Wednesday during term time.

Spring term

- We started the year off doing our Meditation badge – a bit of yoga and positive thinking.
- Learnt about Tessellation patterns and made our own up.
- Did the Snake Challenge badge learning about native snakes, made a pipe cleaner snake and a snake made out of fruit.
- Made fizzy sherbert and made our own biscuits as a science experiment.
- Learnt the art of macrame which was very hard to do.
- Attended Mother's Day church parade.

Summer term

- We did the Summer Quest badge and made kites and flew them at the green.
- Made a bug hotel to take home and to put in the garden.
- We held our Sports Day at the green, with egg and spoon race and lots of relay races.
- We went for a walk to Gunners Park to listen to nature sounds and a trip to the beach.
- Finishing off the term with a Wimbledon style evening making our own rackets and having strawberries and cream and a garden party with ice cream, mocktails and s'mores.

Autumn term

- We learnt about money and how to save it and how to spend it!
- Attended Remembrance Church Parade.
- Made sugar scrubs and held a fruit tea tasting session.
- Held a star gazing night with hot chocolate.
- Went to Kids Kingdom as part of their fundraiser for Guideacres our local campsite.
- Put on an Animal Nativity show which the girls dressed up for, learnt their lines and really enjoyed it.

Leslie Raggett

Unit Leader