

Cambridge Judge Business School

REACH Ely Case Study Series

Reimagining Churches as Community Assets
for the Common Good

ST ANDREW HISTON

Text, design and photography

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**REACH Ely (Reimagining Churches as
Community Assets for the Common Good)**
is a multi-partner research project that
aims to help communities make fuller use
of their churches.

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The project is implemented by

**Centre for Social Innovation at
Cambridge Judge Business School
and the Diocese of Ely**

*with the generous support of Allchurches Trust
and Historic England*

www.reachely.org

The challenges facing church communities and their buildings have been extensively studied in the light of declining church attendance in the United Kingdom over several decades. REACH Ely aims to address the less-well-understood opportunities for churches to engage and reconnect with the 97.7 per cent of the local communities in the Diocese of Ely who do not attend their parish churches.

With the absence of universal determinants of success and failure of churches in the community engagement context, the REACH Ely project will provide an understanding of the relationship between communities and wider use of church buildings as well as the contribution that churches make to the common good. The project will determine community values, needs and opportunities that can be used in the most effective way to ensure a win-win outcome for communities and sustainable future of church buildings.

The **case study series** is based on in-depth interviews and observations about church building use with informants from a subset of deaneries and parishes in the Diocese of Ely, supplemented with secondary information about the communities they represent. The purpose of the case study is to unearth various church experiences in renovating and envisioning their buildings as missional and social spaces, engaging with local and wider communities, addressing current challenges, and learning from their practice.

The **Glossary** is a separate document that accompanies the case study series. It is available as a download from the project's website www.reachely.org

On the cover: Carved wooden angel in St Andrew's parish church.

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ST ANDREW HISTON

Church Category: Rural

Deanery: North Stowe

Address: Church Street, Histon,
Cambridge CB24 9EP

Website: <http://standrewshiston.org>

Saint Andrew's Centre website:
www.standrewscentre.org.uk



Summary

Buildings and Artefacts: Grade I listed building in cruciform plan; Central tower with Early English transepts; Separate Saint Andrew's Centre in the village centre with public café, halls and modern facilities; Elegant bank arcading on walls; Roof timbers; Restored chancel by Sir George Gilbert Scott; Large lectern in the form of an angel and an eagle; Memorials and stained glass

Congregation to Population Ratio: 210 / 5,208

Fundraising: Occasional concerts; No specific fundraising campaigns

Income Generation: Rental of Saint Andrew's Centre halls and rooms; Saint Andrew's Centre Café; Regular giving

Communications: Website; Facebook page; YouTube channel; Instagram account for youth work; Magazine *Network*; Yearbook; Leaflets; Noticeboard; Video screens in the café

Community Engagement: Saint Andrew's Centre and café; Services in care homes; Working with charities; Working with other faiths; Flower Festival; Light Treasure Hunt; Christmas Quiz; Churchyard Clean-Up; Dementia Choir; EssenceXtra; Mosaic service; Stepping Stones for pre-school children; Table Talk; TRIO groups.

ROOTS



Profile

Histon lies just four miles north of the centre of Cambridge and with its sister village of Impington straddles the B1049 road. The village was well established by 1066 and retains much of its ancient heritage. Flint tools have been unearthed and aerial photographs reveal evidence of Iron Age and Roman settlements. Histon sits close to the A14 and the busy Girton interchange and its nearest mainline railway station is Cambridge North. The two villages have a total population of 11,280 residents (2011 census). The nearest villages are Milton to the east and Oakington to the west, both of which have expanded or are due to expand substantially in the coming years.

Village amenities include a nursery, infants, junior and secondary schools. Besides St Andrew's church, there are several churches including St Andrew's Impington, a Methodist church, a Baptist church and a Salvation Army church. Saint Andrew's Centre – which functions as a church hall – is run by St Andrew's church in Histon and includes a café, various halls and meeting rooms that can be hired by the community. Histon and Impington are home to a number of businesses including five or six public houses and several cafés. There is also a British Legion Hall, although it is in a dilapidated state. Histon has a large retired population, with several sheltered housing developments and nursing homes.

The village sign of Histon depicts a man in a stove hat holding a large rock. This represents Moses Carter (1801–1860) a local strongman who lived in the village in the 19th century. Carter was alleged to be over seven feet tall, and famously carried a large stone from a building site to The Boot public house. The stone is still in the pub's garden. Carter is affectionately known locally as The Histon Giant.



Top: Southern view of St Andrew's church and churchyard. Middle: Exterior views of West window. Bottom: Thatched roofed houses in Histon village with the view of St Andrew's church tower in the distance.

Buildings

Histon parish church has been dedicated to Saint Andrew since 1217. The church is located in the centre of Histon but is tucked away from the main road. It is surrounded by a large churchyard and there are parish rooms adjacent to the building which are used solely by church groups, which was a planning condition related to their development. The building can accommodate 250 people comfortably, although it has held 400.

The Grade I listed church building comprises chancel, north and south transepts, central tower, and aisled and clerestoried nave with south porch, and is built mostly of field stones with ashlar dressings. The cruciform plan probably derives from a smaller 12th century church in scale with the existing tower. In 1270, a new chancel and transepts were added to the old tower. The present tower has been constructed within the outline of the original pre-14th century tower.

The church is well maintained and is currently in good condition. The heating system is adequate but there are plans to replace this at the same time as the proposed removal of the pews, which are not of any great age. An action plan has been drawn up by the PCC for the re-ordering of the church and this will include making it more accessible, more welcoming and more comfortable for its congregation and visitors. The roof tiles of the chancel were replaced in November 2004 and the porch roof was renewed at the same time. A sound system was recently added, at the cost of approximately £20,000. The belfry in the tower houses eight bells, the original five having been augmented by three more in the 1960s. The bells are regularly rung by the Histon Ringers (www.histon-ringers.org.uk).

The church has experienced lead thefts on two occasions but there have been few other incidents of theft or vandalism. The church is not currently open during the daytime but the key can be obtained from Saint Andrew's Centre.

Saint Andrew's Centre is located on the main road and was opened in 2014. It was built on the site of the old Church Halls which in turn had been a school and hospital during the first World War. It comprises two large downstairs halls and a café, a smaller upstairs hall and meeting room, a kitchen and an enclosed courtyard. It has a dedicated website at www.standrewscentre.org.uk



1st row: Saint Andrew's Centre facade in the centre of Histon. 2nd row: Entrance to the café.
3rd row: Halls 1 & 2 in the Centre. 4th row: Upstairs meeting room and outdoor space in the courtyard.

Artefacts

The entrance to the nave gives little suggestion of the splendid Early English transepts beyond – the finest in the county. The 13th-century roof timbers are still in evidence. The elaborate double piscinas in both transepts are similar to those in Jesus College Cambridge.

According to architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner (1902-1983), the Early English work at St Andrew Histon must have come from the lodge working at St Radegund's Nunnery and Jesus College in the late 13th century. The walls around feature elegant blank arcading.

The present chancel – Early English as well – was substantially restored by Canon Underwood and his architect, Sir George Gilbert Scott. The South transept features a tall niche which once held a statue of Saint Catherine but now only her wheel survives. A large angel stoops under an eagle's talons to provide an intricate lectern.

Histon parish church is particularly well endowed with pictorial stained glass, depicting the Creation, Annunciation and Nativity, Betrayal and Judgement, Instrument of the Passion and others. Stained glass in the South transept is by Clayton & Bell (1872). The organ is listed on the National Pipe Organ Register. A memorial to the Histon Giant, Moses Carter, can be found in the churchyard.



Overhead view of the Saint Andrew's Centre: The café is bottom left and the hall spaces are bottom right and top left. Top right is outdoor space.



Top: View towards the chancel from the nave. Middle: West window and arches in the nave; Wooden lectern in the form of an angel and an eagle. Bottom: Blank arcading in the north transept; Church organ and pews.

RUNNING

Team

The ministry team includes the vicar, a curate, a youth minister, a youth and children's team leader, a lay pastoral assistant and a small administrative team based at Saint Andrew's Centre. A number of workers are part-funded by the church, including an older person's coordinator, a dementia worker and a mental health worker. The café has two paid staff and a number of volunteers.

Religious Services

There are two services on a Sunday morning – a Holy Communion (alternating with Morning Prayer) service at 9.15 a.m. and a Holy Communion (alternating with Morning Prayer) service at 10.45 a.m. – this service, called Mosaic, is held once a month. The Mosaic welcomes all types of people at all ages and stages of life in doing church together on a Sunday. It includes informal times of worship and a range of zones to choose from – Active, Reflective, Creative, and Prayer.

The Mosaic all-age service is held at Saint Andrew's Centre. A Songs of Praise service is held every two months at Impington with participation from St Andrew Histon. An annual service with local churches is held on Good Friday. There are typically 200 worshippers at the Sunday service. The team have deliberately chosen to make its ministry less Sunday-specific, with a mid-week service and more informal forms of worship taking place at the Centre.

EDGE. This group is part of the 10.45 a.m. service at St Andrew's for anyone in school years 7-13. It starts at the church for the first part of the service and then the group walk down to Saint Andrew's Centre for games, activities, challenges and discussions based on the Bible. EDGE Breakfast happens on every third Sunday for the same age range, with a cooked breakfast at the Centre and a speaker. EDGE Thursday and Friday run after school at the Centre and are for those in years 7-11. There are also different groups for younger children during the Sunday service, starting from a creche for the babies right up to a group for 6 years old children.

The church also runs an **Alpha course** in the autumn evenings. There are also six-week courses in mission, prayer, spirituality and Bible study held in the week between Christmas and the start of Lent.

Covid-19 lockdown. Church services and other activities were temporarily suspended during the coronavirus pandemic and the national lockdown in 2020. During this period, the church body was keeping in touch with the community via **email** and **phone line**. On its **website**, the church shared videos and prayers on its **Prayer Central Online** webpage. On the **YouTube channel** 'St Andrew's Churches: Histon and Impington', the vicar and the church team regularly shared Sunday worship, daily prayer, encouraging thoughts and reflections, Biblical stories 'With Chewy and friends', and virtual walks in the parish.

REACH Ely Case Study | Part 2: Running

Parish Share

The parish share expenditure in 2019 was £79,400.

Fundraising

At present, St Andrew's church has not needed in any specific fundraising, although it does host events such as concerts that raise funds for charitable causes.

Income Generation

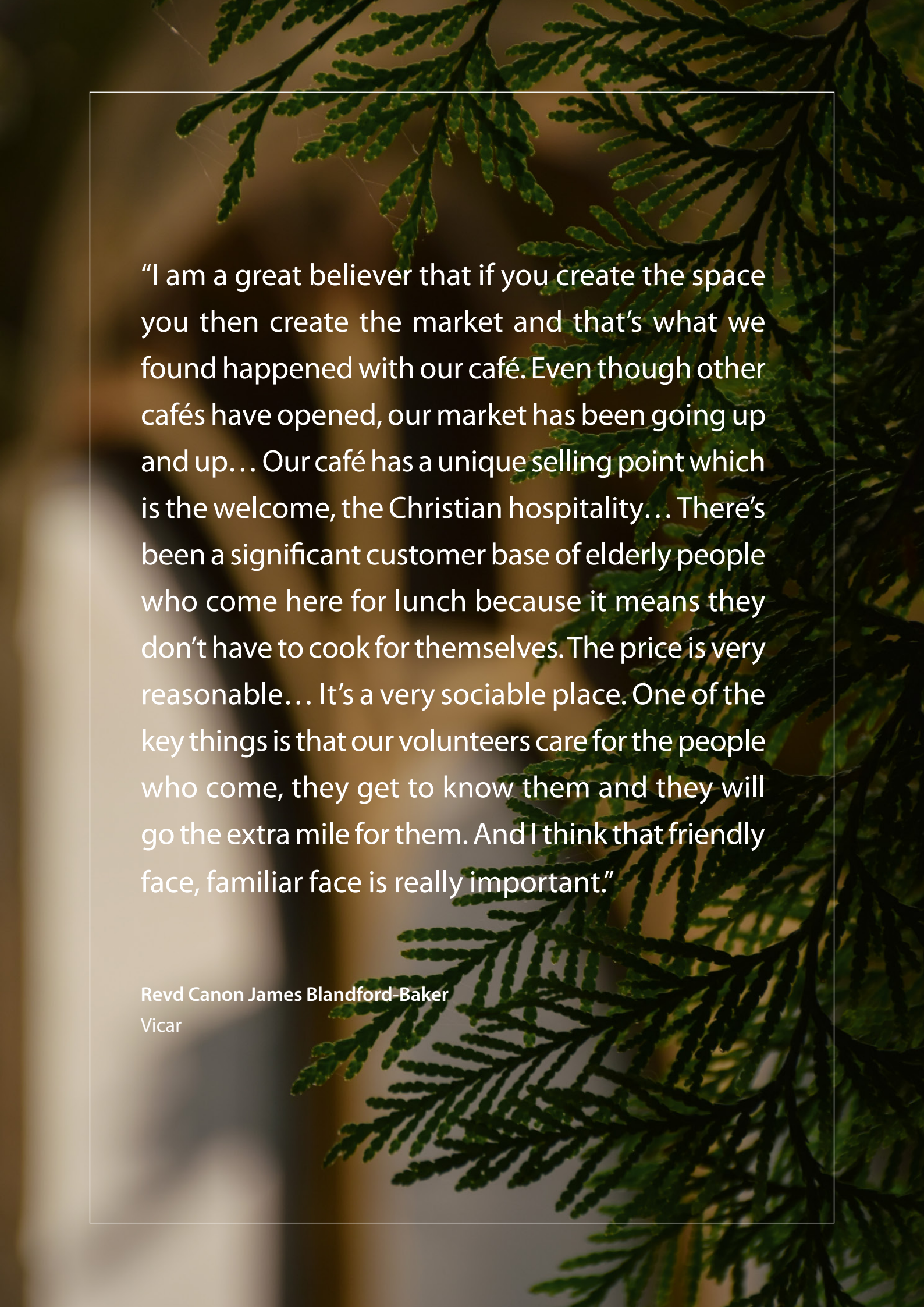
Rental income. One of the main sources of income is from rentals of Saint Andrew's Centre, which generates around £39,000 per year. Rental use is high, at approximately 80% of capacity. The development of the Centre was funded from donations from the PCC (£210,000), three gift days (£1.2 million), and grant funding (£100,000). Rooms are hired out to the NHS who use a room for psychotherapy sessions, to businesses, for fitness classes, and to the local history society among others. The church building itself is not available for hire.

Saint Andrew's Centre Café. The café generates around £8,000 in profit from a turnover of around £120,000. This business has grown by about 10-15% every year since it opened.

Giving and donations. The remainder of church funds derive from regular giving.

Communications

The church has a well-developed **website**, a **Facebook** page and its own **YouTube** channel 'St Andrew's Churches: Histon and Impington' (with 150 subscribers) for sharing worship, biblical stories, prayer and videos for children. The youth work at St Andrew's also runs its **Instagram** account (@standrewshiston.youth). An award-winning free **magazine Network** goes to every house in the village. There is also a **yearbook** published by the *Network* team which is delivered to every home. The team publish a number of **leaflets**, introducing the church and providing information about events and services. An informative **booklet** Histon Parish Church written by Robert Walker from Histon and Impington Village Society is on sale in the church. The Village Society also produced sketches for the church. Histon parish church has its own **noticeboard** at the Saint Andrew's Centre and uses village noticeboards, as well as putting **posters** up at local shops. The café has a **video screen** to promote events.



“I am a great believer that if you create the space you then create the market and that’s what we found happened with our café. Even though other cafés have opened, our market has been going up and up... Our café has a unique selling point which is the welcome, the Christian hospitality... There’s been a significant customer base of elderly people who come here for lunch because it means they don’t have to cook for themselves. The price is very reasonable... It’s a very sociable place. One of the key things is that our volunteers care for the people who come, they get to know them and they will go the extra mile for them. And I think that friendly face, familiar face is really important.”

Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker

Vicar

REACH

Community

Saint Andrew's Centre. In many ways, the Centre functions as a church hall providing space and modern facilities for the community. Regular events in the Centre's two halls range from Zumba, yoga and fitness classes to activities for toddlers, pre-school children and a community of singers affected by dementia.

Saint Andrew's Centre Café. The café offers many opportunities for the ministry to reach out to the community in a more informal way. The volunteers are caring in their approach to their customers and this is particularly important to the large elderly community in the village. They are not, however, the only customers as workmen from the A14 have also recently enjoyed breakfasts and lunches at the café. Customers are able to buy a reasonably priced meal and to enjoy the company of others.

The café is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, and from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays. The café is run by two paid staff and a team of volunteers. Some of the events run in the café include **The Worry Tree Café** for people with mental health problems, and **Edge Café** for young people, which is run in the evening when the café is closed. There is also an **IT drop-in session** on Wednesday afternoons and a weekly **Job Club**. The café attracts people of all ages but is especially popular with the large numbers of retired people living in the village and has a large number of regular (*see also Income Generation*). During the pandemic crisis in spring-summer 2020, the café was temporary closed and re-opened only at the end of July 2020.

Serving the elderly community. The lay team run services in the local care homes and Holy Communion is also taken out to the elderly. There is also a Men's Group set up specifically for the bereaved.

Working with charities. St Andrew Histon works closely with two local charities, specifically relating to mental health and dementia, which has led to a number of relevant groups being organised at the Centre (*see Community Engagement*).

Working with other faiths. The team are open to requests from those from other faiths. For example, a prayer space was created for a Muslim worshipper who needed to say her prayers during the day.

Events

Flower Festival. The flower festival in the church coincides with the village festival. All community groups in the village create displays for the festival.

Kigali Cathedral Choir. The choir visited St Andrew's in October 2019 and gave a concert followed by a bring-and-share lunch at Saint Andrew's Centre.

Light Treasure Hunt is an event that is run for children on All Hallows' Eve, featuring a treasure hunt, a disco and food.

Engagement

Autumn Churchyard Clean-Up. Volunteers are invited to help with the clean-up, with refreshments provided afterwards.

Children and Youth Workers. The team has a high level of engagement with the local schools through its children and youth workers. This happens mostly at the schools rather than in the church. There is also a wide variety of clubs and after-school groups available at the Centre for children and young people. One of these posts has been in place for at least 14 years.

Dementia Choir. The choir is run at Saint Andrew's Centre and its members will often stay for coffee or lunch at the café afterwards.

EssenceXtra is a venture for women of all ages, aiming to provide a welcoming space

to explore issues of faith and spirituality. It takes place once a month and involves thought-provoking discussion using film clips and other media. Wine, coffee and tea, and puddings and cheese are served.

Holiday Club is jointly run by the church of St Andrew together with other churches in the village. The club involves stories, songs, drama, messy challenges, quizzes, games, craft and prayers and times for reflection.

Mosaic. This service is held at the Centre once a month, where people can read the papers and socialise. It attracts people who find it a less formal than a traditional church service. This has lowered the threshold to new worshippers.

Stepping Stones. This includes three groups for pre-school children: **Playgroup** runs three times a week; a **Toddler Group** that meets twice a week; and a **Baby Club** that meets once a week.

Table Talk. This session is run on a Tuesday morning and residents are invited on an informal basis to ask questions and share conversations about Christianity.

TRIO. Small groups of two or three members of the congregation are encouraged to meet and to develop spiritual friendship. This involves exploring what God is doing in and through their lives in the midst of everyday life, praying together and supporting one another in different ways. Each TRIO can be flexible as to how often, when and where they will meet.



1st row: Community meeting in the hall at Saint Andrew's Centre; The Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker and the Bishop of Ely the Rt Revd Stephen Conway at the opening of the Saint Andrew's Centre on 7th July 2014. 2nd row: Children's activities in the Centre's courtyard; Cupcakes on sale at the café. 3rd row: Exterior and interior of the café. 4th row: Community event in the Centre (Photos by St Andrew Histon).



“In terms of profitability I would encourage [other churches] to seek volunteers. I am amazed at the volunteers here. Most of our volunteers are not members of the church, they are members of the community. That’s very significant and a big surprise because I didn’t think that would be the case. I am amazed how many people want to volunteer in an environment where they are on a team, people get on well, it’s sociable, that is remarkable. I think that helps to build communities [and] reduce your costs.”

Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker
Vicar

REFLECTIONS

Challenges

Church location

Histon parish church building is situated up the hill and hidden away from the main road. *'Some people live here and don't even know where the church is'*, adds the Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker.

Church building condition

The space within the church is not flexible enough for large events, given the positioning of the pillars and the fixed pews. It is not easy to lead worship in that space, and communicating with the congregation is a challenge as the people in the nave cannot see the people in the transepts. The church would need to install five or six screens to make sure that everyone could see the preacher. The pews are hard to move: people find it more congenial to visit the Centre and the café and the difference between the comfort provided in these two spaces is currently quite significant. The PCC would consider installing a glass porch on the west end and glass doors to make it a more welcoming space.

Potential competition from new cafés

One or two new cafés have opened in the village with the potential to take business away from the one in the Centre, although that has not happened to date. Having a volunteer team means that the Centre café can remain solvent. Many of these volunteers are non-worshippers and outside the church.

Lessons Learned

To raise funds for major projects from within the community

There had been four projects to develop the Saint Andrew's Centre over the past forty years that had failed. Working in partnership with the local council proved not to be a workable solution as the funding conditions had been too restrictive. In the end, the PCC found that working alone was really important and the community was very generous in their support for the project. The development of the Centre was organised by a number of small teams who undertook different parts of the project. This meant that a large number of people were invested in the project and wanted it to succeed.

To listen to the community

Prior to the development of the Centre, the PCC had sent out a number of surveys and had listened to what the community wanted from the building. Again, this made sure that the community was invested in the project. As a large congregation, many members are engaged in relationships outside the church and this is a good way of obtaining feedback on what works and what does not.

“One of the things that probably helps us most is that we are a large congregation. We have people who are engaged in relationships with people across the village who don't come to church. We can often listen quite well to the village by listening to the congregation. They are listening to their friends in the village... If we were a much smaller congregation, we would find it much more difficult, and that is when you would need to be going out and surveying.”

Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker
Vicar





Page 17: Pictorial stained glass in the church. Page 18: Church interior with the stone font and mixed seating.

To create a living church

The team had made a decision ten years ago to make the ministry less Sunday centric. While the Sunday congregation has declined slightly, the team have developed many other ways of reaching the community than the traditional Sunday service.

To adapt the church building for more flexible and a wider use

As part of their action plan, the team are reaching out to the community to find out what their needs are in terms of the re-ordering of the church and the need for accessibility.

To be open to people who might feel overwhelmed or intimidated by the church

With a focus on mental health and the needs of the elderly population, the team have focused on making the Centre a welcoming space for the more vulnerable members of the community.

To support people in need through creating volunteering opportunities

The volunteering opportunities at the Centre have created a very sociable and caring team who look out for each other and its more frail or isolated customers.



“Like all churches, we’ve seen our Sunday congregation diminish but that doesn’t mean there’s less people involved, it means the same people are coming but they are coming less frequently, and other people are coming midweek. And for them, that is church.”

Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker
Vicar

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