

BathAbbey



*Stained glass detail showing King Edgar The Peaceful being crowned*

2022 - 2023

# Annual Review

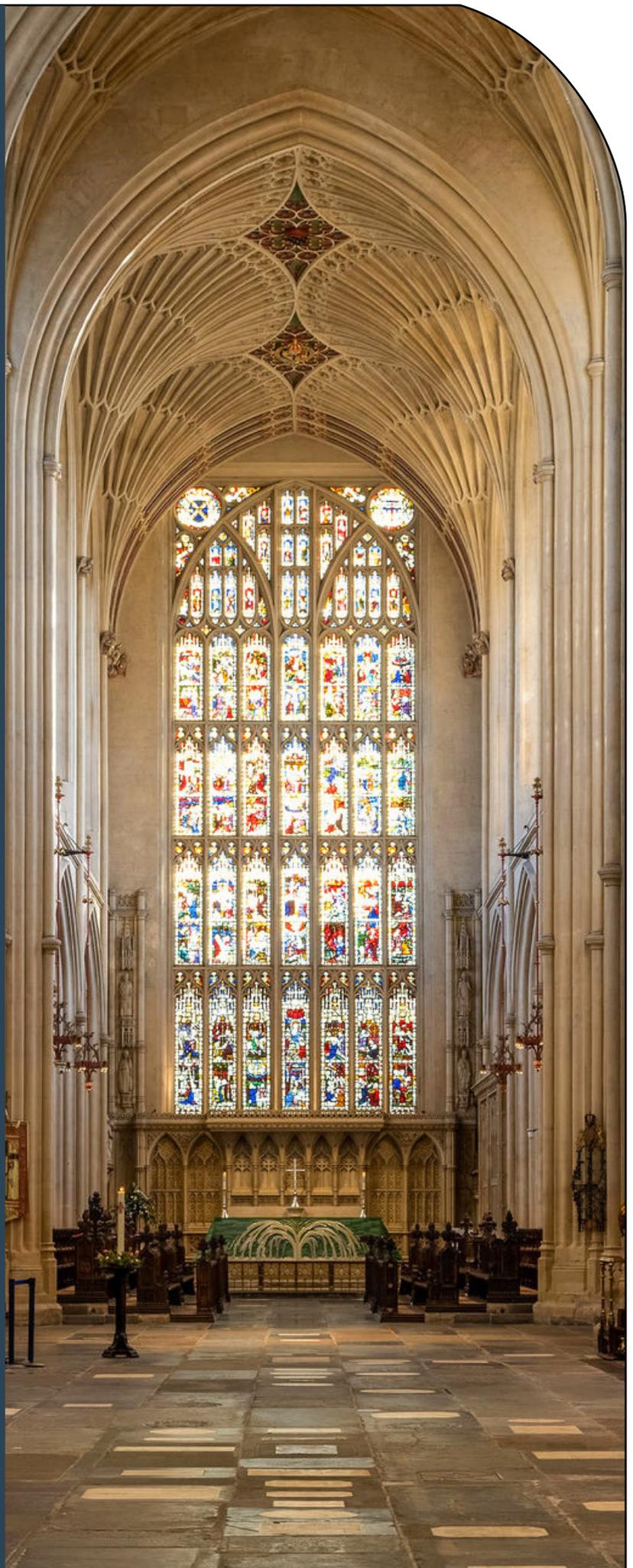
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# Contents

Welcome from the Rector	3
<b>Thanksgiving</b>	
Connecting with God in the Every Day	4
Worship and Music	5
<b>Telling</b>	
Worship & Ministry	6
<b>Teaching</b>	
Interpreting	7
Learning Programme	8
Youth & Families	9
<b>Tending</b>	
Pastoral Care	10
Safeguarding	11
<b>Transforming</b>	
Mission Support	12
<b>Treasuring</b>	
Financial Review	13-14
Visiting	15
Volunteering	16
Message from the Church	
Wardens	17
Remembering	18

“  
Living and  
Telling the  
Good News  
of Jesus  
”





## Welcome From the Rector

### Welcome

Welcome to this review of 2022-3 at Bath Abbey. It has been a hugely encouraging year, with many exciting highlights that my wonderful colleagues describe below.

As Rector my own contribution to this report usually focuses on how we have served our mission purpose, of “Living and Telling the Good News of Jesus”. This year, however, I need to say something about the challenges of resourcing that core mission, behind the Abbey scenes.

Later in this review you will find details, courtesy of our Executive Director Frank Mowat (who with our Church Council has worked tirelessly upon it) of our Parochial Church Council (PCC) Recovery Plan. This addresses the major financial challenge caused by the pandemic, of severe loss of visitor income at the Abbey.

Recovery planning has meant making some very difficult decisions. I myself was most particularly concerned that charging visitors for entry (even though only for tourists, not for locals, nor any wanting to pray and worship) might damage the Abbey’s core mission purpose.

However, having prayerfully considered all options with great care, the PCC and I unanimously approved this plan, as our only viable pathway to recovery. We also called for our own levels of financial support to be raised as a congregation - sacrificial generosity for which I am profoundly grateful.

Now as I write, albeit just two months into our new visitor offer, I am thrilled to report that, thanks to fantastic support from all our staff and volunteers, we are already seeing strong signs of essential financial recovery on the way.

Further, and here my gratitude to

God simply overflows, it seems our visitor numbers are not reducing anything like as drastically as I had feared. Indeed, due to the amazing work of so many, not least welcomers, stewards, chaplains and guides, together with simply stunning new interpretation resources to share, I believe our mission opportunities are now as rich as ever they were ... and are set to grow richer and more fruitful still.

Through all this season of discernment and hard work I have been so grateful for your support and partnership in the life of the Abbey. As we move further into 2023 and (pray God) a post-pandemic world, PCC and staff will of course keep our Church’s mission priorities under careful review – and I sincerely covet your prayers for God’s wisdom and courage in my own leadership. Thank you!

**Revd. Canon Guy Bridgewater**  
**Rector of Bath Abbey**





## THANKSGIVING – Worshipping & Praying

### Connecting with God in the Every Day

The Vision of Bath Abbey is to Live and Tell the Good News of Jesus, with the City of Bath and its visitors. We pursue that calling in 6 key ways, one of which we choose each year to focus upon and actively strengthen:

#### *Vision of Bath Abbey*

##### THANKSGIVING

Worshipping and praying

##### TELLING

Proclaiming the Gospel

##### TEACHING

Growing as followers of Jesus

##### TENDING

Caring as a church family

##### TRANSFORMING

Pursuing justice & peace in society

##### TREASURING

Sustaining and renewing creation

The 2022/3 focus has been upon the “Telling” element of our purpose, as described by Stephen in this review (on page 6). An exciting new suite of resources has been provided to support our daily witness to Jesus Christ – from our state-of-the-art Discovery Centre, to new interpretation signage, guidebook and literature, a new audio guide and hourly guided tours.

In turn, the 2023/4 focus will shift to strengthening the “Tending” element of our purpose, as described here by Chantal (on page 10). To undergird and inform all our caring as a church family, the PCC and staff have agreed the following set of Abbey Values – which we pray will describe ever more tangibly and visibly all dimensions of our life together.

#### *Values of Bath Abbey*

##### WELCOMING

“What you do for the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do for me” (Matthew 25v 40)

“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3 v28)

##### SHARING

“There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all people ... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Corinthians 12 v6, 27)

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves” (Philippians 2 v3)

##### CHERISHING

“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3 v18)

“Encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5 v11)

##### FLOURISHING

“Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Ephesians 4 v15)

**Revd. Canon Guy Bridgewater**  
**Rector of Bath Abbey**



## THANKSGIVING – Worshipping & Praying

### Worship & Music

What a joy to be back to normal after the pandemic! In April 2022, the Boys and Lay Clerks visited Southwell Cathedral and in July the Girls and Lay Clerks toured Holland and Belgium. Our latest CD, 'Caritas' received fabulous reviews in the autumn and was a featured CD on ClassicFM (reaching No 14 in the Classical music charts!).

In July we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Girls Choir with a concert of music by women composers and a new commission by celebrated composer Roxanna Panufnik (who was also commissioned for the Coronation of King Charles III).

A royal theme prevailed throughout the year with a festive Jubilee concert in June, while September saw poignant Memorial Evensongs following the death of Queen

Elizabeth II. We are proud of the high standards achieved by the Melody Makers who led the Queen's Jubilee party in June, and who featured in many services and concerts through the rest of the year. Naomi MacLeod-Jones has led the group with distinction since September 2022: they were previously helmed by Bethan Dudley-Fryar.

All the choirs performed at many significant services throughout the year, particularly over the Advent, Christmas and Easter periods. The choirs also broadcast a service on Christmas Day on BBC Radio 4.

There have been many concert highlights, including a moving Remembrance concert in November, featuring the newly formed Abbey Chamber Choir for the first time, and most recently an uplifting performance of Bach's St John Passion during Holy Week 2023.

In February 2023 we appointed our

new Assistant Organist, Dewi Rees who is joining us in September. In March the choirs recorded their newest disc 'Baroque Christmas Splendour' accompanied by baroque instrumentalists Rejouissance.

Our world famous Klais organ was cleaned and restored early in 2023 by a team from Bonn, and since Easter has been leading worship again with renewed verve.

**Huw Williams**  
*Director of Music*





## TELLING - Telling the Good News of Jesus

### Worship & Ministry

The final stages of the Footprint Project provided the opportunity to refresh the way 'the good news of Jesus Christ' was integrated into the Discovery Centre exhibits, guides, tours and interpretation material.

Exhibitions which support the proclamation of the Gospel have included a Diptych exhibition focused on 'Prayers of the Bible', a 'HOPE' exhibition in the sanctuary and a 'Heroes of the Commonwealth' exhibition showcasing stories of people from Commonwealth countries who fought for justice and peace with British forces in the First World War. A 'Threads through Creation' exhibition with 12 large silk tapestries illustrating the biblical story of Creation was very popular with visitors. Supporting material and talks offered a deeper understanding of the story of creation in the scriptures.

During Holy Week, images curated by the Church Mission Society under the theme of 'The Christ we

Share' were used in services and meditations to support teaching on the meaning of the 'Cross of Christ' as represented in different cultures.

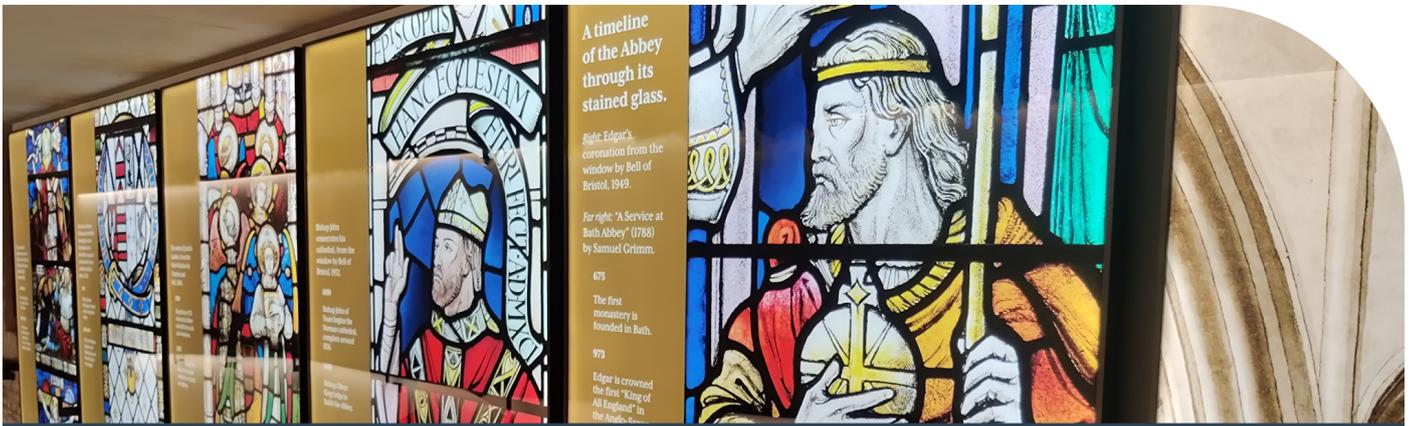
In its civic work the Abbey was actively involved in celebrating Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee and in September hosted a broadcast of her funeral service, with associated concerts and opportunities for visitors to express grief and prayer.

Telling the good news of Jesus in partnership with the wider church in the city included hosting workshops on eco-farming and lifestyle opportunities to combat global warming, an interfaith pilgrimage and participation in the city's Re-Balance Festival with a series of 'Movement and Meditation' workshops.

A university Freshers event was hosted to welcome Christian students to the church in the city and promote faith sharing and volunteering.

**Revd. Stephen Girling**  
*Abbey Missioner*





## TEACHING - Interpreting

### Interpreting

In 2022 the new Abbey Guidebook was published by Taylor Brothers (no relations to the author). On 6 March 2023, the new permanent exhibition "Building on Faith: Bath Abbey's Churches and People through the Ages" opened in the new Discovery Centre.

In the first month, we welcomed 16,645 visitors to the centre, and their feedback, as well as that of volunteers, staff, funders, and the press has been unanimously positive. Some of the

best quotes so far about the exhibition include:

"I'm travelling in Europe [from America] visiting cathedrals and a lot of religious sites, and there is a warmth here you don't find everywhere." (Woman, 30s).

"It was amazing ... We will come back again!" (Local family with 3 children).

"The best explanation of any building and its archaeology I have ever seen ... Better than the Vatican!" (Man, 40s).

**Dr. Oliver Taylor**  
*Head of Interpretation & Engagement*

"There is a warmth here you don't find everywhere."

"It was amazing!"

"Better than the Vatican!"





## TEACHING - Growing as Followers of Jesus

### Learning Programme

The number of schools visiting has continued to grow steadily over the past year, with new tours and workshops on offer. The 'Threads through Creation' exhibition was a real draw with children fascinated by the colourful images. Easter Experience was run once again with students exploring in depth the meaning of the Easter Story.

For families, our trails and craft activities have been popular all year, including a special 'Towers Day' exploring the science behind the Abbey's

architecture, plus an 'Animal Art' day of colourful collage.

A friendly welcome has been given to a wide range of community groups through tailored workshops and talks. They included art projects supporting mental health groups, a language class for Ukrainian refugees, fun holiday workshops for young carers and a warm space called 'The Cosy Place' for people experiencing life challenges.

**Polly Andrews**  
*Learning Manager*





## TEACHING – Growing as Followers of Jesus

### Youth & Families

Our Youth and Families Minister, Tim, retired at Christmas 2022. We still miss him! Nevertheless the Abbey Kids and youth groups have kept themselves occupied.

Starting with a fun nativity service starring Dermot the Donkey, to decorating biscuits (Abbey Kids) pancake flipping (Boys' Choir), making pizza (Anchor), necklace-making, balloon tennis and planting bulbs, both the Abbey Kids and Youth /

Anchor groups have been busy - often reporting back at the end of the 9.30am service, and occasionally distributing gifts to the congregation.

Special thanks must go to Rebecca Jellis, who helped out as part of her Duke of Edinburgh Award, and to our wonderful volunteers (in particular Julia Underwood, Louise Perry and Jacki Barnes) who have stepped up this year in helping our children and young people to have fun and grow in faith.

**Cath Candish**  
*Abbey Curate*





## TENDING - Living in Love & Faith

### Pastoral Care

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:10)

The opportunities to strengthen our pastoral care and discipleship have increased dramatically in the Abbey and across the city. There is an imperative to provide for the needs of our frail elderly Abbey members, as well as carers, so one-to-one pastoral visits have increased substantially and Contact Group leaders continue to provide superb pastoral support.

In addition, pastoral care reaches our newest members; families and children; and those working in demanding careers. We have an excellent Chaplaincy Team so our visitors are well supported with a listening ear, and we have introduced prayer

ministry in our Sunday services. The staff have received high quality mental health training to support them as they offer pastoral care to the public.

Across the city we have been intentional about linking with Bath schools, offering support to chaplaincy at secondary level, and working with the diocese to host children’s services. We have provided bereavement support through a Grief and Loss course for the city, and worked with the diocese to train in Anna Chaplaincy to strengthen our care to the elderly. This year we have also undertaken a review of pastoral care which will become the Abbey’s focus for 2024.

Thank you to all who so generously offer their time and care.

**Rev. Chantal Mason**  
*Abbey Pastor*





## TENDING – Caring as a Church Family

### Safeguarding

Another challenging year with continued focus on ensuring we can be confident the Abbey is a safe space for all those who come through our doors. After almost twenty years of outstanding service as Parish Safeguarding Officer, Derek Smith ‘retired’.

We have welcomed a much more streamlined process that continues to include established, secure procedures for DBS checks on volunteers and employees and enables us to operate within a strict 3% parameter (82 clearances/re-clearances completed). The PCC monitors risk assessments for

our choristers when they visit other venues. We also check details of choirs supporting Abbey services during holidays. CCTV will help the Operations team to be vigilant throughout our new facilities.

Training needs are extensive and increasing (approximately 235 hours of training completed).

We are grateful to all who maintain the sanctuary of the Abbey for visitors and worshippers of all ages, choristers, staff, and volunteers.

**Judith Babb & Natalie Cox-Mullings**  
*(Interim) Parish Safeguarding Officer & HR Officer*





## TRANSFORMING – Mission Support

### Mission Support

This year we have focused on supporting five external mission partners.

The **Genesis Trust** work with those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged in the city and region of Bath.



**Arocha UK** work to promote a Christian response to the challenges of global warming.



**Unseen** work to address the challenges of modern slavery, offering training and advocacy.



**Ripple Effect** brings smallholder farmers together to learn new skills and share knowledge so they can improve their livelihoods and thrive.



**Wycliffe** work in Togo to provide literacy training and the translation of the bible, and other resources, into the Iife language.



Mission Partner support has been spread through the year, to gain more traction with mission among the Abbey's congregation and with its visitors. Support has been financial, awareness raising (through information and visiting speakers) and through prayer.

Partnerships with organisations including Bath Mind, Bath Christian Action Network and DHI (Developing Health and Independence) have supported their work through the use of the Abbey building and offering volunteering experiences.

**Revd. Stephen Girling**  
*Abbey Missioner*





## TREASURING – Financial Review



2022 represented the first full year of the Abbey being fully re-opened post the COVID-19 pandemic. However in February, war broke out in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis ensued as fuel, heating and food costs increased. Overseas tourists had not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels and the UK was also experiencing a significant rise in inflation and interest rates. The net effect of these major economic issues was that Bath Abbey saw a fall in visitor numbers and service collection monies along with a rise in operating costs. Staff costs increased as a number of visitor-facing volunteers decided not to return to the Abbey post the pandemic.

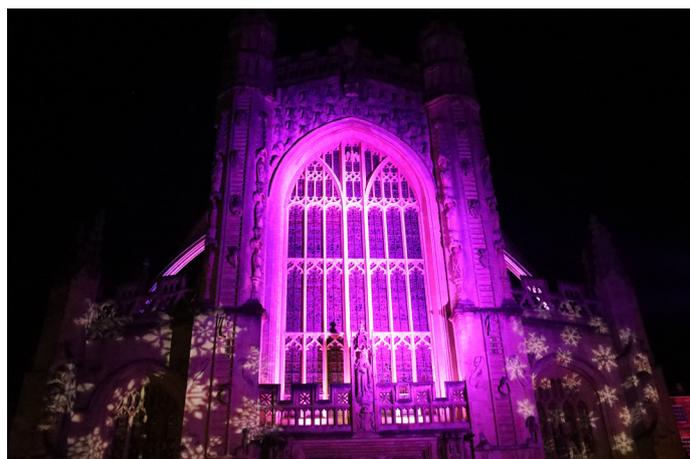
The Footprint Project experienced further delays, with the opening of our Discovery Centre pushed back (caused by supply chain issues), and protracted negotiations regarding the proposed Discovery Centre fire escape link. We are now pleased to report that the Discovery Centre opened on 6 March 2023.

By July 2022 we became concerned that visitor numbers were about 20% behind budget, and costs

such as heating, were higher than budget. Our revised forecast for the full year indicated that we would incur an unpalatable deficit, more than 10 times worse than our budget deficit of £36k. As a result of these concerns, we started working on a Recovery Plan which would be transformational, enabling us to achieve operational surpluses from 2023 and beyond. We also approached the Diocesan team (“DBF”) who agreed to support our plans.

After months of research, consultation and planning, our Bath Abbey Recovery Plan was unanimously approved by the PCC and DBF in November 2022.

During this process, we kept a tight control on costs and cashflow. Events, shop and tour income were strong, with visitor numbers and visitor income also improving (helped by the return of the Christmas Market in Bath). We welcomed 358k visitors in 2022 which was 15% below budget and 30% down on pre-pandemic levels. Excluding Footprint Project finances and with the support of the Diocesan team, the Abbey produced a trading deficit of £132k for the year.





## TREASURING – Financial Review

We are pleased to report that during the second half of the year:

- We have been able to sub-let our York Street office - rental income now covers our rent.
- We successfully negotiated new heating contracts to minimise the increase in gas and electricity bills.
- A successful stewardship campaign took place in October which led to a 20% increase in Planned Giving for 2023.
- Footprint Project costs continue to be controlled. We have sufficient funds set aside to cover all costs to completion.
- We organised the major refurbishment of our Klais Organ (completed in March 2023) following receipt of a significant donation from an anonymous donor.

The Bath Abbey Recovery Plan was implemented in conjunction with the opening of the Discovery Centre in March 2023. The key elements of the Abbey's Recovery Plan are as follows:

- The introduction of an admission fee for visitors - £6.50 for adults - replacing asking for donations on entry.
- No entry charge for BA1 and BA2 residents, Discovery Card holders, or those visiting to pray, attend a service or to light a candle.
- Concessions available for students, children, carers and families.
- Admission fee includes free guided tour and Discovery Centre entry.
- Headcount reduction via natural wastage, i.e. not replacing certain leavers.
- Parish Share is being paid in full each month.

- The Diocese to convert our 10 year on-demand loan to a term-loan repayable over 5 years.

At the time of writing this review, we have been charging an entry fee for almost 2 months and are pleased to report that our overall performance is in line with our 2023 budget.

Despite the difficult economic environment, we enter 2023 with a very strong feeling of hope, positivity & confidence.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our team of PCC, staff, volunteers, chaplains and clergy for working tirelessly though 2022 and into 2023, for their continued hard work and commitment, and for developing and implementing a robust Recovery Plan.

Thank you.

**Frank Mowat**  
*Executive Director*





## TREASURING – Visiting

### Visiting

In 2022 we received our first mystery shopper visit from BVA-BDRC. We scored 87% placing us in their outstanding visitor attraction category. 2022 also saw the 100th anniversary of the Jackson Extension and to celebrate we threw a 1920s themed social for our volunteers.

We began 2023 by welcoming the stunning 'Threads through Creation' exhibition which contributed to increased visitor numbers during our normally quiet months and was a huge success in the Shop. We had estimated we would take £10,000 from exhibition merchandise for the 10-week period but our wonderful shop team exceeded this, achieving £16,000. This helped the Shop achieve their best first quarter on record.

In February we launched our new audio guide and have plans to translate this into other languages, ready for the busy summer period. March saw the introduction of a new Abbey Highlights Floor Tour. Take-up has been fantastic, with some tours reaching 65 visitors, and feedback glowing!



Our Tower Tours, recently renamed 'Step it Up!' continue to be popular, with outstanding reviews on Trip Advisor and we have seen 38 proposal tours (all yeses!). We are continuing to work with Bath Astronomers, and since November 2022 have been able to run 11 tours with 201 visitors taking part. The tours now include an additional element of a planetarium experience inside the Abbey. A huge thank you to the team at Bath Astronomers for working with us on this offer.

Looking to the future we are excited to be welcoming Luke Jerram's Gaia in the Autumn and are working on reflecting in the shop, the stories told in the new Discovery Centre.

The biggest thank you of the year has to go to our wonderful staff and volunteers for their continued support during a year of unprecedented change, we couldn't do it without them.

**Sarah Fielding & Donna Lodge**  
*Head of Visitor Experience & Shop Manager*





## TREASURING – Volunteering

### Volunteering

This year has seen many new and existing volunteers wanting to get involved in what our new volunteering opportunities have to offer.

From new Abbey Floor Tours, to being part of our wonderful new Learning activities, and Discovery Centre. Being able to hold regular volunteer socials post-Covid has helped volunteers to form new

relationships and reconnect with existing ones, helping to really grow the community spirit.

As always we are extremely grateful for our volunteers, and their enthusiasm, commitment, and free time this year has equated to over 5,500 hours. We cannot thank them enough!

**Natalie Cox-Mullings**  
*HR Officer*





## TREASURING – Message from the Church Wardens

### Back to Normal

Another year has gone and it feels like the pandemic is just about over at last. All our services are back to normal and good numbers of worshippers have returned. We are still taking precautions with the administration of the Communion Bread and Wine so that people feel confident to receive these holy gifts.

Over the Christmas period we again hosted numerous school Carol Services and Shoppers' Carols and welcomed thousands of people into the

Abbey. Confirmation and Ordination Services have been held, along with Mayor Making and other Civic Events. The Abbey is truly back in the centre of Bath Christian worship. Our recent Holy Week and Easter Services were poignant and joyous occasions, with our congregation numbers swelled by many visitors from home and abroad.

Andrew and I would like to thank all our Deputy Wardens and Worship Support Volunteers who keep our services running smoothly each week.

**Rose Amphlett and Andrew Bragg**  
*Church Wardens*



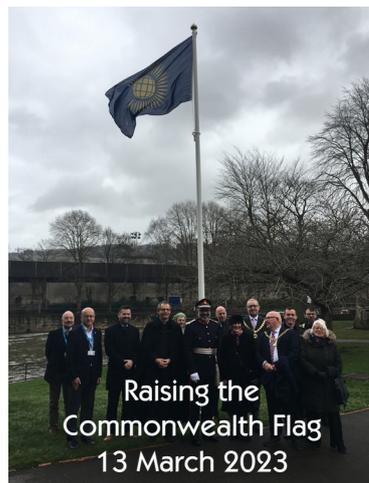
Melody Makers' first Evensong 2022



Ukraine Benefit Concert 24 Feb 2023



Family Carol Service



Raising the  
Commonwealth Flag  
13 March 2023



Remembrance Day 2022



## TREASURING – Abbey Family Farewell

### Remembering with love, members of the Abbey Church family who have died

As we look back on the past year, we remember with love and affection all those from our church family who have died.

We thank God for their lives and their example of faith. We honour them, as we remember with gratitude their unique contribution to the life and mission of the Abbey, which will be highlighted at our Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

At our special All Souls service in the Autumn, we will hold before God their loved ones in prayer, as we remember these members of our church family.

May they continue to inspire us to be all that God calls us to be, as we receive their baton of faith:

- Sally Barton
- Patricia Batten
- Philip Bliss
- Brian Chappill
- Gerald Collett
- Barry Cooper
- John de Cordova
- Brian Hood
- Brian King
- Audrey Maunder
- Molly (Tim) McConnell
- Anthony Pinnegar
- Peter Russell
- Ian Stratton
- Irene Weller
- Shelagh Yeates

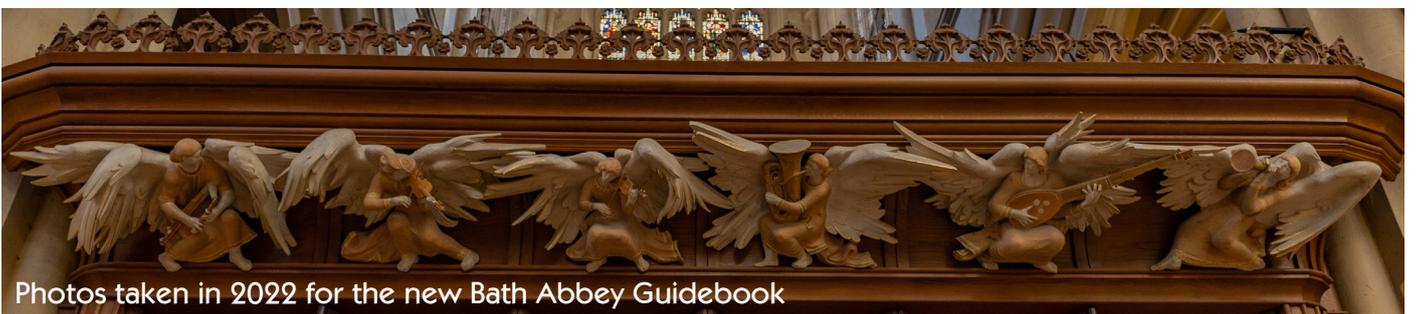
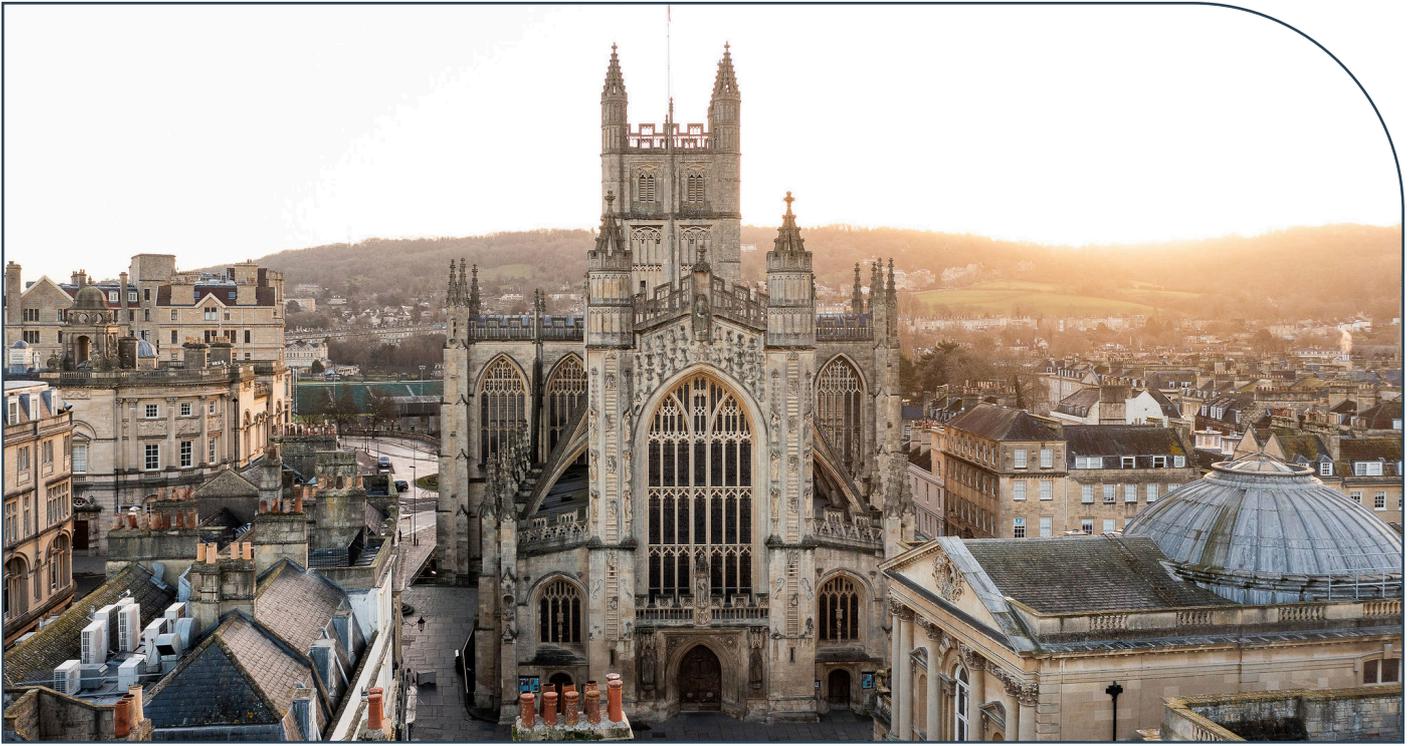
(From our Abbey Electoral Roll)

**Revd. Chantal Mason &  
Revd. Guy Bridgewater  
Abbey Pastor &  
Rector of Bath Abbey**



“Therefore, since we are so surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us”. Hebrews 12: 1





Photos taken in 2022 for the new Bath Abbey Guidebook

# BathAbbey

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