



# Christ Church Gipsy Hill Annual Report 2021



## **Welcome – Rev Jonathan Croucher**

This is our first full annual report for two years: COVID continued in 2021 to have a major impact on all of us as individuals and households, and as a church family. It has been a rollercoaster year – where some things seem to have happened only yesterday; others a lifetime ago. As we headed towards Christmas 2020 there was hope for a fresh start in January 2021. Weeks later, faith communities were asked by the Mayor of London to close their doors once again as COVID cases began to soar and the Delta strain of the virus brought fresh and merciless impact. And so, with highs and lows through the year, we approached Christmas 2021 with similar concerns and uncertainties, though grateful as 2022 began that the fresh wave of COVID that followed had, for most people, less extreme consequences.

So the year under review feels like it was exhausting – a constant re-invention of what we were able to do and how we were able to do it. But in the pages that follow, we are reminded that, among all the challenges, God has been at work. In the small things – the calls, the conversations, the shared prayers, the gatherings on zoom – as well as some of the big ones – the joy of being together for Easter and Christmas, the introduction to the Farsi speaking community, the restoration of our children and youth work – we have seen the Holy Spirit touching lives, calling us to renewed ministry, inviting us at every turn to look to him, and to depend on his strength alone.

It hasn't been easy – there have been losses, and disappointments and many, many challenges. But writing this

at the beginning of May 2022, we can be grateful for God's faithfulness, and hopeful in his promises and provision.

Let us renew our commitment to re-build our community of faith, continuing to welcome all as we have endeavoured to do in these difficult times.

May we explore together what we need to equip and encourage one another to walk day by day in our different situations as disciples of the Lord Jesus.

And let us continue to proclaim the gospel afresh as we serve God in our church and our communities.

Much love

Jonathan

## **Mission Action Plan**

Christ Church's mission action plan sets our vision for our church, and provides us with a focus as we seek to respond to God's call on us as a community of faith.

### **Our Purpose**

We are here to...

- **build** up a worshipping community of faith in God that is welcoming to all.
- **equip** and encourage one another to live our daily lives as disciples of Jesus Christ,
- **serve** God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, in our church, our communities and our world.

### **Our Vision**

We want Christ Church Gipsy Hill to be a community of faith that, in its welcome and worship, is open and accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds.

In the life of the church, its worship and activities, we want to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ and grow together in faith and in understanding as we seek God's will in every area of life.

We are committed through accessible and relevant bible based teaching and prayerful worship to equip one another as disciples of Jesus Christ as we serve Him in our diverse daily lives. We want to provide space to ask difficult questions, share our doubts and deepen our faith.

Through energetic ministry with children and young people we hope to nurture new generations of believers to their own active faith.

We celebrate the love of God for all of creation and recognise our calling to respond to God's love by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and by loving and serving our community and one another.

We want to engage prayerfully with the needs and challenges in our local community, our nation and the world, encouraging one another, nurtured and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to respond individually and collectively to God's call to seek justice and love mercy.

## ***Worship, teaching and prayer***

### **Ministry team – Jonathan Croucher**

We were delighted in 2021 to have two ordinations to enjoy. Within our ministry team Gemma Birt with her husband Simon and family had been worshipping with us at Christ Church on placement during Gemma's training for ordination at Cuddesdon. Although Gemma's full time training meant that she was not around so much during the week, we were particularly blessed by her thoughtful preaching and prayerfulness. Gemma was ordained deacon at the cathedral on 26<sup>th</sup> June and is serving her curacy with Gill O'Neill at St John's East Dulwich. We are looking forward to her coming back to preach later this year.

Along with Gemma, Luke Whiteman was ordained and joined us at Christ Church as Pioneer curate along with his wife Emma, and baby Zachary. Luke trained for ordination at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford (where Emma Lowth also trained) whilst leading a small church on the Clapham Park Estate as parish missionary. Prior to that he had been a long term member at Holy Trinity Clapham, where he met Emma, who works as a civil servant. Emma and Luke moved into the Vicarage at Emmanuel West Dulwich on Clive Road just before the ordination service. We are delighted to have them with us. Luke has been taking a particular lead on children's work, and Emma has joined the music team playing piano at the morning services and for Inspire.

### **The Roberts**

The summer saw Richard and Rhos Roberts retire to Cardiff. Together they have been a great blessing to the ministry of Christ Church, to the whole congregation and to many individuals who experienced their deep kindness and generosity over their 15 years at the church and their prayerful discipleship. Richard was an experienced service leader and preacher and a gifted pianist, and he and Rhos together led our home group work and our pastoral care team. We are so grateful to them for all they have given to the church community in their time here. They were a great support to me personally, offering generous time, wisdom and prayer support throughout my time in the parish.

### **Pippa Evans**

Pippa Evans also left the staff team in the Summer to begin her masters course in Durham. Pippa joined us as Ministry Assistant in 2017, shortly before her husband Henry was diagnosed with secondary cancer. Following Henry's death in 2018, Pippa decided to remain on the team and has had a huge impact on our community life – in her tireless contribution to different ministries, and her faith and strength in the face of Henry's death. She led our youth work and before and during the pandemic led us through the eco church process, enabling us to be one of the first London churches to achieve the Silver Award. In between those things she was a huge support to many aspects of our ministry - running the Bereavement Journey, helping with Open Door and coordinating our 20/30s group. We are hugely grateful to her.

## **Beth Peters**

The Peters family has been synonymous with children's work at Christ Church for many many years. Whilst a reader here, Heather Peters, before her ordination, coordinated the children's work in church, and for a period ran Playpen. As Heather left us to serve her curacy in Brixton, we were delighted that Beth continued to worship with us and her confidence and leadership grew. During lockdown, Beth produced every week a set of resources for our church children along with a weekly video encouraging the children in their faith. It was a wonderful gift to families in the church and a huge blessing, in addition to her ongoing work with special events at Easter and Christmas. Returning to church after the pandemic restrictions were lifted, Beth helped us restore children's work in church but felt the time was right to step back and find a new church home elsewhere. She has been a wonderfully creative gift to our church over many years and a blessing to the children who have passed through Sunday School over that time. We are grateful to the Lord for her and delighted that she has found a new church home with the Kingdom Faith team in Horsham.

## **Emmanuel West Dulwich**

In the course of 2020, the longstanding Vicar of Emmanuel, who had been on a long term absence for two years, retired from ministry. Jonathan, as Area Dean, had been overseeing the life of the congregation over this period and was asked by the Bishop to formalise that responsibility as Priest in Charge. As part of that arrangement, Luke Whiteman was offered as a second curate to increase the clergy support available in the parishes.



Jonathan was licensed to this new additional role in April 2020 and over the last year has spent two Sundays each month with the congregation at Emmanuel, working with them to re-establish regular worship on a Sunday and to help settle their administration and rebuild their community work in the adjacent community centre. Luke, Emma and Pauline also lead and preach regularly, along with Rev John Marshall, a retired priest from St James Clapham.

The congregation is small but committed – with a regular Sunday attendance of between 20 and 25, including children and over the year we have seen several old members return to join the congregation. The Emmanuel Foodhub, which began in October, is a fruit of this new responsibility and in 2022 there are plans to restart on Fridays an after school homework club and youth club.

### **Sunday morning services – Pauline Simpson**

At the beginning of the year, when the country went into a third lockdown, we followed most other churches by closing for public worship. We continued to livestream a service on Facebook at 9.30am each Sunday. On Palm Sunday, we were pleased to re-open our doors to a service at 11am, continuing to livestream a more or less identical service at 9.30am. The congregation at 11am gradually increased during the year as people became more confident about venturing out and being with others in a safe space. From the beginning of August we stopped the 9.30am livestream and instead streamed the 11am service, something that continues to be appreciated by those less able to come to the church, and some people from further afield.

We have always been conscious of obeying government and diocese rules and guidance, and endeavoured to keep things as safe as possible. Many were delighted when congregational singing was permitted at the end of July, though we have kept part of the church as a non-singing area for those less comfortable with live singing. We have continued to wear masks, keep some social distancing, share the peace from where we are standing, and receive communion in one kind only. We look forward to the day when these restrictions are no longer necessary!

From the end of July we resumed serving tea and coffee after the service, initially in the church garden then in the hall when it got colder. Many people really appreciated the chance to chat more after the service.

### **Sermon series on Sunday mornings – Pauline Simpson**

#### **Mark's gospel**

We spent the whole of the first part of the year, from January to mid-May exploring Mark's gospel, with its themes of showing who Jesus is – "the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God", the accounts of miracles and teaching, and the demand for a response from us to follow him.

#### **The five marks of mission**

During June and the first week of July we explored the five marks of mission as set out by the Church of England, though in a different order, namely: to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth; to teach, baptise and nurture new believers; to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and

pursue peace and reconciliation; to respond to human need by loving service; to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.

### **Ephesians**

For the rest of July until the end of August we followed the lectionary epistle readings, looking at selected passages from the letter to the Ephesians, some people's favourite epistle.

### **Philippians**

From September until the middle of November we unpacked the letter to the Philippians, with its themes of partnership in the gospel and various aspects of discipleship, around the wonderful central passage declaring the humanity and divinity of Jesus, and his example of servanthood for us to follow.

At other times of the year, particularly during Advent and Christmas we used the lectionary readings. As well as our licensed clergy and reader - Jonathan, Emma, Luke and Pauline – we have been blessed by regular or occasional preaching from Richard Roberts, Pete Moorey, Gemma Birt, Pippa Evans, Ali Seal and our archdeacon Simon Gates. The variety of preaching styles and experience is enriching for us all.

### **Inspire – Emma Lowth**

Inspire, our regular evening service with a contemporary charismatic feel, continued to meet over Zoom for the first part of the year, exploring encounters with God in the Old Testament. We were delighted to return to church in June, and to begin singing together again, led by our wonderful worship team. Our Autumn series exploring what it means to Abide in Christ gave us plenty of opportunity to grow together in

Listening Prayer and to explore different ways that we can draw close to God in our daily lives.

### **Music – Emma Lowth**

Huge thanks must go to all our Christ Church musicians and singers who kept our spirits lifted through musical worship during the pandemic restrictions. Since congregational singing remained restricted until July 2021, our worship leaders performed for months either solo, or in small ensembles, whilst those in the congregation listened. We were delighted to be able to return to singing together in the second part of the year, even if still from behind masks.

A particular musical highlight of the end of the year was the All Age choir workshop, led by Sophie Williams, which rehearsed for the afternoon before breaking for tea and cake and performing to everyone at Raise the Praise. This led to a wonderful choir, under Sophie's tutelage, gathering from across the congregation in order to prepare various pieces for the Christmas Carol Service. What a joy to be able to sing together again!

## Holy Week Reflections – Bettina von Hornhardt

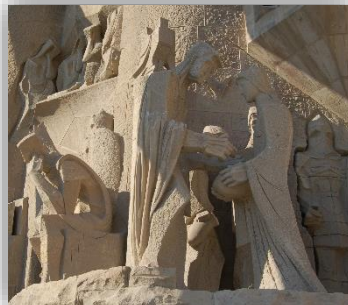


For three evenings during Holy Week we looked at how sacred space can help us to look at the story of that week in a slightly different ways. We started by looking at how we got to the events of Holy Week based on the Cathedral of Hildesheim in northern Germany and its 11<sup>th</sup> century magnificent bronze doors. The doors feel like the cover of a book; you enter to find out more about the story of God and His people. The left door depicts the increasing estrangement of humanity from God and the right door shows the redemptive work of Christ.



The next evening, we took a deeper look at what happened during Holy Week through the passion façade of the Sagrada Família in Barcelona. The façade not only presents us with very stark images of the last couple of days of Christ's life, but it is also an example of modern-day architects and designers trying to piece together a lost design, perhaps an image of us trying to piece together what those days before the Passover were like.

On the third evening, we considered how to enter into the story by looking at the stations of the cross, with examples through the ages, ending with an example from Colombia; the Salt Cathedral of Zipaquirá. Here, the stations of the cross take us deeper and deeper into the mine past a series of caves hewn into the rock or giving a glimpse of the mine shafts beyond.



The stations of the cross are a practical way to be present on that day. Following Christ's path to the cross, we might reflect on where we stand in the story, are we extending a hand to help, like Simon of Cyrene; are we just bystanders; do we judge without understanding all the facts; do we deny; do we mock; do we mourn?

### **Easter and Christmas Services – Pauline Simpson**

As we had only re-opened the church for public worship on Palm Sunday, we celebrated Maundy Thursday together on zoom, by encouraging everyone to bring something to eat. We had an evening of sharing together, and Jonathan led us in an agape celebration for which we were invited to bring our own bread and wine.

Emma devised a prayer walk for Good Friday which had been emailed round to everyone; a few people met to do the walk together in a small group, while others did it in their own time.

We had our usual meditation on the cross in the afternoon, accompanied by beautiful violin and cello music from Michael and Julia from the London Mozart Players. Congregation members were invited to sprinkle petals and herbs around the cross.



We had 2 services on Easter Sunday morning to enable as many to come as possible while maintaining social distancing. There were very similar numbers at both, and about 140 in total joyfully (though without congregational singing!) celebrated Jesus' resurrection.

By Christmas time we were able to sing together as a congregation, and services followed our normal pattern with minor adjustments. About 30 children gathered for an hour of different crafts and Christingle making, very well co-ordinated by Rachel Skeath, before our Christingle service led by Luke. The carol service featured a choir put together for the occasion, ably led by Sophie Williams with Clidna accompanying on the piano and organ. Several of our regular singers were unable to join us for various reasons, but we were blessed with a number of new people joining in for the first time and Sophie did a great job encouraging us all. What has now become an annual event is the carol singing by the Christmas tree near Gipsy Hill station. A good number from the community joined some of the congregation in singing well-known carols which was enjoyed by all.

Our Christmas Eve nativity took place outside this year, and despite some rain was enjoyed by people both from the church and visitors. We then had the usual midnight communion service and lively Christmas morning family service with a good number of visitors.

### **Memorial Butterflies – Emma Lowth**



For the Remembrance season in November, a creative group gathered by Bettina von Hornhardt created an artistic installation of origami butterflies floating up to the

ceiling in a beautiful spiral. The community and congregation were welcomed into the church to reflect and remember anyone, anything or any opportunity which was lost to them during the pandemic, to add a butterfly to the display and to write in the book of remembrance. The weekend ended with a reflective Memorial service, which was well attended.







## Prayer – Pauline Simpson

We continued to livestream Morning Prayer every Tuesday and Thursday, initially from people's homes, then after Easter from church. That continues to be appreciated by a good number of people who join either live or later in the day.

Monthly Wednesday prayer meetings have continued throughout the year, either entirely on zoom, or hybrid with some in the church or vicarage and others on zoom, which has worked very well.



We have prayed for a variety of topics including our nation, children and young people, our mission partners, the environment and COP26, issues around hunger, and church activities. A highlight was a prayer walk around the parish in

September praying for different areas of the parish, especially for local businesses and schools.

### **Environmental Focus – Jonathan Croucher**

An area of work that continued unabated during lockdown was our focus on our environmental credentials. During 2020 and into 2021 we had joined the eco-church movement, using their 'Eco Church' award system as a basis for reviewing every element of church life and seeking to make changes to reduce our negative impact on the environment. Some of this had been achieved through several years of focus – adjustments to our hall heating system, the introduction of double glazing where cost effective and the reduction in paper use following the installation of the AV screens.

The eco church survey asks churches to consider five different areas of church life; worship and teaching, buildings, land, community engagement, and lifestyle (of the congregation). Through their question and answer system, changes and enhancements across these areas – many of them very simple – could have a potentially significant impact. Under the careful and enthusiastic leadership of Pippa Evans much was achieved in lockdown –



from changing our cleaning fluids, through reducing our heating timetable, installing bat and bird boxes and raised beds on the embankment to

increasing the focus on our responsibilities for creation within our teaching programme. As a result, we were able to satisfy the requirements for the Eco Church silver award, one of the first churches in London to do so.

We have plenty still to do on this front, and following Pippa's departure need to find more eco champions to ensure we do not lose our focus on this area. Do speak to Jonathan if you have a passion for this area of church life.



## ***Children and youth ministry***

### **Sunday School – Luke Whiteman**

Christ Church is blessed with a wonderful group of children of all ages. The ministry to the children has been particularly impacted by the pandemic, with many children being out of regular Sunday School for a long period.

In early 2021 as the country slowly unlocked, the church has gradually worked to re-instate its children's work. In the Summer Term a fortnightly Sunday School began, then in September a more regular offering running every Sunday for three age groups, 0-5s, 5-11s, 11-16s. These groups all are run by a wonderful team of volunteers, with the children playing games, doing crafts and learning about Jesus.

The numbers of children have slowly increased through the term, with groups starting to look more like pre-pandemic. We hope in the New Year to split the 5-11s into two groups as this is often a big group but need to recruit more leaders to make this change.

We particularly want to thank the volunteer leaders who give up a Sunday of worship to teach the children and make such a wonderful ministry happen.

### **Raise the Praise and Shine – Luke Whiteman**

Raise the Praise is our monthly service on Sunday afternoon for children aged 8 and under. Shine is our attached group for 8-11 year olds.

As with other children's groups these services had to stop during the pandemic and were restarted in the Autumn term. The children attending have enjoyed meeting together again to play games, do some craft, dance to action songs and learn some Bible stories.

The age mix in the group attending is now more focused on the Shine age group, so in the coming year we look forward to encouraging more Under 8s to join the service.

### **Youth group – Josh Prendergast**

As we came out of lockdown, Pippa Evans and Josh began meeting with members of the youth group and Shine, mostly outside, every other week, with people coming on rotation. In the new academic year we started meeting on Sunday mornings every week, which has helped us double and

sometimes triple the numbers coming. We also met for two socials, going up to Crystal Palace for Pizza, and a Murder Mystery meal in the Church. The Autumn Term was mainly about re-connecting and building a group following the pandemic, and we have seen growth with several new members. In the New Year we have continued to build on this by running a well-attended Youth Alpha course.

### **School visits – Jonathan Croucher**

Our relationship with Paxton School, just across the hill from the church building, has been something of a rollercoaster in my time here! When we are able to work with them, we have great fun and receive wonderful feedback on their visits. At Easter, we were hoping to have two full years' worth of classes join us to hear something of the Easter story and managed to get half the classes into the church before COVID isolations meant classes were sent home. At Christmas we had another wonderful crowd of year 4s and year 6s (three classes in each year!) joining us for a creative retelling of the Christmas story. It is a wonderful opportunity to share the essence of our faith, and the true story of Christmas and Easter with children, many of whom, increasingly, have no previous engagement with the Christian faith.

### **School assemblies – Luke Whiteman**

In the Autumn term Luke started regularly taking assemblies at St Luke's Primary School. He has also taken a role as a governor at the school. It has provided a good opportunity to build relationships with the children and teachers, to provide teaching from the Bible, and to dance to many action songs!

## **Church community and pastoral support**

### **Home Groups – Sophie Williams**

I am a grateful member of one of the seven house groups that meets through church on a regular basis.

There are several reasons that I go to a house group:

- I really love being part of a smaller group within church who know me and who I know well. Praying for each other and our personal concerns through the weeks is a great comfort and support, and we have seen some wonderful things happen because of prayer. It is so affirming to see prayer in action like this.
- Having a regular non-Sunday link to church is very important to me, it keeps me grounded in my faith, and helps me structure my prayer life and bible study, and helps remind me to put God in the centre of every day.
- There is a lovely social aspect to home groups – I am writing this after a great supper with my friends, after which we studied and prayed for each other.

The study and prayer are central to what I feel is important to home group, and over the last year we took a leisurely look into the Gospel of Mark and then Philipians. At the beginning of this year we worked our way through some of Richard Foster's book A Celebration of Discipline, which was fascinating, challenging and affirming in equal measure. We tend to follow the sermon series that are led by the clergy team at church, and it is helpful for me to have time to reflect on or feel prepared in some way for the more in depth (or dare I say 'learned') talks from our preaching team!

The pandemic has played its part, of course, and much of last year's Home Group was either online or held in gardens (when allowed) out of necessity, though most are now meeting face to face.

During 2021 groups were led by Hugh and Juliet Bain until September when the group was led on zoom by Luke Whiteman, Anthony and Pam Merifield, Peter Black and Justin Kueh until Peter's untimely death since when Justin and Connie Yau have led, Rob and Ali Seal, Richard and Rhos Roberts until the summer since when the group shared leadership, Zoltan and Kati Schwab, and Yvette Croucher who leads a daytime group.

We owe a huge vote of thanks to Richard and Rhos Roberts, who as well as leading a groups headed up the Home Group Team until their move back to Cardiff last July; the work they put in is reflected in the lively state of home groups today. If you are interested in coming to a home group to see how you like it, please contact Jonathan.

### **Pastoral care – Jonathan Croucher**

During the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021, we endeavoured to stay in contact with all in our congregation in a variety of different ways beyond the livestreaming of worship. Home groups proved to be a strong support mechanism for those in existing groups.

We organised the pastoral care group, along with a number of additional volunteers, to call members of the congregation



during lockdown and to stay in touch with them where possible. It is a real encouragement that some of those relationships have grown into strong friendships, and regular calls continue to this day.





The goody boxes which we delivered for the first Easter proved to be another way of staying in touch with everyone on our address list and to bring, during lockdown, a tangible expression of love and prayers, with seasonal liturgies, gifts created by the church craft group, activities for children and candles, with the ever present bar of Cadbury's Dairy Milk. The final goody box delivery was made at Easter 2021,

ensuring in addition to the other gifts that everyone could share both in lighting an Easter candle and the obligatory Cadbury's crème egg. The children were given the wherewithal to create their own Easter garden. We are so grateful to everyone who helped offer care and support during the pandemic, helped with the preparation and delivery of goody





boxes (for adults and children) and looked out for other members of the congregation during this difficult season.

Richard and Rhos had coordinated both the pastoral prayer group and the pastoral visiting team before their move to Cardiff. The pastoral prayer group continues to pray, in confidence, for pastoral needs across the congregation, meeting every six weeks to pray

together but able to respond immediately to specific requests for prayer.

The pastoral visiting team has, because of all the COVID restrictions, has not been meeting and we are looking to establish a new team in 2022. Anyone who would like pastoral support or prayer is invited to make contact with a member of the clergy team or the churchwardens.

### **20s-30s Ministry – Emma Lowth**

Despite the restrictions, the 20s/30s group was still able to meet for various social events over the year. Highlights included gathering over Zoom during the restrictions, a picnic in Crystal Palace Park, and a wonderful summer BBQ in the vicarage garden. The 20s/30s ministry at Christ Church has been wonderfully led over the last three years by Pippa Evans, who left London in the Autumn to begin a Masters in Theology at Durham University. Her departure leaves a significant gap at

Christ Church, but we wish her all the best as she takes up this next challenge which we know makes use of her gifts in wonderful new ways.



### **Mother's Union – Jodie Lomax**

During the year 2021, Mothers' Union members as a group had to adapt its activities to fit in with Covid restrictions of the moment. Frequent walks in local parks for exercise and inevitably, sharing faith, were a feature in 2021. Others from Christ Church joined us from time to time, for this bit of fresh air and fellowship.

In keeping with our tradition, we prepared Mothering Sunday posies and delivered them personally to the homes of Christ

Church members, both near and far! In the summer, we held a farewell garden tea for Richard and Rhos Roberts with members, spouses and another involved church couple. Richard and Rhos were remembered, among other things, as having played an active part in MU organized “Family Fun Days” at Southwark Cathedral.



In the autumn, we held our usual “Prayers by Candlelight” – meeting at twilight and praying for our children and families. Over the years we have seen many prayers answered and thank God for this. At Christmas time, we wrote an inspirational message from Scripture on “recycled” Christmas cards prepared by a member of the CC congregation. These were then given to the Foodbank to put in the Christmas food parcels. The year concluded with the annual Christmas wreath making, held in the church narthex. An early visit to Covent Garden Market for fresh, plain wreaths, greenery and accessories enabled us to make the wreaths at a reasonable cost to the participants.



Individually, our members participate in the life of Christ Church through knitting baby blankets and clothing for those in need of them, knitting “twiddle muffs” used in care homes for the elderly, being part of the church prayer and intercessory prayer teams, volunteering with the Magnolia Club, and more recently, helping with church administrative work.

We thank God for our blessings and are delighted to serve Him through Christ Church.

### **Deaths in the congregation – Jonathan Croucher**

Christ Church has suffered a number of significant bereavements over the last few years which have been painful not just for the families affected but for the whole church family.



We were saddened at the loss of Colin Wright. Colin was a long-standing member of the Christ Church congregation who had served as caretaker for the church buildings and a





general support to individuals, clergy and the wider ministry of the church. We were joined at his funeral by his three daughters and his grandchildren and the service was a real celebration of his character, humour, and commitment to follow the Lord Jesus.

We were devastated in July by the sudden death of Peter Black, our deputy warden, husband of Sepi and father to Bethany and Miriam. Peter was a humble and dedicated follower of Jesus and his funeral was a tribute to his love for his family, his committed faith and his integrity and humility. The church was full of people from relationships going back to university friends, his Wandsworth architects teams and his longstanding work with the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship.

### **Weddings – Jonathan Croucher**



Although the services were not held in Christ Church, we were delighted to celebrate the marriages of Kechi Chinda and Emily Boyce in 2021. Both married a Dan (different ones!) and Jonathan conducted the wedding services at St Stephen's Church on College Road.

Both days, delayed by COVID, enjoyed glorious sunshine and celebrated not only the joy of a new marriage but both couples' Christian commitment.



### **The Bereavement Journey – Cath Mitchenall**

During May and June 2021, Pippa Evans ran the Bereavement Journey, which I assisted with. The materials were developed by “Care for the Family” and over the course of six sessions, we explored the pain of grief, coping with change and moving forward. The final optional session, led by Jonathan, gave an opportunity to ask faith questions.

Though the group was small, the course proved to be very helpful for all who attended, giving an opportunity to remember those we have lost and begin to talk about and deal with our feelings of grief.



## **Welcoming into church**

### **Open Door - Pauline Simpson**

Open Door finally re-opened its doors in August, meeting for a short time each Thursday lunchtime, organised by Iain Khan-Gilchrist and Josh Prendergast, serving a simple lunch of soup and bread, along with coffee/tea and biscuits, giving people an opportunity to meet others and chat.

In September we reverted to Tuesdays from 12-2.30pm, offering coffee and tea, and a hot lunch with home-made cake for pudding. This gives a welcome opportunity for many to meet others from the local community and make new friends. Towards the end of the year we introduced activities most weeks after lunch such as quizzes, crafts, bingo and cards. We have been joined by some of our previous visitors and some new people, and also towards the end of the year by a growing group of Iranian refugees who we have welcomed into church.

We are grateful to Ina Oakes who has produced delicious meals, and members of the congregation who've displayed their baking skills.

### **Magnolia Club – Sue Davies**

The Magnolia Club is for people with dementia and their partners and friends, meeting on Wednesday afternoons in the Narthex. It restarted in August 2021, again funded by the charity Hope for Home but organised by Age UK Brixton rather than an employed individual and, as before, supported by 3 to 4 volunteers, 2 from Christ Church. It immediately attracted a

local couple and later another from Croydon. Both come regularly. A local single lady has just joined. Apart from refreshments and chat, there are various activities including art and handicrafts. Sadly, some of the people who came before the pandemic aren't well enough to return and the time is not convenient for the rest - 2 to 3 couples. Please advertise this club if you can.

### **Playpen – Jonathan Croucher**

As Covid restrictions diminished, we were able to reopen Playpen in September. This stay and play toddler group has been a feature of our service to the community for over 20 years and it was a real delight to be able to open the doors again and welcome in many families, including many "lockdown children" for whom the opportunity to interact with other children and families in the wonderfully spacious and creative surroundings at playpen was a real joy.

## **Together with the Community**

### **Norwood and Brixton Foodbank – Elizabeth Maytom**



In 2021/2022 we fed just under 22,000 people of which 8,000 were children, a 15% increase on pre covid rates.

We continued to work in partnership with 3 other foodbanks in Lambeth – Vauxhall, Waterloo and Clapham Park – which has had huge benefits, and this is currently being formalised to enable us to

continue to work together enabling us to be better resourced not just at the warehouse but also as we open hubs.

We opened 3 hubs across Lambeth for face to face work in the autumn; Norwood and Brixton oversee work at the foodbank hub at Emmanuel Church, West Dulwich, on Thursdays.



Three more hubs will open in the coming months including one we shall oversee at Immanuel and St Andrew, Streatham Common. These hubs provide an opportunity for clients to get help, advice and support as well as refreshments and seeing friendly faces.

In the coming weeks and months we will continue to work not only to support clients but also to campaign for change as we see the increasing effects of rising prices.

We are so grateful for all the support of churches like Christ Church as we work in our local community.

### **Award for Elizabeth – Jonathan Croucher**



We were delighted that Elizabeth's work for Foodbank was formally acknowledged by the Bishop of Southwark in 2021 with the award of the Lancelot Andrewes medal for 'Godly Service and

Zeal for the Gospel'. The medal was presented to Elizabeth at Christ Church by Ven Simon Gates, Archdeacon of Lambeth.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Gipsy Hill Brownies – Chris Woolley**

We started the year in lockdown and having zoom meetings. A huge thank you to Tawny Owl Louise for organising that. The girls earned Communicator badges by learning about finger spelling, the NATO alphabet and body language. We also managed to make microwave mug chocolate cakes at home, with parents helping, which was enjoyed by everyone.

We were able to start our face to face outdoor activities in June with a district fun day at South London Scout Centre in Dulwich. The girls enjoyed various activities, especially the “s’mores” – toasted marshmallows squished between chocolate digestives; they are so good you want s'more!

We finally started meeting in the hall again in October and the pack grew up to 12 girls as we welcomed some new members; several had passed their 10<sup>th</sup> birthday and due to Covid we had lost some others.

In December we attended the district Christingle, and then celebrated with a Christmas Party combined with our 101<sup>st</sup> birthday (the pack was registered in December 1920) and some of the new girls made their Brownie promise.

### **Churches together in Crystal Palace – Jonathan Croucher**

Opportunities for collaboration and fellowship with our brothers and sisters of different church traditions around Crystal Palace were largely put on hold during 2021 and our annual event on the green outside Sainsbury's on Good Friday was again suspended because of the Covid risks.

The monthly prayer meeting that draws individuals from across church traditions has now been reinstated and plans are being made for a full programme in 2022.

Jonathan stepped down as coordinating minister in 2020 and this role is now taken by Pastor Oh, of the Crystal Palace Korean church.

### **Open Door Kitchen - partnering with Friends of Gipsy Hill – Emma Lowth**



When the pandemic hit, Open Door, our usual Tuesday drop-in and community lunch had to close. But, thanks to funding secured for us by the Friends of Gipsy Hill, we were very quickly able to transform

into a twice weekly meal delivery service, reaching out to members of the community who were struggling to put a healthy hot meal on the table during the lockdown.



2021 saw the continuation of this community-wide effort, and by August, Open Door Kitchen had delivered more than 6000 meals to addresses in the Gipsy Hill and West Norwood area over the 17 months of

the pandemic, with delivery volunteers involved from the Christ Church congregation, and from the community.

A summer fundraising drive, which was wonderfully supported again by Friends of Gipsy Hill as well as the congregation, enabled us to continue our delivery service for a further six months, whilst also allowing us to re-establish a community drop-in, run by Iain Khan Gilchrist. And at Christmas, a delicious Christmas lunch was delivered out to all our clients, alongside boxes of goodies for the second year running, from Friends of Gipsy Hill's Dear Neighbour initiative, which was set up to bring Christmas wishes from members of the community to others who may be feeling low or isolated in the Christmas season.

In the Autumn, Open Door Kitchen metamorphosed yet again to reflect the changing social restrictions, as well as our growing network in the community, as we teamed up with the Foodbank Advice Hub and began to deliver meals from two locations – Tuesdays at Christ Church and Thursdays at Emmanuel.

### **Emmanuel Foodhub – Luke Whiteman**

The hub was started at Emmanuel Church Hall in October. It is a partnership between Christ Church, Emmanuel, Foodbank and Centre 70. The hall is set up as a café every Thursday and it serves drinks and delicious hot meals prepared by Ina Oakes. While the churches make the hall a welcoming place for guests, advisors from Foodbank and Centre 70 sit around the edge of the room and provide advice to those who turn up. The hub also acts as a pickup point for Foodbank parcels and

distributes meals as part of Christ Church's Open Door Kitchen Project.



The Emmanuel Foodhub has received funding for equipment from Lambeth Council. The Council also send their Health and Wellbeing Bus every other

week. The bus has been providing Covid vaccines, Covid test kits and health signposting.

The project was quiet for the first few months, but then in December footfall really increased and even more so going into the New Year. With cost of living increases in 2022 we expect this project to grow even more.

## **Events**

### **Summer barbecue – Jonathan Croucher**

The summer barbecue in July was the first major social event we had felt able to hold since pandemic restrictions began in March 2020. This year, we planned the event to coincide with the farewell to Richard and Rhos Roberts, as they moved to Cardiff, and it was a real joy to welcome back to church many



who have not felt able to return until then, including some old faces back to visit for the day. The weather was (relatively) kind to us and a fine feast was prepared and served; particular thanks to the barbecuing team pulled together at late notice and to Yvette, Pauline and other volunteers who supplied and served salads rolls, drinks and ice creams.

## **Church building and hire**

### **Church buildings – Jonathan Croucher**

Having remained closed during most of 2020, we were pleased to be re-able to reopen the Goodliffe Halls for our regular users in the course of 2021, as circumstances permitted.

The Team dance group, our main user of the halls, needed to occupy more space on a Saturday to allow for social distancing and we decided, therefore, not to accept one-off bookings during the year. With Team dance and our other regular users – the Crystal Palace community choir, Sing & Sign for babies, Pilates and Zumba – the halls are used by the church and community groups throughout the week and on Saturdays. The decision not to take on one-off bookings, apart from community events, has greatly reduced the administrative burden around the halls. We also decided to end the hire of the hall on Sundays to an independent church, and we are looking forward to being able to establish a more regular programme of after church social and other events, enabling us to use the space as we grow together as a congregation.

NCC Equipping Church which leased the Berridge Road building from us just before lockdown has also returned to worship in the building and has been faithful to its promise to develop its own outreach programme to the estate and local area. We have an excellent relationship with Pastor Akinola who is leading their congregation and they have an established programme of providing food support to those on the Berridge Road estate, and are developing a programme of Saturday basketball in one of the multi-sport areas on the edge of the estate.

### **Flowers – Jonathan Croucher**



front of church which have been such a blessing both whilst live streaming the services and now we are together back in church. Thank you!

Patsy Easter and others in the flower team have resumed the provision of really beautiful flower arrangements at the



### **Church garden – Anthony Merifield**

The church garden continues to be a place where people can rest and enjoy its beauty. In August we held one of our coffee mornings, offering free drinks and home-made cake to people

who were passing, giving us the opportunity to meet new people. Several people dropped by, including some from the dance classes in the hall.

The church approaches are vulnerable to litter and it has been important during the past year to carry out a weekly sweep of the church frontages, including the pavement and roadside along Highland Road, and the Memorial Garden facing Gipsy Hill. During autumn and early winter the falling leaves pose a further hazard and as Spring approaches the retaining bank above (south of) the church and Goodliffe Hall also need attention. This latter task requires extra help from "tall and strong" volunteers with extended cutting gear, and I have been grateful to those who have gallantly come to lend support once a month on Saturday mornings

As announcements are made about monthly work parties in the Spring and early summer of 2022, we invite members of the congregation to come and lend their support on these Saturday mornings.

### **Financial report summary – Pauline Simpson**

We are enormously grateful for the generosity of members of the church and that giving has remained stable throughout the pandemic. The fact that the majority of people donate online means that we are not reliant on cash donations. Our bank balance is the healthiest it has been for a long time, due to various factors such as the furlough scheme, reduced staffing, and leasing Berridge Road just before the pandemic.

We do need to recruit more staff and are actively working on this, so we expect that our bank balance will not stay at its current level.

We are hugely grateful to Ed Hanson for his work as treasurer over several years, for his calm approach and careful stewarding of our finances; Ed will be stepping down during 2022.

### **Unrestricted income**

- Total unrestricted income was £225,630 compared to £211,369 in 2020.
- Regular giving remained stable compared to 2020, at £131,781.
- Lettings income increased by £15,000 to £44,580, largely due to a full year's rental for Berridge Road from the New Covenant Church.
- We received £12,982 from the furlough scheme, funding a significant proportion of our salary costs in the year.

### **Unrestricted expenditure**

- Total unrestricted expenditure was £193,855 compared to £222,240 in 2020.
- We reduced our contribution to the diocese by £5,000 to £92,000, being unsure how the pandemic would affect our finances. This will be reviewed in 2022.
- Staff costs were down by £15,000 to £28,288 due to Pippa Evans leaving in the summer and Helen Williams' hours being reduced.
- We incurred one-off professional fees of £7,800 in 2020 in relation to leasing of Berridge Road to the

New Covenant Church which were not repeated in 2021.

- In total, our unrestricted income exceeded expenditure by £31,775.

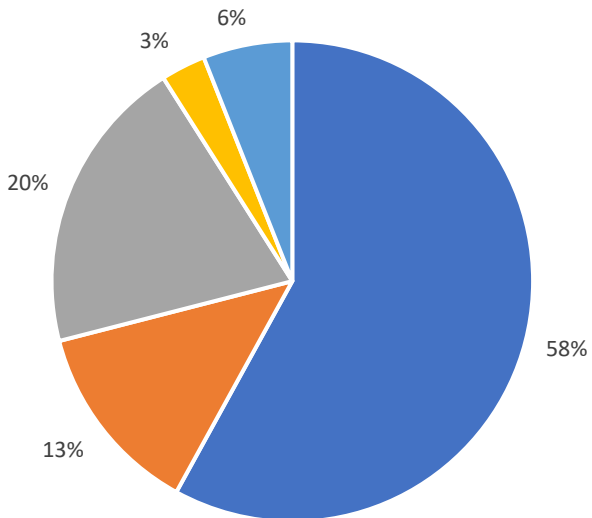
### **Restricted funds**

- Income of £16,203 relates mostly to grants (largely support received for Open Door) and dividends received from the Endowment Fund (reserved for youth work).
- Expenditure of £8,102.

### **Balance sheet**

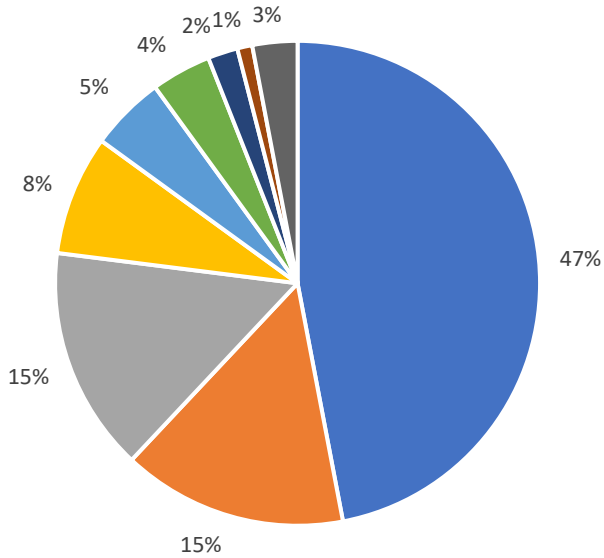
- £126,420 held in Barclays accounts (2020: £79,944).
- CCLA deposit account of £65,500, similar to 2020.
- Market value of the Goodliffe Endowment fund of £253,924 (2020: £223,003). We received £6,453 dividends from the fund in 2021.

## Income (unrestricted funds)



- Income from donors
- Gift aid
- Rental income
- Playpen
- Other

## Expenditure (unrestricted funds)



- Diocesan Support
- Staff Costs
- Building and maintenance costs
- Charitable grants
- Property rental
- Office costs
- Worship, music and audio
- Catering and entertainment
- Other

## **Mission Partners**

### **Mission partners – Jonathan Croucher**

The pandemic has rather broken the rhythm of our involvement with some of our overseas mission partners, but we have endeavoured to remain in contact with them and maintain the routine of praying each month consistently for one of those mission partners:

CMS – the Cloustons continue to serve in Bangalore and there has been much in common in our very different contexts during the pandemic. We were delighted to have them join us on zoom and providing video recordings for the congregation during the pandemic and we look forward to seeing them in church in 2022.

CSW (formerly Christian solidarity worldwide) – CSW continues to campaign for faith communities around the world subject to oppression and persecution. They work with those of all faiths and none, but have, over the course of the year, highlighted a number of very significant cases of persecution and imprisonment of Christians and Christian pastors around the world.

Spinnaker – Spinnaker continues to serve schools across south London and beyond, working in secular and church schools to assist in offering Christian input to the RE curriculum and in assemblies.

Tearfund – Tearfund remains our primary mission partner. Our funding goes to the general fund to enable them to use it



where the need his greatest, but we have a particular connection with Anthea and Martin Gordon, who are working in Goma. Anthea is project manager for Tearfund, Martin is working with the local Anglican diocese. Goma suffered a significant volcanic eruption in 2021, and significant violence and unrest as historic conflicts came to the fore again.

Norwood & Brixton Foodbank – Our closest mission partner is the foodbank and many of the congregation continue to volunteer with them at the warehouse in Streatham. More details are available in the separate article but please do speak to Pauline, Elizabeth, me or Tim if you would like to hear more about their work or volunteering opportunities.

The Quanruds - John and Lynne Quanrud left Albania as the Covid outbreak spread across the country. Although this took them away from their community in Tirana, they were able to continue much of their work, Lynne teaching online, and John writing for the Institute of Protestant studies. It also meant they were able to spend some more time with their children and grandchildren in the UK and US. We continue to support their work financially and in prayer and look forward to seeing them in 2022.

## **Other reports**

### **Electoral Roll report – Pauline Simpson**

The roll has been updated in April 2022, and comprises 154 members, which is an increase of 7 (11 added and 4 removed) from the last roll in 2021. 101 are female and 53 male, 42 live

in the parish and 112 outside, though due to the location of the church within the parish many of these are still near the church.

### **PCC report – Pauline Simpson**

During 2021 the PCC met six times, the first four meetings taking place on zoom. Major items for discussion included provision during lockdown and opening services and other activities up safely; a presentation from the environment group on measures taken to achieve the silver eco-church award, and a discussion on future plans; a wide-ranging discussion on racial justice and inclusion, focusing on what we could do at Christ Church, having read the bishops' report "From Lament to Action". We also discussed future staffing needs and plans, our work with Open Door and Open Door Kitchen including funding and grants received, and received regular finance updates.

We were pleased to welcome Luke Whiteman as a pioneer curate, and were also made aware of Jonathan's extra responsibilities as priest-in-charge of Emmanuel, West Dulwich, as well as area dean.

We had previously adopted the new diocese safeguarding policies introduced in 2019 and are always mindful of the need to safeguard children and vulnerable adults, following the House of Bishops' guidance, and dealing appropriately with any incidents which arise. We are working on ensuring that everyone is up to date with DBS checks. The PCC has appointed Pauline Simpson as an interim parish safeguarding officer due to Helen Williams' current sick leave.

## **Deanery Synod – Jonathan Croucher**

Christ Church falls within the Lambeth South Deanery, in the Archdeaconry of Lambeth, in the Kingston Episcopal Area within the Diocese of Southwark.

Lambeth South covers the Southern half of the London Borough of Lambeth, and the Archdeaconry includes both the whole of the Borough of Lambeth along with the Borough of Merton. The Kingston Area then includes both the Lambeth and Wandsworth (London Boroughs of Wandsworth, Kingston and Richmond) Archdeaconries.

During 2021 we managed to hold two synod meetings on zoom – focussing in May on Bereavement Ministry, and in July on Environmental Challenges. The session on bereavement featured input from Katy Tutt of charity Loss and Hope, and Jane Oundjian the founder of the Bereavement Journey which we use here at Christ Church. The July meeting was equally fascinating with speakers covering eco congregations (Ali Angus from Streatham), a theology of creation (Ian Christie from the University of Surrey) and Brother Hugh, of Hilfield Friary who had received their Gold Eco Church award. These synods are intended to encourage and equip the ministries of our deanery churches, as well as acting as a focus for unity.

The other highlight of the year was the deanery ascension service which took place at St Leonard's Streatham with their newly re-formed choir. It was a wonderful musical celebration, one of the first services where choral singing was permitted, and we were delighted to have Rev Canon Stephen Hance as the preacher, the CofE's national lead on evangelism.