



Christ Church Gipsy Hill Annual Report 2022



Welcome – Rev Jonathan Croucher

Welcome to our report on the life of Christ Church in 2022. The year has been something of a bridge between living with restrictions under Covid and seeking to return to a life without legal constraints but still with the reality of Covid.

2021 ended with the imposition of new restrictions, following a hesitatingly open Christmas. And so the early months of 2022 proceeded with yet more uncertainty as to what was to come. In light of that, perhaps one of the most moving services of the year was Easter Sunday, the first major festival without serious concerns over Covid. With no clear idea of who might come out to church that morning, we were delighted to have a full church with over 200 people – regulars, families and friends, and visitors. It gave us real hope that church life might begin to settle into a new normal. The year truly has seen the abundant restoration of much that had been lost, as well as new and exciting opportunities that the Lord has opened up to us.

Our ministry to a growing Farsi-speaking community has developed significantly over this year, bringing real blessing to our existing fellowship as well as to the community of asylum seekers, living locally and farther afield. You can read more about this ministry in the report but we have seen God's provision and blessing generously bestowed as we have responded in faith to this new work. We are looking forward to the development of this ministry with the funding from the central church that will see Emma Lowth staying with us for another five years.

As we progress through 2023, it's clear that life after/with Covid is unlikely ever to be quite the same. We continue to live stream services in the morning and it is an encouragement that many join us online - those who are unable due to ill health to attend as well as families and friends of congregation members all around the country and beyond.

We continue to discover what it is to be the body of Christ in these times of challenge, and pray for God's continued leading and blessing of our ministries here in Gipsy Hill.

As ever, words cannot adequately express my great thanks for all who continue to serve in so many different ways in the life of our church, for those living as salt and light in a world that increasingly rejects the notion of God, and those who give so generously financially and otherwise to sustain the life and ministry of a church.

Jonathan

Rev Jonathan Croucher, Vicar
April 2023

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

Staff and Ministry team – Jonathan Croucher

The year began with the shocking news that Helen Williams, our long term administrator and playpen leader, had suffered a severe brain injury caused by an aneurism. During several weeks in intensive care, when it seemed Helen's life was hanging by a thread, she was surrounded in prayer here at Christ Church and among friends around the country. Over the months that followed, and despite the severity of the original injury, Helen has made incredible progress, and whilst frustrated that there are still ongoing struggles, Helen continues to regain her strength. She decided in July that she would not come back to church and instead focus on getting well and rebuilding her life down in Warlingham. We are so grateful for all she has contributed to the life of our church over many many years.

With Emma Lowth and Luke Whiteman in their curacies, Jenny Thomas working as Families and Pastoral Minister and Josh Prendergast expanding his role as youth intern to cover many ministries in the life of the church, we have been joined by two new staff in the office. Jeanette Bell joined us in September, working two days a week as church administrator. Charlotte Carpenter joined us shortly afterwards as operations manager, working three days a week, and taking on a big chunk of church management from Jonathan. Ina Oakes and Sepi Black have made a wonderful contribution as cooks for Open Door and Foodhub, and both Ina and Jon Caddell have kept the church buildings clean and in good order over the year.

Along with Pauline Simpson, in her role as lay reader, we have continued to offer a range of preachers, with Pete Moorey and our Archdeacon Simon Gates as part of the regular team, Gemma Birt on placement with us prior to her ordination in June, and welcoming also Rachel Lillycrop, who is discerning her call to ordination, and Jon Fox, an ordinand in training who was on placement with us for six weeks in the autumn.

Sunday morning services – Pauline Simpson

During the year we enjoyed a gradual return to normality following the Covid restrictions. On Palm Sunday we removed the requirement to wear masks, and it was a joy to see people's faces again. From September we resumed sharing the peace in the usual way, and also receiving the chalice at communion, while remaining mindful that some members of the congregation wished to remain more cautious.

Our 10.30am services, alternating between Holy Communion and Morning Worship, have continued to attract a wide range of people from different backgrounds, races and ages, including a good number of asylum seekers, mostly Farsi speaking. Several people have returned to church but we are still livestreaming the services for those who for various reasons prefer to watch from home, and we plan to continue this for the time being.

Having had occasional 9am Holy Communion services during the year, we re-introduced these regularly on the first Sunday of the month in the autumn, and had All Age worship at the 10.30 services on those days.

Sermon series on Sunday mornings – Pauline Simpson

Spiritual disciplines

From January until Easter we looked at some of the spiritual disciplines, spending a month on each of scripture, prayer and fasting, with a final sermon on Sabbath rest. For each of the first three we had an introductory sermon followed by three specific aspects of the topic. These were based on Richard Foster's book "Celebration of Discipline" and were really helpful on a practical level at helping us to engage with God.

John's gospel

From Easter until the end of July we unpacked passages from John 1-6, looking at some of the main themes of the gospel, and specific encounters between Jesus and individuals, the crowds and the authorities.

Isaiah

For our autumn series we looked at the theme of Restoration, from Isaiah 40-55, taking sermon titles from Bishop Steven Croft's book "Comfortable Words". This looked particularly at God's words of comfort to the exiles in Babylon, with the promise of the return to Jerusalem, and the series included the four servant songs, which as well as prophecy relevant to the exiles also point to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. This was a particularly helpful series in our current situation of coming out of Covid and the restrictions and difficulties so many had faced during the previous two years. For the All Age services we looked at similar themes using New Testament passages.

Inspire – Emma Lowth

Inspire, our twice-monthly evening service, continues to offer a complementary worship space on Sunday evenings for those seeking a contemporary charismatic service style with plenty of opportunity to pray for one another. Over this year, our topics have aimed to complement the main teaching in the morning services, with a series on “Who You Say I Am” taking us through 1 Peter, a series on “Restoration” looking at the healing miracles in Mark’s Gospel, and we have kicked off 2023 looking at “Walking with Jesus”.

Music – Emma Lowth

Our musicians and singers serve so faithfully, leading us in worship on Sundays. This year has seen a few new members join the musical worship team at Christ Church, and we are so grateful to each one. In particular, it has been brilliant to see younger members contribute their gifts in our All Age music group on the first Sundays of the month, whether on keyboard, guitar, singing or cajon.

This has also been the year in which we have learnt to sing praise in Farsi! Thanks must go to Sepi Black for her patient training in pronunciation and also for her wonderful translation of a song for our Carols by Candlelight – Somewhere in Your Silent Night, *Jaaye sokoot shabe to*.

Mid-week Communion – Jonathan Croucher

Recognising that many still felt uncomfortable coming into a full church, we began offering in 2022 a monthly mid-week

communion service along with a light lunch beforehand. It has proved to be a lovely welcoming social occasion and we have been able to offer transport for those who find the journey to church difficult. The intimacy of the communion service has been a real encouragement and joy to share in.

Easter and Christmas services – Pauline Simpson



On Maundy Thursday we had a service of Holy Communion with footwashing, commemorating Jesus' actions at the Last Supper. Luke led our Good Friday meditation at the cross, which included congregation members being invited to paint our initials on the wooden cross, to identify ourselves with those Jesus died for. On Easter Sunday we were blessed with a bumper congregation including a large number of visitors, joyfully celebrating the resurrection of

Jesus (and enjoying some chocolate!)

Our Christmas services followed their usual pattern; the Christingle was preceded by an hour of craft with a variety of activities put together by Luke



and led by various members of the congregation, which was followed by tea for the first time for three years. The carol service, on a Saturday this year to avoid clashing with the football world cup final, had the usual mixture of congregational carols, choir items and readings, and was followed by mulled wine and mince pies. The nativity was devised by Emma with plenty of congregational participation and featured Josh as the angel Gabriel on the church roof! Again, this was followed by tea which was much appreciated. The midnight service was as usual quiet and reflective, Christmas morning much livelier and very joyful. We were delighted to welcome plenty of visitors to all of our services and activities, and it was wonderful to be able to run them without restrictions.

Confirmation – Jonathan Croucher

After completing the Alpha course in Friday night youth, two young people decided they wanted to be confirmed – Hannah Venters, and, from Emmanuel, Tyler Antrobus. We were delighted that they were joined by two adults, Rachel Lillycrop and Siobhan Cran.



We welcomed Bishop David Atkinson, one of the retired bishops in the diocese (formerly Bishop of Thetford). It was a joyful occasion and not least to welcome the family of Angela Venters back to Christ Church.

Prayer – Pauline Simpson

We have continued to livestream Morning Prayer from the chapel on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 8.30am. As well as staff and one or two others in the chapel, there is a small but committed group of people who watch from home, either live or later in the day, and who really appreciate being able to join in with the liturgy and prayers.

Our Wednesday evening monthly prayer meetings have mostly been hybrid – some meeting in the vicarage, others joining on zoom. We have prayed for individuals, our church, the local community including poverty and Foodbank, the overseas mission organisations we support, Ukraine and other parts of the world which desperately need our prayers. It is always a really worthwhile time, and we would love to have more people joining us.

On Good Friday morning Pauline led the annual prayer walk around the parish, where we stopped at different places within the parish to pray for the church, residents of the Central Hill and Berridge Road estates, local businesses and schools. As usual we carried the wooden cross as a witness to the community, and we were able to speak to a few people as we walked around.

Environmental Focus – Jonathan Croucher

Having achieved the silver eco-church award in 2020, we have struggled to maintain our eco-focus as we come out of the pandemic. Stuart Mitchenall's terracing on the embankment alongside the Goodliffe Hall waits invitingly for volunteers to take on responsibility for planting. We need to resurrect some of our

programs aimed at encouraging engagement with environmental issues across the congregation and our community in the course of 2023.

Emmanuel – Jonathan Croucher

Jonathan's role as priest in charge of Emmanuel has continued, although as the ministry at Christ Church returned to a regular pattern he has only been able to be at the church on a Sunday once a month. The congregation at Emmanuel is small – about 15 adults in total, with between six and 10 children – but they are committed to ministry and to the worship at church. As well as Sunday morning worship at 10am, they offer an after-school club and a separate youth club on a Friday evening in the Emmanuel Youth and Community Centre, adjacent to the church, which also hosts the Foodhub that we have set up jointly with Norwood and Brixton Foodbank. You can read more about the work of Foodhub below.



Children and Youth Ministry – Luke Whiteman

Christ Church's children and youth work saw growth in 2022, after the disruption of Covid in the past years. The Church reinstated old clubs and activities and started new initiatives reaching out into our community.

The pre-school age group and their parents have formed a strong and growing group, with outreach into the community through the Playpen stay and play group, and now in the Diddy Disciples

group that meets during the church service. The Diddy Disciples group on Sunday has grown a good number of regulars who bring their children into the hall during the service.

The Raise the Praise and Shine groups were closed during the year but in 2023 RTP has been rebooted and targeted towards the pre-school age group with some success.



For Primary School aged children we have continued to run our Sunday School group and in May also started an 'After School Club' to reach into our community.

The Sunday School meets during the morning Sunday service and they play games, do crafts and learn Bible stories. During 2022 they have looked at the stories in Genesis, the significance of the Easter story, Jesus' 'I am' statements and the Christmas story. The Sunday School is run by a small and wonderful group of volunteers. In September there was a revamp of the volunteer rota with several people stepping up and joining the rota which allowed us to create two age groups again. The numbers of children at the Sunday School have slowly grown during the year and into the New Year, but for the group to continue to grow more leaders will be needed.



we started the club we did a couple of days outside the church giving out flyers and milkshakes to passers-by. This created relationships with several families who now send their children along.

The After School Club was started in May 2022. The club is an hour and half at the end of the school day on a Tuesday, inside the church and hall. The club involves snacks, games, crafts and Bible stories. When



The Club also has several regular church families, whose children have been good at inviting their friends! The club regularly gets 20 children, and has now reached capacity due to the limited number of leaders we have available at this after school time slot.

In the week before Easter 2022 a one day holiday club for primary



school children was run, teaching the Easter story, building Easter gardens, playing games and singing songs. The numbers were quite low in comparison to

past holiday clubs, but it felt like an important step back to normality after Covid.

We have re-connected with various local primary schools after Covid. Several of the Paxton classes came into the church at Easter 2022 to talk about the significance of the festival. Using Emmanuel Church as a venue, Luke has talked to several classes of children from Elmwood School about the Church and its role in society. Luke is also involved as a governor at St Luke's school, West Norwood, and takes regular assemblies there.



In the youth age group we have both a Sunday Morning group during the service and a Friday night group. These groups are open to 11-18 year olds, though most of those who attend are in the younger half of this category.

The Sunday morning group has been blessed with good numbers throughout 2022. The group grew in September as 5 girls moved up into Year 7 so there are regularly over 10 youth members present each Sunday morning. The session is run by a team of experienced leaders, though we are in need of new leaders for this group. Over the year we have looked at topics including Old Testament characters, Christian commitment, along with seasonal teaching at Easter and Christmas.



The Friday Youth group began early in 2022 with the Youth Alpha course. It takes place at Luke's house, the Emmanuel Vicarage in Clive Road. The group is normally around 10 in number and there is a Christian discussion, with food and games. After Youth Alpha finished we continued to do courses on prayer, Christmas and Big questions. There have also been multiple socials, like Pizza in the Park, Film nights, bowling and board games.

We hope to further expand the Youth ministry in the coming year and are looking forward to taking them away for a weekend in May 23.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Josh, who was our Youth intern for the whole of 2022, for all his work with the children and youth in the church. And also to thank all the volunteers who make all this work possible. It is such a blessing to see the children and youth grow in knowledge and start on the road of faith.

Church Community and Pastoral Support

Home groups – Kati and Zoltan Schwab

Some people dream about becoming a film star. Others wish they were astronauts. But *everyone* dreams about having a hot tea with friends on cold nights, occasionally eating a cake together, sharing their struggles with each other, praying for each other, and being surprised by the wisdom of each other when they discuss God's revelation. Everyone dreams about being a member of a homegroup. (Though not everyone is aware of this!)

For some of us this is a dream come true. Our homegroup has 9 regular members and a few more former members with whom we are still in touch. We are a happily diverse group with many different occupations, age groups (although we could do with one or two younger members), personal interests, etc. One of us goes to another church, but the rest are keen members of Christ Church. We meet fortnightly at Kati & Zoltan's but we gather for socials at the homes of other members two or three times a year. These events usually involve good conversations and a decadent amount of excellent food, contributed by all the members. In our fortnightly bible studies we tend to follow the sermon series using material provided by the church, which means that most recently we have been studying the Book of Acts. Normally we are far ahead or behind the sermons on Sundays, but this term our discussions have almost always followed the sermons fairly closely. We are invariably amazed by how much God is teaching us through our group discussions. Jesus promised that wherever two or three disciples come together he will be there, but now we know that this also includes, as an added bonus, that the wisdom of each disciple is multiplied by the number of people present.

Extra note – Pauline Simpson

There are also home groups led by Anthony and Pam Merifield, Chris and Victoria Kelly, Luke Whiteman, Pauline Simpson and Sophie Williams, and a daytime group led by Yvette Croucher. There is always room for others to join a group – do speak to Jonathan.

Pastoral care – Jenny Thomas

We are very fortunate that within CCGH we have a culture of care that has been developed over many years. So many people take time to care for one another that often needs are met without clergy/staff having to be involved. As a staff team we do try to keep abreast of the needs within the congregation. We regularly do home visits, especially when people are housebound, taking communion to them when appropriate. We also particularly focus on new people who have visited the church, seeking to get to know them and get them integrated into the congregation. It has been encouraging to see a number of new people join and get involved over this past year. We would love to involve more people in **pastoral visiting** and are seeking to develop a team to be involved with this.

We have a wonderful dedicated team of 12 people who make up our **pastoral prayer team**. Needs are shared via email, as and when they arise, so that we are instantly praying into situations. Every other month we meet to pray together, which is always very encouraging. This is a completely confidential group ministry which is a joy to be able to offer to people. Many have been blessed to know there is a dedicated team praying for them and we have seen many answers to prayer.

Parenting for faith – Jenny Thomas

Ali Seal brought this course to our attention and after looking at the material we decided to run it during the later part of the autumn term, October – December 2022, to test out the material and to see how it was received.

For convenience we ran it on a Thursday after Playpen and before school pick up time. Although we knew this time excluded many parents who are working, it worked well for a number of our mothers who were on maternity leave, including Ali, who helped to run it. Tracy and Sarah, two helpers from Playpen stayed on for the afternoon to offer child care for any children who came along too; Bea really enjoyed her time with them.

In total 12 people attended, though most weeks we were only 6-8. We had 4 mums on maternity leave, 4 grandmothers, 3 parents of older children and Josh who does a lot of work with children and youth.

Each week there were teaching videos followed by group discussions and exercises. The material helped us to see what church and faith look like from a child's perspective. It gave us tools and ideas of how to encourage children and young people to grow in their own faith, especially giving them time and space to hear from God themselves rather than trying to give answers. It was very lovely having the mix of ages and experience which led to great discussions. There was much love and care shared amongst the group.

We felt most of the material was very helpful and we hope to run the course again at a time which would suit more parents.

Mothers' Union – Jodie Lomax

Prayers by Candlelight. For the past eight years or so, we have met in the autumn to celebrate “Prayers by Candlelight”. This is an occasion where we meet on a Sunday evening at dusk, to pray for our children/grandchildren as they return to school, university or the workplace. We usually start with an appropriate Bible passage that comes to our attention regarding the Lord’s place in our lives and in the lives of our children. One by one, we light a tealight for the children that we pray for, mentioning them by name and sharing, if we so wish, special requests for our named children.

We are in the process of assembling a “Portable Prayer Chit” with the names of those we are praying for and a general prayer that they come to know the Lord as their loving, heavenly Father, provider and guide throughout their lives.

Clothes for Iranian Babies and Refugees. As a branch, we collected clothing (washed, ironed, packed in tissue paper, and nicely packed in boxes) for babies and adults of this lively community within our church family. The message “With love from members of the Mothers’ Union” was written on the side of the boxes. Distribution was made by a couple from Christ Church who are well acquainted with the community.

Wreath Making. The MU Christmas Wreath Making was very well attended this year. There were more men and teenage boys than



usual attending as part of their families. Planning and buying (accessories, foliage and fresh basic fir wreaths) meant two early morning trips to Covent Garden Market for some of us. We had a “Blind Tasting

Competition” for the best mince pie (Aldi v. Fortnum and Mason). “Miss Christmas”, a local personality, turned up to make her wreath. We gathered into a big circle to hear her special poem and sing merrily. Great fun.



Mothering Sunday. The church flowers comprised of blossoms and spring flowers are a seasonal gift to Christ Church by members of the MU. The prepared posies are distributed on the Sunday in remembrance of all mothers and those who have “mothered” others over the course of their lives.

Wedding – Luke Whiteman

On 27th August 2022 Claude and Carol Taitt were married. Carol has been a long term resident of the parish and more recently a member of the congregation. Luke took the service on a very happy day for all in attendance.



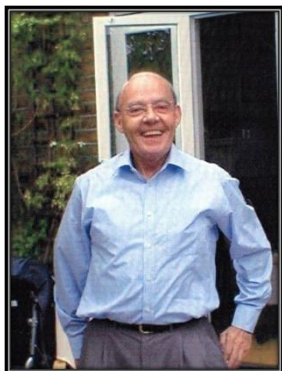
Deaths – Jonathan Croucher

Iris Smith

Iris had been a member of Christ Church for almost 40 years, joining after her move with her beloved husband Charlie to Crystal Palace in 1974. She made many lifelong friends here, and was, in particular, a great friend and support to Cyril Tennant, the vicar at the time she joined. Iris was a great woman of prayer and was very involved with the crèche, and, later, with Playpen, our toddler group, and would often be seen helping at church events and preparing flowers. Over the last 10 years, Iris's eyesight affected her confidence, and she was seen less often at church services, but continued to pray regularly for those who asked for prayer and for the church community as a whole. She was delighted to become a grandma in 2018. Her health had begun to deteriorate and the isolation of Covid affected her badly. She died peacefully

at Saint Christopher's, with her children Mary and Richard close by.

Michael Davies



Michael died suddenly on Boxing Day 2022 while visiting family with Sue in Oxford. His death came as a real shock for everyone – despite his almost 90 years, Michael was in good health and good spirits. Michael had also been a member of Christ Church, with Sue, for over 40 years. He had served on various occasions on the PCC and as church treasurer, playing a significant role in the reconstruction of the church after the devastating fire in 1982. He was, as many described him, a quiet saint of the church, who, with his cheerful and encouraging nature, was such a blessing to all who knew him and whose kindness, wisdom and support has been a particular encouragement to each of the incumbents over those four decades.

The Queen

As we go to print on this annual report, preparations are underway for the marking of the coronation of King Charles III. The death of HM Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022, brought to an end the longest reign of any British monarch. Her funeral was a moving tribute to her service and duty, and to the Christian faith, of which, in recent years, she had spoken more openly and publicly. We televised the service live at Christ Church and, all who were present, even remotely, felt very much involved in marking the death of someone who had come to be almost universally, and globally, respected.



Lancelot Andrewes Medal – Jonathan Croucher



The Bishop of Southwark occasionally bestows the Lancelot Andrewes medal on individuals in the diocese by way of recognition for “godly service and zeal for the gospel”. We were delighted in November 2022, that Bishop Christopher awarded the medal to Pauline Simpson, our lay reader, PCC secretary and ministry team member. Jonathan presented the medal to Pauline on her 70th birthday at

the morning service.

Farsi ministry – Emma Lowth

It seems a lifetime ago that 2 young Iranian men arrived at Christ Church one morning in September 2021 and were so warmly welcomed by Antoinette and then Hamid Momtahan. In the 18 months since then, we have welcomed hundreds of Farsi-speaking men, women and children through the church doors, many of whom have already encountered Christian faith through the underground church movement in Iran. We are so grateful for God's miraculous guidance and provision as we've been learning to do church together and to grow our pastoral and discipleship provision among this group of people, each of whom is precious to us and to God.

In the last year we have started holding Hub worship events, aiming to offer worship services in Farsi every month or so, which have been made possible through the diverse contributions of members of the community and the support of English congregation members. These events have also been of benefit to smaller groups of Farsi-speakers attending other churches in Southwark Diocese. There has also, of course, been food!



Christian salad



Farsi Alpha manual

With the incredible support of Sepi Black, and the arrival of Rev'd Susan and Ali Shirdel, and latterly with Richard Winborn joining the team, too, Emma was able to host the Farsi Alpha course on Wednesday nights over Autumn 2022 for more than 40 individuals. The day of teaching on the Holy Spirit, with guest speakers Aptin Samadi and Atena Sameri, was a particular highlight. It was a joy to see 12 choose to be baptised in

January 2023, having completed the course. We have continued our Wednesday night provision in 2023, offering a course in John's Gospel focused on the "I Am" sayings, and offering everyone the chance to discuss their thoughts on the Bible passage in small groups.



Nowruz invitation

One of the incredible gifts but also most humbling experiences of this time has been having the opportunity to learn about Persian culture, and the realities of life in Iran and Afghanistan. A series of film nights begun in January 2023 showcases the talent of Iranian cinema whilst also opening up the

culture to those of us following the subtitles.



Tahdig

than 250 celebrated the ancient New Year festival with a cultural presentation, a quiz, an incredible meal, a professional dancer, and, of course, a disco right to the end of the night.

Community gatherings have included amazing meals shared, and opportunities for music and dancing. Our Persian Christmas party attracted more than 100, and Nowruz was the absolute icing on the cake (or really that should be *tahdig* at the bottom of the rice pot) as more



Halva



Haft Sin

We finish this reporting period with the wonderful news that we have been granted Strategic Development Funding to continue this work over the next 5 years, as part of Southwark Diocese's vision for Hub churches which can support important new ministries across the Diocese. We very much look forward to Emma's licensing in June as Associate Minister to lead on this work.

Welcoming into church

Open Door – Pauline Simpson



Christmas lunch

Open Door, our weekly drop-in, has grown in numbers during the year, so that we now welcome up to 50 people each Tuesday for tea and coffee, and a hot lunch with home-made cake for pudding, all free of charge. People come for different reasons, but mostly for a welcoming space and a sense of community, and many friendships have been formed. After lunch there have often been activities such as card games, quizzes and craft, and more recently the community choir.



We are indebted to Ina Oakes and Sepi Black who produce delicious meals, and our team of bakers whose efforts are always appreciated. We are also really grateful to Iain Khan-Gilchrist for continuing to travel some distance to volunteer each week, along with the core Christ Church team of Emma, Josh and Pauline.

Moving into wellbeing and community choir – Emma Lowth

We were blessed to receive sponsorship from Lambeth Public Health in partnership with Norwood Forum to run two different weekly wellbeing events as part of Tuesdays at Open Door. Roshì's community choir brought people together to sing a variety of different



songs in a variety of different languages after lunch! And Diane Aben's very popular gentle exercise class, Moving into Wellbeing, was a fantastic addition to our Tuesday mornings, bringing a growing number of folk fresh from their exercises into Open Door for lunch and chat afterwards.



Magnolia Club – Jodie Lomax

The Magnolia Club is a drop-in group which meets at Christ Church on Wednesdays from 2:00 – 4:00 pm and is specifically designed for those with dementia and their carers. It is administered by Age UK (Lambeth) and assisted by local volunteers. Its purpose is to provide a congenial atmosphere where people in similar situations can gather, have a cup of tea and biscuits, chat, learn about the practicalities of living with dementia and assist with memory retention. This is encouraged through, among other things, exposure to music, art, poetry, picture quizzes, and looking at/touching and talking about objects that attendees may have encountered during their lives. Magnolia Club welcomes volunteers who would like to participate in this useful and highly enjoyable group.

Playpen – Jenny Thomas



Throughout the year Playpen has continued to provide a safe and friendly space for local parents, carers, childminders, nannies and grandparents to bring their babies and toddlers to. We pray as a team before each session and it's been lovely to have non-

Christian members both prompting us to pray and bringing their own prayer requests into the mix. One of the things we've frequently prayed for is that those coming will make good connections whilst at the group, it's been great to see this prayer answered: parents connecting with each other and with childminders, younger mums being supported by the grandmothers, two sets of adoptive parents meeting whose girls have now become great friends. One day two grandparents were sitting and having a cup of tea and chat, they hadn't come together; the wife of the gentleman informed me that they were a brother and sister who never had time for a catch-up because they were both so busy looking after their respective families. How good is God!

None of this would be possible without our wonderful team of volunteers, three of whom have been coming to Playpen for more than 30 years! Obviously the big change of the year was Helen no longer being here; she's been greatly missed but her legacy lives on, she left so many good practices in place for us to continue. This was especially apparent and helpful as we prepared for our Christmas parties. These were a great success and were appreciated by all.

We said goodbye to Tim in the summer; he had been coming for more than 20 years to lead the singing session with his guitar. He and his guitar have been missed. We are grateful for his commitment to the group over so many years. We welcomed Sharon onto the Thursday team, she brings great enthusiasm and has proved to be a



valued member of the team. Jenny and Christine take overall responsibility now.

One of our biggest challenges this year was managing when there were teachers' strikes; most of our team have school age children so wouldn't be with us. For the first day we did have to close but for subsequent days we have managed to stay open, much to the delight of many. Also, due to the boiler issue in the main church, this year we have only been using the Goodliffe hall. We have had to limit the toys which are put out, eg no ride on cars or slides, which is a shame, but it has meant everyone getting more involved in clearing the toys away before song time, something we hope to continue even when we return to using the Narthex again.

Attendance continues to regularly be more than 30, and we often reach our capacity of 45. We have to laugh that even when we put out our notice to say we are full, some people just ignore it and still come in.....we must be doing something right!

Together with the community

Norwood and Brixton Foodbank – Elizabeth Maytom

Fuel increases, food prices rising, other utilities all going up, school holidays, new school uniform at the beginning of the year, benefits cut, redundancy, eviction, poor housing – just a few additional contributions to people finding themselves in crisis and needing help from Foodbank and the numbers are rising.



like.

As our data is released at the end of April we expect to see an increase on the previous year and there are concerns about what the future looks

However things are going well. Our second hub opened at Immanuel and St Andrew, Streatham Common, in May 2022 and our third hub opens shortly at the top of Brixton Hill in Brixton Methodist church. We took on another signposting officer in September to increase our capacity to support those needing help to complete online benefits forms, find information and other help they need.

We were also successful in getting grants to re-think how teams work in the warehouse and so release more of the managers' time to work strategically. They are actively involved with the work of the Trussell Trust, supporting their campaigns and encouraging others to work towards ending the need for Foodbanks.



We are now more involved in work in Croydon after the Trussell Trust foodbank in Croydon had to stop its work and we were able to avoid clients having nowhere to turn to and to continue supporting clients sent by the borough.

2022 was completed on a high as we managed to get out over 1000 parcels in one week before Christmas.

Elizabeth's MBE – Pauline Simpson

Everyone involved with or supporting the foodbank was delighted that Elizabeth was awarded a richly deserved MBE in the 2023 New Year's honours list for her inspiring leadership, particularly during the pandemic. She has said that it acknowledges the work of an amazing team of staff and volunteers, but that work wouldn't have happened without her.

3rd Gipsy Hill brownies – Christine Woolley



We began the year with badgework and then celebrated World Thinking Day by thinking about peace and the Chinese new year of the tiger by decorating tiger biscuits. Several girls gained their Express Myself badge, which included making sock puppets and using them to tell a story.

The highlight of the year was a weekend camp in July, thankfully not TOO hot, which included cooking pizzas on barbecues, a mini funfair and finished on Sunday morning with a colour run. We also said goodbye to three of our older Brownies after camp.



In September, we welcomed some new Brownies and In October we learnt about Parliament during Parliament Week, and joined in

the District Christingle Service in early December. To celebrate Christmas we had a games night and decorated gingerbread men and stars.

We have spaces and any girls aged 7 to 10 would be welcome to join us.

Emmanuel Foodhub – Luke Whiteman

The hub was started at Emmanuel Church Hall in October 2021. It is a partnership between Christ Church, Emmanuel, Foodbank and Centre 70. Each Thursday the hub is open between 11am and 2pm. Teas and coffees are provided, and then a hot meal at lunchtime. Alongside the food there are advisors from Foodbank and Centre 70 who work with the guests, helping with various advice.



The hub started very quietly in 2021, but during 2022 the numbers attending have greatly increased. The impact of the cost of living crisis has been seen in the guests attending the hub. An exercise class was started in September before the hub. It has been particular good to see community forming in the club with many guests attending even when they don't want to see the advisors.

We would like to thank all the volunteers who make the club happen, and particularly to our chefs Ina and Sepi.

Lambeth health and well-being – Jonathan Croucher



Lambeth Council have invested significantly in well-being projects post-Covid. Our Open Door kitchen support of those in need during the pandemic had laid sound foundations for renewing connections with Lambeth and their new team focused

particularly on health and well-being in Gipsy Hill ward, one of the most deprived areas of the borough. The opening of the Foodhub with Norwood and Brixton Foodbank generated significant interest and Lambeth's well-being team soon regarded the hub as a key point of contact with the local community. Through those relationships, we have partnered with Lambeth on a number of initiatives, including the health and well-being bus bringing vaccinations, health advice, and physiotherapy services to the local community, stopping at both Foodhub and Open Door once a month.



We successfully applied for funding from Lambeth both for additional services at Open Door (a chair based Pilates class and community choir) and for the Youth and Children's work at Emmanuel Community Centre. We were then invited to apply for funding from the Health Inequalities Fund for Foodhub/Open

Door, receiving £9,250 which covered our core operating costs for a six month period. It also enabled us to employ Louise Macgregor to engage with our visitors in identifying issues around accessing healthcare and other support in the community. The report Louise has made to Lambeth Council will, I'm sure, have an impact on how they provide support and services moving forward.

Other organisations that have received funding from Lambeth have also networked with us at Open Door and we have been able to offer a mental health first-aid course with local charity "it's a playground" and have had two visits from the Beacon Trust to morning services, offering blood pressure and other essential health checks for the congregation.

Friends of Gipsy Hill fete – Jenny Thomas

July 10th 2022 was a bright and sunny day, perfect weather for the Friends of Gipsy Hill Summer Fete at Long Meadow.

We set up our stall within the marquee with other local charities.

On our table we had a variety of leaflets advertising different activities which go on within the church, a craft activity: butterfly making, 'guess-the-number-of-sweets' inside a jar and a good old fashioned game of shove ha'penny. We had a rota of people who took turns to be available at the stall throughout the afternoon.

All in all the fete was a great success with many people attending and lingering in the beautiful weather. Our stall was busy throughout the afternoon as people of all ages enjoyed the activities on offer. Through this we were able to engage in lots of conversations, making connections with many local people. It was good to be part of this local event, raising the profile of the church and its people.

Central Hill fair – Jonathan Croucher

As part of the Gipsy Hill health and well-being project, with a number of other organisations we were represented at a well-being fair on the Central Hill estate, renewing our existing relationships with the residents association and other local organisations, including the youth hub run by the Rathbone trust and with Norwood Forum.



Another event on Central Hill

Carol singing around the Gipsy Hill Christmas tree – Emma Lowth



It was -2 degrees Celsius on the night of our third annual carol singing around the Gipsy Hill Christmas tree – the coldest one yet! But our hearts were warm as a diverse

crowd of around 50 carollers gathered outside the Great Southern pub to sing, along with our good friends from the Friends of Gipsy Hill. Jonathan's fingers just about avoided frostbite on the keyboard, and Pete's ice-cool saxophone riffs were a welcome addition as Emma did her best to add aerobic actions to everyone's favourite carols.



It is rumoured that the songs were heard far and wide in the parish – presumably to the merriment of all.

Street doctors' first aid course – Jonathan Croucher

With the support of a member of St Stephen's South Dulwich, we hosted a training session from Street Doctors, providing training for first-aid response for those who have been stabbed. It was shocking to hear of the numbers of young people who have been victims of stabbing in this borough and the significance of immediate and appropriate first-aid intervention, which could so easily save lives.



Churches together in Crystal Palace

Churches Together in Crystal Palace unites 13 churches of different denominations – three Anglican, two Roman Catholic, the Methodist, Salvation Army, Baptist, Korean, and four independent Pentecostal churches. A group of committed lay people from different churches meets every month for prayer at the Methodist Church, usually led by one of the ministers.

A coordinating group manages fundraising and events and in 2022, alongside the regular Good Friday Act of Witness at Sainsbury's which now regularly draws over 100 people, the Salvation Army hosted a songs of praise event, and the Enabling Group held a fundraising afternoon for the Jubilee at St Margaret Clitheroe.

We need a new rep for the churches together committee – if anyone is interested, please speak to Jonathan.

Events

Pancake party – Jonathan Croucher

The pancake party at Christ Church on Shrove Tuesday is not huge, but always great fun, drawing together people from across the generations. About 90 pancakes were made and eaten, with 11 being eaten by one person (who will remain nameless).



Particular thanks to Yvette Croucher for cooking a vast pile of pancakes, even though she could not be present in person.

Church fun day – Luke Whiteman

On Saturday 19th March 2022 Christ Church hosted a Fun Day. There was a bouncy castle in the church, with various craft stalls, a café and a Zumba session. Due to the impact of Covid we hadn't had many of these events in the preceding years. The event attracted lots of church members, particularly those with children. The event also attracted several families that didn't attend the church. It was a positive event for our community in the recovery from Covid.

Cream teas in vicarage garden – Jonathan Croucher



Helen Gates and Yvette's mum, Kay. We enjoyed the sunshine, delicious home-made scones and tea, beautifully served in bone china cups and saucers. A real treat!

On a happily warm and sunny afternoon in May, Jonathan and Yvette hosted two sittings for afternoon tea, ably supported by



Summer barbecue – Jonathan Croucher

The summer barbecue suffered a couple of postponements due to weather (too hot) and illness - but finally took place in August. Again, we had a beautiful day (at least before the rain came), and the vicarage garden and upper church hall were full to bursting. Despite a minor crisis in the cooking schedule, we fed well over 100 people, very amply. Many thanks to the wonderful volunteers on the barbecue, and to both the team of servers and clearers, and the Iranian volunteers who made up some beautifully decorated salads.



Harvest Supper – Emma Lowth

Nearly 100 gathered for our Harvest Supper from across the congregation. On this occasion, this was a celebration of Persian cuisine, superbly cooked by members of our Farsi community and we also had an opportunity to hear a little more of the experiences and testimonies of some. It was particularly wonderful to be able to come together for this occasion after Covid lockdowns had prevented it for so long.



Quiz night – Luke Whiteman

On Saturday 19th November there was a quiz night in aid of Tearfund. The quiz was run by Luke and Josh, with rounds for all the family; particular highlights were the amazing towers made from spaghetti and marshmallows! We also had delicious food cooked by Ina. It was well attended and a good opportunity to spend time together with other members of the church family. The winning team included the vicar!

Mini fair – Jonathan Croucher

We decided to hold a low-key cake and craft fair this year, with tea, cake, and craft on sale on a Saturday afternoon in December, and then after the service on Sunday. As ever, the Christ Church cake stall was wonderfully supported, along with some wonderful donated crafts – including some delightful quilt mats and bags made by Glenys Lawrence, and the event raised an astonishing £700 towards Open Door and Foodhub.

Church building and hire

Church buildings – Jonathan Croucher

During Covid, one of our main hall users, Team Dance, offered an incredibly popular online dance school that saw many youngsters join in for the first time. When the opportunity to return to in-person teaching returned, Lucy's dance school was able to fill upstairs and downstairs all day on Saturday to ensure adequate social distancing and cleaning between classes. As the restrictions relaxed, it became clear that the demand for classes continued

and the dance school now continues to fill the halls during the day on Saturday, so we no longer take occasional party bookings. It has given us a significant increase in regular hall income and lightened the administrative load considerably.

During the week the hall is also used by Team Dance on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays; Slimming World use the Narthex on Thursdays, and on Tuesdays we have Zumba downstairs and Crystal Palace Community choir upstairs. Finally, during the weekdays, Diane Aben runs Pilates classes on Wednesdays and Friday mornings. All of this means the halls are now as fully booked as we can cope with.

We had problems with the heating systems, both in the hall and church during 2022. We undertook some repair work to pipework in the upper hall, but the church heating system ultimately proved incapable of repair and in 2023, we are in the process of replacing that system.

The buildings are generally maintained in good condition, with great thanks to Stuart Mitchenall for his work in undertaking many repairs and general maintenance, and to Jon Caddell and Ina Oakes, our cleaners, who keep the building clean and tidy. Thanks also to Anthony Merifield for his continued work keeping the garden and ground clear and tidy.

Flowers – Jonathan Croucher

Patsy Easter continues to provide delightfully attractive flower displays for the church, occasionally assisted by others. It is so transformative in the simplicity of our modern church building to have fresh flowers arranged each week and Patsy, with Ron providing practical support, offers this ministry so generously and beautifully week by week. We are so grateful to her. If you would like to get involved in flower arranging, even if only once a term, or if you would like to learn a bit more about what it involves, please speak to Patsy or Jonathan.



Mission partners – Jonathan Croucher

The relationships with our long-term mission partners have slightly taken a back seat this year as other priorities have occupied us. We still pray regularly for them, with one mission partner being prayed for each month in morning services.

Our mission giving policy is to give 10% of financial donations to the church to our mission partners. This has enabled us to give approximately £5000 per year to Tearfund, and £2500 per year each to CSW (Christian Solidarity Worldwide), CMS, supporting our link mission partners, Eric and Rhena Clouston, and to Spinnaker, the charity that provides Christian RE content for local schools. We have, in addition, this year, been able to continue to make an additional donation of £2500 to John and Lynne Quanrud to support their work in Albania.

Although we do not give financially, Norwood and Brixton Foodbank is a key mission partner and our Christmas collections are donated to the Foodbank. We have a giving point in the church lobby, which is regularly filled and deposited at the Foodbank in Streatham and many of our congregation volunteer in different ways.

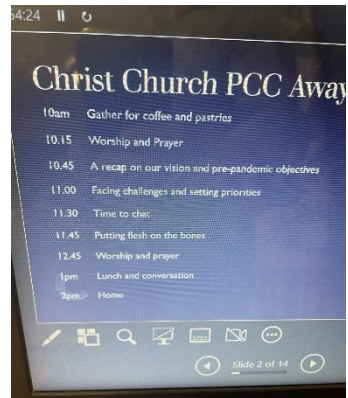
Other reports

Electoral roll – Pauline Simpson

The roll has been updated in April 2023, and comprises 147 members, which is a decrease of 7 (6 added, 13 removed) from the last roll in 2022. 98 are female and 49 male, 40 live in the parish and 107 outside, though due to the location of the church within the parish many of these live within easy walking distance of the church.

PCC report – Pauline Simpson

The PCC had 6 “normal” meetings, plus a meeting to approve the accounts before the APCM and an awayday in September. We spent quite a lot of time looking at our MAP, and how much of it is still relevant post pandemic. At both the June meeting and the awayday we had extensive discussions about our joys, challenges and hopes for the future, as well as looking at some of the detail of the MAP. We also decided to continue with online provision of services as they are still much appreciated by some people. At our March meeting we looked at the diocese anti-racism charter and had presentations from 2 members of the Kingston area MEACC who gave us plenty of food for thought from their experiences of racism both within and outside the church. Racial justice and inclusion is a topic we have revisited, especially in the light of our growing ministry with the refugee (mostly Farsi



speaking) community. We have also discussed finance, staffing needs, provision for children, admitting children to communion, and our ministries to the local community.

We had previously adopted the 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. Currently we are up to date with DBS checks. In January 2023 we ran the diocese foundations safeguarding training which was very helpful to all who came. The current parish safeguarding officers are Pauline Simpson and Jenny Thomas, working alongside Jonathan.

Special thank go to Anthony Merifield for about 30 years' service on the PCC, many of which have also been as churchwarden and deanery synod member. He has been a tireless servant of the church during that time, has been meticulous in all that he has done, and kept the rest of us on our toes! He has decided to retire at the 2023 APCM, and we will miss his wisdom and input. Thank you Anthony!

Deanery Synod – Jonathan Croucher

Due to two unexpected cancellations due to illness and calendar clashes with parish activities, Synod only met formally once in 2022.

Synod met at Emmanuel Church West Dulwich in November to discuss issues of mental health and parish ministry. Rev Cathy Wiles, who had served as a mental health chaplain in the NHS, and Rev Andrew Wilson, a retired mental health nurse and Chair

of the Croydon mental health charity APCMH, addressed Synod on some of their experience of supporting those with challenging mental health situations in parish ministry. There was a particular theme of building safe communities where individuals could be heard and where there was an openness to sharing issues around mental health, as well as a recognition that all of us are likely to experience some form of challenging mental health in our lives.

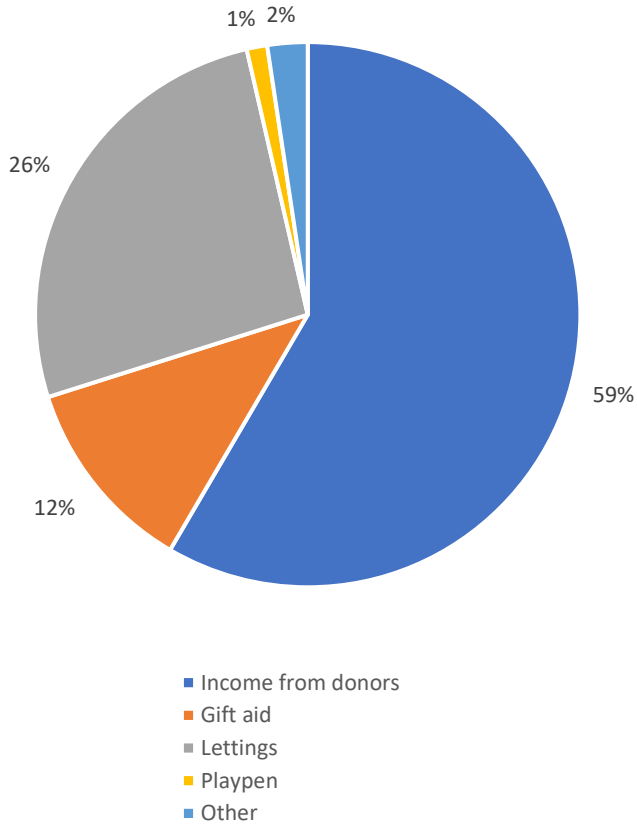


We held our annual deanery Ascension Day service at All Saints West Dulwich. The combined choirs of All Saints, St Peter's and St Leonard's led the musical worship beautifully and our speakers were from L'Arche London, with an inspiring sermon from two members of the L'Arche London community with whom All Saints has very close connections.

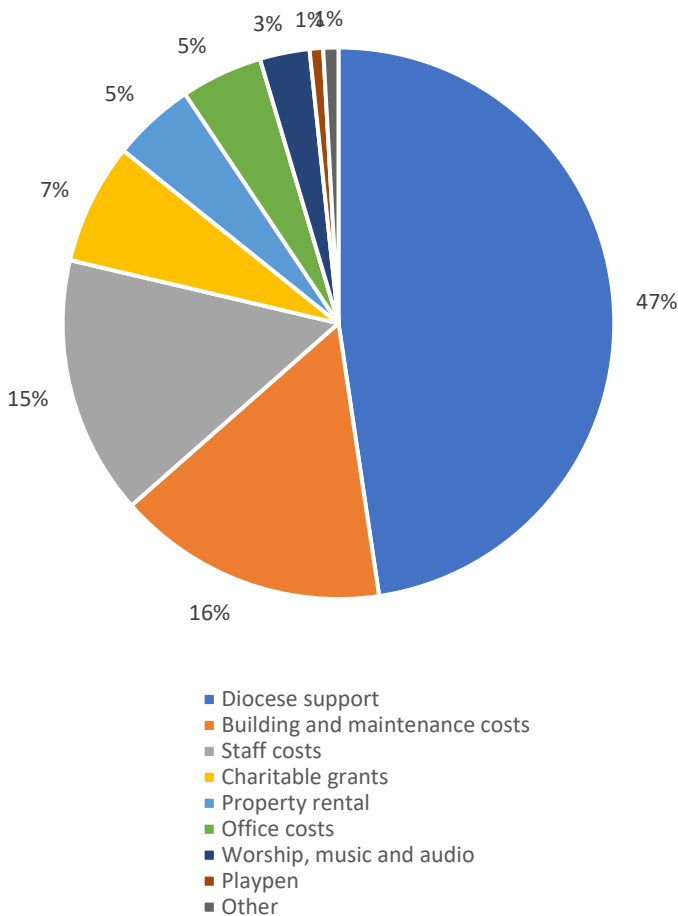
In March Synod met for its final gathering of the triennium, with a fascinating evening visit to the West Norwood Cemetery, with Synod meeting in the Crematorium Chapel with a focus on death and dying. Hosted generously by Kim Hart of Lambeth Amenity Team we were served wine and cheese, heard a little about the fascinating history of the cemetery, including a short video of the unique Gothic Catacombs, and then used the Church of England's new Gravetalk material to open up a conversation around death and dying.

Financial Report Summary

Income (unrestricted funds)



**Expenditure
(unrestricted funds)**



2022 was a positive year for the finances of Christ Church.

The net cash surplus before a change in investment values was just over £25,000 (2021: £40,000)

This surplus reflects the continued support from the congregation, with income from donations remaining the same as 2021 at around £160,000, as well as an increased return on the use of our buildings, which generated a further £60,000, (2021: £45,000).

The total income for 2022 was around £242,000 (2021: £226,000), the balance of income being made up of income generated by the activities that we run - £16,000, and dividends from our investments of £6,700.

On the expenditure side, 2022 saw us returning to activities that had been put on hold throughout the Covid pandemic. This meant that expenses rose to £217,000 for the year (2021: £202,000). In particular, our cleaning expenses rose by £7,000 to £14,500 with the increased use of the building.

The other significant increase was our contribution to the Diocese, which increased by £5,000 to £97,000. Although a vicar's salary is less than the average wage, the full cost of providing one incumbent to a parish is around £81,000; salary plus housing, pension contributions and training come to about £50,000, the rest is the allocation of the cost of running a diocese. This made us a net giver to the Diocese of around £16,000. The surplus is used by the Diocese to support smaller parishes that cannot meet the full cost of an incumbent, which we can view as being part of our mission giving as we recognise and respond to God's generosity to us.

Our youth work continues to benefit from the Goodliffe Endowment, the income from which has covered the cost of our intern and our work with young people, although the value of the underlying investment fell quite substantially this year. The market value of the investment was £224,166 at the year end and it generated an income of £6,672.

Many of our other ministries also benefit from grants received during the year. The church received around £8,000 in grants for the work of Open Door, in all its guises, and for the Farsi ministry. We also received a £1,400 unrestricted grant from the Diocese to help with the extra costs of heating over the winter month.

The church now holds £137,000 in free funds, with a further £32,000 in designated funds – money set aside by the PCC for specific purposes – and £43,000 in restricted funds.

We will need to spend some of this cash on the new boiler, probably around £50,000, but we are delighted that with the continued support of the congregation and good management of our resources we will still be able to invest more into the ministry of the church to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people in our community and beyond.

Many thanks to all those who have given their time, money and talents over the past year, all of which has contributed to our healthy financial position.