

Christ Church Gipsy Hill

Annual Report for 2020



Section 1: Ministry and Discipleship

Summary of 2020

2020 for Christ Church, as for the rest of the world, was dominated by Covid-19 which completely changed the way we do church and are church. Despite all the restrictions we have continued to worship and meet together online and in person when that has been possible, and have continued to know the love and grace of God at work in our midst. Social distancing and isolation have inevitably been more difficult for some than others, particularly those who are vulnerable, without internet access, or socially isolated. We have done our best to help all our congregation in different ways to engage with God and each other, and have seen some grow significantly in faith and their relationship with God, while others have found things more challenging and become more disengaged.

Mission Action Plan

Christ Church's mission action plan sets our vision for our church, and provides us 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.

We are still committed to our purpose and vision and will be discussing in the coming year how to further implement specific aims which can be found on our website.

Worship and teaching

Sunday Morning Services

During the first lockdown, from the end of March until the beginning of July, everything suddenly moved online. We chose Facebook Live as our preferred platform for livestreaming services. For the first couple of months this had to be from the vicarage when Jonathan Croucher, our vicar, was ably assisted by his wife and four children, three of whom were home from university. A large proportion of our usual congregation were able to access these services, and we were all hugely appreciative of the Crouchers' leadership. We were also joined by several people from outside the congregation – family or friends of some, former members who've moved away, and some people who we don't know at all including a couple from Australia!

One of the advantages of Facebook Live is the ability for those who have a Facebook account to post comments during the service, which gave us a sense of belonging even when we were all in our own homes.

When streaming from church was allowed, Emma Lowth, our curate, could join in leading services and music, and there was occasional pre-recorded input from others for intercessions or interviews.

From July onwards we were able to gather in church albeit with many restrictions – no congregational singing, social distancing, no moving around to greet each other during the peace, only sharing the bread during communion, and no gathering together after the service. However, for those who felt able to attend in person it was very moving to be together again. We continued to live stream, and from the autumn our regular pattern became a live streamed service at 9.30am and an open service at 11am, with largely the same content. With no Sunday School or youth groups allowed during the services, most of the families stayed away from the main service, but many enjoyed gathering together at home for the live stream. We were pleased to welcome a few new people who joined the congregation either just before or during lockdown.

Our services throughout the year continued to follow much the same pattern as previously. One thing that was particularly appreciated by many was a series of interviews with different members of the congregation from a variety of backgrounds as to how lockdown had affected them and their jobs or daily life, and what they had learned about themselves and God during that time.

Sermon Series on Sunday Mornings

We began 2020 (before lockdown!) with a series seeking to help us to be more confident in sharing our faith. It focused on two areas, speaking of Jesus and looking at different encounters with Jesus in the bible. This was a challenging and encouraging series, which was interrupted by lockdown.

From May to July we had a series on Colossians which has some wonderful teaching on the person of Christ but also practical teaching on living within the church community and in the world. In the autumn we looked at Nehemiah together, looking at how the people rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and the challenges they faced, relating that to rebuilding community after lockdown. At other times during the year we followed the lectionary readings including readings from Romans and Matthew during the summer.

Inspire

Inspire, our informal monthly evening church service during which we have an extended time of worship as well as the opportunity to share encouragements and testimonies with one another,

continued mostly on zoom. We began with time to share how we were, followed by times of teaching and sharing on different topics, ably led by Emma Lowth, Pippa Evans and Helen Gates. Singing together didn't work on zoom, so after the meeting we switched to Facebook Live where Victoria Boyce and Pete Moorey had pre-recorded a time of sung worship which we could join in with individually. We did also meet in person towards the end of the year.

Christmas Services

We were fortunate to be able to gather together with restrictions for worship during the Christmas season. We held a Christingle service (without the usual shared tea!) which was well attended. We held two identical carol services to allow for social distancing, one of which was live streamed. Because there was no congregational singing, the music was provided by a small, socially distanced, choir of about 10 people, who sang both well-known and less well-known carols. The choir was ably led by Suzanne Munday with Matthew Macgregor accompanying on the piano. We had the usual Christmas readings and some helpful reflections. Some people said it was the best ever! We moved the time of our "midnight" communion service on Christmas Eve from 11.30pm to 9pm, which people seemed to appreciate. The Christmas morning service was well attended.

We were pleased to welcome visitors to all our services, though fewer than usual, but attendance on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day was bolstered by many of the congregation not being able to go away as usual.

On two occasions during December we gathered by the community Christmas tree, put up by the Friends of Gipsy Hill, to sing carols accompanied by James Haddock and others on brass instruments. At that point, singing outside was allowed, and the members of Christ Church who were there were joined by several people from the local community who joined in enthusiastically.

Other services

During the first lockdown, we began live streaming Morning Prayer twice a week from the leaders' homes. It had previously been held in church, but more people joined in the live stream than ever came to church, in particular some who were now working from home and so able to join in. This continued for the rest of the year though later in the year it was streamed from church rather than homes. During the first lockdown we also streamed Compline on Wednesday evenings, and a "thought for the day" every weekday, led by various members of the congregation who shared thoughts on a huge variety of topics and using different styles.

Children and Youth Ministry

From March onwards we were not able to run children's groups during morning services, but during the summer Pippa Evans, our ministry assistant, met with various small groups of children aged 8 upwards and also teenagers for social events outside such as games in the park or eating together (with appropriate risk assessments). This helped some to re-engage with each other in particular.

In the autumn we were able to run Raise the Praise, our service for under 8s, and Shine, for 8-11s, adhering to all the current restrictions. Children enjoyed doing actions to songs played through the sound system and onto the screens, as well as hearing bible stories, doing quizzes and so on. It was so lovely to see some of our children back in church.

Other church activities

Many of our usual activities continued during the year on zoom, including home groups, prayer meetings and 20s-30s events, who also met in person in small groups when that was allowed. Meetings of the ministry team, PCC, mission committee and other committees continued as usual but on zoom.

Home groups were a special source of encouragement for many of the congregation, providing support and the opportunity to “see” other people to all those who were part of a group, as well as continuing to study together and pray for each other. When people were asked what aspects of church life in lockdown people had appreciated most, home groups were a common answer.

Monthly prayer meetings attracted some people who did not usually come to those when in church, including some people who prefer not to go out in the evenings.

We also had some social activities on zoom such as quiz nights, where we could easily be split into teams, which were much enjoyed by those who came.

Weekly chats on zoom over coffee on a Thursday morning also happened for a while, and while not attracting many people were really appreciated by those who joined as it gave them an opportunity to engage with others, and to meet some people they didn’t know well.

Pastoral Care

Home groups were the main source of pastoral care during the year for those who were members of one. For others in the congregation it was arranged for a member of the ministry team to call them regularly, in many cases weekly, to see how they were, encourage them and pray with them if that was appropriate. That created many new friendships and some of the phonecalls were continuing well into 2021.

At Pentecost and Advent we also put together goody bags for every household in the congregation including those we didn’t have regular contact with, and these were delivered by members of the ministry team, often giving a chance for doorstep chats. They contained something home baked, a candle, something appropriate for the season made by members of the creative artistry group, a letter from the vicar with information about forthcoming services, and a small bar of Cadbury’s dairy milk chocolate! These were so appreciated by many, especially those who were unable to access church services online or who hadn’t really engaged with them. There were also separate bags for children and young people containing activities and something edible!

Particular prayer requests from members of the congregation for themselves or others were emailed around the pastoral prayer team who undertook to pray for these needs, often quite serious or complex, in strict confidence. The team met occasionally on zoom to pray together.

Community activities

Unfortunately most of the events when we welcome people from the community into the church during the week had to be stopped for most of the year, notably Open Door, our community drop in, Magnolia Club for dementia sufferers and their carers, and Playpen, our parent/carer and toddler group. We look forward to their restarting when allowed.

However, in the spring we opened the Open Door Kitchen, where we cooked and delivered meals to many people in the local community who were in need of hot meals. Two nutritious meals each week were delivered to approximately 60 people, cooked initially by Danielle Montrose-Francis and latterly by Ina Oakes. They were delivered by volunteers from both within the church and the local community, and the administration was co-ordinated by various people including Emma Lowth, Janet Boyce and Josh Klein. We were so grateful to the Friends of Gipsy Hill, through whom we have received the funding we needed to be able to continue to provide this service throughout 2020 and beyond, and also to Cook in West Dulwich who provided 30 frozen meals each week we could include in regular deliveries or use for emergencies. While the individual people we deliver to have often changed, the need is still there and we hope to continue to be able to help to meet it.

We continued to support the Norwood and Brixton Foodbank with regular prayer and encouragement. It is led by Elizabeth Maytom, one of our congregation, and supported by many volunteers both regular and ad hoc, some from Christ Church, including Tim Boyce, the chair of trustees. Having set up a store for all the Lambeth Foodbanks in a large church in Streatham Hill in 2019, when Covid hit in 2020 we were able to move into the church to begin packing food parcels for delivery throughout Lambeth, as well as some addresses in Croydon and Bromley. Although the face to face meetings with clients had to cease for the moment, they have been supported by phonecalls and advice, and the food we have been able to deliver has been a lifeline for many, including those who have never needed to use a foodbank before.

Mission Partners

Our relationships with international organisations are overseen by the Missions Group. Individual members of the group are responsible for each of the three projects which Christ Church supports financially and with regular prayer. Engagement is proactive and each month we focus on one of our overseas or home organisations in the Sunday morning service, as well as devoting some of our monthly prayer meetings to our mission partners.

The three overseas organisations we support are:

- Tearfund: we donate to their general fund, but particularly support in prayer the Gordon family, who have recently moved to the DRC where Anthea will be a programme manager for Tearfund, and Martin will be working through CMS with the Anglican Bishop of Goma.
- The Church Mission Society (CMS) where we continue to support the Clouston family - Eric and Rhena and their two children Kitty and Sam (both now studying in the UK) who are based in Bangalore, India.
- Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), which works for religious freedom throughout the world through advocacy and human rights

In addition we support financially and in prayer John and Lynne Quanrud, members of Christ Church who returned in 2019 to Albania, where they had previously served as missionaries. John is working with the Institute for Albanian & Protestant Studies, whose mission is to 'promote the

discovery of Albanian and Protestant history and thought'. Lynne is teaching English to Albanian students. They returned to the UK when the pandemic struck in 2020 but continued their work online, and plan to return to Albania when possible.

Locally, we continue to support Spinnaker, whose work in primary schools has continued via videos and the Norwood and Brixton Foodbank.

Environmental Focus

We continue as a church to be committed to reducing the church's environmental footprint, becoming an Eco Church, and encouraging members of the congregation to be more environmentally aware. Our efforts have been led enthusiastically by Pippa Evans and others, and we will be able to focus much more on this in 2021.

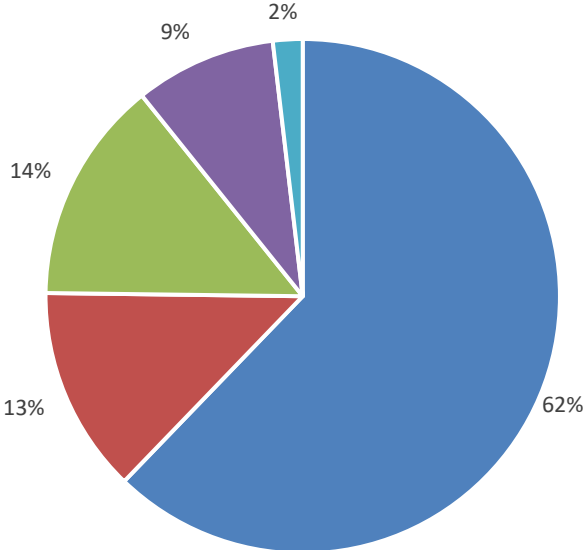
Summary

Despite the difficulties that many have faced during the year, we are very grateful to God that we have seen him at work in many different ways. We are indebted to the seemingly tireless energy, enthusiasm and dedication of our leaders, in particular Jonathan Croucher, Emma Lowth and Pippa Evans, as well as the many volunteers who help to sustain the life of the church. We hope and pray that 2021 will see us re-engaging as a community and that there will be less need for zoom, wonderful though that has been!

Income and expenditure

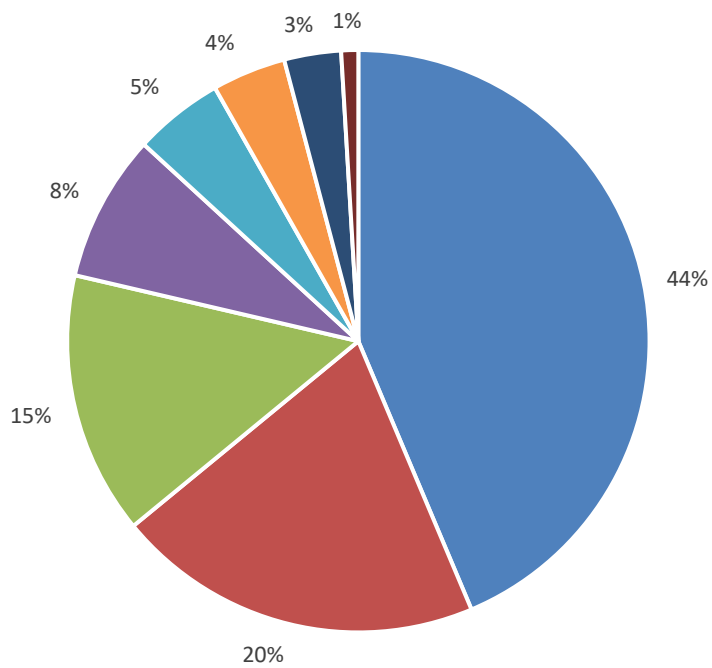
Financial Report Summary

Income (unrestricted)



- Income from donors
- Gift aid
- Lettings
- Furlough
- Other

Expenditure (unrestricted)



- Diocese support
- Staff costs
- Building and maintenance costs
- Charitable grants
- Property rental
- Professional fees
- Office costs
- Other