

THE PARISH PROFILE OF

# CHRIST CHURCH GIPSY HILL

[gipsyhill.org.uk](http://gipsyhill.org.uk)

January 2024

*For prospective applicants for the position of  
Vicar of Christ Church Gipsy Hill*



# WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in the vacant role of Vicar at Christ Church Gipsy Hill. The church is actively praying for our new incumbent and we are excited for the future.

Christ Church Gipsy Hill is an active, growing Anglican church in a vibrant and diverse south London location. It is a focal point in the community, not only as it stands in a prominent and visible point on the hill itself, but also as an embedded partner with other local organisations.

We seek to be a welcoming, worshipping community of faith in God. We want to live our daily lives as disciples of Jesus Christ, serving God, guided by biblical teaching, in the power of the Holy Spirit, in our church, our community and the world.

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# THE PARISH

We are a small South London parish in Crystal Palace near the point where five boroughs meet.

The parish lies on the hill above Dulwich and commands panoramic views of Central London eight miles away. Crystal Palace Park lies to the east and Norwood Park to the west.

The church is situated on Highland Road in a leafy conservation area, a few minutes walk from the bustling streets of the Crystal Palace Triangle.



## WELCOME TO GIPSY HILL

With around 6,000 inhabitants, the parish is home to a richly diverse and multicultural mix of people. According to the Church Urban Fund's data, over half of the parish are not White British.

The 2021 census reveals that 42% are Christian, 39% state no religion and 7.6% are Muslim.

The area has a strong community spirit with a high level of involvement in tenants' and residents' associations, the Friends of Gipsy Hill, and local cultural groups.

Crystal Palace is a thriving area – named the best place to live in London in 2022 by The Sunday Times. The local area is packed with independent shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants, a local cinema, as well as a

Sainsbury's. Crystal Palace Park hosts music and other events throughout the year and is home to the National Sports Centre.

There are two primary schools – Paxton and Kingswood – within or on the edge of the parish, as well as eight other primary schools and six secondary schools within a couple of miles, some of which have been rated outstanding by OFSTED. There are excellent rail links to central London and the City (20-25 minutes away) and Croydon, with a local bus terminus at Crystal Palace. A very good health centre is just outside the parish at the bottom of Gipsy Hill and two large NHS hospitals are within four miles of the church.

Gipsy Hill Ward, of which the parish forms the southern half, is one of the most deprived areas of Greater London. The 2021 census showed that 15% of adult residents had no formal qualifications, and around a third of children and pensioners experience income deprivation with Foodbank use increasing significantly in recent years.

The church sits on the edge of the large Central Hill estate – with a mix of local authority tenants and private renters and owners. There has been a campaign by local residents to oppose the local council's plans to rebuild the estate, and the church has been used as a safe space for debate.



# WHO WE ARE

***Christ Church Gipsy Hill has had a worshipping congregation since the 1860s, when the church was established. One of the things many people say they like about Christ Church is our diversity, our warm welcome and our strong roots in the local community.***

Christ Church has a broad evangelical tradition and draws a congregation from a range of church traditions and backgrounds. Our vision is for Christ Church to be a community of faith that is open and accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds. We want to share the good news of Jesus Christ and to grow together in faith as we seek God's will in our daily lives, our church, our community and our world.

We have seen moderate growth in recent years – even during the pandemic. Our electoral roll numbered 147 members in April 2023, including 107 who live outside the parish, but the majority within walking distance of the church. There has been additional growth through a Farsi-speaking community who have joined us during the past two and half years, bringing real blessing to our fellowship.

To minister to and serve our parish, our main building and our adjoining church hall are

used throughout the week for a wide range of church and community activities. These include Open Door – a weekly drop-in session for the community; our Playpen stay and play group; an after school club for primary school children; a group for people living with dementia and their carers; wellbeing classes and more. We are fortunate that the local community uses our buildings for a range of clubs, classes and events.

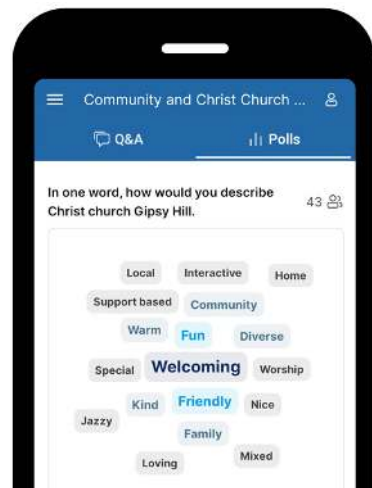


*Members of Christ Church PCC*

# VISION AND FUTURE — WHO WE ARE

**Over the last 10 years, we believe that Christ Church has become increasingly more established locally. Living out God's love for Gipsy Hill, we have embarked on a commitment of outreach, mission and involvement in our local community.**

**As we begin our search for a new incumbent, our hope is that we continue to grow together as a thriving, diverse and committed community of worshippers, grounded in faith.**



*“I love the Christ Church atmosphere. Everyone here is really kind and wants to help each other. Christ Church feels like a home for me, where I can always go”*

## Can you help us to:

- Develop and deepen our relationship with God through worship, prayer and engagement with scripture? Encourage us to actively apply our faith to our everyday lives?
- Creatively engage our congregation and local community with the Gospel?
- Ensure that every person is included and valued and celebrated?
- Support and uphold our identity as the Farsi Hub church in the Diocese of Southwark, supporting our Associate Vicar in this ministry and continuing our commitment to the refugee and asylum seeking community in our church?
- Build our work with children and younger members of our church and their families and carers?
- Meet the needs of people who are not served by our current areas of mission and ministry?
- Explore our practical and spiritual gifts in ministry and equip new volunteers?



# VISION AND FUTURE – OUR NEW VICAR

## We are seeking a new incumbent who is:

- **A prayerful, pastoral leader** to help us grow in our faith.
- **Kind and compassionate** with the ability to listen to and build meaningful relationships with the breadth of our church community, holding us together in our diversity.
- **An excellent and engaging preacher** committed to the Bible and open to where the Spirit is leading them and the church.
- **An inspiring enabler**, motivating others to develop and use their gifts, including lay people and clergy.
- **An effective manager** with the ability to successfully steer the church as an organisation, our staff, volunteers, ministries and outreach.

We would welcome someone who has the ability to supervise curates in training and in assisting church members to identify a vocation for ministry (either lay or ordained).

*“I love the different prayers we do”*

*“Its community focus; it’s accepting, relaxed and friendly”*

*“I love that we worship as one big family and the church does everything well”*



## OUR VOICES

*We asked our congregation to tell us what they thought about Christ Church and what they’d like in a new vicar.*

*We hope we’ve managed to capture some of that here.*



# SUNDAY WORSHIP

## 10.30AM

Our main service is at 10.30am which has an informal feel, broadly following Common Worship liturgy with Holy Communion twice a month, Morning Worship once and All Age once. During the last six months we have averaged 117 adults and 26 children on a typical Sunday. There is a mixture of worship songs and traditional hymns. We have a number of gifted musicians, but would welcome better direction in this area. We welcome young families and love the life and spirit they bring to the church. This service is also livestreamed on Facebook for all who want to follow online.

## 9AM

At 9am once a month we have a service of Holy Communion with a short sermon. It attracts a small congregation who value the opportunity for a quiet time of peaceful contemplation .

## INSPIRE

For the last 7 years, we have been running Inspire, an informal evening service twice a month. We have an extended time of worship, followed by a talk which may be more interactive than a morning sermon. We continue with a time of prayer in different forms – sometimes reflective, sometimes listening to God for each other in small groups. The service attracts about 20 people and is led by a small, dedicated team.



We follow a sermon series each term, either a book of the bible or a theme, and sermons are about 20 minutes in length.

Services are led by the clergy, reader or lay people. About 45 people are involved on a Sunday to welcome, read, lead intercessions, administer the chalice, or offer prayer ministry which we currently do during the administration of communion. After the service most people stay for tea, coffee and conversation.

# CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

We are fortunate to have a flourishing ministry with children and young people, both on Sunday mornings and at events during the week.

Our Sunday School groups for children include Diddy Disciples, a group for pre-school children; a group for Reception to Year 3 and another for those in Years 4 to 6; and a youth group for those of secondary school age.

Activity clubs are held during the school holidays and there are special events for children and young families at Christmas and Easter. These are popular with both regulars as well as with the wider community.

Children and young people are actively involved in the All Age services routinely reading and leading intercessions, sharing their own perspective on faith.

We have a small dedicated group of volunteers who lead our children and youth groups but we would welcome more support.

## YOUTH

Our youth group meets on a Sunday morning, during the service, and on a Friday evening at our curate's house. These groups are open to 11-18 year olds, though they are mostly attended by young people aged 11-16.

Our youth group on a Friday night worked through the Youth Alpha course in 2022 and have continued to do courses on prayer, Christmas and 'Big Questions'. There have been multiple social events – such as outings to local restaurants, film nights and bowling – as well as a residential activity weekend away.



Christ Church  
GIPSY HILL

# After School Club

We Are Back!

13th September

Every Tuesday

in term time, 3:30-5pm!

For ages 4-12

Contact [luke@gipsyhill.org.uk](mailto:luke@gipsyhill.org.uk) for more details.

## AFTER SCHOOL CLUB

From 3.30pm to 5pm a lively weekly group, After School Club takes place, welcoming primary school children in to participate in games, craft, snacks and Bible stories. After School Club started in May 2022 and now regularly reaches the maximum capacity of 20.

# CHURCH IN THE WEEK



Join us for  
soup & a roll  
at 12.30pm

Follow by  
service at  
1pm.

*Midweek Communion*  
Monthly Lunchtime service  
2nd Wednesday every month  
@ Christ Church, Gipsy Hill

## MORNING PRAYER

Every Tuesday and Thursday morning at 8.30am. staff and occasional visitors say Morning Prayer in the chapel; this is livestreamed with several regular viewers, some later in the day.

## MIDWEEK COMMUNION

For the last two years, we have held a midweek monthly communion service on Wednesdays with a light lunch beforehand. This is welcomed particularly by some of our older members, and we organise lifts for those who need them.

## WEDNESDAY PRAYER MEETING

On a monthly basis we meet to pray for the world, our country, community, church and ourselves. Most people attend in person, others join via Zoom.

## BAPTISMS

## WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS

Baptisms are held during the morning service for children of members of the congregation or those who live in the parish following some attendance at services and baptism preparation. Baptisms of adults or teenagers sometimes take place in the baptism pool, which is also used by other churches on occasion.

In 2022 there were eight baptisms of under 18s and 37 adult baptisms (mostly from the Farsi community), one wedding, and seven funerals.



# PASTORAL CARE

*The church has a dedicated group who are responsible for the pastoral care of the congregation and wider community. This might include people who have experienced trauma, bereavement, are housebound or are in hospital. The team meets regularly to review needs, pray together and co-ordinate visits, home communion and practical help as required.*

## HOMEGROUPS

Christ Church recognises the value of meeting in small groups to study the bible and discuss its teaching. Together we can equip and support one another to live out our faith in our daily lives. We currently have 6 home groups each with about 8 – 10 members, which meet either in person in people's homes or virtually. Meetings are weekly or fortnightly, in the daytime or evening, as preferred by the different groups and most groups choose to follow the same set programme.

## SPECIAL INTEREST COURSES

Christ Church has recently organised courses which have focused on topics such as bereavement, marriage preparation, parenting and first aid. These provide a safe and caring environment where people can share experience, knowledge and learn together.

## MOTHERS' UNION

The Mothers' Union is a small but committed group of women who support and pray for each other as well as the wider work of the organisation.

A popular event for many in the church is the Christmas wreath-making afternoon in December. They also hold an annual 'prayers by candlelight' service at the beginning of the academic year, praying by name for children and young people from the church and their own families. During the past couple of years they have collected clothing and other items, particularly for babies from our Farsi community.



## BROWNIES

The 3rd Gipsy Hill Brownie pack for girls aged 7 to 10 years was registered in December 1920 and is part of Lambeth South district. It is led by a member of the congregation and meets weekly during school terms in the Church Hall.

# OUR FESTIVALS



## CHRISTMAS

A highlight of the Christmas period is an informal Christingle Service. Children prepare their Christingles during an interactive craft session and come to enjoy the special time together.

Our carol service, led partly by candlelight, is also popular in the parish. This usually traditional service features a choir formed for the occasion. Mince pies and mulled wine are served after the service which provides an opportunity to welcome visitors to our church.

On Christmas Eve, we hold a 'join in' Nativity to which children can come dressed as any character from the nativity story. Afterwards, we invite everyone to stay for tea. In 2022 we attracted 83 adults and 55 children from the local area. For many, this might be their only visit of the year to church.

We welcome in Christmas with a much more reflective service of Holy Communion at 11.30pm and a family communion service on Christmas morning.



## HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

We have some form of meditation service on Monday to Wednesday evenings (in the last few years based around Compline) then on Maundy Thursday we vary between a traditional communion service with footwashing, an Agape meal and service, and a Passover meal with liturgy. In 2023 we had an Agape meal with international food which proved very popular.

On Good Friday, we begin at 9.30am with a prayer walk around the parish, carrying a wooden cross. This culminates in an outdoor Churches Together service in the centre of the Crystal Palace Triangle. There is also a reflective service for an hour at 2pm in the church.

Easter Sunday morning sees a full and lively church for a family communion service celebrating the risen Christ.



# SOCIAL EVENTS

We have regular social activities, often involving food! In recent years we have had an annual summer barbecue, quiz nights, family fun days, harvest suppers, craft fairs and pancake parties. These are usually well supported by a good mix of people, and are an easy way to build relationships.

## FRIENDS OF GIPSY HILL

Friends of Gipsy Hill is a lively and passionate community group committed to inspiring residents' involvement and sustainable use of local spaces for community wellbeing. We partner with Friends of Gipsy Hill at regular events such as the Friends of Gipsy Hill Fete, around the Christmas Tree at the train station and other festivities.



## ECO CHURCH AWARD

In 2020 Christ Church successfully applied for and was awarded a Silver Eco Church Award, an A Rocha UK-led project. It required answers about how we care for God's earth in different areas of church life and work.

As a result of working on the award, not only have we taken steps to improve our environmental footprint, but perhaps more significantly, we have focussed on developing a programme of engagement to involve our congregation on this journey.

# IN THE COMMUNITY

*We cherish our involvement in our local community. We are committed to establishing and maintaining long-term relationships with local organisations and Lambeth Council for the benefit of everyone in our area, whatever their situation. Since Covid-19, Lambeth has invested significantly in wellbeing projects, and we partner with them for Open Door and the Foodhub at Emmanuel.*

## OPEN DOOR

Open Door was established in 2014 following a Mission Action Plan which identified a number of key needs in the community particularly around food poverty and social isolation.

A group of up to 50 gather for tea, coffee, to say grace, then share in a hot lunch and home-baked dessert, lively chat and debate.



Topics of conversation can range from current affairs to music, and can develop into tips and ideas being shared from one to another. After lunch, according to individual tastes and requests, activities occasionally take place. A committed and energetic team delivers this free service weekly, with rare closures to ensure everyone has access to community and food throughout the year.

## Moving into Wellbeing

This popular, gentle class is held on Tuesday mornings and is focused on chair-based exercises. It is attended by around 20-25 people, some of whom stay on to enjoy lunch at Open Door.



## WELLBEING

Between November 2022 and April 2023 a research project was funded by Lambeth council to identify gaps between health and wellness needs of attendees of Open Door and Foodhub, Emmanuel, and the available services in the community.

Key findings were reported back to the council who subsequently improved their provision in the area. At the same time, signposting to support services was undertaken.

## EMMANUEL FOODHUB

This hub was started at Emmanuel Church Hall in October 2021 as a partnership between Christ Church, Emmanuel, Foodbank and Centre 70 (an advice, counselling and wellbeing service). Each Thursday the hub is open between 11am and 2pm. Teas and coffees are provided, and then a hot meal is served. Alongside the hot drinks and food, advisors from Foodbank and Centre 70 are available to work with the guests, providing tailored on-the-spot advice.

The hub started quietly in 2021, but over the last two years numbers attending have greatly increased. An exercise class was started in September 2022 before the hub. A community feel has formed, with many guests attending simply for a warm welcome and a hot meal.

## Crystal Palace Magnolia Club



## MAGNOLIA CLUB

Magnolia Club on Wednesdays is a drop-in group from 2pm to 4pm, designed for people living with dementia and their carers. Supported by Age UK, Lambeth and staffed by volunteers, its purpose is to provide a congenial atmosphere for chat and empathy over a cup of tea. Activities to boost memory retention include exposure to music, art, poetry, picture quizzes and talking about objects that attendees may have encountered during their lives.



## PLAYPEN

For over 30 years, Playpen has been an extremely popular and hugely successful play group that Christ Church has provided for pre-school children in the community. Playpen provides a safe and friendly space for local parents, carers, childminders, nannies and grandparents to bring their babies and toddlers to.

Playpen takes place on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10am to noon and includes play and singing, with snacks provided. We often welcome up to 45 children to this supportive and encouraging group. Sessions are preceded with prayer which brings together the dedicated team, volunteers and carers.



Drop in Cafe

Foodhub and  
Advice Centre

Thursdays 11am-2pm

Emmanuel Community Centre

The Lambeth Health and Wellbeing Bus on the third Thursday of every month



# FARSI MINISTRY

Following a successful Strategic Development Fund bid, Christ Church is responding to the call of the Lord to develop this ministry over 5 years. We work as a hub church in the diocese of Southwark to help resource and support other churches with Farsi speakers in their congregation.

In June 2023, Emma Lowth, our Associate Vicar was licensed with particular responsibility for this ministry. She is supported by a Farsi Ministry Assistant and other English and Farsi speaking ministry leaders and helpers in the congregation.



Since 2021, Christ Church has welcomed many Farsi speakers to our community. Many are in the asylum process and others have been settled in the UK for some time. We have been richly blessed in sharing our faith journeys together and believe our church best reflects the Kingdom of God when we worship and share community together across the many nationalities making up our congregation.

We also recognise that our Farsi-speaking brothers and sisters have particular spiritual and pastoral concerns that can be best addressed in dedicated spaces, and so, while we all worship together on Sunday mornings, we have time in the week where our Farsi speaking community can access bible teaching, discipleship and pastoral care in Farsi.

Regular events in the ministry involve baptism preparation courses, a weekly evening Farsi bible study, a refugee women's support group, and hosting the

Farsi Christian Fellowship in Crystal Palace – a monthly service of Holy Communion drawing in over 100 Farsi speakers in the diocese to enjoy worship and teaching in Farsi, as well as social time together over a meal and dancing.

The Farsi speaking community is very active and creative, offering a cultural hub through events such as Farsi film nights, Persian Music and Poetry Nights and celebrating events such as Nowruz (Persian New Year). These occasions aim to welcome even more people to join the community of faith.



# GLOBAL & LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

*Our mission giving policy is to share 10% of financial donations to the church with our nominated mission partners: Tearfund, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, The Church Mission Society and Spinnaker Trust.*

## **Tearfund**

Christ Church has been a long-standing supporter of Tearfund and has previously participated in the Connected Church programme. For the past two years we have provided dedicated support for a family working for Tearfund in Goma. As the situation has recently changed, we are in the process of considering options for the future.

## **Spinnaker**

Spinnaker works with primary schools in South East London seeking to engage children with the Christian faith through assemblies and Religious Education classes.

## **CMS**

We support our dedicated mission link partners, a married couple working in India.

## **Christian Solidarity Worldwide**

CSW works to protect, defend and restore religious freedom through advocacy. We connected with CSW through a previous member and we give an annual donation towards their work. This includes raising awareness of the injustices people are facing, equipping policy makers to bring about change, and holding governments to account for religious freedom violations.



## **NORWOOD AND BRIXTON FOODBANK**

Foodbank is another key mission partner. We support Norwood and Brixton Foodbank financially by donating our Christmas collections and practically by collecting food donations at harvest festival.

The Foodbank project lead and chair of trustees are both members of the congregation. Many of our church members also volunteer independently in different ways.

In November 2023 the Norwood and Brixton Foodbank was awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service.

# BUILDINGS

## CHRIST CHURCH

The present church building was opened in 1987 after a fire destroyed all but the tower of the original Victorian church. The church tower, a landmark in Gipsy Hill, was sold during the rebuilding and is now a private residence.

The new church is a bright and welcoming building. The east side of the worship area is dominated by two large floor to ceiling windows which look out over the memorial garden and beyond onto Gipsy Hill and our local community. The worship area comprises an organ, a baptismal pool and moveable seating for approximately 200 people. A narthex is situated at the back of the worship area and can be separated by sliding ceiling-height doors. This enables the narthex to be used for meetings or more intimate church services.

The parish office is also part of the building, sited at the church entrance.

The last quinquennial inspection was in 2021. Urgent maintenance works from the report have been completed, whilst less urgent works and routine maintenance continue to be undertaken and regularly reviewed as per our building maintenance plan. The main church boiler was replaced in November 2023.



## The Goodliffe Hall

The church building includes the Goodliffe Hall. On the ground floor there is a large hall with a stage and upstairs there is another hall with two smaller rooms and a kitchenette. With an additional separate entrance onto the street, the hall is frequently rented out to a number of independent community groups during the week.

## Berridge Road

The church owns a further building on a nearby estate. It was built in 1995 on the site of a former daughter church. This building is rented (3 years into a 5 year lease) to an independent church.

## THE VICARAGE

The Victorian vicarage is located next to the church on Highland Road. It has five bedrooms, a dining area, large living room and a study. A three-bedroom, two-reception room annex adjoins the main house. At the present time the two buildings are inter-connected, but in the past have been two separate residences.

# PEOPLE AND ORGANISATION

## LEADERSHIP

During the interregnum, we are being led by a leadership team comprising an associate vicar with responsibility for the Farsi ministry, a curate, two wardens, a reader and a pastoral minister. They are supported by two ministry assistants and a temporary youth intern.

## SUPPORT

The busy church office is managed by two part-time administrators, one with some additional responsibility for communication with Lambeth Health and Wellbeing.



**Emma Lowth**  
Associate Vicar



**Luke Whiteman**  
Curate



**Jenny Thomas**  
Pastoral Minister



**Pauline Simpson**  
Reader



**Janet Boyce**  
Churchwarden



**Rachel Skeath**  
Churchwarden



**Josh Prendergast**  
Ministry Assistant



**Sepi Black**  
Farsi Ministry Assistant



**Anna Hadrath**  
Youth Intern



**Jeanette Bell**  
Church Administrator



**Lynne Quanrud**  
Church Administrator

# CHURCH FINANCES

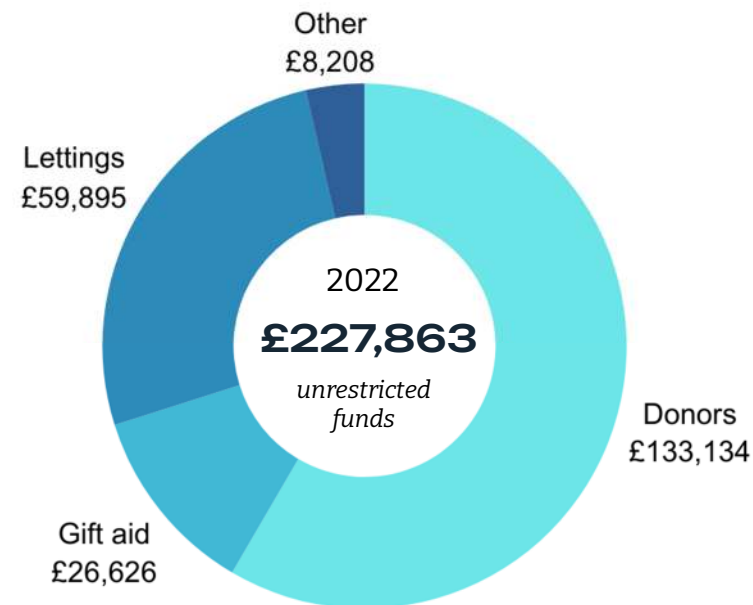
**Christ Church is in a strong financial position with income which remained steady through the Covid years, and accrued savings, which helped it to weather the recent capital outlay for a new church boiler.**

## Income

The average annual income for the period 2018-2022 has been income of £244k and expenditure of £234k. The net cash surplus (before a change in investment values) of the last complete year (2022) was just over £25,000 (2021: £40,000).

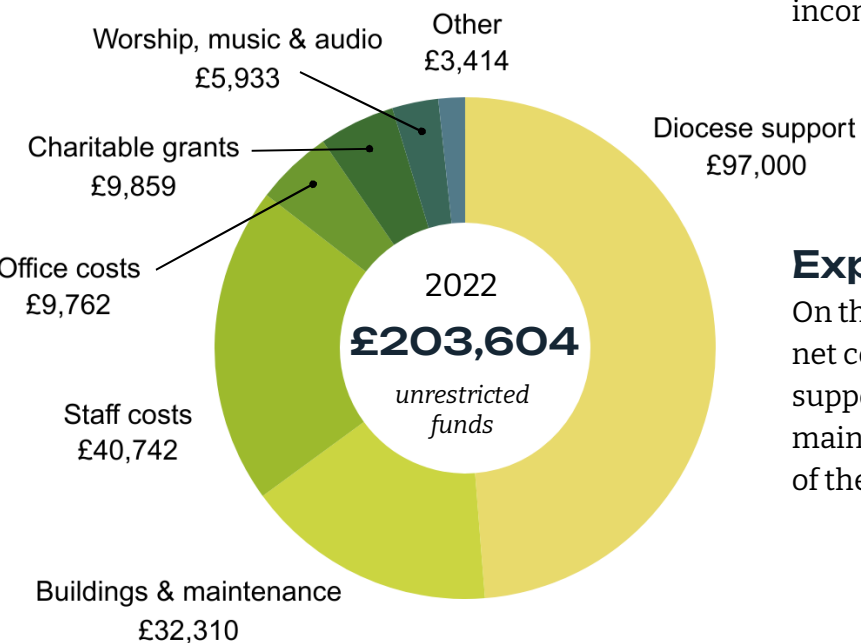
We maintain a strong base of regular donors and associated gift aid which made up more than half of our income in 2022. We also have a significant, if relatively small number of users of our buildings, which bring in just over a quarter of our income. A number of grants were also successfully applied for to support our ministries.

The church is also fortunate to benefit from the Goodliffe Endowment Fund, the restricted income from which goes towards our youth work.



## Expenditure

On the expenditure side our largest commitment is to Diocese support for which we are a net contributor (48%). Worship expenditure (3%) and the associated staff costs (20%) support the delivery of our mission, along with covering office costs (5%). Buildings and maintenance expenditure was 16% in 2022. This was significantly higher in 2023 as a result of the new boiler and interim costs.



# CONTACT US



## CHRIST CHURCH GIPSY HILL

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