



Christ
Church
Orpington



**Annual
Report
2023-2024**

THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

will take place at Christ Church on Sunday 28th April 2024
during the morning service.

Annual Meeting of Parishioners

1. Election of Churchwardens
2. Appointment of Deputy Wardens

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Election of:

(i) PCC representatives

2. Annual report for the year 2023-24 (already circulated), incorporating:
Secretary's report on the work of the PCC;
Report of the proceedings of the Deanery Synod;
Treasurer's report;
Church Warden's report
3. Electoral Roll report.
4. **Treasurer's report and appointment of Auditor**
5. **Any other business**

PCC Secretary's report to the APCM 2023-24

Because of Sharon and Andi's car accident in the summer, four of this year's five PCC meetings were chaired by Dave Humphries, the PCC Vice Chairman.

In view of the risk of a further large financial deficit this year, even after the congregation's generous giving, the PCC took a number of actions to correct the situation. First, the Treasurer, Derek Foxen, negotiated a reduction in our payments to the Diocese. Secondly, as reported in Family News, the PCC decided that this year we could no longer afford to pay 10 per cent of our income to missions, as in recent years. The payment agreed for 2023 was £10,000, even though this would increase the deficit; preference was given to our mission partners. Thirdly, there will be a large saving on gas and electricity, partly because prices have fallen and partly because of our investment in new heating controls. Fourthly, the PCC set up a Savings Committee which successfully identified a number of other savings. The PCC was also grateful for generous offers from its staff: Andi (Youth Minister) took a one-third pay cut, and Jennie Mapp (Bookings Administrator) and Naomi White (Joint Children's Minister) also offered to take less than their full entitlement. The PCC will continue to keep the church's finances under review.

The PCC gave due attention throughout the year to other issues for which it carries responsibility, with regular reports on safeguarding from Keith Miller (Safeguarding Officer) and Dave Humphries (DBS Lead Recruiter), on fabric and on human resources from Alan Goddard, and on meetings of the Deanery Synod and Diocesan Synod for Andy Goddard, who is Lay Chair of the Deanery Synod and a member of the Diocesan Synod. The PCC also applauded its insurance expert, Paul Skinner, for bringing to a successful conclusion the insurance claim for the damage caused by the lightning strike in 2022, and its Secretary, Don Bower, who is standing down this year.

Don Bower
PCC Secretary

Electoral Roll

All are welcome to attend our services. The electoral roll is updated annually and comprises 170 members, an increase of 2 since last year.

The breakdown is:

Male = 72, Female = 98;

Resident in parish = 78, Resident outside parish = 92.

Hall Bookings

The halls continue to be a popular venue locally, having a reputation for being a clean and welcoming space by all who use them. We have welcomed a new regular exercise class this year but have lost the Street Dance group. Once again, costs were increased by the rate of inflation for our regular hirers, but more significantly for one-off bookings. We will be raising prices again for one-off hirers again in July. Demand remains high, particularly for childrens birthday parties

Give thanks:

- For the team who work together to keep the buildings functioning safely and well for the benefit of all
- For the continued support of our regular hirers
- For Jim & Mike and their willingness and ability to keep the halls running smoothly

Please pray for:

- Discernment in managing the budgets for repairs efficiently
- Ongoing issues with waste management
- Good communication with those who wish to use our halls

Jennie Mapp
Hall bookings Administrator

Deanery and Diocesan Synods report

Deanery Synod

The **May meeting** was held at St Marks' Biggin Hill and was an informal meeting, giving the chance for Synod members to meet our new Archdeacon of Bexley and Bromley, the Venerable Allie Kerr.

The **July meeting** was held at St Martin of Tours, Chelsfield Rev Canon Pamela Ive, the Diocesan Director of Discernment and Vocations spoke about how each of us are called to be disciples in a lifelong journey, using the unique gifts that God has given us.

The **September meeting** was held at St Francis, Petts Wood. Claire Boxall gave a talk entitled "How Green is Your Church?". In the main, this was about becoming an eco-church and General Synod's plan of action for the whole of the Church of England to be net zero carbon by 2030.

The meeting closed with the commissioning of our new Area Dean, Rev Neil Coleman of St Barnabas, St Pauls Cray. Thanks were given to Rev John Musson for his 5 years faithful service in this role.

Our **February meeting** was held at St Giles, Farnborough. The invited speaker was Emily Gillespie, a safeguarding school nurse, who led the discussion on safeguarding with a colleague, Karen Harcombe, the PSO at St Mary's Green Street Green. There was much discussion on the need for churches to make sure everyone had the appropriate training.

Diocesan Synod

The **June meeting** was held at Christ Church, Orpington. Bishop Jonathan spoke about identifying the missional and financial strengths and needs of our parishes with a view to seeing how the Diocese can support us in seeking to grow our churches in numbers, diversity, finance and missional impact. He asked us to remain focused on the key priorities that God has set before us – to seek first His kingdom, to love God with all our heart and mind and strength, to love our neighbours as ourselves and to make disciples of all nations.

Rev Trudi Oliver, Young Vocations Advisor spoke about the need to engage with young people, or the Church was heading for trouble. There was a need

to grow a more diverse and younger cohort of ministers, both lay and ordained.

The Diocesan Secretary spoke about the Annual Report and Accounts for 2022. In 2018, parish offers of £9.25m were received. In 2022, these totalled £7.7m and a similar level was expected in 2023. The Common Fund reserves stand at £2.6m. He concluded by emphasising that giving in parishes was absolutely critical and he was grateful for what parishes were doing to share the financial challenges.

The **November meeting** was held at Christ Church, Dartford.

Bishop Jonathan said that churches are good at developing pastors and teachers but people are not joining our churches, and numbers coming for infant baptism and weddings are falling, so we need a new approach, equipping people to be evangelists, prophets and apostles. We need to go out and make disciples; not so our church numbers increase but so that people can receive the hope of Christ that we have.

The key item on the agenda was the budget for 2024 – The budget deficit for the Common Fund for 2024 is £1.46m, which is lower than the forecast for 2023 of £1.48m. Recovery of Parish Offer income is crucial as this amounts to 73% of the Fund's income.

The **March meeting** was held at St Andrew's Paddock Wood.

Bishop Jonathan introduced the Diocese's new vision and strategy statement which was discussed later in Synod:

“Seeking first the Kingdom of God, We are called together by God to Change, Serve and Grow with Compassion, Courage and Creativity”

He felt that churches needed to get into their DNA that growth was possible and that starting new congregations/churches was possible too.

The main item on the agenda was a discussion of the new vision and strategy given above. A time of quiet to reflect on what God was saying to us individually, which was then shared in the group, was followed by discussions around two questions – “if your church was given £100,000, what would it do with it?” and “in order for us to grow, how could we serve better? And what change might happen as a result”. Everyone felt this had been a useful Synod.

Much is discussed at Diocesan Synod – some of the other points we covered are:

- Safeguarding
- The environment and sustainability
- Anti-bullying and harassment policy
- General Synod reports
- Sharing good news from the archdeaconries

Give thanks:

- For our new Area Dean, Rev Neil Coleman,
- For the many people who work for our Diocese in Rochester – from Bishops to admin staff

Pray for:

- The consultations and review of the Parish Offer scheme,
- The implementation of the recommendations of Living in Love and Faith
- Other people from Christ Church to come forward to serve as Deanery representatives.

Andy Goddard

Lay Chair of Synod and member of Rochester Diocesan Synod

Church Warden's Report

As wardens and in our PCC meetings, we have been considering the merits of both looking back and looking forward. Taking encouragement from what God has done at Christ Church already and seeing clearly that he is active amongst us, gives us confidence that he has plans for our future and that he will be with us in these too.

We have taken Psalm 106 v 13 as our Bible text to help us with our thoughts about this. In fact, we are using the mistakes of the early Israelites in the desert, to ensure that we do not follow the poor example attributed to them. This verse records that "they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his plan to unfold". So, we are keen that we remember what God has done for us already. We are equally keen to wait and to look out for his plan for Christ Church Orpington as it unfolds before us.

We thank God for another year in which He has blessed us as a church and as a team of wardens. Pieter and Dave receive wonderful help, encouragement and support from Don Munro and Andi Smith. There is always further help available more widely from others, should anything be needed spontaneously. We want to note how genuinely we have all enjoyed each other's company and service over the past year. Please do join in a thank you prayer for this and a further prayer that our unity and joyfulness continue this coming year.

A look back at the past 12 months gives us much to be grateful for. New faces are appearing, which we value as a sign of God working amongst us. Equally, we have said goodbye and thank you to some treasured saints who have lived wonderful lives of Christian service. We thank God for them and honour them for the people they have been.

Christ Church Orpington has become an amazing production line of emerging new church leaders. We have been blessed by and helped to develop vicars, curates and licensed lay ministers. We pray that each of these will be great servants as they move onto other opportunities to minister.

Youth and Children's Ministry is blessed by excellent leadership. Please pray for growth and for these leaders - Andi for our Youth and Pip and Naomi for our Children. Let's pray especially for the next year, as we continue to invest in young lives.

The Open Kitchen, Warm Space, Cafe and Community Club have been providing service to our community at a time of clear need. Cost of living worries, fuel and power prices and a need for human contact have been rife in our local community. It is great to be associated with these excellent ministries. They put Christ Church in a good light, serving people so effectively. We now see God blessing us back, with some wonderful new people joining our church community through these channels.

Other Ministries are less obvious and carry on behind the scenes. The Finance Committee, our sidespeople and our welcomers, our Safeguarding Officer, Keith Miller, our GDPR Officer, Meina Belsham, and the HR Committee operate largely unnoticed, delivering effective outcomes to enable Christ Church to be the place of worship and service that it is.

Finally, we are so blessed to have Sharon leading us. Since her serious car accident last August, Sharon has endured a great deal of physical pain and numerous challenges. Throughout her focus has remained on others, praying for us all and providing pastoral care to those in need, including from her own sick bed. She is a remarkable person and our biggest prayer this year has been to thank God for her and all that she is to us.

Please do join us as we thank God for all of the above and pray for Christ Church Orpington to flourish in His service.

Pieter and Dave

Treasurers Report Annual Accounts 2023 Summary

Income.

Total receipts for the General Fund were £268,052 (2022 £303,509) down £35,457 (This was mainly due to the following, Rental income £38195 (2022 £31,835) up £6,360. Legacies £5,000 (2022 £45,075)down £40,075 Fees for weddings and other services £701 (2022 £3,092) down £2,391. Investments £5,141 (2022 £1,286) up £3,855. Donations & Gifts £169,245 (2022 £153,220) up £16,025) Other Church Activities, Grants and other income ,Donations to Open Kitchen total £ 41,703 (2022 £35,371) up £6,332.

Expenditure.

Expenditure from the General Fund was £278,377 (2022 £278,743) a decrease of £366 . It has been another year of keeping a tight grip on expenditure.

Financial Review.

Christ Church depends on the continuing generosity of the congregation to meet its financial needs. The results of the year are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities.

It is the policy of the Parochial Church Council to maintain unrestricted funds, which are free reserves of the church, at a level that equates to approximately six months unrestricted expenditure. This will ensure that the church is able to cover management, administration and support costs and respond to any emergency issues that could arise. Six months unrestricted fund expenditure amounts to approximately £139,188. unrestricted funds in cash at the bank were above this and available throughout the year.

I report that this year our expenditure exceeded our income by £5,435 which has been kept to this by prudent use of our expenditure where possible.

It has been another difficult year, but despite this you have given of your time and money to support your spiritual home and allow your church to reach out locally and beyond and I detail at the end of my report a breakdown of our mission giving which extends Gods love from this place.

It is truly humbling to be aware of the sacrificial giving and to be a member of the finance team that is able to serve such a generous church.

If you would like clarification on any item in the accounts, please speak with me or any member of the finance team who will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your continued generosity.

Derek A Foxen
Treasurer

**THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF
CHRIST CHURCH, ORPINGTON**

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £	Total 2022 £
Income and endowments from:							
Donations and legacies	3	200,666	28,109	228,775	244,934	13,159	258,093
Charitable activities	4	61,236	-	61,236	57,216	-	57,216
Investments	5	5,141	18	5,159	1,286	-	1,286
Other income	6	1,009	550	1,559	73	-	73
Total income		<u>268,052</u>	<u>28,677</u>	<u>296,729</u>	<u>303,509</u>	<u>13,159</u>	<u>316,668</u>
Expenditure on:							
Charitable activities	7	278,377	23,787	302,164	278,743	16,405	295,148
Total charitable expenditure		<u>278,377</u>	<u>23,787</u>	<u>302,164</u>	<u>278,743</u>	<u>16,405</u>	<u>295,148</u>
Net income/(expenditure for the year/Net movement in funds)		(10,325)	4,890	(5,435)	24,766	(3,246)	21,5207
Fund balances at 1 January 2023		<u>195,157</u>	<u>12,016</u>	<u>207,173</u>	<u>170,391</u>	<u>15,262</u>	<u>185,653</u>
Fund balances at 31 December 2023		<u>184,832</u>	<u>16,906</u>	<u>201,738</u>	<u>195,157</u>	<u>12,016</u>	<u>207,173</u>

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

**THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF
CHRIST CHURCH, ORPINGTON**

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Notes	2023 £	£	2022 £	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	12		11,436		15,224
Current assets					
Debtors	13	32,264		35,347	
Cash at bank and in hand		178,709		171,980	
		<u>210,973</u>		<u>207,327</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	<u>(20,671)</u>		<u>(15,378)</u>	
Net current assets			<u>190,302</u>		<u>191,949</u>
Total assets less current liabilities			<u>201,738</u> =====		<u>207,173</u> =====
Income funds					
Restricted funds	16		16,906		12,016
<u>Unrestricted funds</u>					
Designated funds	17	17,804		17,804	
General unrestricted funds		167,028		177,353	
		<u>184,832</u>		<u>195,157</u>	
			<u>201,738</u> =====		<u>207,173</u> =====

Missionary Expenditure – Restricted Funds

Grants payable

	2023	2022
	£	£
Grants to institutions:		
CPAS	350	1,593
London City Mission	727	1,704
Church Missionary Society	-	1,575
Tear Fund	-	1,869
Spinnaker Trust	1,000	2,326
Release International	400	1,500
Missionary Aviation Fellowship	734	1,500
Rochester Diocese for Kondoa Churches, Tanzania	1,125	7,952
Bromley Foodbank		1,085
Crosslinks	-	2,043
The Bible Society	685	1,579
European Christian Mission	-	1,000
Barnabus Fund	500	1,725
Christians Against Poverty Bromley	475	-
Other	473	1,569
	6,469	29,020
Grants to individuals	26,988	19,386
	33,457	48,406

Unity Church

It has been another amazing year at Unity Church, and we thank God for all that he has done. The church building has become a busy place, with something happening at least once every day. Our outreach activities, Community Fridge, Life Skills, Job Club and Get Active fitness classes have grown, and we have added walking football and a ladies dance class. More people from the estate are coming to our Celebrate service meals, whether or not they come to the service. One of our key values is that we do not charge or ask for donations for any of our ministries - we want everyone to feel free to come. The church is now having a major impact on the area, and we are seeing people coming to faith.

Attendance at Sunday services increased by over 20% in 2023. Our small team of worship leaders, musicians and singers continues to serve us well, though we would love to have more people, either from outside or by discovering and developing gifts in our own congregation. A few new people have joined us from other churches, and brought fresh gifts in areas such as creative arts and technology. We have developed our pastoral care system, with small groups of church members being cared for by individuals. They meet fortnightly in Growth Groups, either in homes or in the church lounge. It is vitally important that each church member knows that they matter.

One area we are anxious to increase is our children and youth work. We actively welcome children, but since Covid, numbers have been very low. Sadly, we were forced to close our midweek youth group, because we could not staff the club to meet the various needs of those coming. It has been replaced by a smaller group of secondary school students, who meet during the service on Sundays and on Tuesday evenings, with an emphasis on developing friendships and learning more about faith in God.

Financially, God continues to provide. We now have a part-time administrator, doing a wonderful job in taking tasks away from Dave and other leaders, and doing them so efficiently. We have been able to improve our building further, creating a small lounge area suitable for prayer and small meetings as well as the youth group mentioned above. We also have plans to improve our kitchen. Our major concern is the cabins used for children's work and storage, which are in an irreparable state of dilapidation. It seems very ambitious, but we are praying about the idea of replacing them with a permanent structure, used by the congregation and for the youth and children. This is way beyond our current financial means, but God has been good to us in the past, and if this is His will, He will provide.

Finally, we are looking to develop leadership within the congregation. Each area of ministry has at least one person with overall responsibility, both coordinating their area and encouraging and training people serving in their area.

We look forward with excitement to where God will lead us next. Our expectations are high.

Our love to you all

Dave and Kate Bell, Peter and Lynn Price

We thank God for:

- Continued growth in church attendance and outreach.
- For God's amazing provision for our needs, financial and people.
- More people coming into His Kingdom.

Please pray for:

- Growth in our work with children and young people.
- Continued growth in our congregation, as those on the fringe are welcomed into God's kingdom and grow in their faith.
- For God's continued guidance and provision to enable us to be His servants and show His glory on the Ramsden Estate.

Open Kitchen

Open Kitchen continues to support the local community by supplying on-date food which still has life in it. It will have been open for four years this May. The numbers of recipients has stabilised over the last year, but we are still seeing lots of new people in need. Over the last year we've added pickups from M&S at Nugent and in Sevenoaks, Aldi in Swanley and Lidl at Locksbottom. Altogether, the team does 55 pickups per week.

I'm so grateful to the whole team who work so hard to make Open Kitchen possible. Andy Goddard and Katrina Beesley still run the sessions on Tuesday and Sunday, and Roy, a community member, leads the Tuesday session when Andy is working I owe them a great debt of gratitude. Sarah, Christine and Emma have worked tirelessly sourcing and distributing clothes, furniture and household items to local people in need, and I'm so grateful for their hard work. Sarah has recently launched a Pet Foodbank, together with Mila, and we hope that this will enable pets to stay in their own homes. There are now 66 team members, both from church and from the community. The support from Christ Church has been so valuable. Thank you for your prayers, financial donations, and so many other ways in which you help this ministry to flourish. One couple support us on an ongoing basis with a monthly donation for which we are so grateful.

Over the last year we welcomed volunteers from Pret a Manger at a couple of our sessions, a donation from Bluebell Cemetery and Chelsfield Community Cafe, together with invaluable sponsorship from Natwest. The latter held a second hand book sale in branch for the whole of 2023, collected financial contributions, and encouraged customers to donate food to us. Over £1600 was raised through the year. Any money donated or raised is used to buy emergency food parcels for those in dire immediate need, and to supply tins, milk, pasta and other items we don't normally receive.

We began a membership scheme in January this year and this has been very successful. The information provided on the number of people supported by Open Kitchen food helps to support grant applications. Providing refreshments as recipients wait for sessions to start has also proved to be beneficial. People now wait out of any bad weather, there's a real community feel, and relationships are being built.

We thank God for His help in guiding us every step of the way, and trust Him to continue to provide help for those in food poverty.

Liesel Stanbridge

Liesel@ccorpington.org

Give thanks:

- This ministry continuing to flourish and able to support those in food poverty - we help about 55 people at each of our three sessions per week, as well as their families.
- Each volunteer that helps with collecting food, running sessions and delivering food parcels - there are now about 55 volunteers.
- New opportunities for food pickups - we now do almost 60 per week
- the new community fridge which started at St Barnabas through a collaboration with Christ Apostolic Church (Dove House).
- Opportunities for collaboration with Natwest and Pret, alongside financial support from various local organisations.
- The ability to support our local community with furniture, clothes and household items through our Facebook page, together with the setting up of a pet foodbank.

Prayer Points:

- Wisdom in tackling the root causes of food poverty through CAP and other initiatives.
- All the relationships formed with recipients, an understanding of the pressures they face, and a commitment to support them in the best way.
- Team dynamics, that we will find ways to focus on our core ministry whilst being aware of different personalities and utilising the variety of skills on the team.

Children's Ministry

It has been just over a year since we began our work as Children's Ministers. It has been a busy year, with much learning, joy and continued blessings from working with a large team of wonderful volunteers.

We have refreshed the Rainbow Room and Halls' notice boards, and tidied and reviewed our resources. We also received very generous gifts of craft supplies from three people this year, minimising our need to buy extra items. God has also provided thanks to your very generous giving for Pip's 4 event/ 110 Songs/4hr 23min. "Sponsored Human WorshipBox" to help us buy 2 new folding-leg coloured tables!

Caroline Rous kindly invited us to Spinnakers' termly training meetings which helps our continuing professional development, our Rochester Children's Team supports our work with best practice ideas and resources, and we have also met other local Childrens' Ministers to increase our 'body of Christ' cooperation.

Messy Church

Our wonderful Messy Team of 16 has welcomed about 450 guests to share Bible stories, crafts, music and a light meal over 12 fun monthly events! Huge thanks especially for Mike Bailey's Tech support and Melanie Bailey's wonderful food, among many others!

The past year's themes followed various calendar events, but since Christmas we are now discovering Jesus's story!

Pip would love to encourage anyone to join us as guests and/or helpers – ALL ages are welcome to this "Church, but not as you know it!"

'Life to the Max' Holiday Club

Last July 38 fantastic volunteers encouraged 38 children from 14 primary schools for three mornings of 'holiday island' fun in new red/lime/turquoise T-shirts!

Pip is currently working on our next annual Holiday Club after the school year ends – this time with a space theme!

NB please pray for God's wisdom and guidance to confirm the dates, as those previously listed ie Tues 30th to Thurs 1st Aug.2024 clash with other churches and a graduation!!

So possible new dates of Wednesday to Friday 24th to 26th July 2024 are being discussed with KICK, & volunteers etc – TBC/Watch this space!

These events cannot happen without workers, any more than it can without God's Spirit leading!

Any previous/potential helpers will be invited to our main Holiday Club Sunday meeting over the next few weeks, as feedback also helps planning!

Schools Work:

Both Naomi and Pip have attended several Spinnaker training sessions this year, which have been informative and inspiring. Naomi has been visiting the Highway school weekly since the Autumn term. It has been a joy to be able to share about Jesus with children there. Additionally, Naomi has started to stay for break time at the school, when she leads a colouring group for children who may find playtimes a bit trickier. This has been a wonderful way to get to know the children better and to build relationships between the school and church.

Tea and Toys:

In September, Naomi was able to join the Tea and Toys' team, and she is so grateful for the dedication of the team. The numbers have remained strong with new families attending on a weekly basis. There are many opportunities to build relationships with the families who attend, and there is always positive participation with the Bible stories and songs which we share each week. We have introduced some craft activities linked to the Bible stories and we are looking at ways of introducing prayer into our sessions.

Sunday Groups:

Creche continues to be run by Veronica and her team. They do a wonderful job of welcoming families, and we have had a number of new young families attending this past year.

On a Sunday, Explorers and Climbers regularly have between 8 and 12 children, and we have had a few new children join during the course of the year. We mostly follow the teaching of the main services, and we have embraced topics such as the gifts of the Spirit – and we have been amazed at the understanding of the children. We have been using a variety of creative prayer activities in our sessions, and we want to continue to build on embedding the importance of prayer in our daily lives.

It has also been so encouraging to have so many of our children involved with the various All-age services over the year, leading prayers, reading and role-playing.

Give thanks:

- The continued dedication of the volunteers in all the various children's ministry teams.
- The building of relationships with children and families in our community.
- Praise and thank God for Holiday Club and Messy Church's outreach to new families!

Prayer Points:

- For our children to continue to develop in confidence in their prayer lives.
- Please pray for God's guidance for Holiday Club timing and planning, and ask Him to call a Team and children for this year!
- Please do pray for all the Messy Church team, and see if God is calling you to help spread the load by sharing your gifts, either regularly or randomly!
- Please pray for Pip and Naomi, and all the helpers – for their safety, guidance and inspiration! Ask Jesus to guide us with His Holy Spirit about what and how to teach, and fill us with the joy and excitement of God's love!
- Please pray for all the children and families who Jesus is calling – protect them from any distractions, and let their faith grow as they see God's love at work.

Pip Allen and Naomi White, Children's Ministers

Youth Ministry

The Youth Ministry has continued to have an exciting year.

PATHFINDERS, school years 7 – 9, meet on a Sunday morning. Apart from Communion services, the group begins in the church service (to give the group an experience of the church service/church life) and then after the first two songs of worship, head over to the Vicarage for the session. The main part of the group is teaching and learning about Jesus, and when the weather is good, as part of the sessions, the group can enjoy the trampoline, basketball net, and Frisbee outside. And when the weather isn't so good, we enjoy various activities indoors including baking. Pathfinders is a safe space for young people to enjoy learning about Jesus and themselves. An additional way of learning comes from acting out Bible passages, which the group enjoys.

JUICE, which are school years 10-13+, meet weekly on Saturday nights, also in the Vicarage. We have been enjoying varied Biblical teaching, discussions on a whole range of topics, from theological to life's challenges. We have used some new videos on the life of Christ and His disciples to help understand more of the Bible, and the relevancy of Jesus' teaching in today's world. Activities in this group include: musical jam nights, 2x go-karting per year, 2x pizza and film per year.

POST ALPHA GROUP

I have started up a new group, the Post Alpha Study group, which came about from a request of a few young people who took part in the latest Alpha group. This essentially follows on from the Alpha model in terms of teaching, and is very discussive. Most of the topics we look at are chosen by the attendees, and again, it is a safe place for people to explore their own faith, and their own questions, as well as to hear what others struggle with and find easy.

BASE is a Youth Group for Pathfinders and Juice members together, and also for their friends. BASE is once a month on a Saturday night, and has been running well. BASE is a purely social session, and currently comes in either the youth-friendly format of Pizza and Games, or Pizza and film. This will open up once the summer comes to incorporate other experiences, such as football on the field, and other outdoor games.

Our current café manager Jeanette, is also a Youth worker at Green Street Green Baptist, and we join our youth groups a number of times a year at BASE, which the attendees enjoy.

I also offer some free starter drum and guitar lessons for youth who attend any of Christ Church youth groups. This gives youth an experience of these instruments

to see if it is something they would like to investigate further. If you know of any other of our young people who might be interested in either drums or guitar, please ask them to contact me.

Due to the severe accident last year, my working with Bishop Justus this year has taken a sideline. Our curate Helen has been working with Bishop Justus this year, so Christ Church still has a good relationship there.

I am looking forward to see what God will do with our young people this year!

Give Thanks:

- A big thanks to all my volunteers - they are a great team and I really appreciate their help and support.
- A big thanks to the young people for being such a great bunch.
- A big thanks to God for His faithfulness to us.

THANK-YOU VERY MUCH!

Pray For:

- Please pray for the young people in their universities, schools and new classes.
- Please pray that we will all go deeper in our knowledge and love of God.
- Please pray that more young people will want to come and find out about Jesus.

Amen.

Vicar's Report

In these last few years we have been working out our vision from Matthew 5:14-16: *You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

We have done that in so many different ways:

Bringing **hope** to a sad and hurting world through wonderful outreaches such as Open Kitchen, Community Club, Tea & Toys, Messy Church, Base Youth Club, Holiday Club, Men's Ministry, Women's Ministry, Invitation Sundays, Alpha courses, Freedom in Christ courses, the discipleship Course "The Big Picture" and so many more. And also going deeper into becoming **wholehearted disciples**, stepping out to take full possession of the Promised Land He won for us on the cross, calling us, prepared to follow Him wherever He leads.

This year, is going to be special. This year, I believe God is saying He is going to light the beacon for us! He is going to come in Holy fire and light the beacon in a wonderful and amazing way, such as we couldn't even imagine. It is going to be a time of joy and growth and all that our hearts are yearning for in Him. It's going to be exciting, but He is also asking two things of us in this:

1 He is asking us to repent. To repent of all the times we have relied on ourselves, rather than trusted in Him. To repent of saying the words of faith and trust, but not living as if we believed it. We have been waiting on Him, yes, but He has been watching for our trust. Rom 3: 10 says there is no-one who is perfect, not even one - so we are all included in this, including me.

and

2 He is asking if we will be prepared for all His people that He wants to bring through the doors. Will we welcome all those He is calling to His table whether or not they "look" like us, and even might stretch our understanding of those He loves? Will we welcome them with open arms even if all they can bring is themselves and their pain, and we will have to dig deeper in our own hearts and pockets to keep going? Will we love as He loves us? Because if we commit to this, He will fill this church with His broken and lost and we will be fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters to a bigger family than we could ever imagine.

We have a world that is increasingly lost and hurting, but we can show them Jesus, the Living God, who is holding out His arms to welcome without judgement any and all who want to come to Him in these last days, and live as His children. And

as we trust Him and truly love others as He loves us, His light will radiate ever more fully out of us into the darkness of the world's lost through our lives, our words and our works.

Thank you to everyone for a blessed year and all you have so faithfully done, even when it has been time-consuming and sacrificial. It is a privilege to serve in such a wonderful church. And now, with the Lord's help, we are looking forward to an amazing year!

With much love,
Sharon