



Christ Church Gipsy Hill Annual Report for 2023



Welcome – Rev Luke Whiteman

Welcome to our report on the life of Christ Church in 2023.

This year sadly our Vicar, Jonathan Croucher, left but we still saw the church continue to thrive and grow.

Jonathan left in October to take on the role of Archdeacon of Chelmsford. We all wish him well in his new role and continue to benefit from all the work that he put in here at Gipsy Hill. In late 2023 and early 2024 we went through a process to appoint a new Vicar, and were successful in appointing Jenny Dawkins, due to start in June 2024.

Even with all that change happening we still saw much to give thanks to God for. We saw our Farsi ministry grow further and Emma Lowth was appointed to be our Associate Vicar for Farsi Ministry. We saw our youth and children's work growing with a holiday club, a fun day and a weekend away. We experienced some great

events where we gathered together and enjoyed time as a church family, like the Maundy Thursday Bring and Share Supper, the summer BBQ and Jonathan's leaving party. We also were encouraged by the way our ministries into the community – Open Door, Foodhub, Playpen and After School Club – grew and we brought more into the extended community of the church.

I want to thank all who continue to serve in so many different ways in the life of our church. I hope you, like me, have known the joy and privilege of being a part of this very special church family!

God bless
Luke

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 – Luke Whiteman

The staff team at the end of 2023 was a wonderful group of people excited to serve God in different ways. Emma Lowth moved from her curacy with us to her new role as Associate Vicar for Farsi Ministry licenced in June 2023. Luke Whiteman continued in his curacy. Jenny Thomas our Families and Pastoral Minister continued to take a lead on the pastoral side of our ministry. Josh Prendergast as Ministry Assistant covered jobs from youth work to caretaking duties. Jeanette Bell our church administrator working two days a week kept our office ticking over. Lynne Quanrud joined on a 6 month contract in October as a Community Connector, to work with guests at Open Door and Foodhub; she also managed the agencies and services that visited the clubs. Anna Hadrath joined the team on a one year internship with Time for God, working on a range of church activities though focusing on children's work. She will be with us until July 2024. Sepi Black has made a wonderful contribution as a volunteer cook for Open Door and Foodhub, and came on the staff team as a Farsi Ministry Assistant in September. Barbara Filarecka joined our team as a cleaner in September.

Leaving our staff team in the year were both our Vicar, Jonathan Croucher, mentioned in more detail above and, also in October, our Operations Manager Charlotte Carpenter. Charlotte was a great asset to the team helping us to set up a lot of organisational structures.

Sunday services – Pauline Simpson

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. 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. We spent most of the first three months of the year meeting in the hall due to the church boiler breaking down; this led to closer (literally!) fellowship, but I think we were all pleased when warmer weather meant we could move back into church.

Sermon series included parts of Acts, Matthew, and in the autumn different topics under the overall theme of who we are, based on who God is.

Our monthly 9am Holy Communion services continue with small congregations but are appreciated by those who prefer something quieter and we have a lively All Age service at 10.30 on those Sundays with some of our younger members leading the music and reading.

Inspire, our twice-monthly evening service, continues to offer a more informal worship space on Sunday evenings for those seeking a contemporary charismatic service style with an extended time of worship, plenty of opportunity to pray for one another, as well as receiving teaching on topics aiming to complement the morning series.

Our services could not function without the many on the rota who read, pray, lead the musical worship, assist with the chalice,

welcome, offer prayer ministry, organise the audio and screens, and make and serve tea and coffee after the service. We are also very grateful to Patsy Easter and her team for the beautiful flowers each week. We always welcome more to join these rotas, and at the moment are particularly in need of musicians and people to help with refreshments.

Midweek – Pauline Simpson

Tuesday and Thursday Morning Prayer livestreamed from the chapel is usually attended by staff and occasional visitors, but appreciated by several who watch online, either at the time or later in the day. Our monthly midweek communion service with light lunch beforehand has proved to be a lovely welcoming time of fellowship and we have been able to offer transport for those who find the journey to church difficult. It attracts mostly older people, some of whom don't come regularly on Sundays. We also continued with our monthly prayer meetings on Wednesday evenings which people could join in person or on zoom, and would love more people to join us to pray for the church, local community, and needs further afield.

Easter and Christmas services – Pauline Simpson

On Maundy Thursday we had a very well attended international agape meal together with people bringing contributions of food from many different countries. As well as our regular prayer walk round the parish and the Churches Together service outside Sainsbury's, Emma led our Good Friday meditation at the cross, which





included video drama of the passion. We marked the evening of Holy Saturday with the Easter vigil, starting outside in

the dark around a fire with the vigil readings, then moving into church which was lit first by candles, then with lights, to celebrate the first communion of Easter. 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. The carol service, on a Saturday this year as last, had a mixture of congregational carols, small group 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 inside an inflatable donkey! 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.

Emmanuel – Luke Whiteman

Jonathan's role as priest in charge of Emmanuel continued until he left in October. Luke Whiteman took over clerical supervision of church without a formal role from that point, chairing PCCs and supervising a rota to provide regular worship on Sundays. 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 have some social events and offer a 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 continued to flourish in 2023.

Pre-school

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 attractive space to come on Sunday through the Diddy Disciples. The Diddy Disciples group share a welcome song, a short Bible story and a craft. It is led by a team of volunteers. It has continued to grow, and provides a good place for parents of pre-school children to come and find community.



Raise the Praise was rebooted at the start of 2023 to target more towards the pre-school age group with some success, though this was one of the things that stopped when Jonathan left his post in the Autumn.

Primary School

For Primary School aged children we have continued to run our Sunday School group and reach out to our community with an 'After School Club'. The Sunday School meets during the morning Sunday service and they play games, do crafts and learn Bible stories. The Sunday School operates in two age groups for 5-7 years old and 8-11 years old. It is run by a small and wonderful group of volunteers. 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.

The After School Club runs at the end of the school day on a Tuesday, inside the church and hall, for an hour and half. The club involves snacks, games, crafts and Bible stories. This group is mainly made up of children who don't attend the church but live nearby. 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 2023 a one day holiday club for primary school children was run, teaching the Easter story, building Easter gardens, playing games and singing songs.



We have been working with several local primary schools. 8 different classes from Paxton came into the church at Christmas 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.

Youth

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 2023. The session is run by a small team of experienced leaders, though we are in need of new leaders for this group.

The Friday Youth group continues to run 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. There have also been several socials, like Pizza in the Park, film nights, bowling and board games.

In May 2023 we went on a weekend away to Walton Firs Scout Camp. During the three day camp the youth did various activities like caving, crate stacking and wide games. They cooked and ate together, and didn't sleep that much! They also had several sessions taking about the Holy Spirit and asking him to move in their lives.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Josh for all his work with the children and youth in the church. Also I want to thank Anna, who has slotted into the team so well and taken on a lot of responsibility. And also to thank all the volunteers who work with the children and youth. Running these groups is so important and needed to start our children on a walk of faith that we pray will last a lifetime!

Church Community and Pastoral Support

Home groups – Pauline Simpson

Belonging to a home group is a wonderful way to get to know a small group of people on a much deeper level, to study the bible together and learn from one another's experiences, and to pray for each other. We broadly followed the sermon series, either using material written by Jonathan or study guides. At the end of



2023 there were evening groups led by Chris & Victoria Kelly, Kati & Zoltan Schwab, Pauline Simpson & Sophie Williams, Anthony & Pam Merifield and Luke Whiteman – the latter two meeting online. There was also a daytime group

led by Helen Gates who had taken over from Yvette Croucher. We welcomed some new members into groups during the year but would love more of the congregation to be involved.

Pastoral care – Jenny Thomas

We are very fortunate that we have a wonderful caring congregation who look out for each other and most needs are met via friendship groups and homegroups. The clergy and staff are available and do, of course, try to keep abreast of any particular needs and seek to facilitate meeting those needs where possible. They make regular home visits to those who are housebound or bereaved, taking communion where appropriate. These visits are such precious times to come alongside someone who, often, has walked with the Lord faithfully over many years. Staff also like to visit any newcomers to the congregation, seeking to get to know them and help them settle into the congregation.

One of the very practical ways that pastoral care is provided is through a team of volunteer cooks, the Cooking Crew, who will provide meals for people who are sick, are in recovery following an accident or especially if they have had a new baby. We are very grateful for Trena Dickinson who organises this ministry.

We also 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.

The bereavement journey – Jenny Thomas

Cath Mitchenall and Jenny had the huge privilege of facilitating this course which ran for six weeks during the summer term. The Bereavement Journey is a series of films that gently guide people bereaved at any time through the most common aspects of grief and bereavement, enabling them to process the implications for themselves and discern next steps. Each week there were two short films to watch, followed by group discussion and each participant has their own workbook which gives them the opportunity to go over the material again in private. The topics covered were attachment, separation and loss, the impact and pain of bereavement, anger and guilt, coping with others' reactions, adjusting to change, delayed and suppressed grief and moving forward healthily, all which led to some very interesting conversations. But for most of the eight participants it was the group itself which made a difference. Having a caring supportive group which provided a safe space for hearts to be shared, helped them as they journeyed together along their bereavement road. This is a course well worth running again.

Mothers' Union (Christ Church with All Saints West Dulwich) – Jodie Lomax

Prayers by Candlelight

At the start of each school year, MU members and friends gather at dusk to pray for our children / grandchildren – that they come to know our Lord as their loving, heavenly Father, provider, and guide throughout their lives. Following a reading from Scripture, each participant lights a candle for the child to be prayed for, mentioning them by name and says a prayer particularly for their child's situation. Others are free to join in as moved. By the end

of the session, the church is illuminated in soft candlelight, and we feel encouraged in the knowledge that God hears our prayers and that prayers are answered.



Clothes for Iranian Babies and Refugees

As a branch, we collected clothing (washed ironed and nicely packed in boxes with tissue paper) for 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 Antoinette and Hamid from Christ Church as they are well acquainted with the community.

Wreath Making

This has become an annual event at Christ Church and grown year by year. Buying fresh foliage and accessories from Covent Garden Flower Market, having materials laid out before the arrival of the participants, Christmas music and a visit from “Miss Christmas” (with her poems and song) contributed to a wonderful experience.



Mothering Sunday

As is customary, we attend to the flower display on this day and make posies (attaching an appropriate Bible verse to such) for distribution to all the ladies on the day. In 2024 we broke with tradition and gave out a bright Gerber flower (rather than a posy) which was well received.



NOTE: It is with sadness that I report that our branch of the Mothers' Union has decided to close. Some of us will remain as Diocesan members and continue to support the MU in its mission of supporting families and family life across the world.

Farsi ministry – Emma Lowth

The Farsi ministry at Christ Church continued to thrive over the last year, and it was a joy to celebrate our new status as a Hub church for Farsi Ministry in the Diocese when Bishop Martin came to license Emma Lowth as Associate Vicar for Farsi Ministry in June. The bilingual Farsi-English service was a beautiful occasion with wonderful

refreshments prepared by the Farsi community, including traditional displays of fruit and delicious Persian treats. The evening concluded with dancing, giving everyone the opportunity



to experience dance styles from across the different cultural groups of Iran.

Thanks to funding from the Strategic Development Fund, the ministry will be supported as it develops over the next five years, and we were delighted to see Sepi Black step into a formal role on the staff team as Farsi Ministry Assistant.



The year continued with two well-attended Farsi Alpha courses, leading to two wonderful baptism services at which 27 individuals shared their moving testimonies of faith and were baptised in our (rather cold!) baptismal pool.



Other highlights of the year have included the special efforts of the Farsi Christian Fellowship, who hosted a Summer Persian Poetry party,

exploring the theme of divine love as found in the writings of Hafez, Rumi and other poets. And Christmas saw the first ever Pardeh-Khaany to celebrate the birth of the King of Kings, with the artistic talents of many coming to the fore to tell the Christmas story in unique Iranian style. And, of course, the year ended with a Nowrooz party – the Persian New Year which celebrates light triumphing over darkness.



Throughout all of this, the hard work of the wider Farsi ministry team – Rev'd Susan Height and Ali Shirdel, Richard Winborn, Hamid and Antoinette Momtahan – has meant that weekly Farsi Bible studies,

football and volleyball nights, film nights, allotment gardening and on-going support for those in the asylum process has continued to support and uphold community life.



Welcoming into church

Open Door – Pauline Simpson

Open Door, our weekly drop-in on Tuesdays, continues to attract a variety of people, some of whom come virtually every week, others less frequently. Numbers vary – usually at least 40 and we have fed more than 60 on occasion. We provide 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.

We are indebted to Sepi Black who, sometimes with the help of others from our Iranian community, has produced delicious meals, and our team of bakers whose efforts are always appreciated. At the time of this report we have just welcomed a new cook. 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 – Pauline Simpson

We have been blessed to receive sponsorship from Lambeth Public Health to run our very popular gentle exercise class, led by Diane Aben. This is usually attended by at least 20 people who have built a real sense of community, many of whom come into Open Door for lunch and chat afterwards.

Playpen – Jenny Thomas

Playpen continues to be a hive of activity on a Wednesday and Thursday morning when a wide variety of people from the local community bring their babies and toddlers into the church building. There was great rejoicing when the boiler was finally fixed and we were able to use the



Narthex again, thus getting more of the equipment out and having greater space for running around. We are encouraged that “Tidy-up-Time” has become a joint effort with everyone getting involved immediately before song-time, this was first introduced when we were only in the Goodlife hall, so something good has come for us from the boiler breaking.



A very popular session was when Sarah from South London Botanical Institute came to help us to do some planting. We planted micro green seeds, which grew quickly into edible shoots, very tasty, nutritional and satisfying.





We have also enjoyed creating collages on the board at the end of the hall. We started with a playground and then during the summer term we had a busy beach scene, followed by an Autumn/Winter one, on which we had a very glamorous snow lady.

The year ended with our ever popular Christmas parties. The children made lots of take home crafts. Frosty the snowman came for a fun game with snowballs (the indoor variety), and Santa visited to give out gifts ably helped by his elf. I think the children enjoyed it as much as the adults did.



It continues to be a joyful place to be and we trust it will continue for many, many more years.

Magnolia Club – Jodie Lomax

The Magnolia Club is a drop-in group specifically designed for those with dementia and their “carers”. Administered by Age UK (Lambeth) and assisted by volunteers, it is an established feature of Christ Church. Its purpose is to provide a congenial atmosphere where people in similar situations can gather, enjoy light refreshment and chat while engaging in activities and learning about the practicalities of living with dementia.

The activities are often designed to help with memory retention and stimulation. This is done through, among other things, presenting the group with objects “from the past” that help stimulate conversation and recall, singing familiar songs, presenting familiar poetry and saying it together. Activities that may (or may not) be familiar but “do-able” are also encouraged. Representatives from the South London Botanical society have presented very enjoyable “planting” sessions.

Magnolia Club welcomes volunteers who would like to participate in the running of this highly enjoyable group.

Together with the community

Norwood and Brixton Foodbank – Elizabeth Maytom

2023 was much dominated by the cost of living crisis in Foodbank, how it was affecting our clients and more recently the wider impact on Foodbank itself.

We have fed over 27,000 people, an increase of 9.5% from 2022; over 50% are for single people often working and struggling to make the money stretch. We have also seen a 40% increase in over 65year olds needing help. We distributed nearly 300 tonnes of food.

There have been loads of positives and our signposting support amongst other things has helped 87 people get PIP payments in place ensuring clients have regular support and no longer needing the Foodbank.

2024 is going to be a difficult year as donations are down sometimes by 50% and prices increase for us as well in purchasing food.

We were delighted towards the end of 2023 to be one of the voluntary organisations awarded the King’s Award, which was presented to us by the Lord Lieutenant of London in April 2024 at an awards ceremony at the Tower of London.

Do pray for the trustees, staff and volunteers as we seek to support those in most need in our community.

3rd Gipsy Hill brownies – Christine Woolley



We had a very good year. Several girls gained their Communicate badge, and had fun with finger spelling, the phonetic alphabet and tin can telephones. Five girls made their promise early in July and we celebrated in our traditional way with cake.

The highlight of the year was a weekend camp in July, with very variable weather. After a sunny arrival on Friday afternoon Saturday afternoon turned rainy for our visit to the animals at a local farm. We had an indoor campfire and silent disco. Thankfully Sunday was sunny again and the tents dried out to pack away.



In November we made edible bonfires for firework night and the year finished with a district Christingle service and we decorated gingerbread men and played Christmas games.

We now have 18 Brownies and a waiting list, so if you have or know a girl who is 5 or 6, it would be good to put her name on the waiting list. We also need another adult leader before we can expand to 24 girls.



Emmanuel Foodhub – Luke Whiteman

The hub is a partnership between Christ Church, Emmanuel, Foodbank and Centre 70, now in its third year. 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. We also regularly have pop ups from different charities and Lambeth teams for them to directly connect with their service users.

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

Lambeth Health and Well-being – Louise MacGregor

Between November 2022 and April 2023, I attended Open Door on Tuesday and the Foodhub at Emmanuel church on a weekly basis. Lambeth Council had commissioned a piece of research to understand the gaps between health and wellbeing needs and the services on offer locally. As I sat with our guests, it was a mighty privilege to listen to them and enjoy their company. And as I went along, I was able not only to summarise the requests made (with absolute anonymity) into an actionable list of suggested resolutions but of course, as best I could, I signposted guests to immediately available support, and was pleased to encourage some to persist in form-filling for better accommodation, chase up hospital appointments and apply for parking passes. Overall it was a wonderful opportunity to listen to our guests, and give a little encouragement. As a result, Lambeth Council increased funding to a better-organised support network. Lambeth really appreciate our collaboration with them, and they are very impressed with the provision of the twice-weekly events.

We also have regular visits from the Lambeth health and well-being bus giving blood pressure and other checks, vaccinations and advice to the local community, as well as occasional talks on subjects such as energy saving.

Events

Coronation celebration – Pauline Simpson



On 6th May, roughly 100 people from the congregation and local community gathered to watch the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla on the screens, with a TV set up in the hall for families with young children. That was followed by a lunch of hotdogs then home-made cakes, and in the afternoon the church was cleared and we had dancing around the maypole led by Donna Maria. A great day was had by all.



Pétanque – Pauline Simpson

On Sunday 25th June after the morning service, some of us joined the Friends of Gipsy Hill to play pétanque on the rather uneven surface in their garden by Gipsy Hill station. It got quite competitive but was good fun.

Summer barbecue – Pauline Simpson

The annual summer barbecue took place one Sunday after church in early July. Despite the threat of rain throughout the morning, the weather remained dry and we fed well over 100 people, mostly sitting outside in the vicarage garden. There was plenty of food to go round, as usual, and we're grateful to those who manned the barbecue, the Iranians who prepared the beautifully decorated salads, and those who served and cleared away. It is always a very happy social occasion for the whole church family.

Church fun day – Luke Whiteman

In August we hosted a Fun Day, which was attended by a large number of people including many visitors. There was a bouncy castle in the church, with various craft activities, and free refreshments served. In the Goodliffe Hall there were various activities particularly for the under 5s including soft play; these were a welcome addition to the activities in the church. Great fun was had by all.

Crouchers' farewells – Pauline Simpson

Tea party



A couple of weeks before the Croucher family left we had a tea party in the church, attended by about 200 people from the church – current

and former members – and community. We enjoyed a proper afternoon tea, using hired bone china cups and plates, with sandwiches, scones and cake.



There were speeches of appreciation to Jonathan and the family from Simon Gates the archdeacon, Helen Hayes our MP, Andy Scholes from Friends of Gipsy Hill, and Rachel Skeath one of the wardens. It was a wonderful occasion bringing so many people together. It was a great team effort to put this on, led by Rachel.

Final service

Jonathan's final service on 29th October was attended by well over 200 people including some former members of the congregation and the congregation from Emmanuel, At the end of the service there were speeches from various members of the congregation, and Jonathan and the family were presented with several well-chosen gifts by the churchwardens.

Although we were sad to see the Crouchers leave after 11 years at Christ Church, both of these events were a fitting end to their time here.

Jonathan's induction – Pauline Simpson

About 20 from Christ Church went to Jonathan's induction as archdeacon in Chelmsford Cathedral in November. There were a lot of formalities in the service, but it was taken in a relatively informal way, and good to share in the beginning of his new ministry.



Church building and hire

Church buildings – Luke Whiteman

During the week the hall is also used by Team Dance on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays; for much of the year Slimming World used 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

Wednesday 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 2023. During 2023 work went on to completely replace the heating system in the church. This was a long process to pick the right system and to get the necessary faculty from the diocese. This work was completed in November 2023 and has meant we have been warm in church this winter!

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 Barbara Filarecka, our cleaner, who keeps the building clean and tidy.

Other reports

Electoral Roll – Pauline Simpson

The roll has been updated in April 2024, and comprises 164 members, which is an increase of 17 (24 added, 7 removed) from the last roll in 2023. 103 are female and 61 male, 37 live in the parish and 127 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 7 regular meetings, plus a meeting in April to approve the annual accounts before the APCM, a final meeting before Jonathan left where he outlined the different areas of

ministry within the church and those who would be responsible for them during the vacancy, and a pre-vacancy meeting in October with Simon Gates and Mat Ineson from CPAS at which subgroups were set up to collect views from the congregation and to write the parish profile. As well as standing items such as finance, safeguarding and the risk register, we spent time discussing the right way ahead for getting a new boiler, had updates on our Farsi ministry, youth and children's work, and a discussion on prayer in the parish. From September onwards the majority of our time was spent discussing the vacancy and in particular the parish profile

Safeguarding report – Pauline Simpson

The PCC has 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, and have been encouraging people to keep up to date with relevant safeguarding training – there are still a few outstanding to do, but most of our volunteers are fully up to date. We are in the process of updating the safeguarding notice board and adding extra notices; these will be completed once Jenny Dawkins begins her ministry here and can be added. The current parish safeguarding officers are Pauline Simpson and Jenny Thomas.

The wider church

Churches together in Crystal Palace – Luke Whiteman

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. In 2023 they ran the regular Good Friday Act of Witness at Sainsbury's which now regularly draws over 100 people, ran a Lent group and a monthly mid-week Churches Together Service.

Deanery Synod report – Luke Whiteman

The Deanery Synod went through a year of change with Area Dean Jonathan Croucher stepping down in June and being replaced by Kit Gunasekera, Vicar of St James, Clapham. We also welcomed a new Bishop of Kingston, Bishop Martin. During 2023 we had two Deanery Synods and a Ascension Day service.

On 23rd March, synod met at West Norwood Crematorium Chapel. The synod was hosted by Lambeth Council's Project Officer responsible for the development of the Cemetery. Discussion centred around the theme of death and dying.

The Deanery Ascension Day service took place at St Leonard's, Streatham, on 18th May.

On 7th June, we had the Deanery Welcome Service for Bishop Martin at Christ Church Gipsy Hill.

The final synod of the year took place on 8th November at St James, Clapham. The subject for debate was housing and included a focus on hosting refugees.

Mission partners – Pauline Simpson

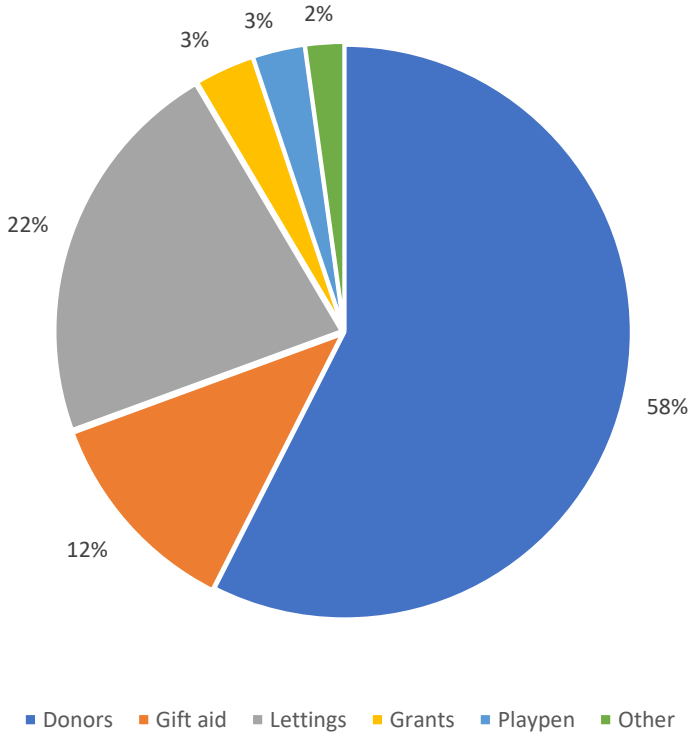
The relationships with our long-term mission partners have slightly taken a back seat this year as other priorities have occupied us.

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 lessons and assemblies for local schools. We were also able to continue to make an additional donation to John and Lynne Quanrud to support their work in Albania, from which they returned in the summer.

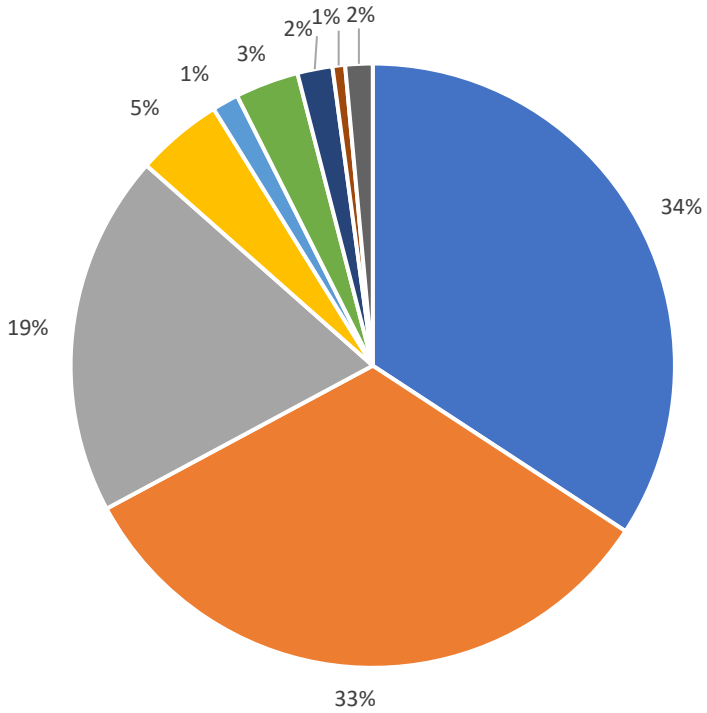
Although we do not give financially, Norwood and Brixton Foodbank is a key mission partner and our Harvest food donations and Christmas collections were donated to the Foodbank. We have a giving point in the church lobby, which is regularly filled and deposited at the Foodbank in Streatham and many of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

Financial report summary – Janet Boyce

Income (unrestricted funds)



Expenditure (unrestricted funds)



- Diocese support
- Building/maintenance
- Staff costs
- Charitable grants
- Property rental
- Office costs
- Catering
- Worship, music, audio
- Other

2023 was another positive year for the finances of Christ Church, despite having the major expense to replace the boiler. We are very thankful for the warm church that we have had in this last winter after struggling in the hall at the beginning of 2023.

The net cash deficit, before a change in investment values, was just under £34,700. However, excluding the cost of the boiler, this translates into a cash surplus of £14,000 (2022: £25,000). This surplus reflects the continued support from the congregation, with income from donations of around £177,000 (2022: £160,000). We were very thankful to receive exceptional donations of £26,000, which is included in this figure. Our buildings generated a further £57,000, which was slightly down on the 2022 figure of £60,000.

The total income for 2023 was around £278,000 (2022: £242,000), the balance of income being made up of grants and income generated by the activities that we run - £32,000 (2022: £12,800), and dividends and interest from our investments of £11,600 (2022: £6,700).

Total expenses rose to £312,000 for the year (2022: £217,000). Of this, £48,000 was spent on the new boiler and £20,000 was covered by grants and restricted income, however, there were still substantial increased costs related to our ministry and buildings. Staff costs rose by £25,000 and building costs were £15,000 higher than 2022, as amounts were spent on repairs to the old boiler, as well as on repairs to guttering and electrical work. We hope to have significant savings in this area in 2024.

Our giving to UK and overseas mission remained the same as in 2022 at £13,500, however, we increased our contribution to the

Diocese by £3,000 to £100,000. This money is used to pay the salary (less than the average wage), housing and pension costs of our incumbent - the total cost of one vicar being around £85,000 including not only training, but the allocation of the costs of running the diocese. This made us a net giver to the Diocese of around £15,000. 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 work with youth and children continues to benefit from the Goodliffe Endowment, the income from which has covered the cost of our intern and our work with young people. The value of the underlying investment rose during the year. The market value of the investment was £245,440 (2022: £224,166) at the year end and it generated an income of £6,709 (2022: £6,672)

Many of our other ministries also benefit from grants received during the year. The church received around £16,000 in grants for the work of Open Door, in all its guises. The cost of the Farsi ministry is now fully covered by funding from the Diocese. The church now holds £117,000 in free funds, with a further £32,000 in designated funds – money set aside by the PCC for specific purposes – and £28,000 in restricted funds.

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.