

**APCM REPORT 2024** When we look back over 2023, I am amazed, yet again, by the extraordinary amount of prayer and worship and active service in Christ's name together we have been involved with. In many ways it seems bewildering to me how it all happens! – though I believe that the action group system has begun to do what we had hoped it would and released new energy and imaginative ways to serve God's kingdom – where so many people in the church family are actively engaged. Thanks to Pere, Suzy and others for compiling the annual reports that are such an encouragement to read.



- Particular thank you to Paul & Tessa for the immense amount that they give to the church family here and more widely. And from September we've also welcomed 'curate Claire' (cf 'warden Clare'!) with Al, Joanna and Andrew and are delighted to have them all with us.
- I want to thank those so-called retired ministers Dallas, who has more recently joined the team, alongside Andrew, Norma and Brian... to Nicholas Parkes who takes one of our 8ams each month, for their ongoing and faithful help.
- Thank you indeed to all of the staff team, which includes the very hard-working Sylvia, Pere, churchwardens, Clare and Cheryl, and Sharon too, as she continues her exciting journey of training for ordination.
- Thanks also for the wisdom of the wardens, Suzy and Kevin Francis, who serve on the 'Standing and Finance Committee', meeting in between PCC meetings.
- Also want to thank Ruth for her support for me – not least for bearing with our enforced house move last November for long overdue work at the Rectory here to try and fix damp and mould problems.
- Ruth, btw, is now ordained as priest – initially serving her curacy in Preston and Paignton, but having managed without a training incumbent for most of the year – a little like Claire's situation – has now just moved her curacy to Cockington and Chelston.

It's great to have Cliff back doing so much behind the scenes, after the distressing and sad time for him nursing his brother in Wales, though we continue to miss Cecil, who has now found a new home back near his family in Northern Ireland.

There are others who we miss who have moved away – for example the Fearnley family. Some like Mike Blunsom may have moved away, and some we see less often in person due to frailty of some sort, but thanks to the dedication of David Wilkinson's AV team, they are all still very much part of the worshipping church

family here – as we all value the faithful and skilful musicianship of Valerie on the organ. We're also grateful to the commitment and gifts of Jon, Cheryl, Anya, Lewis, Kevin, & Nicola in the band – and a wonderful array of singers – not least the three who are under 16!

I wanted to close with some particular highlights of the year, which each have their own challenges too:

**1. The green agenda.** Following the amazing EcoFest in December we've also had a comprehensive energy audit made of the church and are progressing plans to add more solar panels to the Larkin Hall roof when that is replaced later this year. Really exciting – likely to cover most of our electricity costs

But the next stages of our journey to reduce our carbon footprint– like storage batteries or heat pumps – will be costly, and less financially cost effective even though we know we need to keep going in this direction.

**2. Children and Youth** we are really excited by seeing how God has blessed the youth club on Friday nights, but the challenges to connect with families and children, and to maintain the youth work, let alone grow it, remain really significant for us.

Lena Fearnley's move to Cornwall left a large gap, and Hannah the youth worker we have been paying to help run certain sessions is stepping down in July, leaving the youth club too precariously staffed by Ali and Linda.

We have been disappointed how messy church and explore and the all age worship services have been variably and often poorly attended, yet this age group is key to Jesus's Great Commission to make new disciples amongst the rising generation.

The thing is we have many opportunities to reach the younger generations – not least with our own fantastic Preschool.

We also have is sufficient money to employ an emerging generations leader – we just cannot find one, and despite the generous financial response earlier in the year, we were not able to attract the ordained youth minister we thought may come here. Could you help to do the legwork to try to recruit someone else? Or do you sense God calling you to give children or youth ministry a try?

**3. Finance.** It's been a real rollercoaster ride. It's taken a lot of work\_for Kevin and Trudy and Sylvia to take on all that Tony Barratt did for us, and to generate the new systems needed to do so. But we are very grateful to them for doing so and continue that work.

In the process of that hand-over, as we've heard, we discovered that we did not have sufficient giving income to meet our outgoings, especially with the huge rise of our gas bill last winter. However, after much prayer and the gracious and generous response that followed from the church family, our giving has increased significantly. The Centre and Preschool finances are on a much better trajectory too.

As ever, we are very grateful to the Friends of St Matthias for their ongoing support – indeed they have recently agreed to pay for the re-roofing of the church centre, and the refurbishment of the accessible toilets in the LinkWay. But we are not quite out of the woods yet with our regular giving income with significant capital projects likely to be needed in the future.

#### **4. How we operate as a Christian community.**

As a result of the survey we summarised at the APCM last year, and with the Everybody Welcome course that followed, we know that there is a lot of love and care for one another that delights us, and I hope encourages you when you either see that care, or receive it, or indeed give it! But we also know that we have more work to do to develop a deeper level of welcome to everybody – to get to know each other better – to care for one another, more deeply.

That's one reason why we want to encourage everybody to put the summer day Away at Dawlish Warren in your diaries on 29 June.

We want to grow in appreciation of how we are brothers and sisters in the same family, and the needs and vision we have – including the need to be better at sharing out the mundane, family chores like cleaning, gardening, decluttering the church, locking up at night, taking on minor repairs and moving chairs around to welcome others like Mummy and Me and Toddler – and then replacing them carefully.

But as we serve one another, we also want to become more united in our common desire and need to fix our eyes on Jesus, and to seek the presence of God. Because it is only the presence of God, revealed to us through Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit that truly brings life, the life in all its fullness Jesus invites us into. Just like the prophet Ezekiel's wonderful vision of the stream and then a river of water flowing from the temple bringing life to the lifeless salt water of the Dead sea.

So, we want to continue to lead others to that 'life giving water', to tell others of that invitation to life with events like Coffee Box, initiatives like trypraying, and pick up the program of visiting homes in the parish that began a few years ago when the Though Faith Missions team were among us.

Let's close by joining in these words of a new song...

Blessed are those who run to Him  
Who place their hope and confidence in Jesus  
He won't forsake them  
Blessed are those who seek His face  
Who bend their knee and fix their gaze on Jesus  
They won't be shaken

**Come on and praise the Lord with me  
Sing if you love His name  
Come on and lift your voice with me  
He's worthy of all our praise**

Blessed are those who walk with Him  
Whose hearts are set on pilgrimage with Jesus  
They'll see His glory  
Blessed are those who die to live  
Whose joy it is to give it all for Jesus  
And for Him only, Oh Jesus all for Your glory

**Come on and bring your offering  
Sing if you've known His grace  
Come on and lift up your holy hands  
He's worthy of all our praise**

Bless God in the sanctuary,  
Bless God in the fields of plenty  
Bless God in the darkest valley  
Every chance we get let's bless Your name

**Bless God when our hands are empty  
Bless God with a praise that costs us  
Bless God when nobody's watching  
Every chance we get let's bless Your name**

Bless God for He holds the vict'ry  
Bless God for He's always with me  
Bless God for He's always worthy  
Every chance we get let's bless Your name

**Come on and praise the Lord with me  
Sing if you love His name  
Come on and lift your voice with me  
He's worthy of all our praise**