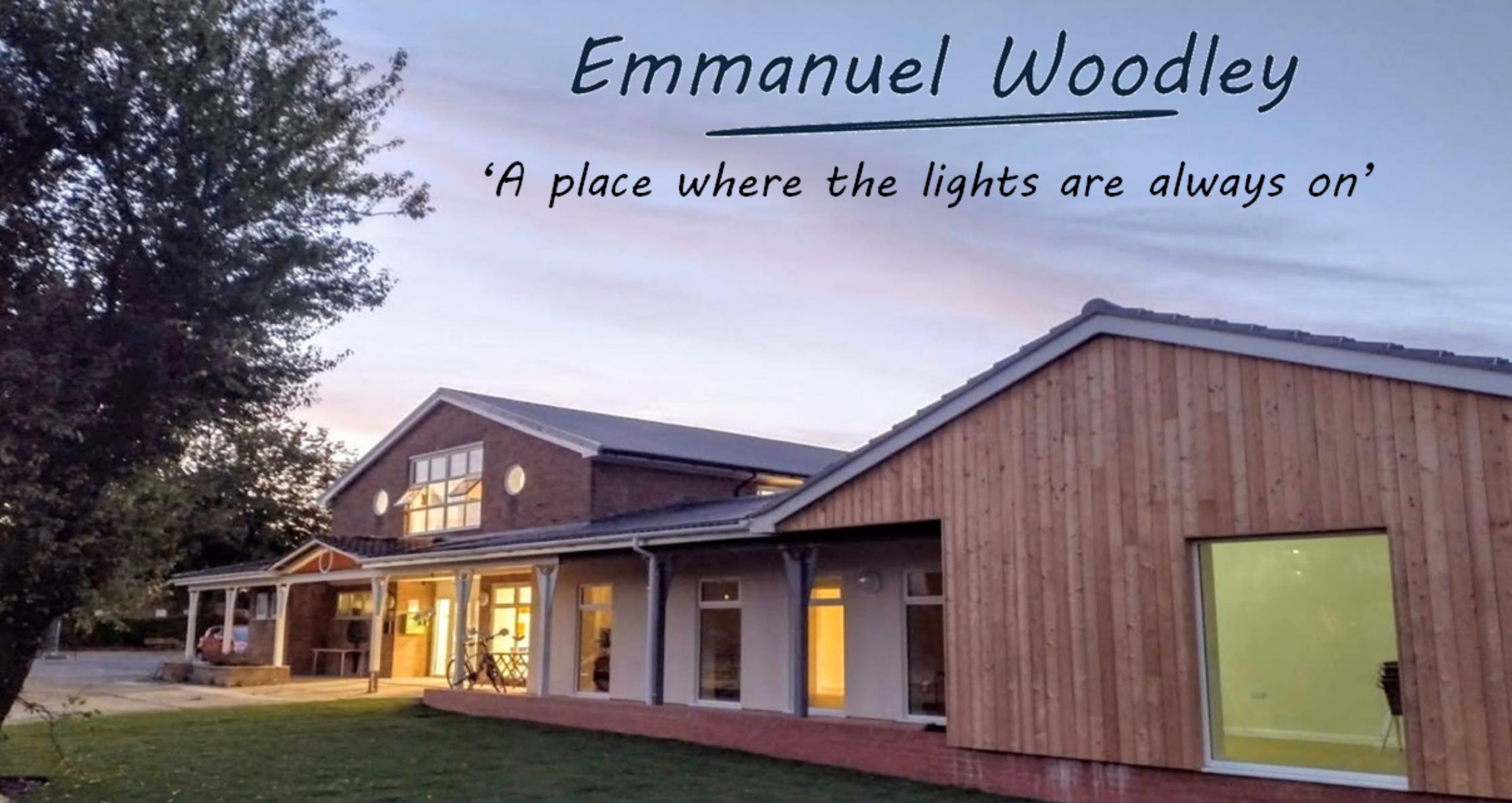


Emmanuel Woodley

'A place where the lights are always on'



Come Just As You Are

Emmanuel Church Woodley
Parish Profile



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INTRODUCTION

Reading Deanery sits within the Berkshire archdeaconry in the Diocese of Oxford. Our diocesan Common Vision is **work together to become a more Christ-like church** – serving in a more contemplative, compassionate, and courageous way for the sake of God's world.

Reading is a large, historic town in the Thames Valley, with excellent connections to London. It is home to the Reading Festival and the University of Reading, and it is a dynamic and vibrant place to live. It has diverse communities and welcomes many newly arrived people from around the world each year, who make the town their home.

Emmanuel Woodley is a lively, community facing church in an **area of opportunity and challenge**. The church is well resourced in terms of a newly refurbished building and a strong and faithful team.

This is a wonderful opportunity to join a growing, Jesus-centred church striving to be at the heart of its community.



**Reverend Canon
Liz Jackson**
Associate Archdeacon
Berkshire





WELCOME

On behalf of all at Emmanuel, thank you for clicking on this profile to find out more about our church. We hope it inspires you to consider if God is prompting you to lead us on the next part of our journey.

Emmanuel Church is a modern, informal, welcoming community for all ages and all walks of life. Our people are diverse, coming from many backgrounds, countries, and experiences of faith. We are blessed with a high proportion of children and young adults and have devoted resources over many years to building discipleship through all ages.

We come together to worship in vibrant and spirit-filled ways, and also cultivate more reflective and contemplative practice. We embrace and forgive the imperfect in each of us to find community and fellowship, and to draw closer to God.

This profile pulls together contributions from over thirty different people in the church and our community, as well as survey and wordcloud responses from scores more, because we are keen to give you a candid feel for our unique church family.

There is a lot going on, a lot of people with a heart for the community, for reaching out, for accepting people as they walk through the door, and we share a compelling vision of Emmanuel as the heart and light of our local area. Empowering each other to step out in faith and encouraging one another to lead in the areas we feel called into by God has been a real strength of our church and we are looking for someone to step into this vision, to expand it and make it your own.

We have our share of challenges at Emmanuel, so there is plenty of scope for you to make a difference - we'd love for Emmanuel to grow more in how we pray, how we share the gospel, develop discipleship, engage with our local elderly neighbours, and step further into becoming a Christ-centred community hub.

Now is a great time to come and join Emmanuel. We recently completed a community hub building project, which created more space and updated facilities that house essential services like the Woodley foodbank, space for local people to use as a community centre, and where we are finding innovative ways to help people encounter Jesus and grow our family.

We are truly excited to see who God has in store for us and hope you will get a sense of what drives our people and what we're passionate about from this parish profile.

We hope you like what you see, and if you have any questions or would like to know more about us, please feel free to get in touch at wardens@emmanuelwoodley.org.uk.



Lyn Rhodes and David Woolnough
Churchwardens –
Emmanuel Church
Woodley





Our vision throughout a decade of working towards our building project was to create a space which would be the **heart and light of our local community**, where people could find love, acceptance, spiritual and mental healing and also practical support, and through this come to know who God is.

We have completed the journey of transforming the physical space of Emmanuel, and we are now taking the first steps on the road towards filling our updated space with new ministries, initiatives and community work to fully realise our ambitions. We are a work in progress, as individuals, and as a group, and we hope that whoever God has in store for us will help nurture the seeds we have planted so that they grow in truly exciting and impactful ways.

We hope that with God's help we can live all this out and reflect grace through our words and actions, so that others will want to find out more for themselves.

We asked our 5 to 10 year olds to describe our church. These were their answers:

- Good biscuits
- Good community with God
- I get to see my family
- Lots of groups so I can understand things at my level
- Fun
- Unique
- Always late starting
- Welcoming
- Light-hearted
- Somewhere to pray
- Friendly
- Encourages people to step outside their comfort zone
- Supportive
- Adventurous church, tries new things
- The best church ever

The Welcome We Aspire to at Emmanuel...

JUST COME AS YOU ARE:
Married, divorced or single here,
it's one family that mingles here.
Conservative or liberal here,
we've all got to give a little here.
Big or small here, there's room for us all here.
Doubt or believe here, we all can receive here.
Gay or straight here, there's no hate here.
Whatever your gender here, everyone can blend here.
Whatever your race here, for all of us grace here.
If your needs are additional here,
the love's still unconditional here.
In imitation of the amazing love Almighty God has for
each and every one of us,
let us live and love without labels.

A poem we display on screens around the church building and before most services.





THE EMMANUEL CHURCH FAMILY

On a regular Sunday at the 10.30am service, we are a congregation of **just over 100 people of which around 30 are under 16**. Our wider church directory connects in over 80 households comprising over 170 people.

Since its planting in 1991, Emmanuel Church has had a young age profile and been known as a great church for young families with a real focus on youth and children's work. This is something very much part of our DNA.

During the pandemic we actively embraced online services and maintained community throughout. We were delighted to have emerged from the various lockdowns as a more resilient church family with almost all of our church directory engaging and enjoying the return to in-person worship afterwards.

We have also seen church growth of around 20 or more regulars since the start of 2022. Some of this growth has been organic, some transfer, and some from people moving into our area. This new wave has helped diversify our age profile to include an increased number of older people, which gives us an even more balanced spread. This has helped us to develop towards an authentically intergenerational church, with active members from all ages.

The congregation is a real mix of people with varied income backgrounds, a wide range of viewpoints, and experience of different traditions within the church – which hopefully shows that our *Come Just As You Are* ethos is effective in helping people feel at ease, whoever they are and whatever they do or don't have.

In terms of ethnic diversity, we are starting to see that reflected better in our congregation, especially as Woodley itself also diversifies over time. However, we would like to see this go even further.

We also host the Presbyterian Church of East Africa every Sunday afternoon as they come to hire our facility for several hours. Last year we did our Christmas Carol Service jointly with them.





THE WELCOME WE ASPIRE TO – ALY'S VIEW FROM THE KITCHEN



As you walk into Emmanuel on a Sunday morning, you are met with a **wonderful rush of welcoming energy**. Being a family church is pretty evident, with parents chasing toddlers here and there who have just found their feet and newfound freedom.

Some of the children are playing football in the garden, while others who don't find it so easy to join in have their heads buried in books or gaming devices, headphones on.

Then you'll find small groups of grown-ups dashing here there and everywhere getting ready to introduce God's word to our young people. Suddenly you hear a few notes of a familiar worship song as the band in the main hall are getting ready for the service.

You'll notice another small group congregating around the kitchen hatch, waiting for that all important morning tea or coffee (which we encourage people to chat over both before and after the service). For some, it's a quick dash and go, for others, a chance to talk through the ups and downs of their week with one of our serving team.

Coffee safely in hand, you look round and see someone new, maybe looking a bit nervous. Going up to them, you gently ask their name and welcome them to the Sunday morning hubbub, while finding out a little more about them and showing them where to grab a hot drink.

The noise level goes up a notch and you spot some of our regulars who come along from the drug and alcohol rehab centre we support. All are laughing and joking with each other while also chatting with the regulars at church they are getting to know and who help support them through their, at times turbulent, journey of recovery.

Others are just merely enjoying catching up with those who maybe they only saw

yesterday, or engaging in deep conversations with those who haven't been for a while. Whilst taking all of this in, you notice one of our older members of church needing a space clearing for their wheelchair to move into the main hall, so you step in to assist.

Checking the clock, you realise that it's past the service start time and spot a churchwarden and some of our Sunday morning team helpers ushering people into the hall for the start of the service, (sometimes it takes a couple of friendly reminders!)

Finally, you hear a familiar voice from the front welcoming everyone to the service. Conversations are drawing to a close as people settle in to the service and at the back is the babbling sound of our babies and toddlers exploring books and toys.

I cannot think of anywhere I would much rather be on a Sunday morning than with my Emmanuel family. Friendly, supportive, encouraging, nurturing, inspirational, accepting non-judgemental and truly embracing the church ethos of *Come Just As You Are*.

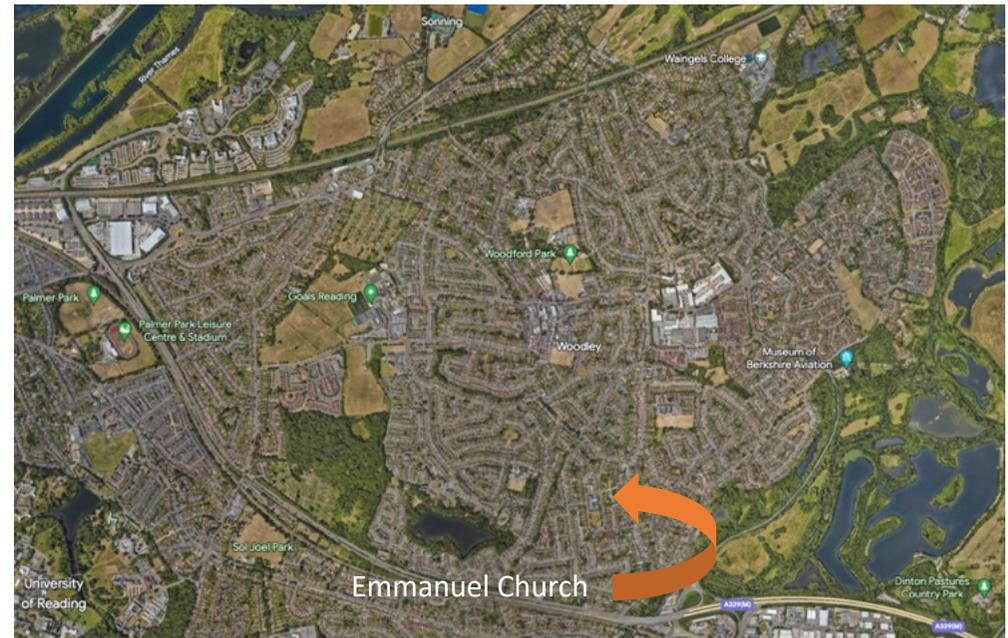


OUR COMMUNITY IN WOODLEY

Emmanuel church is located in the southeast of Woodley, a town five miles from the centre of Reading, in the local authority area of Wokingham Borough - a relatively prosperous council region. Woodley has grown from about 20,000 people ten years ago, to about 30,000 today. Despite the pull from Reading in one direction, and Wokingham in the other, Woodley very much retains its own identity and in many ways feels like a large village.

A few years ago, Woodley was voted one of the best places in the UK to bring up a family (although - let the reader beware - it was the Daily Mail who said that!) In any case, Emmanuel church is located in Loddon Ward, the second-most severe pocket of deprivation in Wokingham Borough. Emmanuel sits a stone's throw from the Drovers Way estate which consists of about 250 predominantly council owned properties.

Woodley is mainly suburban and primarily made up of privately owned housing. It is home to six primary schools, two secondary schools and one Special Educational Needs (SEN) school. We have plenty of green spaces and easy access to the Thames Path and other great walks in the countryside. Just down the road from the church is a newly built leisure centre and a multiplex cinema.



Whilst our church draws people from all over Woodley and further afield, we have a core of people who live within a mile of the church. In our DNA is a heart for those on our doorstep who might experience more of the tough realities of life than most. It is into this mixed social economy that we seek to share friendship and Good News through our community and outreach work. We are well-positioned, well-known and well-respected in the local community as a church that understands what life is like and who try to make a positive difference.





Over the years we have built good networks and have a reputation particularly for work with young families and those experiencing issues around poverty. This is enhanced by our strong partnership with, and our hosting of, Woodley Foodbank. To give an idea, the Foodbank currently distributes food parcels on a regular basis to over 120 households.

There are two other Anglican churches in Woodley – St James and St John – and we each have very different characters! We celebrate those differences and try to make the most of the different ways we appeal to the diversity of people in the local area!



Emmanuel is also just ten minutes' walk from Woodley's popular pedestrianised shopping precinct, which acts as a commercial hub for the town and hosts wider community events like the Christmas Extravaganza.

Leading on from the precinct is Woodford Park which is popular with people of all ages and consists of a newly designed play park, paddling pool and large hill which can be seen swarmed with families on a rare snow day! It is also the heart of the local events such as the Woodley carnival, a weekly parkrun, fun fairs and memorial services.

When we surveyed people in our local area and asked them what they felt the biggest needs were in Woodley, they highlighted:

- Isolation and loneliness
- Food poverty and the increasing cost of living
- Community fragmentation
- Lack of local services for young people
- Growing intolerance

Asked to describe Emmanuel, their most common responses were:

- Friendly
- Welcoming
- Open
- Caring
- Compassionate
- Family friendly





OUR BUILDING

The main church hall was built in the 1960's and was a community hall for the nearby St John's parish church of Woodley. **In 1991 a new church was planted in the building and in 2018 we legally became a parish in our own right.** We continue to have a close relationship with our neighbouring parishes. In 2022 we completed a major extension, so now have significantly improved facilities for community engagement and outreach.

Our building has a large flexible use main hall where Sunday services are held, with a secondary hall, an open lobby area, an upstairs youth room, a smaller meeting room, and a dedicated foodbank area. There is an office, a kitchen, and toilets – all of which were refurbished or added in 2021-22.

We have a large private garden and patio, a community garden where various organic plants and vegetables are grown, and a car park for 30 cars. We also maintain three temporary buildings adjacent to the main church which are mainly used for storage by the church and by Woodley Foodbank. Our community garden is accessible behind a gate from the street and separate to the main garden and patio space.

The church building is very privileged to be the only indoor community space for the local community around Drovers Way. We hire out the room spaces on a not-for-profit basis to a range of local groups and societies (other churches, dance groups, exercise groups, dog training club, toddler groups, etc), as well as to private individuals for children's parties. We often allow local charities to use the space free of charge. It is fair to say that the building is used as much by people from the local community as it is by the church itself and **we estimate that**

currently around 400 – 500 people enter the church building each week, about 50% of whom do not attend church services.

We completed a church extension project in 2022. This new facility increased our floor space by over 50% and is being used to make a steep change in our community engagement and mission. The building work was completed to high environmental standards to reflect our desire to care for God's creation and incorporated solar panels.

Amongst initiatives that we hope to develop are a community café for older and younger people to encounter and enrich each other through friendship and helping to tackle isolation; providing life skill coaching, money management courses, job hunting support, and increasing the help we can provide to refugees in the area. The space is suitable for community groups and also for small meetings such as counselling sessions. We foresee further growth of our children's and youth ministries using this facility as well as for those with mobility issues.

The building is not licensed for wedding or funeral services, so our incumbent normally shares responsibility for these across Woodley with the vicars of our neighbouring parishes.

Our desire is to partner even more with the community, building on the relationships already established with those who use the centre. We are in an ideal position and have a real passion to use the space we have to help address the challenges currently faced within our local neighbourhood.



Come Just As You Are





OUR STAFF TEAM

Our current staff team of 4 (apart from the vicar of course!) comprises:

Laurie-Ann Price (Youth Pastor - 27 hours per week) | Laurie has been an inspirational youth pastor at Emmanuel for five years now and has a real heart for young people, both to explore faith with those who have no church background, and to disciple those who already have their own personal faith.

Heather Aitken and **Rachel Stone** (job-sharing Children and Community Pastors - 12 hours and 8 hours per week respectively) | This new role was created in May 2022, although Heather and Rachel have been long-standing members of Emmanuel so were able to hit the ground running. There is so much already happening and so much potential in these areas and we are blessed to have two people passionate about these ministries and able to build great relationships with our community.

Billy O'Brien *last but definitely not least* (Church Cleaner - 5 hours per week) | Billy has been in this role for about two years, but has been a member of the church for at least ten. The blessing of having Billy is that he is a natural welcomer and so he is happy not only to mop, but to make cups of tea for visitors to the church when he is there

Laurie-Ann Price - Youth Pastor



Heather Aitken and Rachel Stone – Children’s and Community Pastors



Billy O’Brien – Centre Cleaner
The one on the left ☺



We do not have a paid church administrator, although Heather, as part of her hours, oversees hall bookings. Our services are paperless, and we do not have the administrative burden of churchyards, quinquennial inspections etc.

Our PCC’s decisions so far have been to put our available resources into paid roles that are primarily relationship-building, teaching and faith-sharing in nature. However, as our ministries develop, the amount of administration is increasing. We have considered finding volunteers to share some of the work, but may also look into a paid post. This would free our current staff team up to do more of the in-person ministry they enjoy and all want to prioritise.

On the lay side, we have a highly **supportive team of churchwardens and PCC members**, with a wide range of gifts and a real heart for the work of the church.





HAPPY, HEALTHY, STRONG – SAFEGUARDING AT EMMANUEL

We are committed to caring and protecting everyone in our church community. We do this through raising awareness of safeguarding, safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Our Parish Safeguarding Officer and PCC Safeguarding Lead work as an effective team and constantly review and update our churches policies to reflect best practice.

All our volunteers undertake appropriate safeguarding training to empower each of them to thrive in their role and we use *Churchsuite* to store data securely and make it accessible to the right people at the right times.

We respond promptly to each and every safeguarding concern that is raised.

With community outreach at the heart of our church, we believe in building healthy and safe relationships within a supportive culture. Everyone should feel able to flourish within our church family!





READING DEANERY

The parish of Emmanuel Woodley stands on the eastern boundary of Reading Deanery and is one of three Woodley parishes. The Christian churches in Woodley are an active group who meet regularly and work together on common issues of ministry and mission. **Emmanuel is a vibrant church that seeks to serve its local community**, particularly through their church premises which they have recently extended. The congregation have a real passion to serve their community and to help build the Kingdom as they discern God's call. There is much to do in the parish, and a new Vicar is needed who has energy and vision for their next stage of ministry.

With its 29 parishes covering 24 benefices, the Deanery has one of the largest Synods in the country, despite covering a relatively small geographical area focused largely on the town of Reading itself. We have an active and well-attended Chapter, which meets regularly throughout the year. We work closely with churches from all denominations, particularly through the "Transform Reading" and "Churches Together" networks. The concentrated nature of Reading provides many opportunities to work together to bring God into the day-to-day lives of the town and the 250,000 people for whom it is home. The Deanery's Mission Action Plan (MAP) seeks to enable its parishes to deliver the underlying missional aim of making a difference in the world, by improving capacity for confident, collaborative leadership, creating vibrant Christian communities, and making disciples.

Recognising the size and variation in the deanery, we operate a dispersed leadership model, dividing the deanery into four operational zones (north, west, central, east/south). The Area Dean and Deanery Lay Chair have assistants to help resource these zones. Each pair of Area Dean and Lay Chair provides frontline support to clergy and parishes and oversee vacancies in their zone. They also take their share of cross-deanery work. Emmanuel Woodley is in the eastern zone of the deanery.

Our priorities as a deanery currently are to **support parishes as they rebuild** after the Covid pandemic and **discover new opportunities for mission and ministry**. The Deanery is served by an effective and enthusiastic Synod, whose meetings are structured to balance governance and administrative duties with opportunities to share good news and good practice, and to engage with a range of topics affecting the whole Church. We look forward to welcoming the new incumbent of Emmanuel Woodley and working alongside him or her within this forum.



Reverend Mike Smith
Area Dean



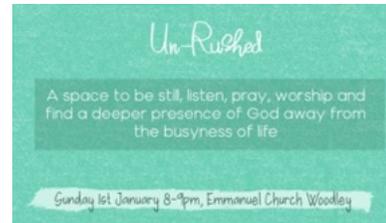


SUNDAY SERVICES AND PRAYER

Our usual pattern of 10.30am Sunday services runs something like this:

- Week one and two of each month: Morning Worship - including a set of three or four worship songs and a 20 minute sermon.
- Week three: Holy Communion - children return from their groups to be included in this important part of our family's worship.
- Last week of the month: All Age Service with pre-service breakfast. (All other weeks, there are children's groups that go out about 15 minutes into the service).

Pre-Covid, we ran a mid-week communion service, which it would be good to rebuild, and also experimented with a communion service early on Sunday. On the last Sunday of the month, we have started running a new more reflective evening service: *Un-Rushed*.



Since the pandemic, we have embraced livestreaming our services, which remain online on [YouTube](#) for a few weeks. This helps those volunteering in our children's groups, and people who are away, to catch up in their own time. We also know from people that have recently joined Emmanuel, that part of the reason they decided to come to us is because they first watched us online.

We include time to pray together in every service and offer individual prayer ministry afterwards, but we have a heart to develop the corporate prayer life of the church and would welcome fresh impetus in this area.

WORSHIP

We are blessed with a well-stocked worship team and a congregation who love to sing praises to God.

The worship team is made up of talented musicians, singers, technicians and leaders of all ages with a heart for Spirit-led worship. We are encouraged that a number of our young people regularly join our adult led bands and we love to bring authentic worship to everyone in the church both young and old.

We aim to create an intimate space to meet with the Lord, receive scripture and respond. Pictures or words are often shared as well. We love to sing both contemporary and more traditional worship songs as well as spontaneous worship when the spirit leads us.

Worship is at the heart of our church and is a key gift and strength of Emmanuel. It's a blessing to serve God in this way.





YOUTHWORK

Our vision is to equip young people in their walk of faith no matter where they are in their journey.

We are passionate about seeing the young people in Woodley, full of God's life, rooted in Christ and fearlessly making known the Good News of the Gospel. **We believe that young people are not just the Church of the future but are the Church of the now, and as Children of God, they are part of Christ's body.**

Discipleship Groups

Discipling young people and encouraging them to know their identity as God's children, is an integral part of our youth programme. On a Sunday morning a group of year 6-9's meet and learn about the theme or Bible passage being discussed in the service. On a Sunday evening, the year 10-13's meet for a time of prayer and in-depth Bible discussion. It is a joy to see these young people grow in their relationship with God, but also with one another.



Our thriving youthwork is led by our Youth Pastor Laurie-Ann and a team of dedicated volunteers. We run a variety of weekly groups and activities that offer different ways to engage with the Bible and encounter God. Alongside this, we run trips and attend festivals and conferences throughout the year.

Community Group

Once a month we run a Friday night group for year 7-13's. We sit and eat dinner and discuss Jesus and what it means to be Christian. We hang out and play games. This space is aimed at non-Christian young people. Emmanuel'ers are encouraged to reach out to friends and invite them along.





Local School's Work

Our Youth Pastor engages with one of our local senior schools by running a weekly Christian Union. Alongside this, she supports a local charity called RE Inspired, by going into this senior school and helping to deliver RE sessions to the different year groups.



Mentoring

Our Youth Pastor offers one-to-one catch ups, with all young people she works with. This offers pastoral support and a time where young people have someone to listen to them. It is also a great way to encourage young people in their faith on a more personalized level.

"A safe space, always open for a chat".

One of our young people.

One Church

Our youth vision also extends to working with Churches across Woodley and the surrounding area, coming together in unity. This is a reflection of Christ and also shows the young people they are not alone as they choose to follow Him.

All three church parishes originally jointly shared the cost of employing a youthworker. Over time the post has developed and became located at Emmanuel, although the parishes continue to work closely together on this.

Our Sunday evening group is co-led by volunteers from Emmanuel and St James' in Woodley, alongside our Youth Pastor. It is made up of young people from Emmanuel and three other local churches. We also work closely with St Andrew's Sonning, joining up once a month for a time of worship and a joint youth group. We run socials with this church and are attending a summer festival together.

Serving

Our awesome young people have a heart for serving the church. Many of them are on our main worship, tech, and kids group rotas for our Sunday service, as well as supporting Minecraft Church and other groups that run in the week. Some young people, with the support of our Youth Pastor, are preaching during our main Sunday services.





CHILDREN'S WORK

Children and families are at the heart of Emmanuel life and we are blessed to meet children of all ages throughout the week. From our Sunday morning groups, to a community drop-in and a bustling, noisy toddler group, there's always lots going on!

Children's ministry at Emmanuel

Emmanuel is a really family-focussed church. We welcome a wide range of families from our community at groups on Sunday mornings, at our community drop-in on a Monday afternoon, and at our toddler group, Little Gems, on a Thursday morning.

None of this would be possible without an army of dedicated volunteers, including some of our youth, who have a real heart and passion for our children and sharing God's love with them. In addition to our regular groups, we also run one-off events such as our nativity fun day!

Sunday morning light groups

When the children leave the Sunday morning service for their groups, they almost leave the main hall half empty!

We run two groups for children; Sparklers is for two to five year olds and Lightning is for five to eleven year olds and we regularly see 28 children altogether in these groups with a further 10 who come occasionally. We have Bible teaching in age-appropriate ways, stories, silly games, drama, crafts, quizzes, worship, messy play, bubbles and LOTS of snacks and are privileged to witness our children coming to meet with God in their own way. At the end of each term we celebrate time together with movie mornings, parties and more food!





YOUNG ADULTS

We're acutely aware that when people 'age-out' of youth groups, this can be a time where people drift away from the church. We have actively put in place initiatives to guard against this, including Sushi, which is a homegroup for young adults which meets fortnightly.

A typical Sushi night involves having a meal together at someone's house, with time for a chat, before exploring the Bible and praying together, while going off on many tangents! The group has recently finished an Alpha course and are excited to explore more areas of the Bible!

"Sushi is a great opportunity for young people to come together in fellowship, talk about God, ask questions, and feel comfortable to be your authentic self."



Some of our Sushi group, out for a meal (ironically there's no raw fish in sight!)

HOMEGROUPS

We currently have three other active, established homegroups and are delighted that two more are starting up this term. We also have a few smaller regular prayer groups.

It would be fair to say that this is an area of church life that has perhaps seen the most prolonged disruption since the pandemic and one where there is a need for fresh vision to help support new smallgroup leadership, inject direction and refresh enthusiasm.

We know that homegroups provide a vital relational and spiritual platform for the church as a whole and would love to see them multiply and flourish once again.

"It was only after I joined a homegroup that I truly felt like I belonged here at Emmanuel."





OUTREACH AND EVANGELISM

A core role of Emmanuel Church is to show God's love to people and help them to develop their understanding of Him in a way that is gracious, winsome and compelling.

We aim to do this by including a gospel message within all Sunday meetings. We also run courses for those looking to explore the Christian faith a couple of times a year (previously Alpha and recently Hope Explored).

A key strength of Emmanuel is the building is known as a community hub, and so we want to use that platform to encourage people who use the building to learn about Jesus too.

PASTORAL CARE

We have an extremely strong Pastoral Care Team, which comprises a small and caring group of experienced volunteers who have a big heart for others and who aim to walk alongside people.

We meet regularly as a group and start with a time of sharing and prayer together, making sure that we are always caring for the carers.

Much of pastoral support happens naturally and informally at Emmanuel, through friendship and homegroups, with our team trying to be there for newcomers, those who are experiencing particularly tough times, and those who are more on the fringes of church.

We offer support through phone calls, visits initiated by us or by request, and prayers (including a well-utilised text message prayer chain with dozens of participants).

There is also practical support such as meal provision, particularly for new parents - but this can also be at other key times, the church's *Helping Hands* financial support fund, and onward referrals or signposting to other agencies if and when appropriate.





LAUGH AND CRAFT

Our Laugh and Craft group builds friendship and community through the medium of craft.

For over 16 years the group has met on a Friday morning to craft together and support each other's mental health. During the pandemic the group continued to meet via Zoom.



It is mainly non church members who attend, and for many this is their connection with church. Membership continues to grow and has birthed a papercraft day once a month, where the peace and quiet of the church inspires creativity to flow.

PUPPETS

Emmanuel's award-winning puppet group *Wide-Mouthed & Stringless* was formed in September 2006.

The group aim to communicate the gospel in a non-threatening way through songs and skits, and to minister to each other and have fun!

Performances take place in the church's all age services and the group performs at external events from time to time. The group rehearses weekly at Emmanuel and engages many members of the congregation in the team.



MINECRAFT

Our Minecraft church group is a brilliant and creative way to engage young people with church. Through the group we have helped young people with neurodiversity to engage with church in a way that works for them and have reached young people and their families who don't usually go to church.



We meet once a month on a Saturday morning and have 20-30 people attending.

"I like Minecraft church because it is a new and interesting way of engaging with the Bible." Toby (age 10).





BAPTISMS

Every summer for the last fourteen years (with the exception of the pandemic), Emmanuel has held an open-air baptism service in the garden of the church, with a large swimming pool provided for full immersion baptism and reaffirmation of vows.

This is a much looked forward to celebration and **unifying moment** for our church and we deliver an invitation to our local neighbours to join us for the service and shared lunch, barbeque, and children's splash party afterwards.

The baptism service is a real highlight of the church year and something that both highly memorable and intensely spiritual for everyone who attends. We also undertake infant baptisms and dedications throughout the year, which are always special services. We love to welcome new people into God's family.





CHURCH CAMPING WEEKEND

For the last couple of years, we have organised a camping trip away over a long weekend in the summer, designed to be **affordable and accessible to all**. The camp is a great way for individuals and families to spend more quality time with each other and has been especially helpful for new people joining the church.

In 2022, we camped together on a local farm just west of Reading over the August bank holiday weekend.

About 70 people stayed overnight and another 30 visited as day-trippers. We shared food together, played games, fished in the river, enjoyed the campfire, and prayed and worshipped. After the success of the past few years, we see real benefits to continuing with this initiative.

Our next camping weekend is booked for the August Bank Holiday 2023 (you'd be very welcome to join us).





WOODLEY FOODBANK / SHARE / LUNCH BUNCH

On Monday afternoons the church building is taken over by a local charity called SHARE who collect and distribute surplus fresh food to the community.

At the same time, volunteers from Emmanuel set up activities for the families coming to SHARE with their children. We have games, crafts, toys and snacks and we've welcomed around 50 children and their parents who ordinarily may not have set foot in our building. This activity is a vital link to those in our community who are facing the toughest challenges.

We also house the Woodley Foodbank, having a close working relationship and supplying many volunteers. We also work with the Lunch Bunch, who provide meals to children during school holidays.

"We have a fabulous partnership with Emmanuel Church. Being in the heart of our community we can share food - and love! - to the local community."

Richard from Woodley Foodbank

"We at Lunch Bunch feel that Emmanuel is our home. We have been so welcomed and become part of the Emmanuel community. Working with the church, the Food Bank and SHARE is a wonderful collaboration to benefit local people."

Juliet from Lunch Bunch





LITTLE GEMS TODDLER GROUP

Little Gems is a well-established toddler group for families and carers with babies and pre-school age children that runs every Thursday. It has really grown and blossomed in the last year following on from the pandemic and we now regularly welcome more than 50 children and their carers.

The entire building is filled with noise, toys, ride-ons, tunnels, dressing up clothes, craft activities and messy play activities (and we mean MESSY!) and there is so much joy in this community. Food plays a big part (of course!) and while the little ones munch on healthy snacks, the carers sneak off for a cuppa and some homemade cakes!

We currently have 135 children on our register and are really encouraged when the carers start coming along to church on a Sunday morning. Many of our volunteers describe Thursday mornings as **'the highlight of their week'**!



CIRDIC

CIRDIC
Churches in Reading Drop in Centre

For the last seven years a group of volunteers from Emmanuel have helped to prepare breakfasts for homeless and rough sleepers in Reading.

One Sunday in eight, we travel together to CIRDIC (Churches In Reading Drop-In Centre) where we prepare and serve teas, coffees, cereals and a full English breakfast for 25 to 35 guests.

While calling for an early start (we arrive at CIRDIC for 8am) welcoming and serving guests in this way is always uplifting and feels very much where we should be as Christians, and we're inspired by Matthew 25.35.

If we're speedy with the washing up our volunteers can even be back at Emmanuel in time for most of the service!



COMMUNITY GARDEN

The Emmanuel Church Community Garden fulfils a number of key priorities for the church. It encourages residents in our local area to grow organic fruit and vegetables for themselves and their community whilst at the same time becoming more socially and physically active. It helps **fight isolation** by encouraging people to form **new friendships** and relationships by developing stronger ties within their community. It also encourages people to value, nurture, and find **peace within God's creation**. As an added bonus, the food that we grow can also be used by the Woodley Foodbank.

Using gardening to bring about positive changes in the lives of people living with disabilities or ill health, or who are isolated, lonely, disadvantaged, or vulnerable, has been positive for the whole church and we love the idea that we're 'growing together for our community'.



"When the Community Garden was first advertised, I had been in the area three years. I knew two people and spent lots of time indoors. I decided to see what being involved in the garden would entail. From the moment of walking through the gate I was welcomed wholeheartedly and was put to work potting up some seedlings. Being of limited mobility, that was all I could really do initially. A year on, my mobility has improved, the garden is inclusive and I have met some extremely nice people, who I class as friends.

"Being involved with this project has given me knowledge about growing produce and the joy of actually being relaxed whilst working the land. It's certainly been conducive for my mental health and how working the land has made me realise how much I need to slow down and take time to relax my mind."

Sue - Southlake Crescent

"I love growing plants and the garden gives me an opportunity to share this hobby with others. It's also allowed me to meet new people in a safe space during the awful period of Covid at its worst. Being outside doing something constructive with others is always a pleasure. It's also an opportunity for me to learn from others and try new plants. I think it's good that we can share the crop with the foodbank to help those in need too."

Bernie – Woodley



REFUGEES

A small group at Emmanuel pray weekly for refugees. We have welcomed refugees from a local hotel to join us for meals and built connections with those staying long term.



We would like to collaborate more and plan new activities which enable them to use their skills and help integrate into their new community.

"This is the first meal I've eaten around a table with friends in two years".
Refugee from Syria, meal attendee

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN WOODLEY

Leaders from all churches in the Woodley area meet monthly under the umbrella grouping of *Churches Together in Woodley*.

We pray together, share what's happening in our respective churches, and discuss and coordinate any shared business.

We hold joint services once a month and held a joint walk of witness at Easter, culminating in Woodley Precinct



PARKRUN

Emmanuel has a come-just-as-you-are running group – the Emmanuel Church Chuggers. Some are fast and some are slow, all are encouraged. And encouraging!



We take part every Saturday in the Woodley parkrun, sometimes as volunteers, sometimes as participants, and are linked to the national churchrunners.co.uk.





COMMUNITY FUN DAY

For several years before the pandemic, Emmanuel ran summer community fun days in partnership with the local council on the playing fields nearby to the church.

We hired inflatable bouncy castles, a café dome and a helter-skelter, as well as having climbing walls and ice cream vans and food trucks in attendance. The café provided opportunities to share information about the church and the Emmanuel puppet team did a series of performances to entertain the children.

The event and access were provided free to the community and we typically saw around 1,000 people from the local area each time. This was an excellent way to raise our profile in the local area and to bless the community in which we are based,

We have not planned a similar event for 2023, but there is certainly scope to think creatively about similar events in the future, now that covid is no longer a limiting factor.





YELDALL MANOR

[Yeldall Manor](#) is a highly regarded local Christian drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre that we have a long and close relationship with.

We support Yeldall financially and have a number of staff and ex-residents as part of our church family. Groups of current residents will also join us regularly on Sunday mornings.



We actively promote Yeldall's evening celebrations and summer fete, which are always really special, and we love to hear stories of lives changed through the power of prayer and relationships being formed with Jesus. A real privilege to hear and always very inspiring too!

JAC



[Just Around the Corner](#) is a local charity that works with young people who are struggling for a variety of reasons. They're based locally in 15 acres of stunning countryside and provide personal learning and development therapies for children and young people.

KKV



[KKV](#) is an orphanage in Nairobi, Kenya. Emmanuel has sent five mission trips to KKV over the last 15 years, many involving young people. As well as supporting the orphanage financially, several Emmanuel attendees individually sponsor children at KKV.

RE INSPIRED

[RE Inspired](#) works in partnership with local schools to bring Christian religious education to young people in the area.



A ROCHA

[A Rocha UK](#) is a Christian charity working to protect and restore the natural world and is committed to equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment. Emmanuel has taken the first steps towards gaining an Eco Church award.



SAM & CHLOE MUTTON

[Sam and Chloe Mutton](#) are two former Emmanuel'ers (Sam was previously our Youth Pastor) who are now living and working to bring God's love into the slums of Uganda.





INTERGENERATIONAL CHURCH

Children and young people are a big part of the Emmanuel family. We believe that having space where **all ages and abilities** can **encounter God**, contribute, and **participate** in worship, is an **integral part of our mission**.

Whilst we run groups that are age specific, we are intentional with trying to create a culture within the church that is intergenerational. We try to create spaces and times where all ages can be in fellowship and worship together. Our leadership staff team works together to make sure this is reflected in practice.

This can be seen in our weekly Sunday services, all age monthly services, Minecraft Church, and social events during the year, like our Church Summer camp. We are passionate about developing this area of our mission and our experience is that this is a journey well worth the effort.

From our nativity service in 2022



A WELCOMING FAMILY

We believe in a loving God and we want to reflect that love in who we are as individuals and as a church. We say that Emmanuel is a place where you can *meet God, meet friends and live life* and that you can *come just as you are*. These are so important. We really want people to feel able to be part of our family and to experience feeling loved and accepted for who they are. It is also ok to just be ourselves, whether that's us on a good day or a bad day.

God has created a wonderful world which bursts with diversity and we want to celebrate that. We believe that difference is a strength, and we want all people to feel valued and respected. We know that the Christian Church is a very large umbrella, covering numerous ways to worship. We are informal and have people with a wide range of Christian beliefs and viewpoints. Some are beginning on their journey of faith and others have been travelling for a long time. **But whatever our differences, we are all 'Emmanuel'ers**, a unique part of God's church family.

Our differences make us unique and we are blessed at Emmanuel to be a diverse group of people with a range of skills and talents, all of which can be used to serve God. We welcome and encourage people to get involved in whatever way they are comfortable. We hope that Emmanuel is a place where people will find friendship, acceptance, and a warm welcome.





WHO GOD MIGHT BRING

At the heart of our vision, are the words; *Come Just As You Are*. This means the ideal individual to lead our warm and welcoming church, should be happy preaching in jeans and t-shirt, as there are no formal cassocks in sight, and comfortable transitioning from an informal joke into a Christ-centred and spirit-filled approach to worship. We are a diverse church which covers all ages and backgrounds. We are looking for someone who is **authentic, open-minded, friendly** and **caring**, who can continue to evolve and bring to life our vision of being the heart and soul of our local community.

We have recently finished building a neighbourhood centre and have started to develop vital links with other community programmes such as: Yeldall Manor, RE Inspired, Just Around the Corner, Eco Church, SHARE and Woodley Foodbank and we are looking for someone who can continue to increase our presence in

the community and make Emmanuel a centre of safety and of acceptance for all. This wonderfully modern building means that our leadership team can focus on pastoral care, mission and discipleship – rather than deal with the practicalities of dealing with the upkeep of an older building as we do not have pews, church organs or graveyards that need to be tended to.

This also means that the ideal person would be the rare mix of being, **pragmatic**, forward thinking and **relational**; someone who likes the 'hurly burly' of a real community with all of its experiences; someone who can be **strategic** and proactive; someone who enjoys building relationships with people and developing leadership skills and **empowering** others to support and encourage them to also take an active part within both the spiritual and secular communities.

We asked our 5 to 10 year olds what they would like next vicar to be like? These were their answers:

- Funny
- Helpful
- Not too strict
- Has vision
- Someone who notices what other people are doing and feeling
- Confident
- Welcoming
- Creative
- Friendly
- Adventurous
- Not afraid to speak out
- Positive
- Playful
- Worships God
- Likes playing games
- Encourages us to worship at home
- Gives us freedom
- Thinks about things we'd like to do
- A bit silly
- Kind
- Helps us to understand
- Visits us in our groups





PERSON SPECIFICATION

1. Be **welcoming** and **friendly**, ready to embrace our ethos of 'come just as you are', valuing our differences.
2. Be an **enthusiastic enabler** confident enough to empower and encourage people and release their giftings.
3. Be **passionate about community** and the positive role that our church can play in it.
4. A good **communicator** and **listener**, able to relate to and connect with both young and old, and people from a variety of backgrounds.
5. Able to lead and **inspire** a church family towards God's vision for them, valuing the contributions of people who hold a range of beliefs.
6. Values modern spirit-filled worship as a core part of meeting with God, and is a gifted Bible teacher, able to **bring God's message alive**.
7. Be an **encouraging and able organiser**, skilled in overseeing teams, with an ability to work collaboratively or delegate.





JOB ROLE

Mission and Outreach

- Continue efforts to bring the Gospel into our local community
- Equip the people of the church to be more visible in the local community (Woodley), for example by engaging with different community organisations in an effort to enhance the position of our church as a hub for the community
- Develop a strategy to enable church members to approach and welcome newcomers to the parish
- Commitment to the support of both new and established mission partners and promote their work within the church
- Enable and develop the ministry of all members of the church, including empowering and managing the volunteer team; sharing leadership generously
- Liaise with local churches and work to build relationships, especially through membership of *Churches Together in Woodley* in fostering shared worship, prayer and outreach initiatives and also working with local leaders of other faiths and secular organizations to benefit the wider community

- Liaise with local community workers to further these links

Worship and Preaching

- Find innovative ways of delivering the Christian message.
- Preach well in a variety of styles and formats to engage with a broad range of people and backgrounds of various ages, with variety of outlooks and understanding.
- Continue to find ways to enhance our existing livestreaming and online presence to complement our mainstay in-person religious services.
- Aim to introduce more people of all ages to Jesus by taking a lead in re-evaluating worship patterns and considering additional possibilities for different styles of worship
- Find ways to facilitate further learning and discipleship during the week following on from Sunday teaching and enabling this to be embedded in the weekly life of the church (eg. homegroups)

Pastoral Care

- Develop our vision, strategy, and approach to pastoral care

- Build teams, encourage gifts, develop resources, line-manage key volunteers and manage administration for those involved in pastoral care and visiting
- Work with others to develop and provide training resources for individuals, groups, and teams as needed
- Offer pastoral care, listening, mentoring and spiritual direction to individuals
- Walk with individuals and groups as they travel through different life stages and transitions
- Have responsibility for how we care for the dying and the bereaved
- Regularly liaise with the pastoral support team and work closely with the Parish Safeguarding Officer
- Be the lead minister with respect to safeguarding
- Implement and maintain the safeguarding policies of the church, making sure that all those involved in pastoral care are fully trained and equipped in this regard
- Encourage fresh ideas and use them to develop a vision and strategy for and commitment to stewardship and (new ways of) giving.



ACCOMMODATION

The vicarage is a four-bedroom detached house built in the mid 1990's. It is situated on Hurricane Way on Woodley Airfield Estate (originally a WW2 airfield), about 1.6 miles from the church centre.

Downstairs, the house comprises: living room, dining room, kitchen, study, utility room, toilet and garage. Upstairs are 4 bedrooms, a bathroom and an ensuite bathroom with shower. The house had its quinquennial inspection at the end of 2022 and new double glazing is due to be installed in 2023.



Outside there is a good size back garden with storage sheds and a summer house. At the front is a double driveway and garden. Immediately behind the vicarage is Ashenbury park and nature reserve with woodland, lake, play area and green space. The Heron on the Ford is a nice country pub about 10 minutes' walk from the house down the back lanes.

Amenities are all very conveniently close by including a doctor's surgery, pharmacy and Tesco Express within half a mile. The main Woodley precinct and shops is about one mile away. Woodley Church of England Primary is a five-minute walk and Waingels secondary school and sixth form is about 15 minute walk across the park.

The nearest train stations are Earley and Winnersh Triangle, both about 2 miles away (Waterloo-Reading line) and Twyford (Reading-Paddington). Buses run every 30 minutes to the centre of Reading from a stop near the house.



FINANCES AND ELECTORAL ROLL

The church is in a healthy financial position. We generated a surplus in 2022 and continue to be blessed by generous giving from our congregation, additional income from hall lettings, and this is backed up by strong cash reserves.

In 2023 our electoral role comprised **84 people**.

| | Unrestricted Funds £ | Designated Funds £ | Restricted Funds £ | Total Funds £ | 2021 Total £ |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Incoming Resources | | | | | |
| Donations & legacies | 90,935 | 0 | 20,474 | 111,410 | 169,463 |
| Charitable activities | 29,682 | 0 | 0 | 29,682 | 13,437 |
| Total Incoming Resources | 120,618 | 0 | 20,474 | 141,092 | 182,900 |
| Resources Used | | | | | |
| Charitable activities | 104,047 | 0 | 21,278 | 125,325 | 111,998 |
| Total Resources Used | 104,047 | 0 | 21,278 | 125,325 | 111,998 |
| Net incoming / outgoing resources | 16,570 | 0 | (803) | 15,767 | 70,902 |
| Transfer between funds | 0 | 2,000 | 1,200 | 3,200 | 1,200 |
| Net movement in funds | 16,570 | 2,000 | 397 | 18,967 | 72,102 |
| Reconciliation of funds | | | | | |
| Total funds brought forward | 46,612 | 0 | 333,395 | 380,008 | 307,905 |
| Net movement in funds | 16,570 | 2,000 | 397 | 18,967 | 72,102 |
| Total funds carried forward | 63,183 | 2,000 | 333,792 | 398,975 | 380,007 |

Our audited statements for income and expenditure statement in 2022.

