

Annual Report 2024



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A copy of the full church accounts will be made available in advance of the APCM.

Christ Church is the Anglican (Church of England) Parish Church of Downend, serving a population of around 25,000 people including those living in the communities of Staple Hill, Oldbury Court, Downend, Blackhorse, Bromley Heath and part of Emersons Green. It is part of the Diocese of Bristol.

Our vision is to become a vibrant community that is 'Learning to Live the Life'.

Introduction

'Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations' Psalm 100:4-5.

> 'I am excited to see where God will lead and what he will do ...'

I write this introduction to my first annual report here at Christ Church, I have now been here just over a year. It seems strange to say but, in some respects, time seems to have just flown by, but in other respects it seems like Julia and I have been here much longer. We are so grateful for the warm welcome that we have received, we both feel very settled and at home here at Christ Church.

As I look back on the last year it is with a great deal of thanksgiving. to God for who He is and what He has done is so important in shaping our worship and discipleship. We all have much to be grateful for each and every day, but the reality is that sometimes constant life demands. struggles and worries give more room for defeat than a heart of thanks. Or in the midst of busyness and pressures we just forget to give thanks for all that God has done in our lives.

The annual report and annual meeting are an opportunity to stop, to pause and look back on the past year and practice giving thanks for all that God has done in us and through us, to give thanks for who God is and what he has done, and is doing. It is also an opportunity to look forward with hope and expectancy for all that God will do in the year ahead. So, at the start of this report, I declare that God is good. Julia and I started our ministry here at Christ Church and we have hosted 24 meals and welcomed 330 people into our home; all the church debts have been cleared: and we

and three teenagers and a dog to Christ Church. We started a schools' ministry

team and are now regularly serving Bromley Heath Infants and Junior school and Black Horse Primary. This was on top of everything else we kept going as usual including - vibrant youth work midweek on Wednesday and Thursday night, as well as Sunday morning, Children's work and family outreach, supporting six mission partners, Warm Space café on a Thursday, Vintage Adventure, Mothers Union, Open Church, Bereavement Group and so much more. God is good and God is faithful and He will build His Church. Praise the Lord - God is good.

Dan Watts

Vicar



About Christ Church Downend

Christ Church Downend, Parish Office, 57 North Street, Downend, Bristol. BS16 5SG 0117 908 9867 | parishadmin@christchurchdownend.com | www.christchurchdownend.com

Rev Dan Watts (Vicar)

Rev Paul Peterson (Associate Minister

and Chair of PCC)

Rev Chris Dobson (Assistant Minister)

Rev Anne Louise Critchlow

Rev Philip Rowe

Church Wardens: Bryan Ashton and

Maggie Nichols

Lay Ministers:

Alison Rowe

PCC Elected Members from April 2023

Richard Bacon

Julian Cox

Sally Green

Andy Pound

Katie Allen

Debbie Pastwa

Nigel Stowe (co-opted Feb 2024)

PCC Minutes Secretary:

Caroline Plummer

Deanery Synod: Roger Cholmondeley **Honorary Treasurer:** Jamie Paddon

Parish Safeguarding Officer:

Laura Green

Committee structure: The PCC has delegated responsibilities as follows: The Giving 4 Life team oversee the church's finances and the Wardens take responsibility for general building issues. A personnel sub group seeks to ensure good practice in the recruitment and oversight of staff and other leaders in mission. A Halls Committee oversees the fabric and

function of the Parish Halls.

In addition, the Ministry Heads team works with the Incumbent in setting and reviewing mission priorities and their effectiveness.

Other elected posts and office holders

Health and Safety Officers:

Church Wardens

Electoral Roll Officer: Elissa Wiltshire **Deputy Wardens (Church Centre** Quakers Road): Mary Massey and

Sally Green

Safeguarding Administrator:

Elissa Wiltshire

CAP Centre Manager: Rosie Brydon

Ministry Heads (as at April 2024):

Children: Harriet Jolly

Communications: Beth Mullins and

Julia Watts

Community Chaplain:

Anne Louise Critchlow

Discipleship for all ages: Anita Dobson Mission/Outreach: Paul Peterson

Welcome: Alison Rowe

Wholeness and Pastoral Care: Philip Rowe and Care Co-ordinators Team Worship/Leadership Development:

Dan Watts

Youth: Diane Paddon and Gary Smart



Parochial Church Council (PCC)

The Parochial Church Council (PCC), held six regular meetings during 2023/4, plus an additional one to explore issues around prayers of love and faith. Each meeting began with some time in prayer, reflection and discussion. Following this a number of proposals were approved including various items relating to vision (deeper, wider, younger), buildings, finances, mission support and staffing matters.

Those approved

- The budget for 2024
- Our Parish Pledge for 2024 was set at £100,000
- 2024 Parochial fees
- Our Building 4 Life debts were cleared from the Legacy of Martin and Myra Brown
- A staff salary increase of 4% in line with January CPI was approved.

Buildings

The Church Wardens submitted regular detailed reports and expenditure was agreed on various items to ensure that our buildings were well looked after. The bell tower has been repaired and the

bell is now being rung before church services on a Thursday and Sunday morning. Work on the south tower has now been successfully completed.

A joint Parish Halls Committee was set up and met together on a regular basis throughout the year.

Eco Church

This group is headed up by James Gardner and met at various times in the year to consider how we care responsibly for the environment. Various initiatives were taken forward, some involving our children and young people's groups.

Safeguarding

Laura Green took on the role of Safeguarding Officer as of 12th March 2023, and reported to each meeting.

Human Resources

 Following a staffing review, we agreed to fund an additional 5.3 hours of admin time for the Parish Office Team, and an additional eight hours funding for work with local schools.

- The PCC supported Anita Dobson's application for
 - training as a Licensed Lay Minister
- Julia Watts took on a role as
 Foundation Governor for Christ
 Church Junior School, and Belinda
 Stowe similarly at for Christ Church
 Infant School
- A Staffing Sub-Committee is in the process of updating all staffing policies.

Mission Partners for 2024-2026

We agreed to continue to support our six mission partners and will also now support Iona Clark of Circuit Riders Europe. It was also proposed that the Deanery Uganda link would continue to be supported with 2% of our tithe. Six partners will receive 13% each and CAP 20%.

Caroline Plummer Clerk to the PCC

Churchwardens

What a blessing it is to be Churchwardens at Christ Church Downend! God has blessed us as a Church Community, and brought out the very best in those who work and help in any way. As we look back on the past twelve months we are so thankful for those who give of their time so freely, which in turn makes our Churchwarden jobs so much easier. From the constant chair moving (thank you Andy), to the clearing and upkeep of the churchyard, the painting, upkeep and maintenance of our church and buildings, the list is never ending. We have achieved a lot in the last year in keeping the buildings in good order. You can't have failed to notice that the

huge scaffold towers are now down and the work on the South Tower has been completed. Halleluiah and we thank God for his faithful provision as we have been able to completely pay for this work. The chancel roof now needs some attention and we are endeavouring to find some grant body that might make that possible.

We continue to try and keep all of our church buildings in good safe order, offering a friendly welcome space to all who enter. The beautiful space that was created when we re-ordered the building, over five years ago now, is being well used by bands, community groups and us as a Church.



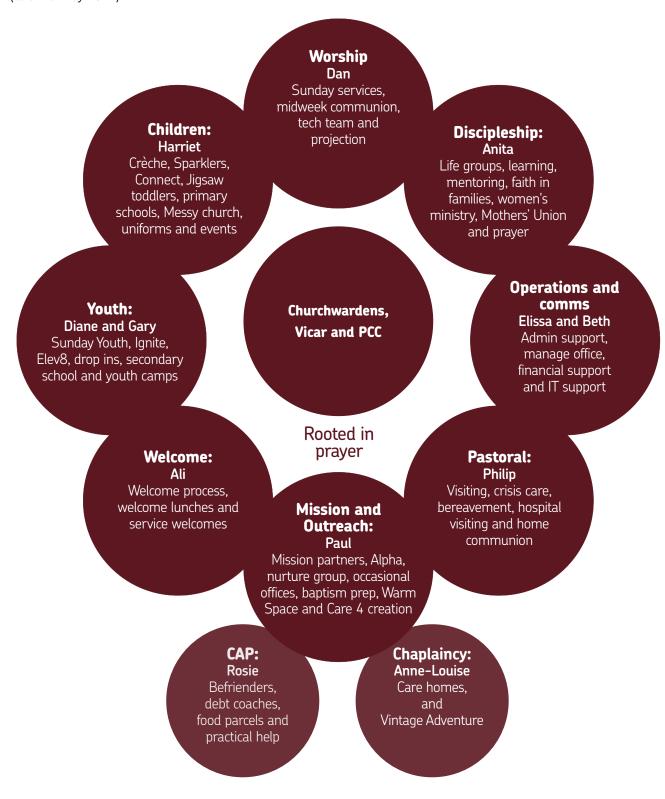


We couldn't be hosting what we do had the building not changed, especially Warm Space Café which is so popular each Thursday. We couldn't finish without saying a big thank you to our assistant wardens for their wonderful support and help over this challenging past year, we couldn't do it without you! We all look forward with expectation to the next season working with you all, and seeing where God takes us.

Bryan Ashton and Maggie Nichols

Church structure

(as at 1st May 2024)



Worship

Church worship services are one aspect of our worship as disciples of Jesus. The Apostle Paul makes clear in Romans 12 that worship is 'to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice'. The daily practice of living in response to who Jesus is and what he has done. It is the process of growing in obedience and service to the will of God.

What we do on a Sunday morning is a part of our wider worship. We gather to re-orientate our heart and mind around Jesus, to offer ourselves again in His love and service. We remind ourselves about who Jesus is and what he has done for us and we encourage one another to keep pursuing Jesus.

Music has such a powerful role to play in worship, and the music team have continued to lead us on serving faithfully week by week, supported by the tech teams who are integral to being able to enjoy live contemporary music and livestream to those who are unable to join us

> 'Music has such a powerful role to play in worship...'

in person. Over the last year new technology has been purchased that means we have a fixed camera and cabling that enables us to livestream more easily - many thanks to Dave Green who has been overseeing this

The teams have experienced the ups and downs of life as

some move on and others join, and as illness or other pressures have taken their toll. We are embarking on a new season of leadership as Ku Scott moves into the co-ordination role, supported by Anita Dobson and Roseanna Wood as well as others who continue to lead on a Sunday.

We pray that all who come to worship, whether up front, at the back or among the congregation, might come with humility, expectation and adoration.

Dan Watts





Pastoral care

I am encouraged to see members of the church family truly being a family by bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ; that is his law of love (Galatians 6:2). Most of these acts of care are shown informally by one member to another. In addition to this the 12 members of the pastoral care team are in regular contact with 31 people offering care on a formal basis in the name of Christ Church. This ministry includes home Communion, prayer ministry and a listening ear. We meet as a

team every three months for mutual encouragement, talking through organisational issues and ongoing learning. Please contact Philip Rowe or the Church Office if you think the team may be able to assist someone in this manner.

Welcoming new people to Christ Church is part of our caring. There are welcomers on duty each Sunday with regular newcomers lunches and follow up according to individual needs. Please continue to show God's love and glorify Christ by being kind to one another. 'By this will all people know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:15).

Philip Rowe

Mission and outreach

We are all called to be part of God's mission in the world – joining in with what he is doing around us. Most of that takes place as we live out our faith day by day in our communities, places of work and social spaces, but the Church of God has always been proactive in other more co-ordinated ways. Much of this is reflected in other reports, but a few additional highlights....

Locally the Warm Space Café has continued to flourish every Thursday in Christ Church under Maggie's leadership. Maggie writes: 'We regularly have around 90 people on Music Train weeks which happen twice a month. There are a huge mix of people from varying backgrounds, some with disabilities and some just looking for some company and a place to eat. It's such a joy to see such smiley faces when the music is playing. Music Train are a group of mostly younger men who play guitars and sing a great variety of music. They are very inclusive in their approach

and anyone can have a turn on the mic. The other weeks are quieter but we are attracting some new faces. On the third Thursday we hope to attract those suffering with dementia with their carers. South Gloucestershire Council and the Co-op in Downend have been very generous with funding and goods. It's such a privilege to be part of this initiative.'

Alpha has flourished this term with a consistent core of around ten guests. There's been a growing sense of community, and a real openness in sharing together and supporting one another and the food has been amazing thanks to the generosity of the Christ Church congregations. One member of the group has just been baptised and we're looking forward to the awayday on 13th April when we'll focus on the work of the Holy Spirit.

We've begun to explore how we might expand our outreach into the Bromley Heath Community. The schools work has been a key part of that, and has enabled us to run two small scale family outreach events at the Church Centre at Christmas and Easter. In the weeks ahead we'll be exploring the possibility of a new bubble church initiative aimed specifically at young families.

The PCC remains committed to tithing our donor income to support the wider work of mission across the world. Boosted significantly by various fundraising events and one off gifts we gave over £67,000 away in 2023. Alongside our regular mission partners we've committed to supporting lona Clark's ministry with Circuit Riders in 2024. Our Mission Champions do a great job in profiling the work of their respective organisations, and ensuring that the partnerships are life-giving to all concerned.

Paul Peterson

Anna Chaplaincy

We have continued with communion services in three care homes and two independent living homes, and are about to add another local house to that list. We have been helped by congregation members at the key times of Christmas, Harvest and Easter.

... it is
appreciated by
people where there
is one disabled
partner

Vintage Adventure, our community outreach from the Church Centre,

Quakers Road, has been thriving this year with a new range of practical activities and it is particularly appreciated by people where there is one disabled partner and a carer. This year for the first time we have partnered with Wrigglypeeps preschool at Christmas and Easter, which gives us a better link with families in the area and allows us to build on the work going on in our local primary schools. Older people love to see the little ones.

We had our first Holiday at Home last August which was a great success. The range of activities and the midday meal were much appreciated, and a lot of work went into this day. If you have practical skills for workshops, please

let me know! As a result of last summer, we had some additional members of

additional members of
Vintage Adventure during the year. We are planning another similar event this July, so watch this space! We have a great team working together and are

always happy to have extra workers.

Anne-Louise CritchlowAnna Chaplain

CAP debt centre and Foodbank

We have had another busy year. Since the start of 2024 we have already seen seven clients becoming debt free and we are delivering an average of between three to four food parcels each week. We take three to four new clients every month, and are constantly booked at least two months ahead.

> Our thanks go to everyone for your continuing support

Our client base has gradually been changing over the years, but this last year has seen probably the most significant change as we have been taking many referrals from charities supporting vulnerable

or homelessness. Whilst this has challenged us, it's been a privilege to work in partnership with other support agencies in the area. We have witnessed the impact of simply being kind to people for whom kindness has not been their experience. One client after receiving his Christmas Hamper said 'I have never felt so spoilt'. We have had the opportunity to pray with not only the clients, but a support worker as well.

Sally and I have missed having Mark working alongside us after his health problems last year but we are delighted that he is now getting back into the on his thanks to everyone in the church family for their support and prayers during these past months.

swing of things. Mark would like to pass The new CAP CEO, Stuart McCulloch, seems to have hit the

ground running and is doing his best

sure we are providing the best service we can.

Due to a steady demand for our service locally, we are looking to recruit another Debt Coach to join our team sometime in the coming year.

Our thanks go to everyone for your continuing support of our work through different volunteering roles, prayer and contributing so faithfully to the Foodbank and Christmas hampers. We could not do this work without you behind us.

Rosie Brydon

CAP Centre Manager



Discipleship

Life never stands still, does it? Our relationship with God shifts and develops as our circumstances change and we move into different seasons of life.

The aim of the ministry of discipleship is to offer a broad diet of opportunities for people to draw close to God in different ways: through spiritual disciplines such as prayer, learning, silence, retreat, intercession and worship. Sometimes we need a little help because we've got stuck. Sometimes we need a "refresher" to help us take stock and re-evaluate as life changes. Sometimes we need to draw alongside others for encouragement and inspiration. Often it helps to be with others who are in a similar stage of life to us.

This Lent we launched the Rhythm of Life, a programme of six practices over the course of the next year to help us add or develop healthy spiritual habits which will give a good framework

for our relationship to grow – like a good fitness routine! The first practice to experience was Confession, using the Prayer of Examen. As one person reported, "It made me realise how sinful I am!" Which is a great basis for deepening our relationship with God as we appreciate all the more how much we need Jesus' work on the Cross.

There is still time to sign up for the Rhythm of Life challenge and pick up on the current month's practice.

Highlights of the year are often little glimpses of the Kingdom of God being near: Retreat Day participants resting in the sun at Mill House in Devon; a family enjoying exploring faith together at Messy Christmas; strong fellowship at the Wednesday Zoom prayer group; stumbling on a fresh truth in a very familiar Bible passage in a Life Group; a group discovering their God-given calling to mission on their frontlines; praying with someone in a time of great struggle; seeing little children

learning the songs taught by Monty
Mouse at
Jigsaw and using them at home

Along with all those who serve so faithfully to help people access ways to draw close to God, I pray that in this coming year we, "being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that we may be filled to the measure of the fulness of God." (Ephesians 3:17b-19)

Anita Dobson

One Church One Day: 24 hours of prayer

'If our church communities are not primarily houses of prayer, then everything else is largely irrelevant.' Pete Greig.

For over four years at least sixty of us have regularly responded to Jesus' invitation to 'Come to me' through our monthly One Church One Day.

People of all ages, from all the different services at both Quakers Road and the Parish Church building, those who are no longer able to physically get to a church meeting, and those who are now worshipping in different church communities, continue to unite in a powerful 24 hours of prayer each month.

Not only do we unite in prayer with one another, but with churches across Bristol, and as our slot, the first Friday of each month, coincides with the World Day of Prayer, we unite each March as one church with thousands of praying communities across the world.

Acts 1:14 tells us that the disciples and the women 'were united in prayer, gripped with one passion, interceding day and night.'

19th century pastor, Andrew Murray, said, 'Where there is much prayer, there will be much of the Spirit; where there is much of the Spirit, there will be ever-increasing prayer.'

For those who take the opportunity to gather on Zoom for an hour of 'Prayer and Praise Together' at the start of One Church One Day, and for those who engage with an hour of meditative, active or creative prayer over the 24 hours, this is what the monthly testimonies reveal. As we pray, we are encountering God through

his Spirit in many powerful ways, and our desire to pray, to go deeper, increases.

If you do not receive the invitation to take part, or the encouraging testimonies that follow please email me diane.paddon@christchurchdownend. com and I will ensure you do.

Diane Paddon

Youth

The story of youth ministry continues to be one of God's favour and fruitfulness.

In (very) brief:

Two members of our youth team were baptised in 2023, Ellis at Woodlands Church in January and Sam at Life Church in July. Both were a great cause for celebration. A blessing to see these two young men growing in faith and being equipped to flourish in youth ministry.

Wednesday Elev8 and the two Thursday Ignite Groups continue to grow and be a great source of Fun, Family and Faith. Our GCSE students requested the after-school revision group which started in March.

The Noise weekend, CCD showing God's love in practical ways since 2010, was another great success, blessing the community in litter picking along the cycle track, a free afternoon-tea with entertainment, and a free family fun afternoon with bouncy castle and barbeque. All well attended.

The community has also been blessed with the young people's Serving Sundays. So uplifting to see the daffodils along the roadsides, wildflowers in the Lincombe Barn meadow alongside the stag beetle

hotel and hedgehog house, and the bug hotel and bird box in the churchyard.

When the Parish Council decided to support Bristol's summer Unicornfest, raising funds for Leukaemia Care, they asked the Youth Group to look after Gracie, Downend's unicorn, and once again our young people were pictured on the front cover of Downend Voice.

As always, the youth weekend to Heatree in Dartmoor was a highlight. The young people were very engaged with teachings on Love, Joy and Peace, led by Josh, Luke and Ellis. The sense of family was amazing and evident when the young people cheered each other on in climbing the high ropes, choosing to play one big wide-game together in their free time, and moving dining-room tables together to be one big family at mealtimes.

The Co-op encouraged us to apply for funding again, which we did, and so youth ministry costs are covered for another year.

The youth ministry has also had global impact, collecting for the Kumi Porridge Fund, collecting items to take to Ukraine, and sending eight people on a Christmas Mission trip

teaching,
health clinics,
clothes,
preaching, as
well as seeing a

borewell and home built that CCD had funded following our previous trip.

The morning after one of our Team India feedback evenings, I felt ready to offer Downend School a wellbeing course, following an eighteen-month break as I re-registered as a nurse. I sat at the computer and noticed that the School had sent me an email titled 'Hello and cheeky question...' requesting a wellbeing course! God's timing is perfect!

Gary and I trained to deliver Youth Leader's Training which we began in April. Gary was asked to speak at the South-West Children's and Youth Conference. CCD is so blessed with its young people and youth team of volunteers!

Diane Paddon



Children

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14. For me, this verse captures why our children are so important - Jesus says so! Not only that, but by teaching and nurturing our children we can learn so much about our own faith and relationship with God. I love the way children ask questions to really understand the hows and whys of what we learn about Jesus. I have felt my own faith strengthened through conversations and questions with our children.

When I look back over the last year, there are many blessings and answers to prayer to give thanks for.

God provided an amazing team so that we could deliver prayer spaces in five of our local schools. This has been a wonderful new opportunity to reach so many children within our parish as we seek to serve not only our church schools, but our community schools also. The prayer space days resulted in some really meaningful conversations

with the children, allowing them time to reflect on a whole range of themes such as respect, friendship, love and how they see the world. The teachers commented on how calm the prayer space environment felt.

God has continued to offer new opportunities and as we look to reach further out into the community, this year has seen the start of 'Tea and Toast', where our vision is to build relationships with our local families.

We have also seen God at work in our 'Experience' events at Christmas and Easter. We had 2 full weeks of schools visiting to learn about these significant events in Jesus' life. At the end of one of the sessions, the first guestion from the children was "When

We have been finding out more about the life of Jesus during our Sunday groups and weekly bible club at Christ Church Infant School, and it is so encouraging to remember that each one of us can say, "I am a child of God".

Harriet Jolly



Finance

Despite being faced with declining revenue and increased running costs, particularly for fuel and staffing, the PCC were able to agree a breakeven 2023 budget for the General Fund and other funds maintained for key Church activities. This budget enabled us to fund the salaries and expenses of our staff, provide for the upkeep of our Church building, and pay all our administration and running costs. It also set aside over £20k for the repayment of loans and Diocesan loan interest, with the compromise being a £15k reduction in Parish Share, with the proviso that this would be paid to the Diocese once all our loan debts had been cleared.

Yet again, we have been blessed by the generosity of our congregation

We began the year with Giving 4 Life (G4L) loan debtors of £168k, although on track with our plan for full repayment by 2027. However, due to the amazing generosity of Martin Brown, and the integrity of his sons to honour their late father's £180k pledge to the G4L scheme, we were not only able to clear all our debts, but we were also able to pay the Diocese the additional £15k Parish Share and make a sizable contribution to fund the work on the South Tower. Additionally, by tithing the giving income we received, we were also able to provide nearly £17k to our mission partners to enable them to achieve great things

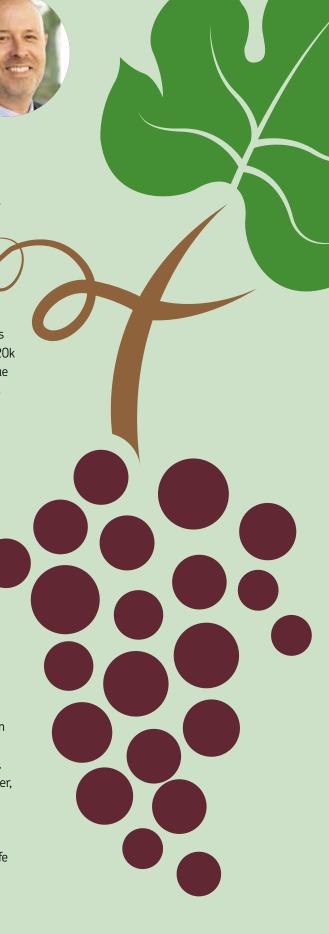
in Jesus' name, and we were able to pass on Martin Brown's £20k pledge to TEN to support Misha's work in Ursoaia, Moldova. Praise the Lord!

Additionally, we were blessed with another legacy, courtesy of Bob Southgate's relatives, sizeable grant income, and a donation of funds from Quaker's Road, which enabled all the work on the South Tower to be fully paid for. During the year, our unrestricted reserves grew from £80k to £104k which is very welcome, particularly as a £20k deficit budget was set for 2024 due to falling planned giving donations and rising costs.

Yet again, we have been blessed by the generosity of our congregation and the hard work and dedication of the team of people involved in the collection and banking of income, raising money through grants, facilitating the hire of our buildings, administering Gift Aid and legacies, maintaining accounts, setting budgets and financial strategy, and providing sound governance and scrutiny of our financial activities. Special thanks go to members of the Giving 4 Life team (Dave Green, Debra Turpin, Adian Harding, and Revd Paul Peterson), the office team, and our bookkeeper, Gabrielle Foster.

Jamie Paddon

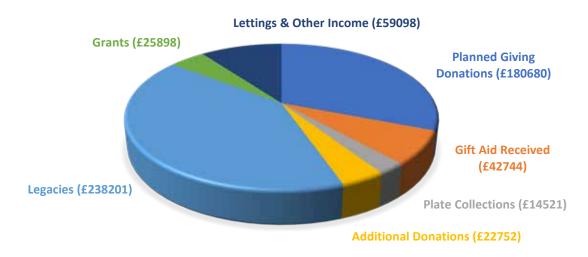
Treasurer and Chair of Giving 4 Life



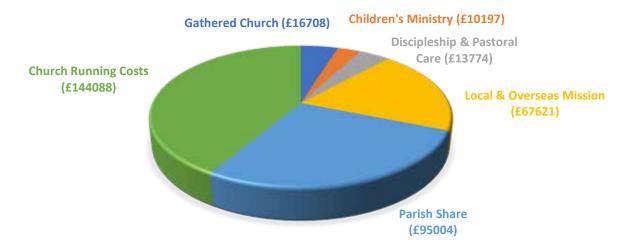
Income and expenditure

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Legacies	238,201	Church Running Costs	144,088
Planned Giving Donations	180,680	Parish Share	95,004
Lettings and Other Income	51,969	Staffing Costs	84,031
Gift Aid Received	42,744	Local and Overseas Mission	67,621
Grants	25,898	Gathered Church	16,708
Additional Donations	22,752	Discipleship and Pastoral Care	13,774
Plate Collections	14,521	Children's Ministry	10,197
Other	7,129		
Total	583,894	Total	431,423

Sources of income



How we spent our income



Surplus of £152,471 used to fund repayments of Building 4 Life loans of £168,000

Notes

Notes





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