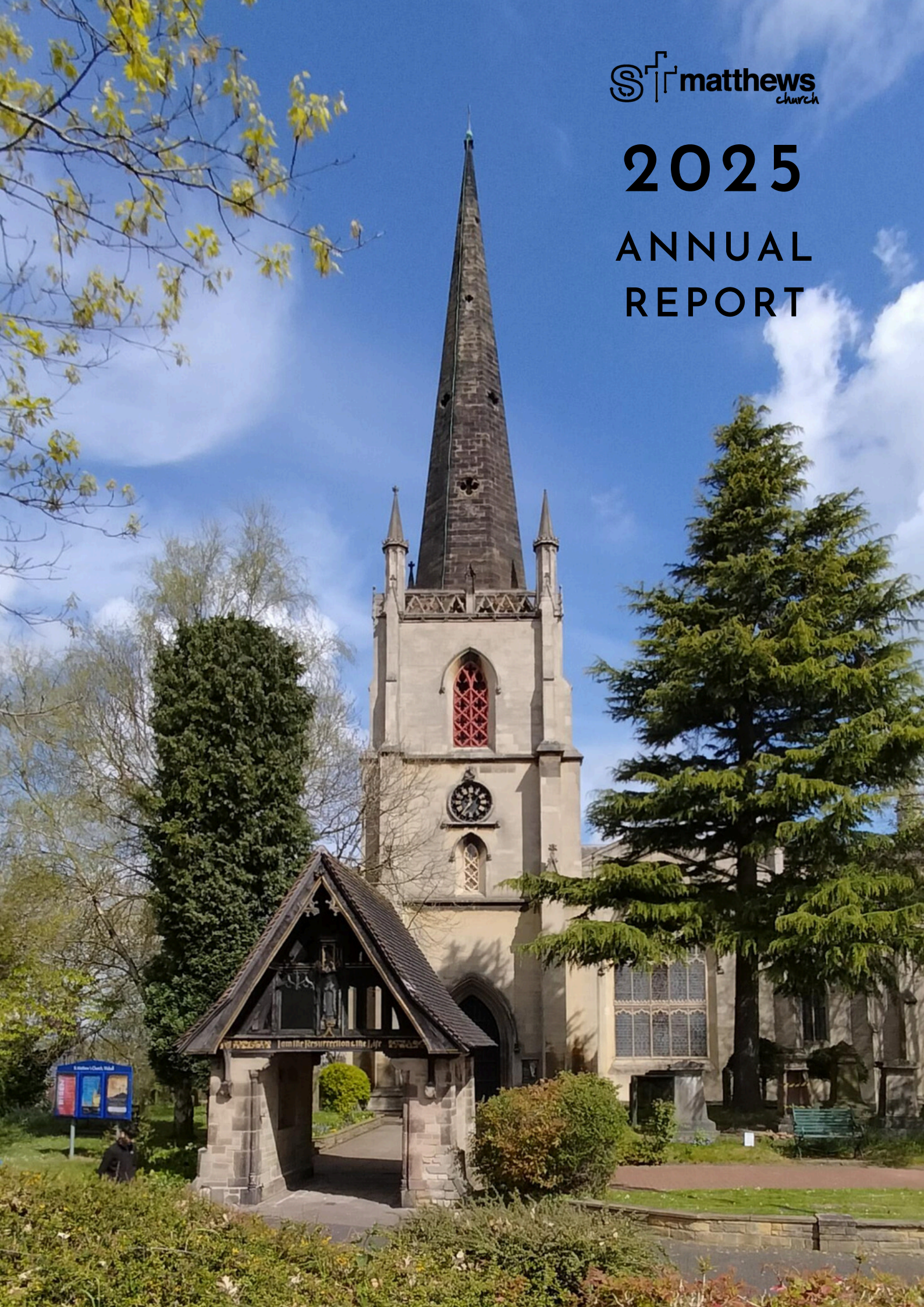


St matthews  
church

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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## THE RECTOR'S REPORT

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

*Ephesians 4:2*

*St Matthew's verse for the year 2025*

Last week saw the release of a report that has put solid numbers to what many of us have suspected has been happening in recent years. God's Church is growing in the UK – by 50% since 2018. This is not primarily in Anglican churches although many Church of England churches like St Matthew's are also growing – Praise God!

Interestingly, some of the key things in the report *The Quiet Revival* ([www.biblesociety.org.uk/research/quiet-revival](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/research/quiet-revival)) are also observable here at St Matthew's. These include:

- Increased church attendance
- The number of men attending church is growing dramatically (men are now more likely to attend church than women)
- The church is growing younger
- The church is growing more diverse
- Younger churchgoers reading the Bible more than older churchgoers.

The report is quite amazing, and a good summary video of the report can be found on the Glen Scrivener Speak Life Podcast. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYBD7vnRDXA>)

For anyone who regularly attends St Matthew's, it is wonderful to see we are getting more diverse and beginning to have a worshipping community that is a more accurate reflection of our local community. This is also seen in our church leadership, both in the Church Council and Leadership Team, and at the front of church in our services.

As regular readers of this annual report will know, each January I produce an annual return for the diocese. A summary of what we have seen at St Matthew's can be seen below.

### St Matthew's summary attendance over the last ten years

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Weekly Adults (no repeats)	176	171	170	171	168	Covid-affected services		115	127	135
Weekly Children (no repeats)	26	22	20	25	22			19	21	22
Home communions		6	15	4	5			11	6	5
Online								49	39	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>195</b>			<b>194</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>205</b>

### Worshipping community - age breakdown

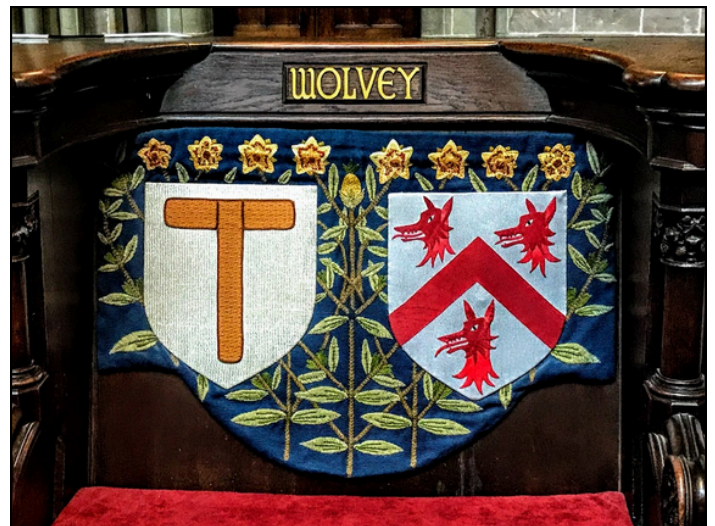
Start of year	Children (Age 0-10)	Young People (Age 11-17)	Adults (Age 18-35)	Adults (Age 35-55)	Adults (Age 56-69)	Adults (Age 70+)	TOTAL
2022/2023	26	13	38	56	22	62	217
2024	25	18	36	60	37	70	246
2025	26	18	49	62	37	57	249

I am, as always, very grateful to members of St Matthew's who do so much, both the paid staff members and the unpaid members led by the churchwardens (Patti Lane, Daniel Barker and Ben Butterfield), the deputy churchwardens (John Edlin and Paul Davico), Pastor Adil, Rev Yemi and, more recently, Rev John, as well as the many others who support the mission and ministry of our church in so many different ways. However, with this growth at St Matthew's we are facing new challenges. We are desperately in need of more people to help and lead in many different areas, and without this happening some of the valued aspects of our church life will probably have to reduce (for example, children's work on Sundays) and other areas will be limited in their impact. Support and training will be provided but we do need helpers in both practical and governance areas. If you are able to offer this help, now is the time to step forward. It is great to be a numerically growing church, but we really need growth in all areas of church life, including helping and leading.

This year has also seen a big change in our Leadership Team and, although our primary vision remains the same (**Worshipping** God; **Equipping** his people; **Growing** his kingdom; **Serving** Walsall), we will be working to develop a new Church Action Plan (or vision) over the coming year.

Of course, not everything is going well in the Church of England and clergy numbers continue to fall. There is also a constant battle to improve our safeguarding at all levels and the Makin report will continue to have an impact throughout the coming years. I am very grateful for the work Barbara (Safeguarding Coordinator) and Nancy (Operations Manager) put into this at St Matthew's, but we must always be aware that Safeguarding is a Biblical Christian imperative, and we are all responsible for it.

This year has also seen some challenges for me on a personal level after being asked surprisingly to take on the role of Acting Archdeacon, and also the privilege of being made the Prebendary of Wolvey at Lichfield Cathedral. The first of these has involved a significant amount of time and effort outside of parish life, including supporting the work of the parishes across the wider archdeaconry and being a member of the Bishops Staff Team. I look forward to the arrival of our new Archdeacon in May, although I have agreed to stay on as Associate Archdeacon which will help the transition period.



It has certainly been a busy year, but it has also been exciting to see God's Spirit, moving and making a difference in people's lives.

May God bless you and may he continue to bless St Matthew's, as we seek to live out His purposes in the life of his Church.

Rev Jim  
*Rector*

# CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

The Churchwardens remain very grateful for the many people who take on responsibilities in church life. There are lots of people who help - a great many more people volunteer than you might think! A number of people play particularly significant roles, including the deputy wardens, the numerous ex-wardens, clergy, paid staff and service organisers.

You could say that evidence of a healthy church is seen when all the people get involved and serve one another, especially when it is inconvenient. Jesus both models and instructs us in this, and it fills me with hope when I look around St Matthew's - though there is always room for growth!

The Churchwardens at the start of 2024 were Judith, Daniel and Ben, with a vacancy for the fourth warden. Judith's experience was invaluable for Daniel and Ben as they began as wardens in 2023. Having helped them settle in, Judith stepped down in May 2024, and was replaced by Patti, who herself brings a wealth of experience having been a warden previously.

The role of a warden at St Matthew's has shifted numerous times over the years, and it is worth noting to any who may consider taking on the responsibility that there is flexibility in the approach, particularly with the broad support in place at present.

Finally, the wardens want to express our sincere thanks to Rev Jim, who continues to serve the church in a way that honours God, is a role model for others and minimises drama. We count ourselves blessed to be following Jesus alongside you all.

Ben Butterfield

*With Churchwardens Daniel Barker and Patti Lane*

## SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding remains an agenda item for every Church Council meeting. As with the previous year I have answered a few queries/questions relating to possible safeguarding situations and given some advice where appropriate. There remain no reportable safeguarding issues.

The use of ChurchSuite to monitor Safeguarding training and DBS registrations remains a good and effective tool.

Barbara Parker

*Safeguarding Officer*



# WORSHIPPING GOD

## SERVICES, WORSHIP & PREACHING

During 2024 we continued with the four-service pattern which looks like this:

### **8.45am Traditional Parish Communion**

This service alternates between a Book of Common Prayer Communion Service and a Traditional Common Worship Communion Service. With robed clergy and organ-based music, the service has maintained its numbers at around 25 per week. The preaching is based on the lectionary readings for the day. I am very grateful for all those who are actively involved on the reading, prayers and communion assistant rotas. We have re-established refreshments after this service and before the 10.45am service, which gives a chance for church members to mingle. I am especially grateful for the support provided by Pastor Adil and, more recently, Rev Yemi and Rev John at this service.

### **10.45am Morning Praise (with children's groups) & live-streamed**

This continues to be a mix of All Together services, Morning Praise and Communion services. The band have continued to lead the music, with more people of varying ages joining and enhancing the music for our services. Unsurprisingly, this service tends to be the one that families attend, although not exclusively. Consequently, this is the service where we run our children's groups. We continue to live-stream this service for those who are unable to make it to church, perhaps due to illness or shift work. The numbers viewing over the course of a week averaged around 43 people in 2024. It was once again encouraging to see the number of people attending in person increasing over the course of the year. This service continues to see new faces joining, although there is a rapid turnover of people as they move into the area and then then leave. Over the course of 2024, as well as following lectionary readings around the key seasons in church life, we started the year with a sermon series looking at "lesser-known Bible Kings" followed by sermon series on "Women in the Messianic line", Songs of Salvation, and Revelation. Sermon series on Prayer and Basic Discipleship helped equip our church members in their daily life and reflect the overall vision of St Matthew's Church.

### 1.00pm Asian Congregation

The Asian Congregation is led by Pastor Adil (our Licensed Lay Minister) and it continued to grow slightly over the year. The service is usually in Urdu/Punjabi, although when Rev Jim attends to lead communion and preach these parts of the service are in English. Moving the service from the Church Centre into the St Clement's Chapel in the main church building has been a very positive move as it allows for some overlap for people to chat over coffee with people from the 10.45am service. It also means that the church building is unlocked for longer on Sundays and allows passersby to wander in to sit quietly and look round. I am very grateful to the voluntary help from Lewis, who keeps an eye on things and enables this to happen safely.



### 6.30pm Evening Service

Our informal Evening Service changed in leadership over the year with a slight change in format. Ben Butterfield stepped down from leading in the summer with Jimm Rennie, Sam Fawkes being joined in their leadership by Rev Jim. We are very grateful for all Ben has done for this service over many years. We no longer start with a meal but other than that the format is similar to before. With a strong discipleship focus the pattern is table fellowship with refreshments, a time of sung worship, a talk and then focused conversations before finishing with prayer. Being very contemporary and relaxed in style, the service is very diverse with a range of ages attending.

Although the numbers have remained steady, there has been a change in the people who attend this service with some members moving on to pastures new. During the Autumn term we experimented with video-based sermons following the Romans Course as well as having live sermons. This proved popular and we have plans to repeat this kind of teaching over the course of the year. As we entered 2025, we took the decision to run the Alpha Course in the evening service slot (see page 23) which has also proved very successful.

Rev Jim  
*Rector*

# ASIAN CONGREGATION

The Asian Congregation has been meeting every Sunday at 1pm in the St Clement's Chapel. A new family of five members joined us this year, so now we have five families and two individuals who meet every Sunday.

Two to three family members have been meeting in the Lower Hall of the Centre on Saturdays since October, and during these meetings a Holy Communion booklet was design for Urdu and Hindi Church members. Opportunity has been given to all members to participate in the Church services through intercessory prayer, Bible text reading, preaching the Gospel and singing hymns. Rev Jim has been coming to preach and serve Holy Communion to the Asian Congregation once every month.

*January:* We did not do New year Church service on 1 Jan but instead celebrated on the first Sunday of the year.

*Feb to March:* The Congregation celebrated Lent by learning through Biblical messages given by different speakers. The Asian congregation attended the Witness of Faith service on Good Friday in the town centre. We then shared an Easter service together in the Church, followed by refreshments.

*May and June:* The Congregation celebrated mother's Mothering Sunday and Father's Day, and distributed gifts to the mothers and fathers.

*June and July:* We held regular Church services.

*July to Sept:* We held regular Church services.

*Oct:* Two members of the congregation were baptised. There was a music concert by the famous gospel singer.

*Nov:* The Congregation has been meeting regularly for praise and worship. We attended and participated in English services, too.

*Dec:* The Asian Congregation organised a Carol Service at the Centre and around 30 people attended from Walsall. After the Service, a meal was shared in the Church Centre. We also held a Christmas Service in St Clement's Chapel with guest speaker Rev Fiaz Samuel and his family.

Adil Burke  
*Local Lay Minister*



# JAM

JAM is St Matthew's after-school club that runs every Wednesday in the church Centre. It is open to primary-school-aged children from across Walsall schools. This group is no longer run solely by volunteers, as we now employ a Kids' Worker to lead the weekly JAM session. Earlier in the year we welcomed Samuel into this role, but unfortunately he was unable to stay in this post for long. The group went back to being volunteer-led for a period of time, but recently we have been delighted to appoint Camila into this role. The resources used at JAM, such as LEGO, arts and crafts and games have been sorted and reorganised at the church Centre and we are looking forward to seeing how the group continues to grow over the coming months.

Hannah Dallaway  
JAM Leader



# SIGNS FOR WORSHIP WALSALL

During the last year we have continued to meet weekly via Zoom and on-site once a month in the church Centre.

Jon and David Leloup have carried on working hard behind the scenes to ensure the technology works when we need it and that everyone has the access they need. We are incredibly grateful for their skills, abilities and giving of their time.

In 2023, we had been invited to lead the service at Gresley Methodist church in Swadlincote on the first Sunday in Advent but, unfortunately, the weather had other ideas and our visit had to be postponed due to snow and the roads surrounding the church being unsafe. Thanks be to God that we were able to attend in 2024 instead, again the first Sunday of advent. They were very welcoming to us and nearly everyone tried their best to join in with signing the worship songs selected for the service. We could not fault their enthusiasm, and it was so lovely to have so much interest and engagement.

We returned to Asda in Walsall to sign Christmas carols and songs in the foyer to entertain the shoppers as they went about their weekly and Christmas shopping. As always, we were well received and the public very generous in their donations which will go towards paying our costs for Zoom for this year.

Our annual Christmas carol service was held in the church just before Christmas and, once again, we utilised Zoom to enable people far and wide to attend the service. It included a nice mix of traditional Christmas carols and hymns, as well as more secular songs ending with a fun rendition of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, which this year, was a return to our traditional version of the song, though it still involved lots of laughter and silliness.

Christine Jones and Estelle Perry continue to interpret the 10:45am services weekly and Colin Townsend as and when he can.

Colin and Estelle will be continuing their annual tradition of interpreting the Walk of Witness in Walsall this coming Good Friday.

Christine and Colin will also be interpreting the new production written by our music director Andrew Clayton, *48 Hours in Jerusalem*.

We thank Rev Jim and St Matthew's Church for their on-going support and prayers as we continue to unite Deaf and hearing in worshipping God.

Christine Jones  
*Signs for Worship Walsall Leader*

# MUSIC MINISTRY

The Music Ministry team has developed with new additions, and it's encouraging to see a wide variety of talents in evidence, from violinists and drummers who are still in school to our resident Canadian guitarist, still rocking out in his eighth decade.

In Advent, the Civic Carols featured a new advent anthem as an introit featuring Blue Coat Academy and the Christmas Choir in tandem. We held a memorable Sunday morning with a turn-up-and-play band, featuring Andrew trying to play acoustic guitar, and we continue to introduce new songs alongside our favourites.

## MUSIC MINISTRY AT OTHER TIMES

This year the Evening Service changed format, but music ministry continues to be a strong thread within it. We're continually grateful to the members of the service team and the musicians who serve. Additional support for 08:45am services means some Sundays will start a little later for the Director of Music.

We led singing at school events, extra services during Advent and Lent (into Holy Week); and ensured that guests at funerals and weddings were suitably accompanied as they gathered in grief or celebration. Once again, the services of our musicians in other churches have meant St Matthew's continues to resource and support congregations beyond our own building.

Duke Kerr and a team from New Testament Church of God led sung worship at the ecumenical Pentecost evening service, and musicians from churches in the town supported the Good Friday walk of witness.

Andrew continues his involvement with Walsall Church Musicians' and United Adoration (a multinational church creatives support charity). Continuing to support the musicians and other creatives across the town remains a priority for developing our own team and engaging in collaborative efforts.



# MUSIC IN THE COMMUNITY

St Matthew's Community Choir met throughout the year and gave a concert in church, as well as contributing to summer festival events and carolling in pubs.

Great Barr Brass receives two hours per week from Andrew in his capacity as MD, and is flourishing with a series of concerts and gigs planned for the coming year.

Once more, singers gathered to Deck the Mall – carolling in the town centre – and further community singing opportunities are being planned throughout the year.

A season of concerts included another Rotary fundraiser, brass band music, singer-songwriter Jessie Desai in a headline slot and Apollo Academy Youth Orchestra. Activity for 2025 will focus on participation. Play Days for both brass band and orchestra are planned.

Andrew Clayton  
*Director of Music*



# HERITAGE

**Bumble Bee Project.** The relationship with Walsall Rotary Club is flourishing, with a lunch held in the church in September, a slide presentation of progress, and visits to the Garden of Rest area. The project came second in the National Green Church Awards in the category Action on a Shoestring. John received the certificate as Runner-up in the Green Awards from the sponsor.



**Concert and events.** The Musical Director, Andrew Clayton, holds a programme adding significantly to Walsall's cultural offering. BBC Radio 4's *Any Questions?* held a live broadcast from the church.



*BBC Radio 4's Any Questions? broadcast live from St Matthew's*

**Heritage talks and events.** Heritage Open Days take place each year and the impact is increasing, with the Mayor and councillors visiting to appreciate Walsall's heritage. School visits take place regularly, about eight each year. In addition, all Year 2 Blue Coat pupils visit the crypts and all Year 6 visit the tower. John Edlin speaks frequently to local groups, notably Rotary and Probus. There was a new initiative of a "Medieval Walsall" day, a collaboration with staff from Walsall Leather Museum. The Civic Carol Service was combined with the Mayor's presentation of the "Bun and Shilling" to selected Blue Coat School students. The Bishop of Wolverhampton's Welcome Service included the reading of a Letter Patent from King Charles III.

# CHURCH BUILDING AND CHURCHYARD

## Personnel

Samuel, the Operations Assistant, helped with some roof work. John Stewart-Gay has been a substantial help and has moved to Shropshire. Volunteers make huge contributions to improving the setting of St Matthew's in the Church Hill Conservation Area through litter-picking, dealing with fly tipping, completing repairs and doing environmental work. There is a real sense of teamwork. I'll mention a few names at the risk of hurting feelings by not mentioning others - Ros, Paul, Neal - who each specialise in different areas. The team has transformed the area to make people feel proud of St Matthew's rather than embarrassed about its neglect... but it's a constant commitment to vigilance.

## Work

The roof above the stone stairs was reslated and flashings replaced in June because of leaks at a cost of £13,500. Three grants were received towards the costs, and VAT has been reclaimed under the Listed Places of Worship scheme, giving a net cost to the Church Council of £1,500.

## Bumble Bee Project

Walsall Rotary Club generously gave two contributions (£500 and £160) and some timber for border edges to the bee area, and, in addition, the volunteer workforce is increasing - and adding greatly to informal community engagement.

John Edlin

*Building Manager*



*John Edlin and Paul Barnard*

# BELL RINGING

The most obvious development is the introduction of new members to the Band. Three adults have learned “the practice of bellringing”; they are committed to the band and are progressing rapidly. Another teenage band member has come through the Blue Coat Taster sessions, which were held on Tuesday lunch times. Unfortunately we have also had losses, two to injury and another decided to go to a tower nearer her home. We introduced a Friday practice to help the adult beginners, in addition to our existing Tuesday and Wednesday practices. Towards the end of the year, we started monthly quarter peal attempts at 5pm on Sundays: these will help increase the band’s skills.

Highlights included Blue Coat Year 6 visit to the Ringing Chamber (some 90 students) and Heritage Open Days tours (another 70 visitors). We welcomed the Bishop of Wolverhampton at his installation ceremony. We also rang for BBC Radio 4's *Any Questions?* and the national Ringing for Peace. At the annual Archdeaconry competition St Matthew’s did not come last (our usual position): while this may appear a poor result, many towers cannot raise a band to competition standards.

The bells and mechanisms are in fine condition; they are serviced quarterly and minor repairs are addressed promptly. The clock autowind mechanism was repaired by John in January and the clock has not stopped since. Clock servicing was carried out by bell ringers, saving the church £300.

John Edlin  
*Tower Captain*



*Our extremely able bell-ringing team*

## HOLY DUSTERS

“Throughout Scripture, we see that God values cleanliness, both physical and spiritual. It’s an act of worship to dedicate time to keeping our spaces tidy, inviting, and peaceful.”

*(scripturesavvy.com)*

I think this quote pretty much sums up why we meet at 9.15am every Friday to clean St Matthew’s... that plus the chat, friendship and biscuits. We are always delighted to get new volunteers. If you are interested, please get in touch. Volunteers don’t need to come every week, and don’t even have to like doing housework! I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to those lovely people who do come to help. I am also extremely grateful to the Blue Coat Academy for lending us one of their Site Staff for an hour every week.

Sue Sargent

*Holy Dusters*

## CHURCH FLOWERS

Our small band of flower arrangers continues to provide flowers for church. Spiralling costs of fresh flowers and their short-lived nature mean that we have moved over completely to using all artificial flowers and foliage. We minimise the use of floral foam as much as possible as we are aware of its environmental impact and have moved to using a biodegradable version.

We hope that our floral arrangements enhance the beauty of the Church and act as a celebration of our faith.

Many thanks to Brenda and Iris for their hard work and friendship.

Paula Tonks

*Flower Team*



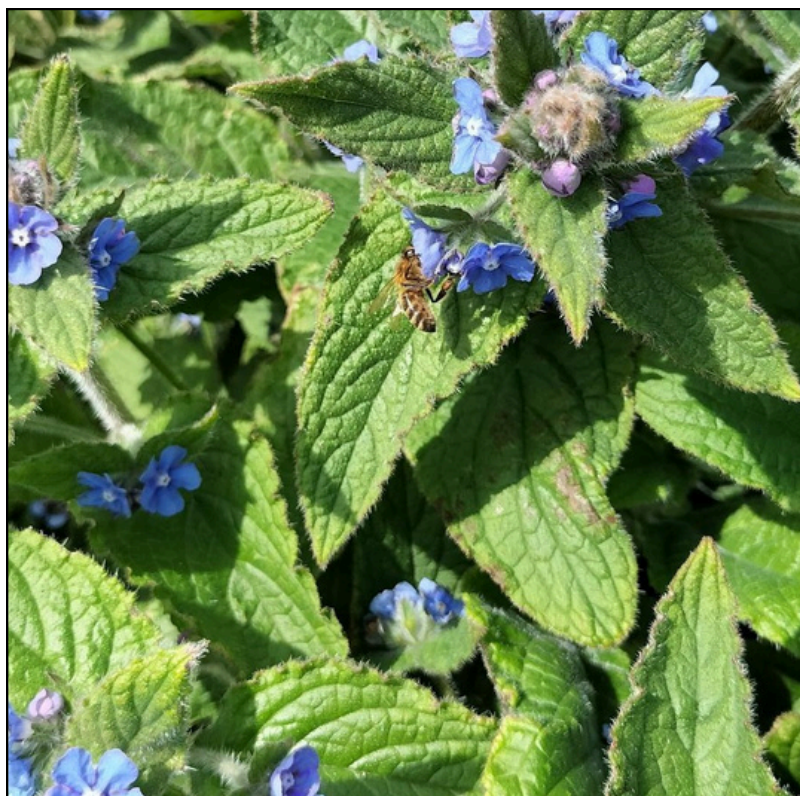
# TREASURER'S REPORT

The role of treasurer in any organisation is not generally one that many people clamour to take on; in fact some are horrified at the thought of having to deal with the finances, although, like it or not, nothing happens without money being involved somewhere. Perhaps it is that it takes a certain skill set to do it and, whilst it looks easy to those of us whose job it is, for some it's an unfathomable minefield.

The online recording system, purpose-built for places of worship and charities, can certainly look like an unfathomable minefield at first glance, with its meticulous detail, but it is that very detail that allows for the transparency and accountability demanded of those entrusted with looking after the finances.

Like most churches and charities, St Matthew's faces certain financial challenges, not least the costs of trying to maintain a large historic building, where what might be a modest expense in a modern building is a frighteningly large expense, creating a lot of work by numerous people to enable it to be carried out. When that happens I seem to have the easy job of paying the bills and keeping the records, for which I must express my thanks to Rev Preb Jim Trood, members of St Matthew's Church Council and my colleague, Operations Manager Nancy Candlin, who have been generous with their help and time as I do what's necessary to keep the finances in good order.

Alyson Green  
*Finance Officer*





## HOMEGROUPS

Homegroups provide an opportunity to meet with other Christians – and those who are seeking - during the week in a small group for Bible study, prayer, friendship, support and social activities. They are a good way of asking the questions you were always afraid to ask, and growing your faith and Bible knowledge, sharing prayer requests and getting to know a small group of people in an informal setting.

Sometimes the homegroups choose their own material to follow, and at other times we all follow the same course or theme. In the spring of 2024, the chosen theme was “joy” with groups studying a range of related topics from “self-esteem” to “Isaiah”. In the autumn, nearly all the groups did the excellent Bible Society “Romans Course” and this was also the focus of the Evening Service, leading to much lively discussion.

Two of the groups focus on the church sermons with one group discussing the readings coming up at the 8.45am service and another reflecting on the talk at the previous 10.45am service.

Each term, Judith and Priscilla aim to get together with the homegroup leaders to pray, feedback about their groups and plan for the term ahead.

There are currently seven homegroups, including daytime and evening groups on different days of the week, with in-person and Zoom groups - so there really is something for everyone.

New people are always welcome to join a group and can come for just a term or try out different groups before choosing a permanent “home”. If you’d like to know more, please contact Judith or Priscilla.

Priscilla Trood and Judith Ridgway  
*Homegroup Coordinators*

# PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Personnel Committee is a group of church members that oversee staffing at St Matthew's. We work closely with the Church Council and the Leadership Team as decisions are made about future staffing at St Matthew's. We meet regularly and exchange many emails to prepare for employment, support our current staff and carry out any work delegated to us by the Church Council.

Over the last year or so we have had six employees working for St Matthew's (see photos below).

They are all DBS checked and have completed their safeguarding training.

Thanks to all employees for all that you do at St Matthew's and also to all those in the Personnel Committee and line managers for their hard work this last year.

Beth Ray  
*Personnel Committee Chair*



**NANCY CANDLIN**  
*Operations Manager*



**ANDREW CLAYTON**  
*Director of Music*



**ALYSON GREEN**  
*Finance Officer*



**PRISCILLA TROOD**  
*Young Children and Families Worker*



**CAMILA MARTICORENA**  
*4-11's Kids Club Worker*

# CRÈCHE

The Children's Chapel is a designated space for very young children and their parents during the Sunday 10.45am service. There are a variety of toys and books available for children and a TV that streams the service so parents and carers can still engage with worship.

Can I take this opportunity to remind families how to safely use the room to ensure the safety of everybody. Thank you.

Hannah Dallaway  
*Crèche Coordinator*

## CHILDREN'S CHURCH

Children's Church is for all children from around three to 11 years old and is growing!

We meet at the back of church towards the start of the 10.45 am service on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month and go over to the church Centre for the sessions. (On the other Sundays there are All Together services.) We aim to make the sessions as fun and engaging as possible using Scripture Union material. The activities include Bible stories, craft activities, games, quizzes, worship, drama and prayer.

Last year we had all the children in one big group but now, due to the increased numbers, we aim to split the children into two groups – one for the younger children and one for the older ones. This means we can tailor the sessions to the needs and abilities of each age group. However, with only three leaders (Izzy, Carla and Priscilla) we don't always have capacity for two separate groups and sometimes the groups join together. This can lead to lots of fun but it's much harder to plan for such a large age span. Luckily, we have a big team of helpers including three teenagers, and everyone works well together to provide high-quality sessions.

We were joined once again by some of the children from the Blue Coat schools for our Christmas party. Ben did a great job of leading energetic games, and the children were gifted a Christmas puzzle book and some chocolate.

We would love to have at least one more leader; and more helpers are always welcome, too, to share the load. If anyone would like to volunteer to help on the rota or find out more about Children's Church, please contact Priscilla. (You need to complete safeguarding training and have a DBS check.)

Priscilla Trood  
*Children's Church Coordinator*



# GROWING HIS KINGDOM

## MISSION REPORT

Each year, as a church, we confirm our decision to support charitable courses, both at home and abroad. Once the accounts have been finalized and accepted by the Church Council, we know how much money is available. We have previously agreed to distribute 60% of available money to three overseas charities, and 40% to four local charities. Monies will be from 2023 accounts, and £9718 was the amount available.

As Mission Coordinator, I then call a meeting to determine our annual giving decisions. The meeting was called for 7.30pm on Thursday 3 October, 2024. The meeting was open to all church members, who are also able to suggest any charities for discussion. A number of charities had been suggested and, after discussion, the following choices were made.

Overseas charities, each to receive £1944 were:

- CSU, funding a Bible training course
- NOAD, improving services for disabled children in four more villages
- Child Aid.

Local charities, each to receive £972 were:

- Seasons
- Walsall Bereavement Support Service
- Love Walsall
- James Brindley Foundation.

In addition, we support the number of other causes and this year they included Blue Coat Trustees, Christmas Shoe Box Appeal, a local food bank and Rotary for their work in Ukraine.

The 2025 meeting will be held later this year following Church Council acceptance of the audited accounts.

Thank you for your generosity.

Joan Nock

*Mission Giving Committee Chair*

# ALPHA COURSE

Moving our annual Alpha course to after Christmas has proven to be a very positive move, with a number of people attending after hearing about it at Christmas services. Over the last 18 months, we have run a course in the church (led by Izzy Butterfield) with an average of 21 people each evening and, more recently, a course in the church Centre on a Sunday evening with an average of 34 people. Both courses had a mix of church members and guests, and it has been exciting to see God moving in people's lives as they seek to learn more of him. As a follow on course to the most recent Alpha, we plan to run the revamped Bible course as part of our evening service. As always, I am very grateful to the team of people that make Alpha courses possible – it is always hard work, but it is always worthwhile.

Rev Jim  
Rector

## LOVE WALSALL & LOVE BLACK COUNTRY

St Matthew's Church remains committed to the Love Walsall network of churches, which is part of the wider Love Black Country organisation. Our aim is to seek the peace and prosperity of the place where we live. For more information and to join the mailing list go to <https://loveblackcountry.org.uk/love-walsall>

We usually meet for a 7am breakfast on the first Thursday of the month at The Table to network, discuss local church issues and explore how we can work together and support each other, to pray and worship and be inspired. This meeting is attended by a mix of people including church leaders, business leaders and people representing other organisations. From St Matthew's those who often attend include Rev Jim, Patti Lane, Nigel Dutton and Andrew Clayton – representing our church and other areas of the wider community life in Walsall.

Every Thursday local church leaders meet for an hour to pray, specifically for Walsall. This prayer meeting started during lockdown and has been continuing ever since. One of the joys of this meeting is the variety of churches that are represented and the diversity of the church leaders.

Coming out of these meetings is an emerging youth network with services starting to happen on a monthly basis.

In November 2024, Love Black Country held a joint event at Bethel Convention Centre which was attended and enjoyed by a number of St Matthew's church members.

The Together Festival is planned for June 2025 and promises to be bigger and better than ever. Tickets are on sale now.

During the year, we once again held a service of unity at Pentecost, which was attended by a number of local churches. Duke Kerr and his gospel singers led a time of wonderful sung worship and Bishop Mike Royal, the General Secretary of Churches Together in England, was our speaker.

As well as facilitating a Mental Health Forum (Sanctuary) put on by health professionals, Love Black Country ran Next Generation youth events (Movement), support for youth workers (Connect) and networking events and retreats for church leaders. This year also saw the launch of Kingdom Business, an event for local business leaders.

Rev Jim  
Rector



# COMMUNICATIONS

During 2024 we have continued to utilise our various means of communication to keep church members and the general public connected and informed about all that is going on at St Matthew's.

**Social media** - We continue to regularly post content on Facebook and Instagram, sharing news about what's on, as well as inspirational content. A big thank you to everyone who engages with the content - the more you like, comment and share something, the wider it reaches. We continue to livestream our 10.45am service every week on our YouTube channel.

**Website** - We continue to maintain and update the content on the church website. The bulletin and service sheets are made available every week, and other content is updated as required.

**Mailing lists** - We regularly send out emails to those on our mailing lists. Each Friday, we send out a link to the weekly bulletin, as well as highlighting news and upcoming events. Our prayer chain emails are sent out on an ad-hoc basis when a prayer request is sent in to [prayer@stmatthewswalsall.co.uk](mailto:prayer@stmatthewswalsall.co.uk). We also email today's prayer from the prayer diary every morning at 6am. If you are not on our mailing list, you can subscribe via our website. If you are already subscribed and would like to change your communication preferences, you can do so in the My ChurchSuite app.

**Printed media** - Posters are regularly refreshed and kept up to date with the latest service schedule and upcoming events. We design and produce flyers, posters and cards for various services and events as required. We produced and delivered over 4,100 Christmas cards to houses in the parish - special thanks to the Blue Coat sixth form students who delivered all of them this year. We continue to advertise in the *Pioneer* magazine - thanks to the small team who contribute to this.

**Graphic design/Brand** - We continue to use Canva (an online graphic design tool) to create social media graphics, presentations, posters and a whole host of other visual content. If you would like access to Canva, would like a design created for a church-related group/activity/event, or if you have general brand questions, please get in touch with Mike Ray.

**Internal communications** - Our internal email accounts and Microsoft office licences continue to be managed by our Office 365 subscription. All staff members and others with positions of responsibility are using an official [@stmatthewswalsall.co.uk](mailto:@stmatthewswalsall.co.uk) email account, in line with our communications policy. If anyone requires an email account as part of their work for church (paid or voluntary), please get in touch and we can set one up for you.

Mike Ray  
*Communications Coordinator*

## Mailing List Insights



**MailChimp**  
Mailing List Subscribers



Email Engagement:

- **43% Often** - Highly engaged and often open and click emails
- **10% Sometimes** - Moderately engaged and sometimes open and click emails
- **39% Rarely** - Not very engaged and rarely open and click emails

## Social Media Insights



**Facebook**  
@stmatthewswalsall



**Instagram**  
@stmatthewswalsall



**YouTube**  
@stmatthewswalsall



Top 5 videos:

1. Celebrating the life of Anne Tolley | Wednesday 6th November 2024 (496 views)
2. Blue Coat Sunday | 10:45am | Sunday 3rd March 2024 (267 views)
3. Funeral of Fitzgerald Alleyne | 12.15pm | Thursday 19th September 2024 (239 views)
4. The Inauguration of The Rt Revd Dr Tim Wambunya as 5th Bishop of Wolverhampton (237 views)
5. Asian Congregation Baptisms | Sunday 13th October 2024 (196 views)

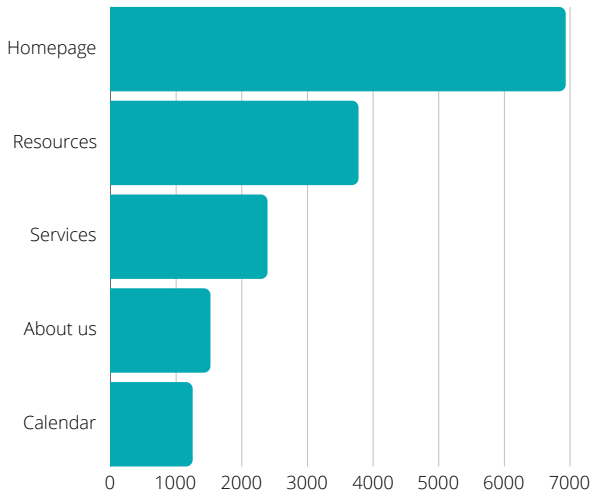
\* **Reach** is the number of people who saw any content from our page/profile or about our page, including posts, stories, ads, social information from people who interact with our page and more.

# Website Insights

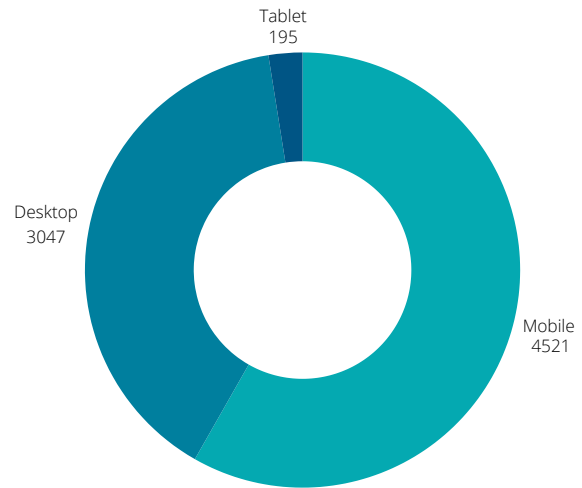
www.stmatthewswalsall.co.uk



Top 5 pages by number of views



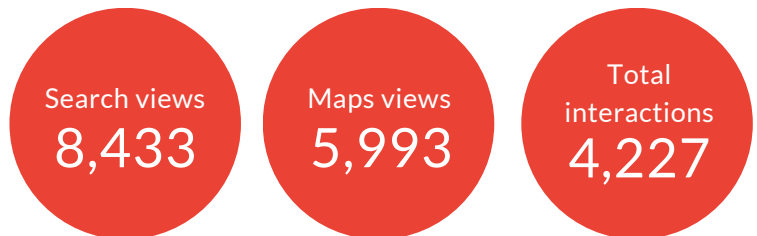
Number of users by device type



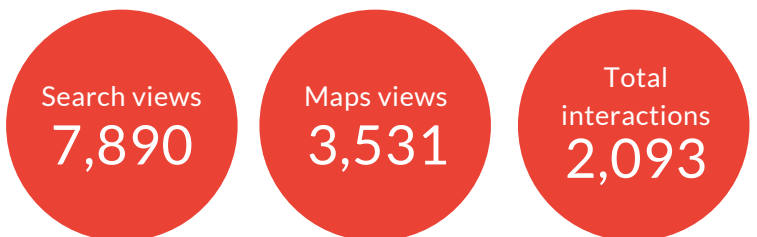
## Google Business Profile Insights



St Matthew's Church  
Google Business Profile



St Matthew's Centre  
Google Business Profile



**Search views** - Number of people that viewed St Matthew's on Google Search using Mobile or Desktop

**Maps views** - Number of people that viewed St Matthew's on Google Maps using Mobile or Desktop

**Total interactions** - Number of interactions with the call button, website button, and requests for directions

# WEEKEND AWAY

For many, the Weekend Away is a highlight of the year, and in 2024 we were again very blessed with a fantastic time. As always, lots of people of all ages and backgrounds joined together, friendships were formed and we grew in our faith.

Our guest speaker was Evan Cockshaw, an old friend of St Matthew's who is an astrophysicist, a priest and an artist with a captivating testimony. His three main talks were about mind, body and spirit.

- *Mind*. Evan spoke powerfully and personally about mental health, failure, trauma and how we are called to love others and ourselves. He also hosted an afternoon conversation about supporting loved ones through trauma.
- *Body*. Evan taught about creation and about science and faith. He spoke about the wonder of creation and the incredible status we have as adopted children of the Creator.
- *Spirit*. Evan talked about creativity, about how understanding our inheritance and identity can allow us to touch something of heaven.

As always, Quinta was a brilliant place to relax and have fun together. There were countryside walks, swimming sessions, games, a disco and plenty of time to unwind and natter.

church Weekend Away, it comes highly recommended - just ask someone who has been to one! We went away again in January 2025 and have booked for 13-15th February 2026. Put it in your diary!

Ben Butterfield  
*Weekend Away Organiser*



# WALSALL TOWN CENTRE MINISTRY



Good Friday Walk of Witness  
Photos by Peter Ford

Besides Rev Jim, St Matthews' members of Town Centre Ministry consist of Daniel and Wendy Barker and Adil Burke.

Apart from St Matthew's, TCM includes representatives from Central Hall, St Paul's, St Mary's, St John's The Pleck and the Victory Church in St Michael's Caldmore. Discussions with other local churches to possibly expand the membership will continue this year.

TCM organised carol singing by the tree outside St Paul's which took place in the run-up to Christmas.

This year, in place of the usual Lent Lunches at St Paul's, TCM organised a single talk at St Mary's The Mount by Canon Michael Dolman, Rector of St Mary's College, Oscott on the subject of "The Jubilee Year - a time for hope and reconciliation". TCM members worked diligently in recent weeks to ensure that this year's Good Friday Walk of Witness went well. Prayers for weather better than the forecasts certainly paid off and there was a great turnout of people. This year, the TCM committee worked with Tim Summersby to ensure that the culmination of the Good Friday event flowed effortlessly into the following Resurrection drama and celebration. We will meet again to ensure lessons are learnt so that next year's event is even better.

Daniel Barker  
*St Matthew's representative for TCM*



## PARENTS, CARERS & TODDLER GROUPS

I am employed by the Church to work for eight hours a week in this role. This enables me to run two weekly groups on Thursdays in term time (Stay and Play in the mornings and Sensory Play in the afternoons) and a termly Baby Massage class. The rest of the time is spent on admin and preparation.

The Stay and Play sessions are for children from birth to school age with their parents/carers. We have themed activities each week and, after drinks and snacks, the children and adults come together for bubbles and song time. Every half term we have a Bible story linked to the term's theme and at the end of term we go into church for a Bible story and linked activity. We have occasional visitors, e.g. the Family Hub and Speech and Language Therapists.

The Sensory Play sessions are for babies from birth to one year old and their parents. There are different sensory activities each week such as lights, instruments and feathers plus optional messy play and we finish with an interactive song time.

We welcome new people to both these groups most weeks and usually get between ten and 20 families each session.

Baby Massage is a five-week class which helps babies to relax and bond with their parents, while giving parents an opportunity to spend quality time with their babies and meet other parents. Most classes have been full with around eight parents.

All the groups are very diverse, and I've been able to build relationships and have conversations about church and faith with some of the parents. I've also invited them to church services, events and courses.

Karen Dutton and Camila Marticorena are very helpful supports at Stay and Play. It would be useful to have a volunteer to make the drinks at Sensory Play on a Thursday afternoon, too, so if you think you can help, or know anyone with a baby or young child, please speak to me.

Priscilla Trood  
*Young Children and Families' Sessional Worker*

# PRAYER DIARY

Prayer is a very important part of St Matthew's life and it is hoped that the Prayer Diary is a useful addition to your daily prayers.

The team were very grateful for the monthly prayers that Anne Tolley wrote as her contribution to the 14 years the diary has been written.

The prayer topics are based around the needs of St Matthew's and our town of Walsall, and include events that the church staff tell us are happening. The prayers cover the church family (home groups, church staff, church Centre, finances), our children and the community (town centre, the church cluster group, the deanery and diocese, our mission giving and the organisations we support). The diary has additional prayers or thoughts each month reminding us of God's creation and our need to look after it. There is a daily request for prayer for those who live in our parish and churches in the Walsall Deanery.

The monthly diary is included in the weekly church bulletin and the daily prayer is emailed out each day to those who have requested it. A great way to start the day in joint prayer for our church family. For those without internet access it is printed out and can be collected from church.

Many thanks to Rev Jim and Nancy Candlin, Operations Manager, for updates on events that we can pray for in the coming month.

Patti Lane

*On behalf of the Prayer Diary Team*

# PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral care continued to be delivered to the St Matthew's community, despite the huge challenges facing Anne and her team. Support has been ongoing, as and when required, across our congregation. Ros Clewes has been appointed as new Pastoral Care Coordinator and, with the help of a well-established team, is committed to consolidating and developing Anne's unique legacy.

*Ros Clewes and the Pastoral Care Team*

# PLACE OF WELCOME / OPEN CHURCH

Places of Welcome is back to its regular time of 10am to 4.00pm each Tuesday. Although we never know how many people to expect, we do have a regular visitors both mornings and afternoons. And as the weather improves, we are seeing more foreign visitors and, hopefully, these numbers will increase during the summer months.

Very many of our visitors have since become regular members of the St Matthew's congregation. We are very grateful to our loyal group of volunteers, who give three hours each month, either morning or afternoon, to keep Places of Welcome open.

If anyone would like to be added to our list of volunteers, to cover illness or holidays, or medical appointments (we're all getting older!), please speak to Nancy in the office, Pat Blewitt or myself.

Sara Hartshorne  
*Place of Welcome team member*



# OCCASIONAL OFFICES AND ADDITIONAL SERVICES

In 2024 we baptised four children and eight adults, with some being baptism by immersion. We also had five adults reaffirm their baptismal promise by immersion and a thanksgiving service for a new child.

Over the course of the year, we had seven weddings and one service of prayer and dedication following a civil marriage. The weddings were preceded by marriage preparation events with Rev Jim where we invited the wedding couples to explore what makes a good marriage, as well as talking through the practicalities of planning the wedding service and what to expect. These were also helpful to two local curates, who came from churches where weddings are less common, to experience wedding preparation and officiating at weddings for themselves.

In 2024 the number of funerals where we officiated decreased, matching the national trend. Clergy officiated at ten funerals at St Matthew's Church, three at the Crematorium and one burial of ashes (some burials of ashes don't require a minister). As mentioned in previous reports, officiating at a funeral is always challenging and whilst it is a privilege to perform this ministry, it can also bring personal pain, especially when a number of these funerals were for members or former members of our church and known by me personally.

We held our Remembering Service in late January 2024 reflecting how this is the time of year when those who have been bereaved seem to be especially affected by grief. For the last few years, we have been supported in this by Dean Harper's Funeral Directors, and this has greatly increased the numbers attending the service.





Four members of the church were confirmed at a wonderfully moving confirmation service this year held at All Saints Streetly, by our Diocesan Bishop Michael.

The annual Blue Coat Sunday was once again very highly attended with a real sense of celebration for things past and present.

In advent, we continued with the popular Civic Carol Service which was a great success once again. Unexpectedly, but encouragingly, the Advent/Christmas special services increased in attendance with total numbers now 50% higher than in 2015. Strangely, however, due to the way numbers are counted, the national picture is likely to show a decrease this year.

One of the gifts of having such a large church building that can hold over 1000 people, is that we often get asked to host Diocesan services. Over the course of the year, these included a service of welcome for the new Bishop of Wolverhampton Bishop Tim Wambunya.



*The Civic Carol Service*

Rev Jim  
Rector



*Bishop Tim Wambunya preaching at St Matthew's as part of his welcoming service*

# OWLS (OUR WAVE LENGTH)

The last year has been a challenge due to the death of Anne Tolley, the founder and leader of OWLs, and the members have supported each other to cope with the significant loss. This has further strengthened the relationships of the members and their protective and caring ties to each other.

The members of the group range from 60 to 101 in age and, inevitably, there have been complex illnesses and also the death of some members along the way this year. If a member hasn't arrived and we have not received communication regarding their absence, it is flagged immediately by members, backed up by an administration system also in place to flag this. The group are incredibly invested in each other and look out for each other. OWLs is an important lifeline for several members, some of whom only leave their home once a week to attend OWLs.

Highlights over the reporting period include a huge contribution to Operation Christmas Child where, in addition to packing gift boxes, the OWLs made scarves to add to the items they purchased. Other events include partnering with Friends of the Earth to take part in activism to highlight the difficulties of rising heating costs and the cut of the winter fuel payment for many pensioners.

The group have enjoyed some entertainment and a journey through the years using songs and discussion. We enjoyed lunch provided by Wiltshire Farm Foods followed by an afternoon of bingo with prizes and coupons for reduced prices. This was particularly beneficial as prior to the WFF visit it became apparent that several members who live alone were not cooking for themselves and were relying on sandwiches and sausage rolls, which had an impact upon their health. Following the taste testing of WFF there has been a strong uptake of the weekly food delivery service with its nutritious balanced meals delivered straight to their homes and which can be reheated in the oven or microwave.



The OWLs also have their own WhatsApp group and they often share their plans and funny happenings throughout their week. This is a great way for people to keep in touch with each other. Technical support is provided on Thursday afternoons to those OWLs who require it, and at least two-thirds of the members use the WhatsApp group. The OWLs have also taken part in a pilates session aimed at the over 65s (don't worry, it was still followed by a cuppa and a doughnut!).



In addition to all the exciting speakers and activities, we continue to hold a film afternoon on the third week of the month and the OWLs have recently picked the films they would like to watch for the next two years!! We also dedicate the last Thursday of each month to the celebration of members' birthdays and karaoke! - everyone is in fine voice and really enjoys these celebrations. We recently celebrated the ninth-year anniversary of OWLs and had quite the party with a buffet and OWL cake.



Leanne Hickenbottom-Marriot  
*OWLs Leader*

## 14TH WALSALL (ST MATTHEW'S) GUIDES AND RANGERS

St Matthew's Guides celebrated 100 years in October and so we held a high tea in the centre which was attended by many; both old and current Guides and Rangers. It was lovely to see how many people joined us in celebration.

Janet Kempson has led St Matthew's for the last 50 or so of those years but she stepped down as leader at the end of October. Christine Barkley has now taken over as leader, with the support of Tahira and Marlena. We wish Janet enormous thanks to all her years of dedicated service.

In March the Guides and Rangers attended a camp at Deer Park in Cheltenham. Everyone had a fantastic time and the girls took the opportunity to try archery, low ropes (tightrope walking) and a zip wire - Janet even had two goes on the zip wire! Thank you very much to Janet for arranging that for us.

In 2025, our aim is grow the group, though Janet has left some very big shoes to fill...

Christine Barkley  
*14th Walsall (St Matthew's) Guides and Rangers*

# BLUE COAT SCHOOLS

Our Blue Coat Schools are a wonderful example of caring for the whole child not just about exam results. The academic results this year were excellent, continuing to rise, but the “value added” life education to the children is immeasurable. This year was the first time we have been able to definitively say that the earlier children enter our Blue Coat School schools, the better they do compared with children who arrive at the Academy from other local schools. It is clear that the Blue Coat ethos across the schools is working.

All the schools have had inspections in recent years both from SIAMS and Ofsted, and they continue to be graded as Excellent from SIAMS reflecting the Christian Distinctiveness and Good by Ofsted.

Many church members help contribute to this by being governors or being involved in other ways, and the strong links between the church and the school are always evident.

The Academy continues to have full school assemblies in the church on Friday mornings and half school assemblies in church on Tuesday mornings. It has been great to see music starting to be a part of most church assemblies. The Academy holds communion services three times a year for their pupils and, on a personal level, I always enjoy being able to tell people that I had over 1000 people in church for a communion service on Ash Wednesday!

The Federated schools celebrate major festivals with services at the church that are both deeply Christian and deeply moving at the same time. The singing at these services is incredible and something to behold.

Unsurprisingly, the schools are increasingly popular, so it is vital that anyone who attends church and wants a place at the school completes a Faith Application Place form and has it countersigned by Rev Jim.

Rev Jim, along with other church members and representatives and leaders of other local churches, regularly goes into the Infant and Junior Schools to do a weekly assembly. Rev Jim also goes into Blue Coat Academy on Wednesday mornings for Morning Prayer.

It is truly wonderful to be part of the Blue Coat family.

Rev Jim  
*Rector*

# ST MATTHEW'S CENTRE

Can another 12 months have gone by already? It's been a busy time in the Centre, as we continue to enjoy the company of some very longstanding, lovely friends (JAM, OWLs, Guides, Narcotics Anonymous, Stay and Play, Marketing, to name but a very few), as well as welcoming many new ones (such as fitness groups, reemployment training specialists, and children's drama and art groups).

We've hosted wakes and weddings, naming ceremonies and coming of age silent discos, plus birthdays covering an age range of one to 90! What with many, many balloons and the odd bouncy castle and children's entertainer, I think glitter is a permanent addition to the carpets...

If you ever enter the Centre by the back (garden) door, you will notice some new plants and plant pots – plus one very special rose dedicated to the memory of Anne Tolley. These plants have been provided by and are cared for by OWLs, with thanks to everyone who is involved.

Sadly, Samuel, our Caretaking Assistant, moved on to pastures new in November, which was a shame as with his help it made it possible for us to accept a greater number of bookings on Saturdays and evenings, and also to share the load keeping the Centre neat and tidy, and locking up in the evening. His support has missed but I hope that, perhaps, 2025 is the time to get some of these plans underway.

Nancy Candlin  
*Operations Manager*



# ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 2024 MINUTES

## 1. Opening Worship

Rev Jim opened by welcoming everyone to the meeting, reminding those present that anyone on the Electoral Roll is eligible to vote at the ACPM. It is an important meeting as it has legal standing and offers accountability to the church community for the activities of the PCC.

The reason for the meeting is to give parish members an opportunity to have a say in the running of the Church. Rev Jim explained that the Church of England is governed by a document called Church Representation Rules. The first version was written in 1919 and it is intended to 'simplify local church governance and enable parishes to adapt the rules to best serve ministry and mission in their contexts'. Available online, they contain rules governing the formation and revision of the Electoral Roll, minimum qualifying age for election to the PCC or the Deanery Synod and how to vote.

Rev Jim informed the group that although he is chairing the meeting, he cannot vote on any of the elections as he is a member of the clergy – the meeting is for the Church community.

There was then a moment of prayer.

## 2. Apologies

Apologies were received and accepted.

## 3. Minutes of ACPM 2023

Proposal: to accept the minutes as a true representation of the ACPM held on Monday 16th of May 2023.

Proposed: Jeremy Sargent

Seconded: David Smith

Agreed by all those who voted.

## 4. Matter Arising

None.

## 5. Notification of Any Other Business

This will be raised at the end of the meeting.

## 6. Election of Wardens

Rev Jim started by explaining what is involved in being a Church Council (PCC) member, as outlined in the leaflet written by Lauren Parker called PCC Overview, a copy of which is at the back of the Church for people to look at and is also on the Church website. On screen was shown a spidergram of the organisation of the Church, its Church Council and lines of responsibility, noting that this is not set in stone but can change. Rev Jim reminded attendees that the Church Council is a legal body, as is the Standing Committee.

Rev Jim issued his thanks to those who have served as Wardens and on the Leadership Team over the last year. The Wardens and Deputy Wardens have been working very hard as they are one Warden down and so have been very active in supporting and covering for each other, whether it be for funerals, weddings, baptism or other events. Rev Jim also thanked Adil Burke for his huge contribution to Church activities in his role as Licenced Lay Minister, noting that it was a privilege to work alongside him.

Churchwardens are elected annually by the parish and are only allowed to serve for a certain length of time. In St Matthew's it is four years (the maximum is seven years). The Deputy Wardens (currently Paul Davico and John Edlin) are not elected but are approved by the Church Council.

One Warden is stepping down: Judith Ridgway. Judith stood for one year only to ensure there were three Wardens, and her experience and support was invaluable in helping two new Wardens, Ben Butterfield and Daniel Barker, to grow into the role. Rev Jim is eternally thankful to Judith.

There have been three nominations for Warden:

- Patti Lane (nominated by Ros Clewes and seconded by Priscilla Trood)
- Ben Butterfield (nominated by Jimm Rennie and seconded by Wendy Barker)
- Daniel Barker (nominated by Daniel Townsend and seconded by Wendy Barker)

There were no other nominations so no need to vote, therefore all three were duly elected.

Sadly, this leaves St Matthew's one Churchwarden short. If anyone is interested in the role, please talk to Rev Jim as elections can take place at the next Extraordinary General Meeting. (Rev Jim reminded the gathering that if he were to disappear suddenly, St Matthew's would be unable to get a new rector until there were four Wardens in place.)

Rev Jim then showed attendees a book of Appointments to Churchwardens and Orders in Vestry, a volume begun in 1854. This has been used almost continuously since then to record such appointments, with only a few gaps in the last decade. John Edlin, who safeguards the tome, is aiming to fill in these gaps and to continue the important tradition of using the book in the future. Anyone who is on the Electoral Roll can sign it, if they wish, and the Wardens names will also be entered.

## **7. Presentation of Electoral Roll – Rev Jim Trood**

This has been posted and will reopen after the ACPM to new applicants (those who can apply must be over 16, are baptized and live in the parish, or attend church services regularly).

The Electoral Roll is not the same as church participants. Church participants are regular attendees to worship and there are about 250 at the moment. Note, you can be on the Electoral Roll and not attend church. Rev Jim noted that the membership of St Matthew's has changed considerably in the last ten years - the congregation has been getting younger and is ethnically much more diverse with less than 50% now white British.

The 2023 Electoral Roll had 183 members; the 2024 Electoral Roll has 184 but there are some names to be added and so is likely to read 188 after the meeting.

Proposal: To accept the Electoral Roll April 2024

Proposed: Rev Jim Trood

Seconded: Jimm Rennie

Agreed by all those who voted.

## **8. Elections: Members of the Church Council**

PCC members are elected by the ACPM and normally serve a four-year term before stepping down for one year.

Rev Jim expressed his thanks to those PCC members who have been on the Church Council for their input and support.

There are a variety of positions available as there are currently eight vacancies:

- one UKME position
- four for three-year position
- two for a two-year position
- one for a one-year position.

Rev Jim was delighted to tell the gathering that he had received eight nominations for the posts.:

- Darisha Daniel (nominated by Jemila Daniel and seconded by Ben Butterfield)
- Winner Dennigne-Aggrey (nominated by Beth Ray and seconded by Mike Ray)
- Christine Barkley (nominated by Daniel Barker and seconded by Wendy Barker)
- Obumneme Esomchukwu (nominated by Ben Butterfield and seconded by Isabel Butterfield)
- Uzoamaka Esomchukwu (nominated by Obumneme Esomchukwu and seconded by Ben Butterfield)
- Sam Fawkes (nominated by Mike Ray and seconded by Lauren Parker)
- Debbie Hey-Smith (nominated by Judith Ridgway and seconded by Graham Hird)
- Chukwudi Madu (nominated by Mike Ray and seconded by Beth Ray)
- Lorna Williams (nominated by Alyson Green and seconded by Priscilla Trood)

As Returning Officer of St Matthew's Walsall, Rev Jim confirmed that all nominations were elected as officers of the Church Council. He also noted that the next Church Council meeting will be shorter than usual and will cover any legal matters and what is expected of Council members. This will take place on 10 June.

## **9. Elections: Deanery Synod Representatives**

There are no Deanery Synod elections this year and so no required actions for this Agenda point.

## **10. Presentation of Inventory and Terrier – John Edlin**

Oh behalf of John Edlin, Buildings Manager, who is away, Rev Jim explained that the church is governed by the 'Canons of the Church of England', and keeping an Inventory of all things in the Church is one of the rules by which St Matthew's must abide. Copies of the Inventory, managed by John Edlin, are kept both online and in written form. New items added in 2023 include a table saw, replacement fridge, hedge trimmer and computer.

Rev Jim noted that the Inventory is about keeping a physical record of church life and its artefacts. He presented the Terrier and Inventory, noting that it needed to be signed at the end of the meeting and has to be available for inspection by the Diocese. It is recorded electronically with every item in the Church pictured and listed or described. Rev Jim offered his thanks to John Edlin for all his work with this.

Rev Jim then commented on the huge improvement to the care of the church and its environs, which is so much better cared-for and presented than previously, and thanked all those Wardens and volunteers who had so contributed. There is a wonderful team of people who give their time to keep the interior and exterior of the building clean, neat and tidy and these crews are always happy to have new volunteers. If anyone is interesting in helping out, for buildings and grounds maintenance contact John Edlin and for interior cleaning contact Sue Sargent.

The Inventory and Terrier Report was signed by John Edlin.

### **11. Presentation of Accounts – Treasurer/Rev Jim Trood**

Rev Jim reported that, as has happened in previous years, despite Alyson Green has preparing and sending the accounts to the Diocese for auditing in plenty of time, they have not yet been signed off and so can't be shown at this meeting. When the Diocese have audited the accounts, they will be signed off at an extraordinary meeting and then go on to the Charities Commission to be published on their website.

Rev Jim feels that St Matthew's is financially secure, and has robust processes in place to manage and monitor the finances. Rev Jim then issued huge thanks to Alyson Green for her hard work on the accounts both throughout the year and on the final yearly accounts, and he feels confident that the finances of St Matthew's are in good shape thanks to the Finance Committee.

### **12. Annual Report and Rector's Comments**

Rev Jim expressed his thanks to Mike Ray, Samuel Baidoo and Nancy Candlin for the collation and presentation of the annual report. It is available on the website and hard copies are at the back of the Church or can be obtained from the Church Office. It is a good read and gives great insight into all the activities that go on in St Matthew's.

Rev Jim also pointed out that there is a Vision Action Plan that is available at the back of the Church that gives an overview of what the Church is trying to do at and with St Matthew's and the local community. It is a guiding document and each year there is a focal point for activities – again a very worthwhile read. The focus points this year are:

- Legacy project
- Prayer
- Active membership and participation
- Joy bringers

Rev Jim finished by saying a really big thank you to the Church community – to the volunteers, staff, Church Council members, lay support, etc. He loves being Rector of St Matthew's because of the people: "It is the best parish in the world!"

### **12. Any Other Business**

Patti Lane offered thanks on behalf of all who attended for all that Rev Jim does, and how very appreciated they are.

### **13. Closing Prayers**

Rev Jim closed the meeting with a prayer and blessing.

# PCC MEMBERSHIP 2024/25

Incumbent: Rev Jim Trood

## Wardens:

1. Daniel Barker (elected from APCM 2024 to APCM 2025)
2. Ben Butterfield (elected from APCM 2024 to APCM 2025)
3. Patti Lane (elected until 2024 to APCM 2025)

## Representatives on the Deanery Synod:

1. Patti Lane (elected until 2026)
2. Diane Edlin (elected until 2026)
3. Sue Webster (elected until 2026)

## Elected members:

1. Darisha Daniel (elected annually)

## Elected members:

1. Judith Ridgway (elected until 2025)
2. David Smith (elected until 2025)
3. Deborah Hey-Smith (elected until 2025)
4. Samantha Fawkes (elected until 2025)
5. Elaine Brookes (elected until 2026)
6. Jose Davenport (elected until 2026)
7. Obumneme Esomchukwu (elected until 2026)
8. Winner Dennigwe-Aggrey (elected until 2026)
9. Christine Barkley (elected until 2027)
10. Uzoamaka Esomchukwu (elected until 2027)
11. Chukwudi Madu (elected until 2027)
12. Lorna Williams (elected until 2027)

## Associate members:

N/A

## Co-opted members:

John Edlin (non voting)

Treasurer: Alyson Green (from February 2023)

Secretary: Nancy Candlin (from November 2022)

Gift Aid Secretary: Alyson Green (from February 2023)

# ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 2025

Sunday 11th May 2025 at 12.30pm in St Matthew's Church

## AGENDA

1. Opening prayer
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of APCM 2024
4. Presentation of Electoral Roll – Rev Jim Trood
5. Election of Wardens
6. Elections: members of the Church Council (PCC)
7. Elections: Deanery Synod Representatives
8. Presentation of Inventory and Terrier – John Edlin
9. Presentation of Accounts – Treasurer/Rev Jim Trood
10. Annual report and Rector's comments
11. Any Other Business/Questions to the Rector
12. Closing prayers