



St Matthew's Church Worthing

Annual Reports for APCM April 2024



Introduction

These reports describe the amazing work that you are all doing, and as I was reading I was reminded of what Paul said to the Thessalonians:

'We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Faith, love and endurance. It is not easy to keep going in the work of the Kingdom. It takes strength and stickability. These are not things that we find in ourselves but in Christ. Our work comes from our faith in Him. It is His work, and He honours us by inviting each of us to join in. We labour in love even when the situation makes us want to grind our teeth! Love is not soft and squashy, real love is a tough, cross shaped sort of thing. Endurance comes from the hope that God has set in our hearts. This hope inspires our prayers, our worship and our work for the Kingdom that is coming.

Like Paul, I thank God for all of you, and remember you in my prayers, and I am so grateful that you remember me too.

Paul

Alpha

This year I wanted to change the way we led Alpha. Having a meal together with people you have never met before is a big thing for some people – and the meal adds quite a lot of time to the evening – so I decided on a simpler format. We met in the Youth Lounge, which offers a more comfortable and relaxed setting, and started the evening at 7.30pm rather than 6.30pm, so there wasn't such a rush from work and people could have dinner at home. We began the evening with some light snacks and just 30 minutes of conversation, which felt a lot more relaxed and less forced, and then watched the video and chatted for about half an hour afterwards.

This year's Alpha was a great success with three people coming to faith and now attending our church. This is something to celebrate. It's been so encouraging watching these individuals become part of St Matthew's family.

I would like to thank everyone who prayed for us and especially Alex Picker and Hannah Purser who were brilliant in supporting the new format.

Joe Shurmer

Cameo

CAMEO celebrated its second anniversary in March this year and it has been thrilling to see this group grow in number from about 20 in the early days to over 35 and sometimes over 40! We meet on the second Thursday of each month all year round from 10:30am until 12 noon in the Church, beginning with refreshments sold on a donation basis and time to chat.

Throughout 2023, we had many guest speakers including: Richard Draycott from Air Rescue Kent Surrey Sussex, Colin Reid sharing the history of his family and Worthing, Rosemary Banks from Turning Tides, a Morning Coffee Garden Party in Stu & Serena Marchant's beautiful garden, Oliver Smith-Boyes on Wills and Power of attorney and Rebecca Jones from National Energy Action who gave us valuable information on saving energy. One of the highlights was the boat trip in Chichester Harbour.



This year, we are planning more trips out including: a seal watching boat trip, a Chichester canal boat trip and a visit to Lancing College Chapel, as well as speakers from the Police, Fire Department, Seaside Hospital Radio, an Osteopath and many more. A warm welcome awaits you!

I am so thankful for the Organising Team and couldn't do without them and their help in setting up, welcoming, helping things run smoothly and encouraging me. The team includes Pat Dale, Stu Marchant, Jim Reynolds, John & Noleen Sadler and Anne Thick. We continue to pray that this time will be a blessing to our church members and an outreach into our community.

Janette Taylor

Cathedral link

This is a delightful task which involves keeping us aware of the cathedral in Chichester and its facility to us. Covid caused a halt to the flow of information from Chichester but we now receive electronic newsletters which can be accessed from a link on the Friday Update.

The cathedral has a schedule of special services when they pray for individual parishes and the relevant congregations are invited. These used to be a great time of worship and included afternoon tea and cake prior to the service. I understand I will be informed when the cathedral plans a service for St Matthews and hopefully a good number of us can attend.

Anthony Slaney

Community choir

Our choir meets on a Monday morning and we celebrate our 5th anniversary in September. The choir has grown in that time and we now have around 55 members who meet regularly. Our sessions are informal and fun, and we organise a concert at the end of each term and collect money for a charity. Our songs are usually well-known, but we sing different arrangements and learn a few new ones too. In addition, we meet for socials and coffee in the holidays. We are a very social group and no auditions are held – you just turn up and sing along. Several members of the church are involved and we have many come from the local community. It is an excellent way to start the week and you are warmly invited to a taster session on Mondays at 10am.

Sandra Hill

Coffee on the Corner

Coffee on the Corner is open in the church on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, 9.30-12.00. We offer coffee and a wide variety of teas as well as hot chocolate. The cakes are delicious and we stock a gluten free alternative. Our aim is to provide a welcoming place for local people of all ages and to offer good quality drinks and cakes at affordable prices.



We have been encouraged that links are being made with other ministries such as St Matt's Meals, Sparklers and Holiday Lunches. On an average morning we see over 20 adults and children, some of whom are regulars. Some stay all morning to chat and enjoy our free drink refills, whilst others stay for an hour or so. People feel happy to come along on their own, knowing that there will always be someone ready to chat. Customers are mostly church members but we do have a few people from our local community who are becoming regulars.

We have a wonderful team of nearly 30 volunteers and serving on the team is a great way to get to know others. We are always keen to welcome others to join us so if you would like to know more then please do get in touch.

Please pray that more people will find us and that any who are lonely or isolated would feel that Coffee on the Corner is a friendly and safe place to be.

Lynn Taylor

Community Outreach Events

St Matthew's has a long history of outreach to the local community in a wide variety of ways. Over the last year we have held:

Great Easter Adventure

We held this in church, where the local community gathered to enjoy family time together and learn more about the real meaning of Easter.

Craft activities with an Easter theme were provided around the church, and refreshments served. Paul and Joe led a time of music and telling of the Easter story and Al rode a donkey (made by Trevor), leading a procession of children around the church.

A free lunch of hot dogs followed by hot cross buns was provided at 12 noon. About 150 attended and this was a great time of welcoming the community. Thanks to everyone who helped make this a success.

Fun Day

Our Annual Fun Day returned to its usual weekend in September and we were once more blessed with glorious sunshine, enabling everyone to enjoy being outside. The church was again full of people enjoying tea and cakes and happily chatting, while outside, children slid down the bouncy slide, loved doing a variety of craft activities, queued to get a balloon animal made for them and played games.

Thanks to the many people who helped and to those who made or gave cakes for this event. It is very important to be able to provide everything for free. This continues to be a wonderful opportunity to welcome the local community, share a fun time with them and show them God's love.

Halloween: No Tricks, Only Treats

On Hallowe'en evening, we held our annual 'No Tricks, Only Treats' outreach, taking our rightful place as a major part of the local community as they are out and about enjoying themselves. We offer chocolate, hot drinks (including hot chocolate) and the gospel message along with information about St. Matthew's. In addition, 2023 was the first time we offered a prayer tent where people could go to talk and be prayed for. A number of people took advantage of this and we are considering how we might improve this next year.



Set-up on the tennis court lawn started from mid-afternoon with a tent giving out treats and information and, after the rain the previous year, another tent with a drinks table and the tables and chairs. There were smiling pumpkins placed around the site indicating that we were open for business. Despite the weather (it rained a lot again!) we had over 200 people come through.



As is always the case with these events, those who came were delighted to see us engaging with the community and it was an invaluable opportunity to show Jesus' love and inspire people to want to know more about us and about Jesus. The encounters on the Hallowe'en evening are fleeting but our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will inspire people to read the literature and respond to their experience with St. Matthew's on that night.

We are becoming 'known' as we have been doing this now for a few years and one volunteer heard a group of girls some distance from St. Matthew's saying, "Shall we visit St. Matthew's like we did last year?"

As 2024 is the 125th anniversary of St Matthew's, planning has begun for even more community events this year to celebrate and reach out to the local community.

Maureen Rackham and Phil Rugg

Deanery Synod

Our deanery representatives are Paul Taylor, Phil Rugg, Phil Taylor and Al Pitcher. A typical deanery meeting consists of a specific topic presented, then discussed and normal meeting activities (minutes & actions from previous meeting and deanery finances).

Deanery Synod seeks for the churches to inspire each other. Please pray that the Worthing Deanery is effective and that there is a strong unity and togetherness across all churches.

This year the number of meetings has reduced from 3 to 2 with the aim of increasing the quality of meeting content, focussing more on the Deanery Mission Action plan and increasing attendance.

The June 2023 meeting had a fun and interactive presentation about hospital chaplains which aimed to both share the benefits of chaplains and their required skills and to seek to increase the number of chaplains.

The October 2023 meeting had two presentations:

- from Bible Society about the benefits of their *Open the Book* project for school assemblies, which involves interactive bible story telling with props and opportunities for children to dress up and take part. The project is well regarded by OFSTED.
- from Christian Aid, which is changing how they operate and collect financial donations within Worthing deanery. This is mostly due to limited capacity of volunteers. Christian Aid week is 12th to 18th May.

In addition, Deanery Synod members are welcome to attend the Autumn budget meetings for PCC Treasurers and officers. This is when they hear from Diocesan finance

representatives about the state of the Diocese's finance and parish contributions for the next year.

Worthing Deanery has a Facebook page to provide you with information about their events, including the Deanery Environment Day on 15th June.

Meeting dates for 2024 are Thursday 2nd May and Thursday 19th September.

Al Pitcher

Environment Committee

Solar Panels

St Matthew's is now one of the first churches in Sussex to have installed solar panels on its church roof. In September we installed 17 panels on the south facing roof of the church - 9 panels generating electricity for the church and 8 panels generating electricity for the church hall. On a sunny day these panels generate just under 8kW per hour which enables us to be self-sufficient in our electricity requirements. Any surplus electricity generated is exported back to the grid for which we receive payment. The panels should have a life of around 20 years and should be maintenance free. The cost of the panels, just over £12k, was met by grants from the Rampion Community Fund (£10,000) and the Benefact Trust (£2,650). The solar panels should reduce our electricity bills by between 30-40%.

Hall, Office and Rackham Room

We had an energy audit carried out when the solar panels were installed. This audit recommended energy saving initiatives that we are either implementing or considering for the church hall, office and Rackham room. These initiatives involve:

1. Replacing the gas boiler heating the underfloor heating system in the office and Rackham room with a heat pump. We will receive a Government grant of £7,500 for this work as the Government are encouraging us all to change from gas to electric heating. The grant means that it would only cost the church just over £3,000 to install a heat pump which will reduce our carbon footprint and reduce our energy bills. It is hoped to implement this project very shortly.
2. Insulating the church hall and then replacing the gas heaters with an external heat pump feeding wall-mounted hot air blowers in the hall. We will have to replace the gas heaters as they are very close to the end of their working life, but before we do this we need to insulate the hall in order to reduce heat loss and improve its energy efficiency. The cost of doing this work will be between £50-60k and we are currently applying to grant providers for funds to cover some/all of the work.
3. Insulating the roof of the youth lounge and at some stage replacing the electric panel heating with a more energy efficient heat pump.

It is hoped that the second and third initiatives can be implemented in the near future subject to funding being available.

Paul Mason

Fabric Report

Due to be delivered by the churchwardens to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on behalf of the Parochial Church Council

The Building Committee met twice during 2023. The committee consists of Peter Parish, Peter Goodall, Clive Purser, George Rackham, Pete Smith and Paul Taylor and is chaired by Phil Rugg. At each meeting we summarise works done since the last meeting, discuss what needs to be or could be done and prioritise.

The Church

The five-yearly Quinquennial inspection took place in 2023. The purpose of this is to provide an overview of the general condition of the building and where appropriate, its contents, furnishings and fittings; to indicate areas of immediate concern and to forecast, as far as possible, areas where works of repair or renewal are likely to fall due during the next five years and beyond. The churchwardens considered each of the issues raised by the architect and have taken appropriate action.

The five-yearly Electrical Installation and Condition inspection also took place in 2023 which resulted in a report that was largely satisfactory, requiring only a small amount of work which was undertaken to ensure that our electrical installations are in line with current standards.

17 solar panels were installed on the south roof of the church following a grant from Rampion of £10,000.

An energy audit was undertaken by a consultant from Brighton and Hove Energy Services Co-Operative (BHESCo) which provided some useful insights into how we might do our bit towards reducing carbon output. These recommendations are being considered by the PCC.

Some of the new lights from last year proved to be unable to meet our requirements but the manufacturer and installer showed excellent professionalism by replacing them free of charge in a very short time.

The platform was rewired to allow the band members greater flexibility in positioning during worship.

Leaks in the vestry roof will continue to be repaired as they occur with a final solution to the issue being addressed when the organ space is repurposed.

As recommended in the Quinquennial report an inspection of our stained glass windows was undertaken and no immediate work is needed. Long-term work will be considered by the PCC.

Over the course of the year there are many repairs and improvements undertaken by members of the Building Committee and others for which we are very grateful. This applies to the hall and grounds as well.

The Halls

The five-yearly Electrical Installation and Condition inspection for the hall also took place in 2023 which resulted in a satisfactory rating.

After part of the tower collapsed in 2022 and temporary repairs were undertaken, an inspection in 2023 concluded that the tower is in good condition with no immediate need for further work.

There have been numerous problems with the security lights which have been fixed as they occur.

Babs is employed as our cleaner for both the church and halls and does a great job preparing the church for different activities throughout the week. She also ensures the hall facilities are well presented for both outside hirers and our own use.

The Grounds

The gardening team have done a great job of ensuring the green areas around the buildings enhance the appearance of the church. Grass cutting continues to be arranged on a rota basis, and we are grateful to those who regularly serve in this way. Anthony Slaney has run the rota for this and has done a good job in keeping the lawn mower functional.

The Churchwardens (Phil Rugg and George Rackham)

Finance Report

In 2023 we saw a deficit on our general income and expenditure. However, we have been blessed in the past and so our current reserves are within our stated policy range. We have continued to invest in the future of our building and the new solar panels are one of the ways in which we have done this.

We were blessed by grants of £25k, the most significant of which covered the cost of the solar panels and an associated energy efficiency audit. We will act upon some of the recommendations in that audit in 2024 as we seek to move towards greater sustainable energy usage.

We are thankful for:

- + Each and every donation we receive, whether small or large and the people behind the giving.
- + God's continued provision, through one-off giving and grants, of the means to become a more sustainable church.

- + Two legacies which, along with a donation from one of their family members, has enabled us to employ a Young Women and Families Worker early in 2024 and to fund this until such time as general giving can increase to meet the need.
- + God's continued generosity in enabling us to give to others through our regular tithe and the opportunity for Al Pitcher to travel to Kenya later in the year to be a part of utilising the funds raised to build the vocational school facility there.

Looking to the future

Whilst the church's finances are healthy and the reserves are where we need them to be, we recognise that costs do continue to rise. We need to increase our giving in 2024 by 10% in order to fund our overheads and to continue to maintain our outreach to, and contacts with, the local community.

Ginny Santer, Treasurer

Holiday lunches

The Holiday Lunches team have had another wonderful year welcoming our local young families to join us for a barbecue picnic outside or in the hall for a sit-down meal. The weather last summer wasn't as kind to us as it had been in previous years and we were only able to be outside for two of the six barbecue 'picnics'. However, the rain was no deterrent and we had our highest ever attendance on a wet day in August with 75 guests in the hall.

Whether inside or out, Sandra continues to prepare inspirational craft activities which can be completed on site or taken home. These are hugely appreciated by the young children, and their mums too, particularly when offered 'messy play' activities which may not be practicable if there is very little space at home.

As well as the younger children's play corner we also have a table set up for older children with Connect 4, chess and Jenga. We now man (or 'woman') both areas which increases the chance of relaxed engagement with the children and their families. When the weather permits, two members of the team will organise some outdoor games for



the older and livelier children. This gives the smaller children more space to play and the adults a chance to chat.

There are many opportunities to get to know our guests better and to demonstrate that we care. We get glimpses into their lives as they share their concerns with us. These often include troubled and broken relationships, mental and physical health problems, as well as financial difficulties and the stresses of bringing up their children alone.



As well as mums and grandmas, we also have some dads, grandads and step-parents attending, and it has been helpful to have one or two of the men in the team available in the hall both for the adults to chat to and for the children who may miss a male role model.

One single parent who has been coming regularly to Holiday Lunches since May 2021 decided last year to have her two little girls baptised. She asked members of St Matt's who she had got to know through the lunches to be godparents; it was a very

special time.

Another young mum with two pre-school children who has been attending the lunches over the past year, as well as Coffee on the Corner and Sparklers, has also asked about having her daughters baptised. She came to St Matt's for the first time on Mothering Sunday, met some of the young church families and was made very welcome, happily settling in the play area.

Since the start of Holiday Lunches in the summer of 2020 we have had contact with 125 different families and the numbers of people attending continues to grow. During this past year the number of meals served is 30% higher than the previous year. Over February half-term we gave our guests simple feedback forms to fill in anonymously, asking if they would like to see any changes to Holiday Lunches. Their responses were both useful and a great encouragement to the team, amongst the latter were comments such as "I think they're great", "I've loved attending", "It's absolutely brilliant and you are all so welcoming", "Thank you very much", "It's absolutely perfect!" (The last one might be a bit over the top!)

Just after Christmas we received a very moving letter from a local mum saying how much she appreciated all that St Matt's Church does for the local young families. Here are two short extracts from her letter:

"Thank you for organising and hosting these meals. To me this goes beyond a well presented and free meal – it's a family outing/event, a change of scenery, it provides mums (especially those with no support network) with some much-needed respite, a chance to talk with others, for the children to play in a safe and clean environment and families (irrespective of background) to be treated in a dignified manner free of judgment."

“You do it because you want to not because you are told to or paid to. Thank you.”

The team are very grateful to the church for their support and especially to Paul, who has attended every lunch that he possibly can and circulates, chatting to our guests which is hugely appreciated. We are very much looking forward to the future when Beth Hayes can come along to the lunches in her new role as Young Women and Families Worker. We pray that our Lord will continue to bless and guide her and the Lunches team in the days ahead.

Pam Normansell

Life groups

Our Life groups continue to draw people in and we have seen a number of new people to St Matthews join and settle into one of the groups. We had a break to allow people to take part in the Lent course on Sunday evenings, which was very well supported.

A great success for this year is the new Life group which takes place during the day and is headed up by Penny Frank. Last year we saw a need for this, and God has been faithful. Please do pray for Penny as she discerns how this group will evolve going forward.

Joe Shurmer

Matt's Comedy Club/Wisecraic

It's been a real mixture of challenge and encouragement with comedy club events over the past 12 months.

The challenge has come on several fronts.

Numerical: since the pandemic it has taken quite a while to build up audiences to pre-Covid levels. People have been quite reticent about going out and we're only now really starting to see that change. Plus with the financial squeeze, many have had less money to spend.

Financial: Worthing Theatres have been good to us for many years but due to their own financial challenges have had to start increasing hire costs for their venues. As a result we have stopped doing Open Mics at the Pavilion Atrium as it had become too expensive for the size of audience we could attract. We have had one at the Cellar Bar at The Brewhouse & Kitchen and hope to do more – free venue, free tickets, free performers, so makes much more sense to scale down.

Spiritual: it's an ongoing battle to remain distinctive and keep our family-friendly ethos intact. Sometimes acts cross the line but we have had the same challenge for 15 years!



Encouragements have been plentiful:

Two thought-provoking shows from **Aidan Goatley** that both made people laugh and left us with plenty to think about.

Another great sell-out, feelgood, **Harry Baker** show with another in prospect this July.

A great weekend with comedian/preacher **Andy Kind** who teamed an excellent comedy night with powerful message/ministry on the Sunday.

The establishment of **Wisecraic** as a regular (every two months) 'micro comedy night with a theme'. This has proved entertaining and thought-provoking, and plenty of people have brought friends who are not part of church. We've also been able to use some performers who are not Christians but who bring a fresh perspective. I hope to develop the concept further as others have shown interest.

Please pray for

- Good-sized audiences for our 'paying' gigs at the Pavilion Atrium, and a healthy mix of tried and trusted acts with newcomers.
- Ongoing good relationships/witness to Worthing Theatres staff, the local comedy circuit, and other arts groups in the area.
- People to be able to sensitively share what their faith means to them when they chat at Wisecraic – and for more people to start their spiritual journey which they can hopefully move forward at Alpha when the time is right.

Thanks for all your prayers, attendance, and support with stewarding from our regulars.

Russ Bravo

Men's work

The men's work is currently led by committee, with a number of people contributing to events and planning. The men have met for various events, mostly involving food, and recently at the Toby Carvery for our new year breakfast. Each event is a great time to get together and chat, as well as make plans for other meet ups and events. Check out the men's work page on the website for more information and upcoming events.

Men @ St Matthew's has been undergoing a period of transition and so if this is something you feel excited about being a part of, you are most welcome! We are particularly looking for a 'figurehead' who, supported by the enthusiastic committee, might take this ministry into the next few years.

Clive Latter

Mission support committee

Our main event this year was the International evening in June, where we learnt more about the countries and cultures in which our four main mission partners work. This

event was well supported and everyone seemed to enjoy both the food and entertainment. Thanks to the committee for all their hard work in getting this organised.

It was wonderful that the church were able to support the Pitcher family in their short trip to The Dominican Republic, and thanks to them for their great presentation about the visit on their return. Al is now hoping to join Matthew Barrow (Hope in Africa) on a short trip to Nakuru, Kenya later this year to help start building the vocational centre we are supporting there.

Another privilege of the committee is to recommend to the PCC how the tithe is allocated. The tithe allocation for 2023 was:

Opendoors	£3,240.00
Max and Sarah - People International	£3,240.00
Ruth Guinness - SIM	£3,240.00
Phil Rugg - Pioneers	£3,240.00
Hope in Africa	£1,620.00
Go chatter	£400.00
Acorn pregnancy guidance centre	£400.00
Mission Aviation Fellowship	£400.00
Safe in Sussex	£400.00
Yada	£400.00
Evangelical Alliance	£250.00
New Wine	£250.00

We continue to pray for our mission partners as part of our Sunday services and committee members try to stay in regular contact with them. If anyone would like to receive regular newsletters from any or all of our main mission partners please get in touch with one of us.

The committee members are Janette Taylor, Temi Ojars, Peter Parish and Paul Taylor, and I thank them all for their help and enthusiasm.

Judith Slaney

Mowing ministry

Our task is to keep the grassy areas as tidy as possible. Usually there is a variable quantity of rubbish to collect and some grass edging to attend to. We leave as many of the daisies and buttercups as possible, and to this end we don't mow the northern portion of the west garden, allowing the plants there to have their heads. We have a

petrol mower which is mostly reliable and we hope to replace it with a rechargeable electric one at some point. The volunteers are Peter Jones, Richard Barron, Michael Scott and Anthony Slaney. We are taking applications from anyone who fancies pushing a mower around.

Anthony Slaney

PCC Report

PCC Trustees April 2023– May 2024			
Paul Taylor	Chair	Phil Rugg	Deanery Synod Rep.
George Rackham	Church Warden	Al Pitcher	Deanery Synod Rep.
Phil Rugg	Church Warden	Pam Normansell	PCC Rep.
Clive Purser	Vice-Chair	Matt Bramley	PCC Rep.
Julie Mason	Secretary	Judith Slaney	PCC Rep.
Ginny Santer	Treasurer	Paul Mason	PCC Rep.
Angela Standen	Finance Officer	Karyn Picker	PCC Rep.
Maureen Rackham	Safeguarding Officer	Phil Taylor	PCC Rep.

St Matthew’s Church is a charity and the PCC members are trustees. Each member usually serves for a minimum of 3 years. We meet once every two months. A ‘News from the PCC’ report is sent out with the Friday Update after each meeting and the PCC minutes are displayed in the church porch. The PCC Standing Committee meets on the alternate months. This is a smaller group of trustees who discuss issues in more depth, in preparation for the full PCC meeting. There are other sub-committees of the PCC such as the HR committee, the Building Committee and the Mission Support Committee.

St Matthew’s has many policies. The PCC reviews, updates and approves these on a regular basis. Some, such as Safeguarding and Health and Safety, are reviewed every year, while others, for example, Conditions for Room Hire, Risk Management and Complaints Handling are reviewed every three years.

PCC meetings cover a vast range of topics, such as staff salaries, solar panels, mission support, building improvements, Christmas services, youth work, finances, fire risk assessments, room hire rates and outreach ministries. Sometimes there are issues which are being discussed by the Church of England, such as the blessing of same sex relationships. Then there are special occasions such as the Queen’s funeral and the King’s Coronation. These are all set within a context of prayer and seeking God’s vision for our church. The PCC meets with the church staff for breakfast and prayer a few times a year.

Three trustees: Paul Mason, Karyn Picker and Clive Purser are stepping down at this year's APCM. A huge thank you to them for all their hard work and also thanks to Jackie Harris who is the Minutes Secretary for the PCC meetings.

If there's something you would like the PCC to discuss, please ask one of the trustees.
Julie Mason, PCC Secretary

Pastoral Visiting Team

I am so grateful for the ongoing work of the Pastoral Visiting Team.

Currently on the team we have Linda and Malcolm Pudney, Anne Thick, Kathy Adams, Brenda Fitzalan Hawkes, Ginny Santer, Paul Mason, Mary Parish, Pete Smith, Penny Frank, Gladys Gillet and me. We take communion and/or visit members of our congregation who are unable to get to church. Thank you to this dedicated team.

We also have a number of experienced Christians helping others with long term mentoring.

The main pastoral care team is you and lots of good work goes on in Life Groups and other groups. I am always available to talk – just ring me up!

Please do tell me if you, or anyone know in the Church family needs support or goes into hospital.

Rev Paul Taylor

Prayer ministry

The prayer ministry team has not stood still! Our 'area' had another move to accommodate the growing numbers attending St Matt's and that must be good news! We are now on the raised area in front of the chapel, which enables us to use the chapel if required.

It's very encouraging that PM teams for both the 9.30 and 11.15 have increased in number after a prayer ministry training course in October. We would still like to encourage more people to attend these training sessions, especially the 11.15 congregation, so that as many as possible are equipped to pray with others. We would value prayer for this and for more men to come forward for training.

It's good to see that more people are recognising their need for a longer prayer ministry session and we are fortunate to have people on the team who are experienced in this. It is not easy to have more in-depth ministry after church services, so if you feel you would benefit from this then please speak to Paul T, Gill or Jan so that an appointment can be made at a convenient time. Appointments usually last about an hour and give opportunity to look a little deeper into any issues that have arisen, especially those that

stop you moving forward as a Christian or are holding you back from the freedom Jesus has won for us.

We are looking at the possibility of another Saturday conference at some point as we have received requests for another similar event, so watch this space!

We would love to encourage more people to come forward for prayer. No need is too small or too big for the Lord! Sometimes it's just to give thanks or maybe to respond to the talk because it has resonated with you. It's really encouraging to hear answers to our prayers- we love to hear testimonies as that really builds up everyone's faith.

Our Confidential Prayer Team have also had a busy year, and they are a truly amazing group of our church family. At times we have had many folk to pray for, with very challenging situations.

Sometimes, it is hard when we don't see an immediate answer to our prayers, and circumstances remain the same for some time – but we never give up!

On a positive note, there have been answers to prayer, and we are so grateful to God for his love and faithfulness. It is a real blessing for us all in our church family, that when in need we have instant access to a committed, praying team.

We give glory to God, who is able through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:20.

Jan and Gill

Safeguarding

Safeguarding our children and other vulnerable people at St. Matthew's is a priority. We are committed to implementing all safeguarding policies and practice guidance issued by the House of Bishops with our responsibilities being informed by The Parish Safeguarding Handbook.

We work with the support of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, whose guidance and advice we are able to call on at any time.

As Parish Safeguarding Officer I report at each PCC meeting to ensure all members are updated on any aspects of safeguarding relevant to St Matthew's, including completion of training and DBS checks.

The Safeguarding Committee meets to review training needs and consider the need for constant vigilance and the running of safeguarding checks.

This committee is made up of Paul as Vicar, Maureen Rackham as PSO, Julie Mason as Lead Recruiter, Clive Latter as Youth Worker and Recruiter, Lynn Taylor, and George Rackham as Churchwarden with responsibility for Safeguarding.

This year we have started work on an assessment of our procedures in line with the National Safeguarding Standards. These five standards are Culture, leadership and capacity; Prevention; Recognising, assessing and managing risk; Victims and survivors; Learning, supervision and support. More information on these standards can be found on the poster in the church porch.

Thank you to everyone who has completed training online as part of preparation for work with our children and young people, greeting and prayer ministry.

Safeguarding is the concern of every single one of us and we must all remain aware and vigilant.

Maureen Rackham
Parish Safeguarding Officer

Saturday Prayers

Each Saturday at 9.15am we meet on Zoom to pray for 45 minutes. Currently, there are up to 17 of us who meet, including people from Arundel and Dorset, and we pray for the needs of the church, current or upcoming church events – Christmas, Great Easter Adventure, and so on. We pray for people to come to Christ here in St Matthew's (and we are seeing answers to those prayers) for our town and all who live and work in it, for other local churches and their witness.

We also often pray for the needs of our desperately broken world, especially just now of course the wars centred on Ukraine and Gaza, and also for other world situations as they arise.

Every so often we have a special "Spotlight" section, in which we invite one of our mission partners to join us and to talk with us about their situations, and then we pray for them. The joy of Zoom is that people can join us from London, Worthing, Malawi, or wherever! These are special times to get up to date and to home in on the lives of our partners with our prayers.

I say we are 'up to 17', but wouldn't it be great if we were up to 70, and were able to split into break-out groups to pray more?! Even for the deeply-morning-averse leader (that'll be me) 9.15 is doable on Zoom, and it's a great way to start the weekend. The link is always in the newsheet: please come!

Mary Parish

Social Media

St Matthew's has a Facebook page and Instagram page where we inform and interact with our community. With Clive's creative input, we have worked on ways to improve our

communication and we are seeing growing numbers interacting with us on these platforms.

We had a great response to our 'My church' advert, which included a video and ran for four weeks. Over 3,500 people watched the video and over 1,000 responded by either liking, commenting on or sharing the video.

We are increasing our posts as the church gets busier and we are seeing people communicating with us a lot more through our social media channels.

Joe Shurmer

Sounds, Screens and Streaming

We are very thankful for the improvements that the new screens and speakers have brought. They have been in use for over a year now and we continue to look at how we can improve in supporting our worship and church services.

With the musicians moving to a more central position on the platform, we were able to add some new cabling under the platform to reduce the amount of cabling visible to everyone. In the coming months we are hoping to improve what we can display on the screens in the building.

I want to thank our great team of volunteers for their hard work and enthusiasm. In the last year we've said goodbye to Gerri Mooring, who has moved to another church nearer to her new home, and welcomed Harry Kent, who is currently helping with streaming.

If you have any interest in helping the church on the technical side, we're happy to provide training and mentoring support. If you are interested, please talk with Paul, the wardens or myself.

We thank you for your prayers and encouragement each week.

Peter Brown

Sparklers

Sparklers is our 'stay and play' toddler group that runs every Thursday morning during term time. It is popular and we have around 20 children with their adults (mums, dads, grandparents, carers) attending each week. The session is mainly free play in the large hall and outside in the summer, which gives us the opportunity to chat to the parents

and carers. The morning ends with us gathering together for a story and singing time.



In the summer term we are planning to run a Christian parenting course with the aim of getting to know people better and exploring faith with them. Many of the families attend our other outreach events but we would love for them to also come on a Sunday.

We have also recently hosted the team from the council's Family Hub who chatted to carers about their child's development and the services they offer. This was very beneficial and they will now be coming once a term.

Su Pitcher

Spiritual Trail

The popularity of this area remains high. Our task is one of maintenance. This entails cleaning and weatherproofing the benches and art, and trimming the hedge and shrubs. Pat Dale and Jill O'Brien volunteer to tend the flowers and the mowing team cut the grass.

The spiritual trail team is Peter Goodall, Julia Brown and me, Anthony Slaney. I have seen the area go from a scrappy piece of grass to the lovely area it is now, but I feel it is perhaps time to encourage someone else to join us to lead. We also need some additional help with all aspect of the trail and are seeking others to join us. Please speak to one of the team about it.

Anthony Slaney

St Matt's Meals

St Matt's Meals provides free groceries to anyone in need and who lives within a mile of the church. We provide three days of main courses and desserts, for each member of the household. In addition, we also include lunch items such as baked beans, soup and hot dogs, along with biscuits and seasonal items such as mince pies, Christmas cake and Easter eggs.

During 2023 we saw a huge rise in requests: 213 deliveries made equating to 2,010 main meals. (2022 figures: 90 deliveries made equating to 752 main meals.)



St Matthew's members have generously supported St Matt's Meals through food and cash donations. Paul Mason successfully obtained a £2,500 community grant in July 2023 and although nearly used up, this has been essential in keeping up our stocks.

As we have recently had so many requests, we are now encouraging clients to collect their food parcels from church during Coffee on the Corner sessions. This will relieve the burden of delivering and we hope that we may get to know clients better over a coffee and chat. We are still able to deliver in exceptional circumstances.

Please continue to pray for our team (Paul & Jan Mason, Kath Barron, Joy & Keith Williams and myself) and for people in need in our area. Pray also that, as we meet practical needs, we are able to build lasting relationships and are able to share the good news of Jesus.

If you would be interested in joining the team, do talk to one of us to find out what's involved.

Lynn Taylor

Supper Club

Supper Club is a great opportunity to enjoy a meal, spend more time together to have fellowship and meet new people. Lots of people tell me how much they enjoy their meals and how they have got to know many people so much better through them. There are currently 62 people involved.

Anyone can join, as not everyone has to host the meal, you can simply bring along the Starter or Dessert (which you can cook or buy). So you do not need to be a super chef!

There are four 'get-togethers' in a year, with different people.

So whether you are new to St Matthew's or been here many years, whether you could host the meal or not, whether you are single or a couple, how about joining us? For more information do chat to us or call us on 01903 882787.

George and Maureen Rackham

Transforming Lives for Good

TLG has continued to support children at Heene School during the past year. The EI programme equips coaches to work with children for one hour a week for a year. Coaches are supported by a regional co-ordinator and termly on-line forums.

In July 2023 Phil Rugg and Ann Thick stepped down as volunteers having coached one child each for a year. Thank you both for your commitment to this role.

The Autumn term saw other changes and challenges. Linda Appleby, the new Head Teacher, was keen to work with the team. However, we were unable to coach during this term because of a significant lack of space. It was a frustrating time for the team. In December Liz Frank asked me to take over as co-ordinator which I was happy to do. I would like to pay tribute to Liz for the work she has done in initiating TLG in both St Matthew's and Heene school.

We welcomed Fenella Scott to the team during the Autumn and began coaching again in January. We now have three coaches, including Clive Latter and myself, and have been encouraged by the children's increasing ability to share their experiences with us. Our sessions are full of fun and offer each child time, space and individual attention. Lack of space is still a problem so we are coaching in the deputy head's room.

We are grateful for your prayers and interest in this work. We are committed to giving children the opportunity to be seen and heard.

For more information about TLG please visit www.tlg.org.uk.

Pam Denman

Table Tennis Club



St Matt's Table Tennis Club has been running since August 2022 and we meet on Monday evenings in the church hall. Most of our members are regular players, with some not now able to play on Mondays and a couple having joined us from other churches. We are looking to expand and acquire a third table, but as usual, storage is a challenge.

Beginners are welcome to come and have a go, and equipment is provided. See Kath Barron for more information.

'Table tennis raises the heart rate, helps strengthen muscles, mobilises the joints and, importantly, sharpens reaction times and hugely improves hand-eye coordination.

All of which help to improve one's quality of life.' (British Heart Foundation website)

Kath Barron

Women@StMatts

We have had a really exciting and busy year since we wrote our first APCM report in 2023. I remain extremely grateful for the work of our core team: Penny Frank, Gemma Kent, Sue Pitcher and Fenella Scott, who help to make everything happen. Since the last report, Becca Shurmer has stood down from our team to focus on the upcoming arrival, and we are really grateful for all the support she gave. Gemma has joined us, and brings with her creativity and enthusiasm. She is already planning some very exciting things for later in the year.

We have now established a pattern of approximately monthly events that try to be inclusive and cater to a variety of interests, with a Saturday morning breakfast and a Friday evening gathering on alternating months. We are particularly pleased with the Saturday morning breakfasts which are proving to be very popular and have been a-buzz with new connections, deepening friendships and the warmth of fellowship. We have introduced a short, structured section to these breakfasts called 'On the Spot' where we interview one person each time and ask the same five questions about life and faith – it has been a wonderful way to get to know people better.

We have had a few Friday evening trips to the pub – with a particularly huge turnout to our date in August which saw us spilling out of the relatively tiny space I'd booked. We sat in the pub garden all evening enjoying warm, dry weather and lots of laughter. We also held a walk and coffee in July and a Christmas quiz in December.

We have updated our pages on the church website to try to improve our visibility and links to ChurchSuite, and are very grateful to Jackie Harris and Kath Barron who help us publicise our events.

We remain mindful of the cost-of-living crisis and aim to continue to keep events accessible and low cost. We have been grateful that the church has been a safe, well-equipped and comfortable space from which to host many of our events, and wish to extend particular thanks to those who make sure the heating is on when we need it.

Looking ahead, our heart remains to gather together all women in St Matt's. We look forward to working closely with Beth Hayes in her new role. We are encouraged that some people have started to bring friends to the events we organise, and we would like to encourage this more. We really want to extend the love of Jesus to the women in our midst through friendship, Godly fellowship and fun. We look forward to the year ahead as we plan a programme of events that will hopefully draw in women from across the church and beyond. We would be grateful for your prayers and support for us as a core team as we continue to work together to achieve these aims.

Hannah Purser

Worship

It's a great honour to be able to lead this church in worship every week. This year we have seen the core team (Russ, Matthew, Jazmyn) step up in leading the worship and they have been supported by Nigel (Band Leader).

This is a personal joy for me, as I love seeing people develop and grow. My heart longs for some of our young people to join our worship team and I ask you to pray that we will see this happen soon.

I would like to thank the Sound team and especially Peter Brown, who works tirelessly with the team to continue to make improvements and serve every service or school assembly or practice. We have introduced new and old songs into both services and have had some powerful times of praise.

The worship team has also had opportunities outside of Sunday mornings. I hosted a worship night where Matthew, Temi, Naomi and I led worship. We had a good number there and it was a powerful evening of worship. We hope to have more of these evenings soon.

As a team we have led worship at Maybridge Community Church and St Mary's, and in March I took Nigel, Manny (from River of Life) and Beth (from Portsmouth) to the 'One body' event on the Isle of Wight. This is headed up by my close friends on the Island and my brother-in-law, and sees churches from around the Island gather over a 24-hour period to seek Jesus through worship. We had a great time leading an hour slot and it was a powerful day of lifting our praises to Jesus.

Joe Shurmer

Youth, Children and Schools

It has been a tough year personally, but it brings me great peace and joy as I reflect back over the last year - looking at where we were a year ago and what has changed since then. There is so much to thank God for, so much we have achieved and so many ways that we have seen him provide for us and bring fruit from where we have worked.

Sunday continues to be variable in terms of the regularity and quantity of children and young people who attend. We do now have a critical mass in each of our groups – which was not always the case a year ago – and have established a new 3-5's group for those children who are happy to play separately. My gratitude goes to the six pioneers (Alison, Anika, Judith, Karyn, Katie and Matt) who stepped up to start this group and have proven their adaptability as we have felt our way through the early months! This group is appreciated by the parents of those who are there, and has meant that we are able to provide a feeder group to prepare children for the more structured session when they are older.

The youth group has changed profile as we have taken the year 6s up into that group, and some of the older young people have transitioned out the top and are now engaged with the main service. Hannah P, Beth and Fenella have added capacity to our youth and kids teams, and enabled us to provide an input that is more age specific than before.

Schools continue to be a valuable part of our outreach. Our connection with Heene continues to be consistent, with TLG (separate report), Collective Worship and school services giving us opportunities to connect with the daily pattern of school life. We ran a prayer space at Easter and Christmas, and this again was received with great joy and awe by many staff and children. The year 6 high school transition workshop developed into an exciting chance to include these young people in a new Drop-in that we ran during July.

St Andrew's continue to value our support with Prayer Space three times over the year and there is a real sense that this is now an accepted and welcomed part of the school calendar by both students and staff. Year 10s also visit the church to look round a 'real live church' and are amazed and impressed at the way we use our building and all the things we do!

The story at Drop-in has been one of quality over quantity. As the numbers of young people attending has dropped off, this has actually allowed a greater depth of relationship to be built with the young people. We continue to offer opportunities for them to engage with other groups and activities including Mini May Camp, Summer Holiday Drop-in and the Hallowe'en outreach, and a couple of the young men came and helped at the September Fun Day to great effect.

The Year 7 Drop-in has remained small with a committed group of youth. This is something we expect to build on year on year in a manageable way, prioritising the solid depth of relationship over variable numbers.

There is an underlying theme to all I have written – people are important: young people who we engage with at Drop-in, children and youth who come on a Sunday, students in a school setting and the youth team and parents who support, champion and encourage them. It can be frustrating when things don't go as we plan, but we can trust that God is in control, and when we seek his vision and guidance, we will be in just the right place. It is a great thing to be with a child or young person when they ask big questions of God – and even more exciting when they begin to journey with, and explore the answers they find.

Thank you for your prayers this year.

Clive Latter