



**Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Reports**

Review of 2018

Meeting 7th April 2019

12.00

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Annual Report April 2019

Revd Ian Tomkins: Vicar, St Matthew's & St Nathanael's, Bristol

Dear Friends

As I write this, just over two weeks before our APCM, I have to remind myself that it is only 6 months since I was licensed as vicar. Deborah, Nathaniel and I feel so very settled at St Matthew's that it feels as if we have been here longer! This is in no small part due to the warmth of your welcome, and to your support and encouragement. This is our church, and we are so thankful to be sharing our lives with you, and prayerfully thinking about all that God calls us too together, as we look to the future.

I am also very thankful to have such supportive colleagues to minister alongside; staff team colleagues Richard, Minty, John and Julia, churchwardens Chris and Laura, a tremendous PCC and so many of you who so actively and generously serve God practically and prayerfully in different ways in the life of St Matthew's.

Although it has only been just six months since I started, much has happened.

We have welcomed new Trinity context students and their families, and we are hugely appreciating getting to know them and sharing our lives with them. I want to take the opportunity to particularly thank Jordan and Emily for all they have brought to St Matthew's during their faithful journey with us, and our prayers will follow them as they leave us in May to go into curacy. We shall miss them.

We have welcomed new members of our church fellowship. We have travelled through the autumn, with Harvest, a new bereavement service – Kept in our Hearts, and through a hugely encouraging Christmas time, when we welcomed and met so many people from our communities.

We have recently addressed the urgent financial situation of the church and Christian stewardship, with the hugely encouraging response. To date, we expect a £21,000 increase in our regular annual giving. We have also received an additional £7,400 of one-off gifts. Both these figures are inclusive of gift aid. There is much still to do, but as a result of this giving, we shall be able to stabilise our parish finances and begin to pray for and plan for future growth. Praise God, and thank you.

We are now in Lent, with the Talking Jesus course happening on Wednesday evenings, and anticipating Easter – the glorious hope of new life and new beginnings in Jesus Christ.

In our first few PCC meetings together, I asked PCC members to pray and think about what God placed on their hearts, reflecting on our hopes and dreams for St Matthew's.

PCC members spoke movingly about a desire to deepen our prayer life - both individually and together, to encourage and grow our mission and ministry to all ages, to deepen relationships amongst each other and into our communities, to truly understand and practice Christian welcome, hospitality and friendship, to use the gifts of God's people, to share our lives generously with others, and to share our faith and encourage others to know Jesus Christ.

These prayerful and heartfelt reflections are not rocket science. This is precisely why they are so very encouraging. These are at the root of our faith, and are foundational to our purpose as Christians and Church. In our humanity, we may find it hard sometimes to live out the Gospel. But it is not a complicated message. Jesus says, ***'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full'***.

In the Great Commandment, God calls us to *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself'*. In the Great Commission Jesus calls us to *'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'*

In both the Great Commandment and Great Commission, we see purpose and meaning for the Church of Christ. The PCCs prayerful reflections are an expression of these great calls of God, and demonstrate clearly our desire to build relationship and connection with God, each other and our communities.

In our continuing discussions, we placed the PCC reflections within a helpful framework for this early stage of this new season. This framework, with the help of the Diocese of Bristol's thinking and resourcing, names six key discipleship practices for creating connections and making disciples:

1. A Foundation of Prayer
2. Creating a culture of invitation
3. Creative family-focussed expressions of church
4. Opportunities to explore the Christian faith
5. Small groups for whole-life discipleship
6. Developing the gifts of God's people

As the year goes on, the PCC will be looking into each one of these areas in more detail. But in the short-term, we recognise that our priorities are to focus on a Foundation of Prayer, Creative family focussed church and groups for whole-life discipleship. Work is being done in all these areas to identify the next steps.

To encourage us to look outwards to each other and our communities, this year we are also specifically following a 'Journey of Invitation', with particular focus on how we can develop a culture of invitation and welcome, thinking about how we do Sunday church, the Talking Jesus course during Lent, a focus on invitation to all our church events e.g. Party in the garden, and a special Invitation Sunday in June. We

have Good News to share, and long to grow in confidence in inviting others to know this for themselves.

I am hugely excited and expectant and hopeful for the future. We shall need to be patient as we listen to God together, love each other and take a step at a time. But with a foundation of prayer, God in His grace will show us His ways and purposes.

As mentioned earlier, Jesus says, '***I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full***'.

As we go deeper in our journey of faith together in the coming year, may each one of us, and all those who we live amongst, come to taste, see and know this wonderful promise for themselves.

I leave you with the poem we shared during our recent stewardship weekends, 'God's Dream' – a reminder and encouragement to us all that it is indeed **God's** dream we dream, **God's** house we build, **God's** caring we witness and **God's** love we share.

Yours in Jesus Christ

Rev Ian Tomkins.

God's Dream

I myself will dream a dream within you –
 good dreams come from me, you know...
My dream seems impossible,
 not too practical,
 not for the cautious man or woman –
 a little risky sometimes,
 a trifle brash perhaps...
Some of my friends prefer
 to rest more comfortably,
 in sounder sleep,
 with visionless eyes –
But, from those who share my dream
 I ask a little patience,
 a little humour,
 some small courage,
 and a listening heart –
I will do the rest...
Then they will risk
 and wonder at their daring...
Run- and marvel at their speed...
Build – and stand in awe at the beauty of their building...
You will meet me often as you work –
 in your companions, who share the risk...
 in your friends, who believe in you enough
 to lend their own dreams,

their own hands,
their own hearts
to your building...
in the people who will stand in your doorway,
stay awhile,
and walk away knowing that they, too, can find a dream.
There will be sun-filled days,
and sometimes it will rain –
a little variety –
both come from me.
So come now, be content
It is my dream you dream...
my house you build...
my caring you witness...
my love you share...and this is the heart of the matter. (Pequy)

2. Churchwardens' Report

This last year at St Matthew's has been one of recurring themes – of rebuilding, deepening relationships, hope and of trust in God's eternal grace. We began the year in vacancy, with a tight timescale in which to meet all the deadlines in the appointment process. We are hugely indebted to Ruth Rimmer and Andrew Lucas for their role as our elected parish representatives. We are so thankful for their dedication, integrity and inclusiveness at every stage. Prayer was central to the whole process and our thanks also go to all those who assisted with facilitating the whole church sessions in which we could all contribute, to create an honest and open renewed church profile.

During the vacancy, up until September 2018, Minty Hull and Richard Pendlebury continued to preach the gospel with passion and to lead us in our weekly worship. We are incredibly fortunate to have two such dedicated ministers and they have carried a huge responsibility. Either Minty or Richard planned and delivered both services every week, including organising visiting speakers and of course, supporting and working with our staff team and supporting Jordan Allan in his ongoing training as a theological student. There were also weekly staff meetings, leadership and PCC meetings, significant pastoral care within the church and the wider community. As wardens, our role would have been immense without them! It would also have been a very challenging time without the full support and dedication of the PCC. We felt it was vital to meet on a monthly basis during the vacancy, to faithfully discharge all of our responsibilities as trustees. It was a big commitment of time and our thanks go to each member, to those prepared to extend their role to provide continuity and to new members, all of whom were willing to share expertise and reflections.

In September, the appointment process culminated in an inclusive and uplifting interview day. We were absolutely delighted to be able to appoint Ian Tomkins as our

new vicar and to welcome Deborah and the family to St Matthew's. It was both encouraging and very affirming on the day of the interviews, to hear that Ian felt a definite calling to apply for the post. That as we had been praying, God had indeed been 'stirring the heart and mind of the person he was calling to join us'. The Induction and Installation service was a wonderful occasion, filled with joy and thanksgiving. Bishop Lee preached on deepening our relationships within the church and of the importance of being outward looking and of discerning and joining in with God's mission. Our huge thanks go to all those who contributed their time and gifts to make it such a special service of welcome to Ian – it was a joy to be see so many people involved, of all ages and in so many aspects, both seen and unseen.

Quite a few of the church family had already met Ian, on the occasions that he had helped Minty and Richard by preaching at some of the services, and this has felt a real blessing for us. Ian was also aware of the difficulties and hurt that we had faced and of the ongoing need for healing, support and prayer for one another. Ian has a depth of experience, a heart for pastoral care and a strong desire to build God's Kingdom together – 'walls down, roots down'. It felt as though Ian had barely begun before Christmas was upon him and now Easter is fast approaching. We look forward to continuing to build a relationship as part of the leadership team and to supporting Ian as he spends time discerning God's will and direction.

Our staff team, John and Julia, have worked tirelessly in their roles and it is a privilege to be part of the leadership team with them. John's approach of uniting the church family through being truly All Age has been inspiring and really important. Although his role of CYF minister is focussed on our children and young people, he has willingly offered his time and skills to co-ordinate other vital areas of ministry and this has been hugely appreciated. John has also been going into Playgroup once a week to work alongside the staff and to develop relationships with the children and parents. This has been invaluable in building a better culture of support and in linking this area of mission with that of Stay and Play and Kings Kids.

Julia, our administrator, has also willingly taken on extra areas of responsibility and this has helped us all enormously. We needed to find a new Parish Safeguarding Officer, as Ali Taylor was stepping down, having faithfully fulfilled the role for a long time. It is a significant role within the church and Julia volunteered to take it over and commit to training. We are thankful for Julia's enthusiasm, commitment and consummate professionalism and for her patience and discernment.

In May we had a wonderful church weekend away at Brunel Manor in Devon. The PCC had taken the decision to step out in faith, despite our reduced numbers and to uphold the booking that had previously been made. As many from St Matthew's had been attending the Whole Life Discipleship course at Redland church, it felt a natural step to invite David Lawrence (LICC) to be our speaker. The teaching sessions focussed on going deeper, supporting one another in prayer and in practical ways to be effective and energised gospel messengers. It was a time of fellowship, fun (some of it way outside our comfort zones!), exchanging front line experiences and new friendships for all ages.

Throughout the year other important work has continued, some of it in outwardly reaching different groups within the parish and some within the church family and building. Tea and Chat, led by Jackie Burnell; Knightstone House, led by Ann Baker and Stay and Play, led by Val Jeal and John Stilwell. The hard work of the SOT team is much appreciated and the increased number of varied events have all been well supported. There was a very busy and enjoyable Christmas Craft evening and our thanks go to Deborah Tomkins for her thought provoking and inspiring 'green Christian' message. The wine tasting evening was well attended and there were some in depth discussions following the talk by Richard Pendlebury. A new event, Galettes du Rois, was really encouraging as families came through a number of different connections, clearly demonstrating the power and importance of personal invitation.

We have so much to be thankful for each week – for our Treasurer and for Mary Parsons, who has taken over the assistant role, for our assistant wardens, welcomers, sacristans, gifted musicians, singers, choir and youth band. For our sound and technician teams, gardeners, flower team, cleaners and coffee rota members. We have a number of church family members who gracefully and willingly respond to calls for help by those who rent the hall space. Many of these important roles are fulfilled with selflessness and often unseen – except by our loving Father. There are two people in particular who we would like to mention as they do an extraordinary and varied amount of work to maintain the church building and the groups that run within it. Simon Pugh Jones' knowledge of the building and care for it encompasses everything from pointing us in the right direction for possible grants and mowing the grass with George each week, to scaling the roof and setting off insect bombs in the bell tower! Rick Parsons gives hugely of his time every week to ensure the smooth running of the building and also willingly sets aside time to meet with contractors and carry out numerous essential maintenance jobs, even repairing the train set for Kings Kids!

As we know, the life of a church involves the joy of welcoming new members and the mixture of emotions that accompany bidding farewell to those who are moving on to the next step in their journey. We are delighted to have welcomed 3 new families of context students from Trinity in this past year and are already enjoying the blessings of their contributions to our worship and church family life; we look forward to continuing to grow our relationships with them. If demonstration is needed of how deep that relationship can be, we need look no further than Jordan and Emily. Their commitment to the life of St Matthew's, and particularly its young people, would have seemed significant in normal circumstances but in the context of the challenges we have faced, it has been remarkable. We are indebted to them and our sadness at their impending departure is only lessened by our confidence in the great works they will accomplish in their new church.

“give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus”.

1 Thessalonians 5:8

Laura Pendlebury and Chris Smith

3. Children, Families and Youth

Children

The children of St Matthew's have changed significantly during 2018. Half the group progressed into Youth during the summer. We have been really excited to watch them grow up and wish them well as we hand them over to the Youth team. The Sunday Club team has remained faithful and our children are so blessed by their hard work and creativity. Topics of note that we covered included God being faithful to Daniel, Esther and through to the Apostles in acts.



One particular highlight was the weekend away. We loved spending a prolonged period of time with each other and with other members of the church, who made us feel hugely included. We thought about superheroes and how Jesus was mindblowingly better than all of them put together. The children also performed masterfully again for the Christingle service, where we made more contact with many local families.

We were delighted to welcome some younger children into our groups and look forward to how we can help them learn and participate in the coming year. We have also planned a series of co-ordinated events to try and provide more regular contact with families. Watch out particularly for our new Galettes des Rois celebrations marking Epiphany.

Families

The position of families at St Matthew's can be summed up by the following quote of one of the parents: "They feel really excited to come, they just see it as an extension of their family." We are so pleased that this is what is felt towards the rest of the congregation and is built on each week as we share in our all-age time during the 10.30 service. This was given a great boost by the aforementioned weekend away. Special mention should be given to the Rowlands house group who managed to bake pancakes for 50 people: I wonder if they can top it in 2019!



King's Kids

King's Kids has continued to play an important role for the families around St. Matthew's. The greater links with playgroup have seen more children progressing from King's Kids in to their program and so we are seeing more of these families using the building throughout the week. It continues to attract new people and almost every week someone is trying the group out for the first time. Laura Pendlebury, Margie Bushell and Rosie Low have continued with the wonderful task of supporting families and providing a listening ear. We are grateful for the help of Rick Parsons with set up and for Mary Parsons, Ros Syrett and Phil May helping us out with sessions.

Youth

What a year for our young people: It's difficult to know where to begin.



Growing in Faith

The group have continued to show a mature and fun-loving approach to further their understanding of faith. Thoughtful with questions, imaginative with answers and continually trying to understand what faith means in their ever-busy lives. The 5 young people who moved up from Sunday Club, have been welcomed seamlessly and we were so blessed to all be able to go away

together in September. There was much evidence of personal faith and enthusiastic enquiry. 3 Young people were confirmed through the year, so please keep praying for them as they pass this milestone in their lives.

Giving Service

The Youth have given out so much this year. Every month they contribute with Youth band, projector, reading and welcoming. They also took starring roles in the Christingle: If only the adults had learned their lines as well as the young people! Some were also brave enough to support a church in Lawrence Weston on their holiday club as part of the Hope 2018 project. In house, they organised a cake sale to raise money for the Sister's of the Church Easter Egg appeal and we were delighted to contribute over 100 Eggs to this cause.



A few thanks. Margaret May has served on the youth team for many years and has stepped down with her retirement from work. Thanks for all you have done. Sarah Douglas and Dan Green stepped in and offered help through the year and we were very grateful for this. We are also grateful for the support that Andrew Stephen has given with the Youth band. Jordan Allen and Emily Plummer have served faithfully

each week with the young people and been incredible role models. They will be leaving enormous shoes to fill when they leave in May 2019.

Lots of optimism, but an urgent need for growth in numbers leads us into 2019.

4. Music at St Matt's

The musical input into St Matt's worship has continued to use a wide range of musicians, and Janet Lunt has continued to organise the musicians' rota. Grateful thanks must go to the many people who regularly provide musical accompaniment for both the quieter 9am Sunday service, and for the livelier 10.30am services. All musicians who have offered their talents continue to be used. The choir, along with instrumentalists, continue to provide lovely harmonies at communion once a month, and the Pathfinder band does a great job on another Sunday a month. We are enjoying the input from Trinity students, Aidan and Jon.

The church leaders took back the role of choosing the songs and hymns last summer, and Ian is hoping we will learn more new songs this year.

At the special induction service last September, we were able to welcome Ian and Debbie using both band and augmented choir to create a sense of occasion. For the carol service, the musicians pulled out all the stops to create a lovely Christian Christmas event, and the choir sang a challenging song, Mary Did You Know, which moved many people.

I pray the music at St Matthew's will continue with flare, still reflecting the uniqueness and variety of the people within it.

Janet Lunt

5. Discipleship

Gather

Our Gather group meets once a month throughout the year usually on the second Friday in the Church Hall. We come together to get to know Jesus and each other more deeply. We aim to be supportive and to encourage each other in the ups and downs of life. We welcome all women from St Matthew's and are happy to invite friends from elsewhere to join us.

Gather has been meeting since September 2016; we usually have a theme on which to base each evening's discussion, prayers and activities. From January to June 2018 we were completing our studies in depth of The Lord's Prayer based on "A Layman looks at the Lord's Prayer". In March six of us went on a day visit to Wells to meet up for a day's retreat with Sally Taylor who originally started the group. At the end of the summer term we had a lovely summer social at Waf's home when we all brought Mediterranean style dishes for a delicious meal together.

For the autumn term we decided to take turns in choosing our favourite psalm as the focus for the evening. Val and Alison chose Psalm 91 in September. Ros and Polly chose Psalm 71 in November. For October Waf led a contemplative evening using Janet Lunt's writing from "Quiet Spaces" on 'Winter food for thought'. All three evenings had good discussions and an in-depth prayer time.

We decided to postpone a Christmas social and to have a bring-and-share meal in the New Year when we decided our focus in the next few months would be on understanding more about the lives of some of the women in the Bible and what they have to say to us today.

Please do come along and join us if this is the kind of group you would like.

Ann Baker

Small Groups

Around 45 members of the church family belong to small groups which meet during the week with varying patterns. They range in size from around 10 to 20 but all of the groups play a vital role in our individual and corporate discipleship and enable us to deepen our faith in Jesus. They are also safe places where faith can be explored and mutual pastoral care given. At the heart of all our groups is prayer and Bible study and a variety of resources are used.

Our aim over the coming year through small groups is to deepen our faith, grow our relationships with each other, and encourage each other in our prayer lives. Our hope is to create new groups to enable as many people as possible to join in this important part of our fellowship with each other.

If you are not in a group or would like to be, please do contact me either after a service or via email. olm.rich@stmatthews-bristol.org.uk

Revd Richard Pendlebury – Groups Co-ordinator

6. Outreach Ministries

Stay & Play

Stay & Play is the pre-school toddler group which St. Matthew's partners with the St. Paul's Children's Centre and Elim Church. We meet each Thursday in Elim Church on Jamaica Street and are grateful to Elim for their generous provision of space.

At present our families are mainly Somali, but we also have families from China, Spain, Sudan and the U.K. Good relationships have been maintained and this is particularly important with the Somali families who otherwise may be isolated. The majority of the Somali families live in the high rise Dove Street flats where contact is not easy, particularly when lifts break down.

Bristol City Council have reinstated the funding for a Somali Support Worker and he is based in the St. Paul's Children's Centre, with whom we partner. I reported last year that the Children's Centre were undergoing a complete review of their services. We are delighted that Stay & Play in Elim came out highly recommended because of our outreach into the surrounding area, resulting in the continued attendance of the Family Worker from the Children's Centre. The continuity of this excellent worker is seen as vital by both the Children's Centre and ourselves.

As previously reported, our work with the families reaches far beyond the toddler group. Once again we have been privileged to assist families with housing needs, immigration, form filling and signposting to other services. Most importantly, we were able to support a family suffering racial abuse, and support them with interviews with police and SARI (Stand Against Racism & Inequality), which resulted in the family being rehoused in a different location.

John Stilwell is a highly valued member of our small team. We have also been joined over the past 4 months by Sarah Douglas, who is an enormous help and much loved by the families who come each week.

Val Jeal

Knightstone Coffee Mornings

We have been running a Coffee Morning at Knightstone House most Wednesday mornings since September 2011. Making hot drinks and providing cake is a small part of this. The major part is in getting to know the residents; very few are Christian though most are happy to talk about their spirituality and how it has affected their lives. Sometimes we just talk about day to day matters, sometimes we have lively discussion. The residents are all interesting people and come from various walks of life: although they may be physically slowing down those who come to the coffee mornings mostly get out and about and lead independent lives.

Over the years some have come to events at St Matthew's, especially Tea and Chat, Party in the Garden and the Carol Service. We had a Bring and Share Party in the New Year and a BBQ with the residents doing the cooking in their garden in early July. On the last Wednesday before Christmas we sang carols accompanied by Tim and Margie Bushell; Ian our vicar also came along, introduced himself and joined in. We are still very short of St Matthew's people to come and help with this; this year Pat Goddard and Ann Baker have been running it with occasional visits from Sue Budd who comes over from Bath. It would be great to have more people involved even on an occasional basis. Please come and talk to me if you are interested.

Ann Baker

7. Fellowship

Tea & Chat

Tea & Chat continues to meet in the church hall twice monthly on the 2nd & 4th Thursday of the month (2.15 -4.00pm). Anyone is welcome to come, although people tend to be more senior members of the congregation or neighbourhood.

We have up to 20 members & on average have 12 -16 people attend each meeting. We really miss Enid Salvidge who died last year but have welcomed a few new members, including Heather Cressy, who very kindly has joined our team of helpers. Non regular church members include folk from Knightstone House, Dove Street & two or three from further afield.

We are very fortunate to have the 'Alive!' team, who run a 'guided reminiscence' session once a month. Radio Bristol, who have been raising money for this amazing Charity this year, visited a couple of our sessions at St Matthew's to see them in action. Other activities during 2018 included an afternoon with Rick Parsons, who shared his old 78rpm record collection with us; a pancake party; Easter craft activities; a board games afternoon; a strawberry tea; a picnic in the garden, where the weather was so hot we had to stay inside to keep cool; a Harvest/Autumn themed afternoon with seasonal food & quiz & Christmas card making with Ann Baker. We finished the year with Christmas carols, kindly accompanied by Janet Lunt, mince pies & a 'Christmas Thought for the Week' from our Vicar, Ian.

Running Tea & Chat is a real blessing to us as a team members & hopefully to those who come. The 2019 programme includes 'an afternoon with Deborah Tomkins' at the beginning of the year, 'Steve Price & his many banjos' in April & of course the monthly 'Alive!' sessions. We always welcome new members & you don't necessarily have to be an OAP to come!

Jackie Burnell, Joyce Stocks, Gillian Joomun, Heather Cressy

Social Organising Team

Our small but dedicated Social Organising Team have continued to focus efforts on organising events to build the fellowship of our church family, but also accessible and welcoming enough to reach out to those currently not part of our Church. We aim to have a varied programme which complements and supports the wider activities in church while appealing to a diverse range of people. We hope you have felt able to bring friends along to these. Of course our offerings are somewhat limited by our small numbers but look forward to extending St Matthew's hospitality in the coming year and invite others to join us.

Thanks to the core team who work so hard and laugh even harder: David, Helen, Katheryn, Sarah, Vanessa and Chris.

Vanessa Conte

Flower Team

My thanks go to the wonderful group who make up the flower rota team, for their commitment and creativity. I am very grateful for their willingness to cover for one another so that it all runs smoothly and there are always flowers to show God's amazing creation. We have been joined by Julia this year which is much appreciated.

It is always a real joy to come together as a team for Christmas, Easter and harvest. It is also a time of extended fellowship with a wider group from the church family at these important times. It is a great opportunity for us to invite friends with creative floral gifts to join us on these occasions. A friend of mine who was staying for a weekend came with me to help decorate the church for Christmas. She had a great time, felt very welcomed and then came for the service the next day. Please do feel free to invite friends or family, whether that's for a larger event or just on your week – it may be the invitation that draws someone closer to Jesus!

There is also the opportunity for church families and men to join the team – the way in which the flowers are done on a weekly basis really is down to the individual. I'd also like to thank everyone for their generosity in providing flowers and greenery. In particular, I'd like to thank the garden team, who's care and commitment allows us to raid the gardens for such a great variety of greenery for the larger occasions.

Laura Pendlebury

8. City Deanery Synod

Firstly our thanks to Nigel Currie for his service as our parish and PCC's representative at City Deanery Synod. Nigel stepped down in the autumn, and we are very grateful for all his faithful attendance and support for this ministry.

Since then, I have been our representative and we hope and expect that following this APCM, we shall have two new representatives from the parish to be alongside me on this.

During the autumn and spring, deanery synod has met at St Stephen's, City in September, St. Ambrose Whitehall in November, and All Saints Fishponds in February.

In September and February, we had presentations about Uganda, and the revival of the link between City Deanery and our diocesan link dioceses in Uganda. The focus of the revived link is to be creation care, and how we can work with our partners in Uganda on the vital issue of climate change, and how this is so detrimentally affecting this country. The work of our link will involve liaising with the Christian environmental organisation, A Rocha.

In September, we also had a presentation from the diocesan stewardship officer, Claire Fussel, about the Parish Giving scheme, something that the PCC will consider later in the year.

In November we had a presentation from Howard Worsley, Tutor in Mission and Vice-Principal of Trinity College. Howard shared some best practice about Creative family-focused expression of church, an area in which he has experience and expertise, and also an area St Matthew's PCC regards as a priority for mission.

We also had a presentation on resources to help support developing a culture of Invitation in our churches – again an area our PCC is encouraging engagement.

In our more recent synod, we had an inspiring presentation from a Christian organisation concerned with fostering, and finding homes for all children who need one.

Deanery Synod is also a valuable opportunity to meet with and share experiences and fellowship with, members of neighbouring local churches. I look forward to sharing this ministry with others in our church in the coming year, and to feeding back the ideas and reflections that come from Synod.

Ian Tomkins

9. Our Mission Partners

In 2016 PCC set up a group to take on the oversight of our Mission Partners. This Mission Support Group consists of Nigel Currie, Kyle Douglas, Joyce Stocks and Margaret Williams, and we are happy to hear from members of the church on Mission matters.

Throughout 2018 we continued to give approximately 10% of our general giving to the Mission Fund, supporting the following seven partners (approximately £2000 to each per year, paid quarterly, for a minimum of four years): St George's Baghdad, Busoga Trust, CPAS, John and Gillian Robinson (Crosslinks) in Bangkok, Changing Tunes, Sisters of the Church and Friends of Alalay. We receive regular reports (sometimes in person!) from our partners, and these are placed on the noticeboard in the church foyer.

Following a decision made by the PCC in January 2019, funding of our partners was reduced slightly in line with the overall drop in our church's income. However, after the blessing that has been the success of St Matthew's recent focus on stewardship, our mission support can be raised again, probably to its previous level.

We review the support for our partners every three years, and since the funding for the last five groups listed above began in 2016 or earlier, their support is due to be reviewed this year. The Mission Support Group would therefore welcome comments from any member of the church who feels either that those five groups should continue to be supported for a further four years from 2020, or anyone who has a different, specific mission group on their heart whom they believe should be considered. This will enable The Mission Support Group and PCC to make a final, informed decision.

Above all, we would encourage everyone to use the information on the noticeboard and on the groups' websites to follow the work of our Mission Partners, so that we can all hold them faithfully in our prayers.

Kyle Douglas

10. Safeguarding

PCC Nominated person for Safeguarding – **Simon Pugh-Jones**

Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) – **Julia Wright**

Nominated Person for Vulnerable adults – **Val Jeal**

Parish Lead Recruiter DBS checks – **Julia Wright**

Safeguarding is a top priority for all Parishes. At St Matthew's we are working hard to ensure that all checks, processes and training requirements are up to date. Much progress has been made, but there is still more to do and we ask for your continuing support for this in the coming year.

It is a legal requirement and common practice now all organisations adhere to government DBS requirements.

Policy

The Safeguarding report was updated and confirmed by PCC on the 15th October 2018 for St Matthew's church and it is available on the church notice board and is reviewed and updated annually in accordance with the guidelines from the Diocese of Bristol.

We recommend that all church members familiarise themselves with this information and the notices listing safeguarding officer and vulnerable adults officer.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

DBS checks are being completed at the moment by various members of the PCC and Youth team, to ensure that everyone who should have a certificate has completed one.

Information within the Church

A section of notice board is allocated for the display of all safeguarding notifications with other information to guide adults and children to where they can seek help and support.

Annual Safeguarding Audit.

This will take place after Easter this year as a requirement of the Diocese.

Thank you all for your cooperation and help in this.

Julia Wright

11. St Matthew's Playgroup

The Playgroup continues to thrive, each year bringing a new cohort of 30-40 children and families with a wide range of strengths and needs. As usual in our small setting we have a delightful and diverse group with many languages, cultures, faiths, ethnicities and socio economic situations which reflect the local community. The staff team and families share our experiences of the world and build a supportive community of understanding and acceptance where we recognise and celebrate our differences and similarities.

We are a staff team of six as we have recently said goodbye to Paula who has been with us for nine years and is moving on to pursue her new career in Play therapy for children. As a team we are keen to keep up to date with current thinking on education theories and good practice and so we endeavour to take up any training opportunities that are available.

The whole team have recently updated their First Aid training, and our training focus this year has been developing our skills to support children with Social Emotional and Mental Health challenges, Makaton signing, Maths for Early Years and supporting the positive Attachment and Emotional Wellbeing of all children.

The outdoor space at St Matthew's is an important element of what we provide as so many of our families live in flats and even very young children are spending time inside with TV, mobile and computer screens. We take the children outside in all weathers and they enjoy the freedom to explore and learn provided by the garden. The staff are really grateful to the church team who maintain the garden.

The house, swing, sandpit and climbing frame are always popular but the children also delight in the nature around them; insects, birds, trees flowers and also the neighbourhood life – the diggers and fire engines, the dog walkers and cyclists all enriching their learning experiences!

This year we have some children with acute additional needs in our group, some with challenging health or disability issues, some living in poverty, some in emergency housing and some at risk of harm. This means that we are working closely with many agencies including Paediatricians, Speech and Language Therapists, Social Workers, Health Visitors, Mental Health support workers and the Bristol Inclusion Team, to provide the best support for the children. The work that we do is highly regarded by these agencies and we are finding that we have more families in need referred to us for support year on year.

We are all part of the team around these children, working towards closing the attainment gap that disadvantage often causes and improving outcomes for all children to give them the opportunity of a better future.

You are welcome to come and visit our happy Playgroup and see how we work together to support the children's learning and development and how they remind us of the wonder in the world around us -maybe you could share some of your experience and skills with the children too?

Linda and the Playgroup team, Sue, Paula, Rosie, Lydia, Stacey and Adelaide

12. Building Team

Looking back:

Following the achievements of PROJECT SHINE, during the last year we've been busy maintaining, improving and upgrading things around our wonderful building. A long list of tasks has been completed many of which just happened, often unseen and without fuss, kindly undertaken by a team of great generosity of time, expertise and often of funds.

Particular thanks are owed to Julia for her fabulous organisation of contractors and associated paperwork. Also to Rick who pretty well knows every wire and pipe, often because he's fixed most of them himself. To Phil who despite impressive efforts to be away as much as possible, has been regularly fixing, advising and assisting. To Becca Meyer, our Steeple Keeper for her enthusiastic maintenance of all things 'bells' (despite a plague of flies!). To Anne and Kyle, without whom the garden would not be the hugely enjoyed asset that it is. And to the many others who clean, tidy, fix, prune, unblock and polish – you know who you are, and your efforts are greatly appreciated.

Looking forward:

With the benefit of Ian's oversight the increasing use of our building to support the mission and ministry of St Matthew's is high on the agenda. We aim to do more to ensure St Matthew's building is open, accessible and safe, and to greater fulfil its potential to do God's work. And Ian's legendary enthusiasm for gardening (at times almost too enthusiastic) is encouraging further enhancement of our outside spaces.

We also have some challenges and are looking at long term planning for some building work that will need to be done before too long, including the tower roof and some external masonry repair.

And for both the building and garden there is a growing will to be more environmentally considerate in how we operate as a church – lowering carbon footprint, encouraging wildlife and nurturing God's creation.

If you share in our enthusiasm and gratitude for our building and gardens, and would like to get more involved, even if just occasionally, please do let me know. I promise you will find it richly rewarding.

Simon Pugh-Jones

13. Technology Group

The Technology team keep a watching brief on all aspects of technology used in the church. In practice this is the sound system, the projector system, the computers and network and the web site. Andy Hogg manages the sound team while Rick looks after the remainder. Rick is also the first point of contact on behalf of the building

committee for the electrical, heating, hot water, telephone, intruder and fire alarm systems. These will be covered in the building report.

The sound system continues to run well. Thanks to a donation we are now using a much smaller active sub bass cabinet that also has a much better bass response. This has improved the sound for video and pre-recorded music. We are experimenting with new microphones for the choir as better but affordable versions are now available. Again we recorded the carol service in full for BHBS (Hospital Radio for Bristol) and it was broadcast to their listeners on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. We welcome to Richard Graham as a new recruit who is currently undergoing training.

On the projector system the only change has been James Tovey as a new recruit – welcome.

An advertising display has been installed in the foyer – this is basically a TV with a Raspberry Pi connected via the church WiFi network and is used to display still image advertisements on a rotating cycle. It will also do video but there has not yet been a need for this. It runs unmanaged so is always visible to visitors, playgroup and hall hires.

A large screen TV was donated by the estate of Enid Salvidge has been mounted in the lounge and cables provided for laptop, DVD and games consoles for use in meetings.

Apart from keeping the computers up to date, no other changes to the systems have been needed.

The documentation, sufficient for the long-term management of all the systems, has been kept up to date.

Rick Parsons.

14. DIOCESE OF BRISTOL

Across the Diocese of Bristol in 2018, there was significant and varied development and change. There was growth in ministry, vocations, discipleship, evangelism and service. This was supported by an increase in investment from within the Diocese and the national Church of England.

Leadership and vision

Amidst this activity, the Diocese welcomed the appointment and arrival of a new Bishop of Bristol, Rt Revd Vivienne Faull, formerly Dean of York. On her appointment, Bishop Viv expressed her excitement at being “at the heart of this great, multicultural diocese” and her desire to “lead a diocese that continues its pioneering courage and shows the love of God of everybody, whoever they are”.

Parishes, chaplaincies and schools, continued to work out the diocesan vision of Creating connections – with God, each other and our communities, and focusing on the priorities of making disciples, growing leaders and engaging younger generations.

Ministry and mission

This work was supported by the ministry funded and the support provided through the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance, the central body that serves the Diocese as a whole.

In total, 201 clergy were licensed across the Diocese's 200 churches and various chaplaincies and institutions, an increase of 10%. There was a 4% increase in incumbent (vicar equivalent) posts. 180 people were in post as Licensed Lay Ministers.

Supported by the Making disciples in your parish resources, parishes built on a foundation of prayer, and saw increases in developing a culture of invitation, attendees at evangelistic courses, people who were part of small groups and in helping people identify, develop and use their gifts.

Churches continued to run 200 social action projects and are involved in a further 300.

Numbers going forward for ordination continued to increase. 14 candidates were sponsored for ordination, greater than the 50% increase aimed for, and the cohort were younger and more diverse.

The Diocese launched two Resourcing churches – St Nicholas, Bristol and the Pattern Church, Swindon – with £3m grant funding over six years from the Church of England's Strategic Development Fund. Resourcing churches exist to reach new people and resource beyond their own congregations and locations by growing and giving away disciples and leaders, planting and strengthening other churches and providing financial and other resources for mission.

Education and support

The Diocese's family of 70 church schools continued to develop, offering an authentically Christian education to 17,000 children. The Deanery CE Academy (secondary) in Swindon began to be built and will open in September 2019.

The Diocesan Support Services team sought to express vision, strengthen relationships, empower people, maximise resources and develop structures as they served parishes, ministers and schools. 4,600 people received training, a 7.5% increase on average rating it 8 ¾ out of 10.

Giving and finance

The Diocesan Board of Finance increased significantly its investment in ministry and support, from £8.6m to £9m. This was in accordance with the Financial Plan approved by the Board of Directors and endorsed by the Diocesan Synod. It largely related to increases in ordinands, curates and ministers and was supported by increased grant income. However, Parish Share reduced slightly and, despite overall increases in parish income remains a challenge if the Diocese is to continue to invest in new ministries. Ultimately, the DBF sustained an operating deficit of £291,000.

The year ahead

In 2019, the Diocese looks forward to welcoming new Archdeacons of Malmesbury (Christopher Bryan) and of Bristol and a new Director of Ministry Development. Liz Townend has taken up the post of Diocesan Director of Education. The Diocese will continue to work to its Creating connections vision, priorities and 2016-20 Strategic Plan. At the same time, it

will review implementation of the plan and start to develop the next Strategic Plan (2021-5), and work to find ways to resource this vision and the plans that support it.

2018 DIOCESAN SYNOD report

In 2018, the Diocesan Synod met for two full day meetings in June and November.

The June meeting in Bradley Stoke was the last of the last three year term.

- Bishop Ric Thorpe gave an inspiring presentation about the potential of church planting and the range of opportunities for fresh expressions. The distinctive purpose of resourcing churches was discussed and Revd Toby Flint, leader of St Nicholas, Bristol, was interviewed.
- The different ways churches can serve individuals and help transform communities through social and community action were shared, including a range of examples from the floor and the front.
- Exploring further the themes in the Setting God's People Free report, the Dean and David Lawrence from LICC provoked reflection and action in thinking theologically and practically about our common vocation to follow Christ and what it means to be an everyday disciple on the frontline.

The November meeting in Swindon was the first of a new three year term and had been preceded by an introductory session in September.

- The excitement about the growth and diversity of new vocations to ministry being discerned was outlined by Revd Chris North, Adviser for Ministerial Vocations, leading to constructive discussions about taking this forward.
- Revd Canon Mat Ineson and Revd Malcolm Strange shared the partnership work and mission opportunities beginning to bear fruit in Mission Areas.

The Diocesan Synod's role in approving the financial plans of the Diocesan Board of Finance was part of both the June and November meetings. The 2017-2020 Financial Plan that supports the Diocese's Strategic Plan was presented, discussed, noted and adopted in June.

In November, considerable time was given to debating the 2019 budget. This represented a significant increase in expenditure to support an increase in ministry. This investment is primarily in increasing the numbers of ordinands and curates with external funding increasing ministerial deployment in projects like the Mission Areas and resourcing Churches. The Synod approved the expenditure on the basis of the mission and ministry that had been shared earlier that day. This came with the challenge to increase Parish Share to enable this investment.

Finally, the Diocesan Synod received a new President in 2018 as Rt Revd Vivienne Faull took up her post. In June, Bishop Lee thanked the wider diocese for their contribution during the Vacancy in See and, in November, Bishop Viv used her first address to encourage us all to "get out more" as witnesses in the world.