

Parish of Walthamstow

St Gabriel's | St Luke's | St Mary's

Annual Report 2021



Rector's Report

We often remind each other when we have held an event or led a campaign or have finished a project that we don't say 'Thank you', we say 'Congratulations'. When we say 'Congratulations' to one another, we acknowledge that our work is a shared endeavour; we were all involved in creating it, giving our best and making something happen. It feels really important that we say to one another at this point in the year and pandemic: 'Congratulations!'. Together, we made church happen through the hardest of years, with so many limitations and losses. And when we say that, we acknowledge that we need each other, each other's gifts and time and generosity. Together, through our giving, we have sustained the life of the church. Through our skills, we have helped our community not only continue but also grow and thrive. Through our kindness, prayerfulness and love, we have been part of keeping us together when the circumstances of the world might have threatened that. Congratulations.

That said, I find that I **do** want to say 'Thank you', too. I am nervous of thank-you lists – there's a risk someone will feel overlooked or forgotten. So let me say a huge thank you to you all. Thank you for the sustaining gift of praying together each day and worshipping together on Sunday, thank you for inspiring me by your faith and service and commitment, thank you for your encouragement to the clergy team when we may have felt unsure or exhausted. Thank you to those who have really gone above and beyond – giving hours and hours of their time and skill to make something happen, often in a way which is unseen. Thank you if you have joined us in the last year when things were strange and mostly online, thank you for sticking with your church when perhaps it was difficult or exhausting to do so. Thank you for the great blessing it is to be church with you.

Above all, let us join together in giving thanks to God who has sustained us by his Spirit. Thanks be to God for his kindness and his leading in the many times where we have not known that way. Thanks be to God for his presence with us in the grief, turmoil and uncertainty of this year. Thanks be to God for the ways in which we have grown and changed. Thanks be to God for the indescribable gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we know freedom, healing and hope.

Whatever the next few months holds, whatever the shape of our life together, I pray we will be communities marked by a sense of shared endeavour, of mutual interdependence and of deep gratitude.

I am thankful for you.

Vanessa

Rev Vanessa Conant
Team Rector

Governance and Electoral Roll

PCC (Parochial Church Council)

Clergy	Wardens	Deanery Synod	PCC	Ex-officio
Rev Vanessa Conant	Lynne Rhodes (St Mary's)	Jacqueline Baker	Liz Davies (Secretary)	Rob Duddridge (Reader)
Rev Jill Mowbray	Carson Thompson (St Mary's)	Lou Henderson	Martin Kearney (Treasurer)	
Rev Adam Childs	Laurence Jones (St Gabriel's)	Donna Gwilliams	Natalie Burwell	
Rev Dave Edmondson	Tim Coles (St Luke's)	Pauline Martindale (Discerning)	Brian Foxton	
	Donna Gwilliams (St Luke's)		Ava Blake	
			Don Howarth	
			Helen Miller	
			Alex Simpson	
			William Daley	

Standing for Appointment in 2021

Rebecca Veazey
 Dalton Banjo
 Pauline Martindale (Deanery Synod)

Standing down from PCC

Don Howarth
 Helen Miller
 Rev Adam Childs

We give thanks for Helen and Don's service to our PCC throughout the year. Since our last APCM, the PCC has met twice. We have had a particular focus on:

- Developing our safeguarding procedures and policies
- Developing a structure of sub-committees to support the work of the PCC and the life of the church
- Developing our work around inclusion and diversity
- Continuing our oversight of the Heritage Fund building project and the sale of assets associated with this
- Overseeing staffing changes, especially the appointment of a Team Vicar at St Gabriel's

Electoral Roll Report - Jacqueline Baker

Summary of the Ministry: The Electoral Roll is the membership list of those who worship in one of the Parish of Walthamstow's three worshipping communities. We welcome new people, and, in time, invite them to join the Electoral Roll; we also manage the Electoral Roll to keep it current.

Since our last Annual Meeting, five names have been removed from the Roll: two people have moved away and, sadly for us, three members have gone to glory. We remember them by name - Dennis Cooper, Hyacinth Hibbert and Blossom Lindo - and we thank God that they loved and followed Him and that we had the privilege of knowing them.

However, we have also had the joy of adding ten new members for a total of 326 people between the three churches of our Parish, which is a net increase of 5 members on last year.

Who's involved? Our Electoral Roll officers are Jacqueline Baker (St Mary's, Parish), Martin Kearney (St Gabriel's) and John Fairlamb (St Luke's). We give thanks for John as he steps down this year and we welcome Geoff Fisher, who will be taking up this role for St Luke's.

What has been a highlight? Although our church buildings have been shut for worship for much of the last six months, we have still welcomed new members who have joined us for online worship; we very much look forward to meeting these new members in person as restrictions lift.

What has been a challenge? The opportunities to meet new people face to face have been restricted as the majority of our services have been online these past six months. In normal circumstances, we would welcome new members and then invite them to join the Electoral Roll; however, the pandemic has made this more difficult.

What is your hope for the coming year? Once restrictions lift fully, it will be wonderful to actually meet those new members we have only seen on a screen, or as a name on a piece of paper! If you have started worshipping with us these last six months, either in person or online, we'd love to invite you to join the Electoral Roll. Please contact your Electoral Roll Officer or a member of clergy if you would like to join.

Waltham Forest Deanery Synod – Jacqueline Baker

Summary of the Ministry: Deanery Synod gathers representatives of churches across the Borough. At each Synod (currently held on Zoom), a presentation is given after which there is discussion. Members then report back to their PCCs. We have had two Synods in the past six months.

- November 2020: The Diocesan Environmental Officer (Rev James Gilder) gave a presentation on "The Environment, Climate Change & Eco Church" and how Christians, as stewards of God's creation, can get involved in the important initiative of Eco Church and lead by example in the communities in which we live.

- March 2021: Rev Neil-Allen Walsh from St Margaret's, Leytonstone, presented "Racism and the Church: An evening looking at how we as churches can address issues of racism in the church and society." This was a challenging Synod for many, listening to the difficulties faced by many of our clergy and church members. In the breakout rooms there was frank and honest discussion on how we can begin to tackle racism in our places of worship.

Who's involved? Deanery Synod comprises all the clergy, plus the elected laity from the Deanery, and meets three times per year. The Parish of Walthamstow has four lay members, each elected for three-year terms: Donna Gwilliams, Lou Henderson, Pauline Martindale and Jacqueline Baker.

What has been a challenge? After a report on Eco Church was given at the January PCC, a PCC subgroup, led by Mike Forbes, has started to see what the Parish is already doing, and, more importantly, to investigate the environmental issues the Parish needs to more thoroughly address.

What is your hope for the coming year? Deanery Synod can appear as just a 'talking shop', but important issues are raised with which the local church can and should engage. I am excited about the next Synod where we will be looking at how to release the potential of the full body of Christ by resourcing, equipping and enabling the potential of lay ministry in our churches.

Safeguarding

We give thanks for the work of our Parish Safeguarding Officer, Emma Clements, and Donna Gwilliams who have provided additional support to help us develop our safeguarding policies and procedures. In the coming year, the Parish intends to place a particular emphasis on creating a positive culture of Safeguarding. We will be doing this through access to training, clear communication of new policies and opportunities to connect this ministry with our faith.

Finance – Martin Kearney (Treasurer)

2020 Financial Resources

We want to give thanks to God and thanks to those of you who give so generously in so many ways. This has been an exceptional year for our Parish with the Covid-19 Pandemic forcing us to close our buildings to worship, which has also meant the loss of significant amounts of hire income from our churches and halls. As the Parish Treasurer, I feel we have been incredibly fortunate to end the year with a surplus - an overall loss in income of £41k, but with a £42k reduction in expenditure, and, when all is accounted for, a profit of £2k.

The PCC has committed to spending the proceeds from the sales of several parish-owned properties on our National Lottery-supported Creative Church project, which will repair and regenerate St Mary's ancient building. These properties include a house which the Parish part-owned on Sylvan Road, and which has now been sold; the now-closed St Stephen's Church, which is in the process of being sold; and some of the income from the sale of two church-owned houses near the St Mary's Welcome Centre at 9/10 Church End, which are also in the process of being sold. We have to date spent £69k on the Creative Church project, but will spend much more once more assets sell.

Separating out the Creative Church project from our accounts shows that our income for 2020 was £247k whilst our expenditure was £245k. **Thank you so much for your tremendous support for the life and ministry of the Parish.**

In preparing for the sale of St Stephen's Church, the property was re-valued, which showed an increase of £176k; this means our collective assets are now valued at £3.45m.

We praise God for his provision and faithfulness to us. However, there is no doubt that 2021 will prove to be as challenging a year for the Parish as 2020 was. We still have continued demands on our finances, with the bulk of this coming from St Mary's Creative Church regeneration project.

The pandemic allowed us to reduce our expenditure in line with the reduction of our income. However, as we hopefully return to a more normal shape of ministry in this coming year, we will also incur more costs and thus may be in the position in years to come where we do not raise enough income to cover our expenditures. With that in mind, it's important that we, as trustees and parishioners, take every step available to us to place the Parish in a financially secure position.

Making sense of the figures

The Parish has many assets, which can make the figures confusing at first glance. Our assets come from the buildings the Parish own (this does not include St Mary's and St Gabriel's Churches, which are owned by the Church Commissioners and do not belong to the Parish). This means that we now have assets that are valued at approximately £3.45 million in total. If we break figures down further, the net assets come from 2 houses and 3 other buildings - St Stephen's Church, St Gabriel's Family Centre and St Mary's Welcome Centre. The value of these properties, along with re-valuing of St Stephen's, bring the estimated value of our Parish assets to £3,449,574.

These assets are a great gift to the Parish and a huge responsibility. The buildings do not of course translate into cash for the day-to-day operations of our churches and, in fact, having such significant assets can present challenges when seeking to raise external funding for the Parish. It is important that we make the very best use of our assets to ensure the continued financial viability of the Parish.

True financial position

So what is our real financial position? In terms of income, in 2020, we received the sum of £247,362 whilst our expenditure was £244,936, increasing our reserves by the sum of £2,426.

Reserves Shortfall

In 2020, we spent some of our capital on St Mary's Creative Church regeneration project, which has meant that our free reserves fall well short of our agreed 4-month required reserve policy. This means there is a shortfall in required reserves of approximately £54,884.

Why is there a deficit?

There is no single answer to this question; many factors contribute to our current situation. The Parish have been operating at a loss for a number of years now; however, in some previous years, we received a legacy or a large injection of funds that covered that deficit. We have not received any such legacies for a few years now. The under-investment in our buildings over many years has also meant that some of them now need significant investment in order to ensure their viability.

Why have you employed more staff when there is a deficit?

Our new staff positions are funded by outside grants. In terms of ministry costs, we have had to reduce spending wherever we can.

What are we doing to improve the situation?

We cannot continue spending more than we raise and the PCC asks for your prayers and support as we continue to seek ways to make our parish grow financially and spiritually.

Our Finance Operations Group are monitoring our financial position and are working on ways to improve and control it; the PCC also continues to make decisions that keep our expenditure to a minimum where possible. We are constantly looking for any grants to assist with our operating costs, especially for ministries like CAP or our Youth and Children's Ministry, where there is good potential for fundraising through grants. We will also continue to encourage our members to give financially to the work and ministry of the church as stewards of what God has given each of us.

What can everyone do?

The first, and most important, thing is that we ask you to pray. Please pray especially for the PCC and those who are leading us in finding ways forward with our finances, that God will give us wisdom in our decision-making and in our thinking. Please also pray for the leadership of the churches as we seek to find ways to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of our Parish. Secondly, give regularly towards the life and ministry of your church. The best way to do this is by setting up a regular standing order or by giving through the Parish Giving Scheme. Please speak to the Treasurer or a member of the clergy if you would like to know more.

Staffing – Rev Vanessa Conant

We hold our APCM on a day of farewells. On 23rd May 2021, we will say goodbye to the Childs family as Adam's curacy comes to an end. Adam, Becky, Seth and Jonah will be spending some time at All Saints Leyton, where Adam will temporarily support that church through vacancy.

Since our last APCM, we have been able to welcome new members to the team. Rev Alan Moss has just joined us as an Associate Priest in the Parish to lead the pioneering new work on the Attlee Terrace and Prospect Hill estates. Alan's wife, Sarah, will serve one year as an ordinand in the Parish before going on to begin her curacy training. Rev Andrew Stewart and his wife, Menekse, will join us in August when Andrew takes up the post of Team Vicar of St Gabriel's.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund provides funding for buildings renovation and also for staff appointments to help us deliver new streams of activity as part of our Creative Church regeneration project. Thanks to this funding, we have been able to appoint Tim Hewitt as the project's Community Gardener, adding to his existing role as our Head Gardener. We have also been able to appoint Dr Emma Miles, who will join us in August as our Community Engagement Officer, helping to build arts and heritage partnerships.

Please join me in giving thanks for our staff team and praying for them in their continued commitment, dedication and service.

Charnelle Barclay: Community Organiser/Church Planter
 Cameron Conant: Communications and Social Media
 Jacintha Danaswamy: Ordinand, Church Growth Project Manager
 John Fairlamb: Churchyard Gardener
 Fiona Fouhy: Parish Administrator
 Sidra Gill: St Gabriel's Outreach Worker
 Tim Hewitt: Head Gardener
 Sue Peacham: CAP Centre Manager
 Everett Peters: St Gabriel's Premises
 Josh Price: Community Organising Intern
 Jonathan Rathbone: Musical Director

Clergy

Rev Adam Childs
 Rev Dave Edmondson
 Rev Alan Moss
 Rev Jill Mowbray

St Gabriel's

Worshipping and Community Life

Summary of the ministry: We have maintained worship every week, mostly recorded, but in-person, when allowed, throughout the pandemic with over 20 people involved in active ministries of leading, preaching, music, prayer, reading, children's work, recording and distributing services to the housebound, and regular pastoral letters. We have kept to our focus of Participation, Connectedness and Growth with sermon series on The Way of Love, and the Cast of the Kingdom and The Beloved Community. Martin Kearney has actively maintained our relationship with Wood Street Nursery, Sidra Gill has maintained our relationship with English Club mums and parents, and Louise Russell has aimed to keep connections with our children and young people and their parents.

Volunteering and service: Over 20 people have given deeply and sacrificially of their time but many others in our congregation of 70 have given deeply in prayer.

What has been a highlight? The massive commitment of so many volunteers in keeping ministry going without a Team Vicar. The faithfulness and trust in God of every member of the congregation in challenging times.

What's been challenging? Keeping connected with our frail and housebound members has not been easy, especially since many of them lack access to technology.

What is a hope for the coming year? We are excited about the appointment of Andrew Stewart as Team Vicar, and we are looking forward to exploring new opportunities for mission and ministry under his leadership. There are many ideas bubbling up, and we hope that God will guide us to discover together what our new directions as a community should be.

Women and Children

Summary of the Ministry: Prior to the pandemic, Sidra Gill was leading English as a second language for migrant mums and a thriving stay and playgroup for children under 5. These in-person activities have had to stop because of the pandemic, but we have been able to continue supporting families through phone calls and individual meetings.

Volunteering and Service: We have been particularly thankful for the ministry and service of Hannah MacFarlane, Gloria, Mary, Gwen, Everett Peters, Evillyn and Vicky Petgrave.

What has been a highlight? Being able to continue supporting families despite the challenges of this time. We have offered translation for interactions with the NHS and support for homeschooling and online resources. We have also offered prayer and psychological support for families, especially for Mums, and have delivered meals to elderly people and those who were unwell or had to isolate.

What has been a challenge? Not being able to meet in person alongside coping with the challenges of supporting people through a really stressful season.

St Luke's

St Luke's Stall – Donna Gwilliams

Summary of the Ministry: Being a presence at the weekly farmers' market.

Who's involved? We would not survive without our incredible team of volunteers – we are currently looking to expand the team of people who help us serve refreshments and welcome visitors to the stall.

What has been a highlight? Being able to run the stall all the way through. We did this by having our trolley service that visited all of the stalls twice on a Sunday from January to Mid-march. This also meant we had more time to chat with the traders as we made their drinks.

What has been a challenge? It's been hard to have to run the stall with a smaller team of volunteers. It's been difficult not being fully accessible to our more vulnerable friends who come to the market.

What is your hope for the coming year? To build on our relationships with the stallholders and to plan a few opportunities to meet up with them. Also as ever to recruit more volunteers of all ages to serve at least once a month alongside the team at St Luke's

St Luke's Bible and Chat – Bill McDermott

Summary of the Ministry: We meet every Sunday morning (currently online) to share what is going on in our lives, to pray for the church, the world and ourselves and to discuss passages from the Bible.

Who's involved? Numbers vary each week. Total number of participants is 8, with a weekly average of 4. Thanks to those who have taken part and to those who have volunteered to lead.

What has been a highlight? Meeting online has perhaps given us the opportunity to study passages in more depth than in our pre-pandemic meetings, which took place in a local cafe and which were pitched more at those with little or no church background. These last six months, we have been studying passages from the Church of England lectionary, which have been thought-provoking, encouraging and challenging.

What has been a challenge? While meeting online has provided an opportunity, it has also been difficult not being able to meet in person and we have lost an opportunity to reach out to people not in the church.

What is your hope for the coming year? That we will once again meet in person; that, wherever we are in our relationship with God, our study of His word together will help us all to grow in that relationship, both individually and as a church.

St Luke's

St Luke's Discovery Bible Study

Summary of the Ministry: Wednesday evening Bible Study and discipleship discussion

What has been a highlight? We have been able to study the Acts of the Apostles, the letter to the Romans and we have now started a very interesting series of studies based on the book of Hosea, one of the Old Testament minor prophets.

Over the Lent and Easter period, we used one of the Lent courses provided by the Diocese of Chelmsford called Generous God Generous Disciples. This enabled us to think through and be challenged not only about our Christian giving in terms of money but also our time, gifts, attitudes and lifestyles as 21st Century followers of Jesus.

What has been a challenge? Not being able to hold our monthly Communion service or our meal together.

What is your hope for the coming year? To welcome people to our Wednesday night activities in the cafes of Walthamstow.

St Luke's Allotment Project

Summary of the Ministry: A project to offer space to learn new gardening skills, grow food together and create outdoor space for people to meet.

Who's involved? Around 10-12 people have come along (not all at once) on a Saturday morning since we started in August.

What has been a highlight? Seeing the space take shape and the conversations, sensible and serious, we have whilst working away. Having fresh homegrown potatoes for Christmas.

What has been a challenge? None really as we started this in response to the pandemic, to offer some outside space to those who have none or very little. The only challenge is being patient whilst nature takes care of the growing!

What is your hope for the coming year? That we are able to create and use the space more widely for church and community events.

St Mary's: Worship

Services – Rev Vanessa Conant

Summary of the Ministry: Collective worship in person at 9am and online at 10.30am

Who's involved: So many people make worship possible – from the welcomers and stewards at 9am, to those who read and pray online at 10.30am. Particular thanks to Rev Adam Childs and Rev Dave Edmondson for their work in leading and preparing services, to Jonathan and Helen Rathbone for their extraordinary service in leading and recording music, to Josh Price who has also led us in worship and to Fiona Fouhy for much of the behind-the-scenes work.

What's been a highlight? It has been such a joy to see each other again in person at the 9am service. The 10.30am service has allowed for lots of creativity, for new voices to be heard and there has been a strong sense of worshipping with others. It has been wonderful to see so many people joining us for worship online.

What's been a challenge? Not being able to worship together in person can feel as if we are very dislocated and disparate. It's likely that many are not joining us online and so we feel the loss of community in this way. It is hard not to be able to sing together. It is difficult to know what the shape of our community will be when pandemic restrictions lift.

What is your hope for the coming year? To be able to gather in-person more easily while still being able to provide online worship; to re-connect with one another and to rebuild confidence in our in-person worship; to discover God's calling to us as we worship outside our building.

Morning Prayer – Rev Dave Edmondson

Summary of the Ministry: To lead people in 15-20 minutes of worship and prayer every weekday at 8.30am on our Facebook page.

Who's involved? Morning Prayer is primarily led by St Mary's clergy as well as by our ordinand, Jacintha Danaswamy, but we also want to thank Rev Dan Copperwheat of Greenleaf Road Baptist Church in Walthamstow for his willingness to lead Morning Prayer once a fortnight, which is always powerful and insightful. We are also really grateful to Cameron Conant in his unseen but vital role in editing, commenting and moderating online.

What has been a highlight? Having such a large community of people praying and encouraging each other every morning has been wonderful. Some of the people who regularly join us are new to St Mary's and since participating in Morning Prayer have started to join us for other online services or courses. It's also been exciting to have people join us online who might never have been able to come to Morning Prayer in the church. About 25-30 people join us every day for Morning Prayer.

What has been a challenge? In some ways this area of our life has had few challenges and, in fact, has been one of the positive impacts of the pandemic – an area of significant growth. We need to consider the long-term sustainability of Morning Prayer and how we continue to hold the digital and in person communities together. Apart from the occasional technical challenge, leading Morning Prayer has been a real privilege and joy.

What is your hope for the coming year? That we will explore how to deepen our connection and to find ways of being a community despite significant growth; also that we will be wise about how we manage this important ministry as Covid restrictions begin to ease.

Vespers – Natalie Burwell

Summary of the Ministry: Vespers is a 40-minute mid-week contemplative service that provides space for stillness, reflection and gentle, practical theological input. Vespers draws on Christian mystical and contemplative traditions and is designed to be accessible to people no matter what they believe.

Volunteers and Service: Our team includes Rev Dave Edmondson, Jacintha Danaswamy, Rhian Johns, Christine Checinska, Carmen Correa and Rebecca Branch, with Rev Vanessa Conant and I leading and planning Vespers together. Rev Adam Childs and Dave have both done a great job making the online Shorthand design for Vespers hospitable.

What has been a highlight? The Young Adults' group have attended Vespers together virtually and found it a helpful space for them to feel close to God; it has also helped spark group discussions. It is also notable that Vespers has reached people in the US, Australia, Spain, India, and across the UK and Ireland - far beyond the four walls of St Mary's. It is wonderful that it has reached people who could have never attended in person.

What has been a challenge? When Vespers took place in person, there was a palpable sense of a unique community forming. There were lots of natural opportunities to follow up and have deeper conversations with the people attending, some of whom had big questions about God and the Christian message; many did not attend other services at St Mary's. Vespers was missional in a tangible way. During the pandemic, some online participants fed back that they valued Vespers and said what they were taking away from it, but there was significantly less interaction to help shape the content, which made it more difficult to have a sense of what was helpful.

What is your hope for the coming year? I hope Vespers will be sustainable through a larger group of regular volunteers who feel a sense of ownership for it. I hope we can maintain some level of access for people who cannot be there in person.

Music – Jonathan Rathbone

Summary of the Ministry: Keeping people connected and involved by singing and worshipping together. There is something powerful when we are all in our own living rooms, but at the same time, performing together; even when we can't see the others, we know all our friends are simultaneously involved.

Who's involved? All those who have contributed to the videos and recordings, but particularly Helen, my wife, who has been involved on a weekly basis, recording songs for me! We've recorded about five hours of music for St Mary's in the past year!

What has been a highlight? For me, the Carol Service, which included many people visually on the Zoom video and many sending in recordings of their singing. It was a different challenge but it felt like we had fought back against the lockdown and created something we could share beyond just the church community.

What has been a challenge? Obviously music-making has all had to be individual, but this has meant we've had to think of innovative ways round the problem. My personal challenge has been mastering the recording technology; I'm getting there!

What is your hope for the coming year? It will be such a joy to be able to get all our musicians together again and for the whole congregation sing out in praise! My hope is just to see restrictions lifted enough for us to do this soon.

Bells – Katherine Marshall (Tower Captain)

Summary of the Ministry: Ringing the bells in the St Mary's Church Tower.

Who's involved: We have a core team of ringers and are always keen to train new people. We are very welcoming and friendly. I would like to say particular thanks to Lucas Bent for his invaluable contribution to the maintenance of the bells.

What has been a highlight? We have thoroughly benefited from modern technology. A computer app, 'Ringing Room', had been developed in America, where ringers could ring with each other online. Pressing a key does not quite develop the skill of controlling a heavy bell, but it has been invaluable for learning sequencing, and has kept our band together. We rang a real bell for Christmas and tolled a bell on 23rd March 2021 to remember those who had died during the pandemic, as well as for Prince Philip's funeral. As lockdown eases, we can start to ring again as a band, now in groups of four for 10 minutes after the Sunday service, and soon, in groups of 6 ringers for 45 minutes, which means our regular Wednesday evening practice can start again. We are pleased to find that we have not lost the skill but do need to build up our physical stamina.

What has been a challenge? Not being able to ring in person.

What is your hope for the coming year? We look forward to the day when we can once again welcome and teach new ringers. New ringers are always welcome to join us.

Children's Ministry - Jo Talbott

Summary of the Ministry: To engage and offer discipleship to children aged between two and fourteen and, where appropriate, their parents, during the Sunday morning service.

Who's involved: The team consists of twelve members; during the pandemic, two members of the all-age worship team have also joined us.

What has been a highlight? Finding ways to reach our children and young people through digital media and to continue to work as a team even though we cannot meet in person.

What has been a challenge? Producing enjoyable, informative and engaging sessions using everyday technology, not knowing if our content is meeting the needs of those who engage with it.

What is your hope for the coming year? Whether we return to in-person sessions or continue to use digital methods, that we are able to share the good news about Jesus with children, young people and their families.

Youth - Rev Dave Edmondson

Summary of the Ministry: In the last 6 months, we have finished Youth Alpha (a faith-exploration course) as one large group, which included about 20 young people in total, ages 11-18. Since Christmas, we have moved to two smaller groups (one group for young people aged 11-14 years, another group for young people aged 15-18 years) who meet alternative Sunday evenings, and we are now beginning to experiment with meeting outside in the churchyard (weather permitting) some weeks, and meeting on Zoom other weeks. Our partnership with Red Balloon Family Foundation has now ended and I am co-leading the youth work with Rev Vanessa Conant.

Who's involved?: We are hugely thankful to Jo Talbott for supporting our Youth Alpha course on Sunday evenings before Christmas, and to Josh Price for joining us some Sunday evenings.

What has been a highlight? Seeing our young people grow in faith and friendship.

What has been a challenge? Online sessions have been a blessing but it is also more difficult to develop relationship and fellowship online. With the ending of our partnership with RBF, there is also a significant lack of volunteers and a team ideally needs to be built.

What is your hope for the coming year? To continue growing in relationship and to build a team of volunteers

St Mary's: Buildings and Churchyards

National Lottery Heritage Fund - Building Project – Project Board

Summary of the Ministry: St Mary's has been working since 2016 to deliver a £3.6million repair and renovation of our ancient building. With support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we are seeking to create a flexible, beautiful and accessible space to serve as a real community hub.

Who's involved? Many people are involved in making the building project happen. Particular thanks to the Project Board (Lynne Rhodes, Carson Thompson, David Baker, Cameron Conant, Nevil Osborne, Jen Powell, Rev Adam Childs and Rev Dave Edmondson), all of whom have given huge amounts of time and commitment to make our project happen. We would also like to publicly thank Focus Consultants, our Project Managers, and Matthew Lloyd Architects, who have given the Parish tremendous support and advice through this past year.

What has been a highlight? We have worked well together as a team, navigating the various complexities of a building project and supporting each other to find solutions. After a tender process, the cost of the project has come in on budget! We have been able to do a lot of work to mitigate risks.

What has been a challenge: Lots of different things have delayed our project. We have complex archaeological demands and we still need the sale of properties to complete before we are able to build on site. We feel as if we have done a lot of waiting!

What is your hope for the coming year: We anticipate actually breaking ground in late summer/early autumn 2021, which means we will begin to see the work take shape and a renovated building begin to become a reality.

The Welcome Centre - Lynne and Nic Rhodes

Summary: The Welcome Centre has long been in need of some investment and care. We have until now not moved forward with any repair or renovation because of our plans to build affordable housing on the site. Now that this project is not deemed to be financially viable, we have new challenges and opportunities facing us in managing the Welcome Centre. A small team has been project managing the necessary work required to make the Welcome Centre a safe and welcoming space so that it is fit-for-use by the congregation and other users.

Who's involved? Nic Rhodes, our church buildings manager, has been invaluable in providing both technical advice and hands-on work, and also in assessing, engaging and working with contractors. Fiona Fouhy, our church administrator, has been a great help liaising with contractors and the team.

What has been a highlight? The sight of very full skip in the churchyard! The engagement of the roofer to mend the leaking roof in the hallway! And of course working with a great team!

What has been a challenge? The restoration of the Welcome Centre has presented a number of challenges ranging from a leaky roof, heating and hot water boilers that no longer work and can't be repaired, security issues around the storage of expensive equipment and church valuables plus all the general wear and tear etc. At times it has felt like a very big job with a lot of disparate parts. Whilst the pandemic hasn't had too much impact in terms of getting contractors to visit the site to estimate for work, there has been a lot of frustration in the engagement of contractors and the delivery of work, certainly not helped by Covid or Brexit!

What is your hope for the coming year: In the short term, that the necessary work will be completed efficiently and in good time, and that the building is ready for when we need to move in. But ultimately that the building is restored to a safe, welcoming and comfortable space that the congregation and other users feel happy and confident to use and worship in, which will be especially crucial while the church building is being refurbished.

Churchyards – Tim Hewitt (Head Gardener)

Summary: Creating and maintaining a beautiful space for relatives, visitors and the community.

What has been a highlight? Being able to create two new beds and maintain the rest of the churchyards to a higher standard. Very high numbers of visitors now regularly come to the churchyards.

What has been a challenge? Increasing visitors have meant increasing wear and tear. Some paths have had to be remade, and some damage has occurred.

What is your hope for the coming year? That the churchyards will continue to develop as a place of learning, sharing and community.

St Mary's: Discipleship and Community

Life Groups

Summary of the Ministry: A number of our Life Groups or small groups have continued to meet throughout the pandemic. Many have met on Zoom and those who haven't been able to meet in this way have stayed in touch by phone and WhatsApp.

Who's involved? Particular thanks to Dave and Jack Baker for their vision and adaptability in leading their group through the pandemic. Also thanks to David Blackwell who has phoned every member of his Life Group every Monday afternoon throughout the pandemic.

What has been a highlight? The continued connection and relationships provided by these groups.

What has been a challenge? Not being able to meet in person.

What is a hope for the coming year? That groups will be able to meet again and that new groups may form.

Prayer House – Rev Jill Mowbray

Summary of the Ministry: We have met weekly for Bible-study, discussion and prayer, on Zoom, wanting to deepen in faith, to remain vulnerable to one another, and praying for individuals, for church ministry and the world, and encouraging service to others.

Who's involved? 14 people have been regularly involved, with 3 others not wanting to take part on Zoom.

What has been a highlight? People's vulnerability and honesty, and willingness to grapple with difficult issues, and go deep.

What has been a challenge? Zoom has been draining at times, especially for those whose work all day is online, on Zoom, or Teams.

What is a hope for the coming year? We are doing 1-2-1s to gather hopes, get a clear sense of focus and re-define our group calling. We are hoping that we might be able to have more outdoor gatherings, and perhaps run an in-person prayer event.

Young Adults – Rosie Sibley

Summary of the Ministry: A group for Young Adults in their 20 and 30s. Activities have included regular Wednesday evening Zooms, which includes a catch-up, taking part in

vespers online together, or watching a video followed by a discussion and prayer. This ministry offers young adults an opportunity build community and friendships across the Parish.

Who's involved? Dave and Caitlin Edmondson have been really committed and we celebrate their coming. I'm thankful for everyone's willingness to build community together through winter lockdown. Thank you to Adam for his involvement in the last year.

What has been a highlight? Regular weekly catch-ups, especially during the November lockdown.

What has been a challenge? The challenges have been Zoom fatigue and the difficulty of not being able to meet in person; also, those who would normally attend Sunday Social (coffee in a cafe) not being able to participate.

What is your hope for the coming year? Continued community, meeting in-person, growing ministries and helping each other grow in faith.

Parent Prayer – Jacintha Danaswamy

Summary of the Ministry: A safe prayer space for parents in which to meet others, pray together, and encourage and support one another as parents. This is a welcoming space with a gentle liturgy where we seek God's wisdom, strength and encouragement.

Whose involved? At the moment, it's a small group of about 6-7 people

What has been a highlight? Praying together and supporting each other through some of the difficulties of the last six months; also, having a prayerful space to celebrate and be thankful together for the hope God's love brings to each of our lives.

What has been a challenge? As a new group, the biggest challenge has been making more people aware that there is a space for parents to come together and pray online.

What is your hope for the coming year? Our hope is that we will continue to support each other through prayer and friendship, grow deeper in faith and welcome more parents from across our Parish.

Book Groups and Courses – Rev Vanessa Conant

Summary of the Ministry: Throughout the year, we have offered opportunities for people to meet in a smaller group and study or pray together. We do this through time-limited book groups or short courses. Since our last APCM, we have held an Advent Book Group and followed the 24/7 Prayer Course.

Who's involved? Mike Forbes led the Advent Book Group and Rev Dave Edmondson and Rev Vanessa Conant led the Prayer course.

What has been a highlight? Zoom, whilst often a challenge in other settings, has enabled more people to join us. It has meant that people haven't had to worry about childcare, and

some members of our Morning Prayer community who don't live in E17 have even been able to join us.

What has been a challenge? We would like to be able to offer continuous provision of a short course or book group of some kind but don't currently have capacity for this.

What is your hope for the coming year: We are hoping that we can work with the Church Growth Project to develop more opportunities for people to learn and build community

Jesse Tree/Lent at Home/Gospel Pairs – Rev Dave Edmondson

Summary of the Ministry: Creating programmes and activities that individuals and families can do together to deepen their faith and relationship with others.

Volunteers and Service: Laura Elgie and Caitlin Edmondson led the Jesse Tree Project and many volunteers helped record readings for the Jesse Tree and Gospel Pairs' websites.

What has been a highlight? The highlight has been people in groups and families going deeper in faith together. For many, Gospel Pairs was a powerful and important Bible study, a chance to let Scripture to speak for itself whilst developing new friendships. Also the Jesse Tree project was brilliant and allowed people to see the whole narrative of Scripture leading up to Christmas. It has been fantastic to develop resources that allow people to deepen their faith.

What has been a challenge? Lack of in-person interaction and the amount of time it takes to create these resources.

What is your hope for the coming year? That people begin to deepen the relationships they formed through these projects and activities.

Heritage – Jack and Dave Baker

Summary of the Ministry: St Mary's Church has a long and fascinating history, both buildings and people. We want to share with the congregation and the local community the riches that are here by making the church building and churchyard accessible for visitors to explore. Occasionally, we are asked to trace a grave for relatives.

Who's involved? Our storytellers and heritage volunteers, who lead our churchyard/ church tours. I would also like to thank Head Gardener Tim Hewitt and his band of churchyard volunteers for recently laying out the churchyard paths with bark chippings.

What has been a highlight? Although lockdown has meant we have been unable to welcome visitors to the church/churchyard for organised events, we have spent time researching fascinating stories about the people buried in our churchyard in readiness for Churchyard Trails in the summer. We have also tracked down a couple of graves; one comprised of three separate vaults from the early to mid-19th Century. The family travelled from Suffolk and were pleased to be able to see the grave of their ancestors and "join some more dots" in their quest to trace their family history.

What has been a challenge? The church building has been closed and the free “just turn up” Churchyard Trails wouldn’t work with social distancing as sometimes 20 people arrive for a trail!

What is your hope for the coming year? The main annual event is the London-wide Open House Weekend held in September, but this year the building will be closed for restoration. Our hope is to continue to offer (weather and Covid-permitting) the 40-minute Churchyard Trails during the summer and at Open House Weekend to keep the heritage interest whilst the building is closed.

St Mary’s: Church Growth and Church Planting

Church Growth Project – Jacintha Danaswamy

Summary of the Project: A three-year project which uses the principles of community organising to explore how we grow numerically, spiritually and in mission. In partnership with the Centre for Theology and Community (CTC) and St John's Hoxton, we are exploring the theory that community organising can be used for congregational development and lead to church growth. We have developed three action teams who focus on particular areas: outreach, engagement and depth. These teams are made up of members from across our congregation.

Who’s involved: 18 team members across three teams: Outreach, Engagement, and Depth. Particular thanks to Rev Dan Copperwheat for his help and support in developing our project video.

What has been a highlight? Sharing the results of the listening we’ve done - as well as the video we made - with the congregation at a recent post-service Zoom session.

What has been a challenge? Exploring the three areas of the project (outreach, engagement, and depth) during lockdown and the pandemic. At times, it has been challenging to have 1-2-1 relational meetings online rather than in person.

What is your hope for the coming year? To continue to build our teams and to engage with all members of our congregation, and through using the tools of community organising, to grow in outreach, engagement and depth across our church.

New Worshipping Communities – Charnelle Barclay

Summary of the Ministry: The Parish received grant funding from the Church Commissioners to explore church planting using the methods of community organising. The focus of the work is principally around the Attlee Terrace and Prospect Hill estates but has also developed into a new expression of worship at St Mary’s school called Choir Church.

Who's involved? I have led the work this year with Josh Price, our Buxton intern. We also extend huge thanks to Robyn Samuels and Rev Adam Childs for the design of the Choir Church service. Thanks also to Khadisha Gerald at St Mary's School for all her support.

What has been a highlight? The development of a Residents' Association on the estates and a growing understanding about the importance of organising; also the development of Choir Church.

What has been a challenge? Not being able to meet in person makes 1-2-1s much more difficult and it has been hard to build a sense of community.

What is your hope for the coming year? To be able to visit St Mary's School in person to develop Choir Church. I'm also hopeful that the Residents' Association will join Waltham Forest Citizens, and am excited to have Rev Alan Moss joining us in this work.

Across the Parish: Transformation and Outreach

Christians Against Poverty – Sue Peacham

Summary of the Ministry: provides free debt help and local community groups across the UK. Our free services, run with local churches, provide practical and emotional support and show people that there is always hope.

Who's involved? Our CAP Centre is run by our Centre Manager, Sue Peacham supported by an amazing team of befrienders from across the Parish.

What has been a highlight? Continuing to support clients and seeing people become debt free. Seeing genuine freedom and hope come to people in the toughest of circumstances. Being able to provide support and training on budgeting and money management through a new partnership with NELFT.

What has been a challenge? Not being able to support people in person. The pandemic has been so difficult for many as people have lost jobs and incomes. There are fears around the impact of the coming months when people who are not able to pay rent can once again be evicted.

What is your hope for the coming year? To be able to continue to support people locally in seeking freedom from debt. To build partnerships with new Debt Centres.

Citizens UK

The Parish of Walthamstow belongs to Citizens UK and Waltham Forest Citizens. We organise together with local institutions and institutions across London to create change in our community. In this past year, the churches in the Parish have taken a significant lead on two campaigns.

Just Transition – Cameron Conant

Summary of the Ministry: Making sure the policies that we need to create a greener London directly benefit poor and low-income communities. We'll do this by creating 60,000 good green jobs/ apprenticeships and retrofitting 100,000 fuel-poor homes (which are expensive to heat and are a major source of carbon emissions) over the next mayoral term. We'll do this by building our Just Transition alliance (i.e., building power) and by continuing to hold the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, to his pledge to meet with us regularly in order to make this happen.

Who's involved? We had over 40 people in total from St Mary's participate in our Climate Listening events in 2020, and a half-dozen people from St Mary's and the wider Parish have been more seriously engaged with the campaign. I'd particularly like to celebrate St Mary's member Rosie Sibley, who is a member of our Just Transition Leadership Team and has led listening events, spoken in front of top business leaders in London and has shown real leadership.

What has been a highlight? Our campaign released a report with the leading think-tank IPPR, and in April 2021, we put our asks around green jobs and housing retrofits to the top two candidates for Mayor of London in front of over 5,000 people online, securing commitments from both candidates to work with us should they be elected, with both candidates agreeing to some of our asks.

What has been a challenge? Most of our work has taken place on Zoom, which has been both a challenge and, in some ways, a gift, as it has allowed us to meet regularly and involve more people.

What is your hope for the coming year? My hope is for us to 'have a seat at the table' with the Mayor and to continue to build our Just Transition alliance, which currently includes not just Citizens-member institutions, but also London First (a collection of some of the largest businesses in London), G15 (a collection of housing associations) and other charities and organisations.

Racial Justice – Charnelle Barclay

Summary of the Ministry: A campaign to challenge racial injustice locally. We have organised into four groups: Education; Stop and Search; Mental Health; and Representation.

Who's involved: We regularly have over 30 in attendance at each meeting but many more people have connected with our campaign.

What has been a highlight? Forming of the action groups for racial justice and a successful listening campaign; also the listening campaign with Soho Theatre this summer.

What has been a challenge? Moving online and largely corresponding by email, which has been difficult. Meeting new people in church and outside for 121s has been a challenge, and the restriction of not being able to meet in person for individuals who find that easier.

What is your hope for the coming year? That residents will get engage with the Soho Theatre listening campaign, and that the racial justice teams will continue to organise and see some wins.

Wagstaff Course – Tim Coles

Summary of the Ministry: The Wagstaff course is run by the Centre for Theology and Community to provide skills in community organising in a church context. Members from the Parish of Walthamstow, St George in the East (Shadwell) and St Stephens (Ilford) are involved, which helps build relationships between our churches across East London, as well as aiming to train us to build relationships within our parishes. The last course ran from November to March with me and Tim Hewitt (St Mary's) attending with support from Rev Vanessa Conant. The course provides some really valuable lessons on meeting with those around you, listening to their concerns and methods of building consensus around

local issues. One evening a week, over 15 sessions, we welcome anyone interested from the Parish to be involved in the next series of the course later this year.

Who's involved? Tim Coles, Tim Hewitt and Rev Vanessa Conant

What has been a highlight? Learning from and building relationships with members of other local churches.

What has been a challenge? Zoom-only sessions instead of meeting in person can make it hard to get to know people.

What is your hope for the coming year? That we can apply ideas from the course to organise with the community in Walthamstow.

Christian Kitchen - Mike Forbes

Summary of the Ministry: Serving meals to the hungry and homeless.

Who's involved? A team of over 15 volunteers from across the Parish makes food or serves it on our monthly rota day.

What's been a highlight? The willingness of volunteers to continue serving during the pandemic.

What's been a challenge? The well-established system of preparing and serving food was turned upside-down by the Covid restrictions. Instead of serving a hot meal on a plate, we had to prepare takeaway meals in containers. Our guests came and simply walked away with their food. There was no conversation, nor opportunity to respond in any significant way. But meals were served every single day and helped those in need.

What is your hope for the coming year? We hope to get back to normal patterns of service and support for all who visit the Kitchen.

Eco Church – Michael Forbes

Summary of the Ministry: To develop more ways of caring for God's creation and reducing our Parish's carbon footprint through participation in the Eco Church award scheme.

Who's involved: We currently have a growing team of approximately 15.

What has been a highlight? An excellent beginning by the formation of a team to share the work. The project started six weeks ago.

What has been a challenge? Getting all three churches in the Parish involved - a challenge met easily by the help of the Holy Spirit.

What is your hope for the coming year? To achieve at least an Eco Church bronze award.

St Mary's School

Our church school has been remarkable throughout the pandemic, providing high quality teaching and support to students. We have been grateful to be able to offer both online assemblies and the wonderful Choir Church as part of our ministry to the school. We want to say a particular thank you to Paul Powell who has completed his term of office as Foundation Governor. Paul has been an exemplary Governor – committed to maintaining the deep connections between Church and School. Thanks also to Ruth Keane and Stuart Lambert, Foundation Governors.