



Parish Church of St Thomas

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Administrative Information

The church of St Thomas is situated in Stourbridge, West Midlands. It is part of the Diocese of Worcester within the Church of England.

The correspondence address is:

St. Thomas' Church Office
St. Thomas' Church Hall
Market Street
Stourbridge
West Midlands
DY8 1AG

Parochial Church Council

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a registered charity. The Charity Number is 1134825.

PCC members who served from 3rd April 2022 to 26th March 2023 were:

Ex officio Members

Vicar and Chair Reverend Andrew Sillis

Curate Reverend Sarah Roberts-Malpass

Elected Members

Churchwardens Val Charles, Daphne Darlington

Deanery Synod Members Alastair Greeves, Wendy Hemming

Jannette Griffiths
Susan Marks
Janet Taylor
Jessica Warburton
Caroline Haycock
David Hawkins

There were three vacancies for church councillors throughout 2024

The Church of St Thomas Stourbridge
Annual Report of The Parochial Church Council
For the year ended 31st December 2024

Structure, Governance and Management

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

Objectives and Activities

St. Thomas' PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for St Thomas' Church Hall.

Public Benefit

The public benefit is served by enabling as many people as possible to worship at St Thomas' and to become part of our parish community. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament. When planning its charitable activities for the year, the PCC has considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

Achievements and Performance

The number of people registered on the church Electoral Roll is 89

0 people left the Electoral Roll and 0 people joined in the period up to the revision of the roll begun on 31st March 2024.

Incumbent

Dear Friends,

2024 was something of a frustrating year. After the optimism I shared with you at this time last year, many of the promised developments failed to be realised and I soon lost count of the number of times that I was asked, “When are the builders coming?”. Please do not lose heart. Whereas we are still waiting for the necessary permission to carry out the building works that we have planned, and for which we even have funding, senior people within the diocese are saying to me, ‘We have to win this’. It is still a battle to be won, but throughout the frustrations of this past year, ground has been taken. Wendy Hemming has been an absolute star this year in managing not just piles of work in managing the building side of the Renewal Project, but also with the complex and equally frustrating problems we’ve been having on the church hall’s heating system. The Fabric Committee have been exceptionally challenged this past year, and Wendy’s leadership has been of incalculable value. “When will the builders be coming to fix the church?” Honestly, we will be doing well if it is this year, but that is not unrealistic. We will keep you informed if you keep praying! However, let me move on to more positive matters.

Last year, I set out some of the realities of our church’s financial position. The picture was very poor indeed last year, and although from some perspectives it’s still very poor, there are improvements. The first, and very major improvement, was that David Hawkins agreed to act as the church’s treasurer. Not only has this lifted an administrative headache from Val Charles and myself, David quickly set about finding money we didn’t know we were owed, and rearranging the figures so that it was much clearer what we had, and didn’t have.

Secondly, planned giving increased by around 12.5% and cash donations more than doubled. Don’t get me wrong, the church still spent more than it received, and we are still in financial trouble, but we are all grateful to those who reviewed their giving to the church and increased their gifts which support ministry among us. Of particular importance has been the increase in people using the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS). PGS is the most secure, most confidential and most easily managed stewardship scheme the church has ever had, and we do recommend that you use the scheme instead of cash gifts or bank standing orders. Thank you for your contributions.

There are endless other thanks to give, and I could thank every one of you, because you are all incredibly generous with your time, skills, and energies, but that might make for a very tedious annual report.

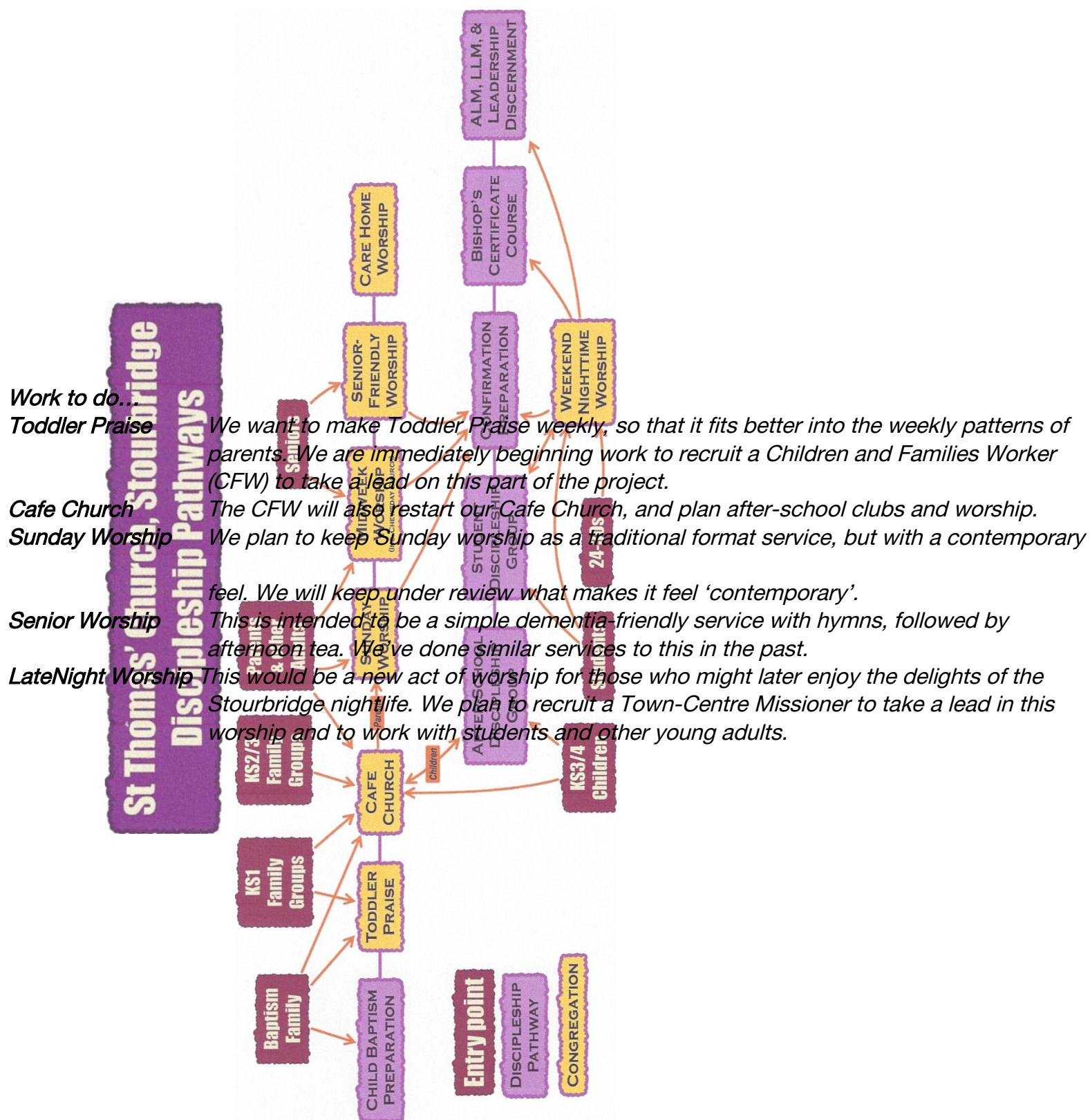
However, I do want to pay tribute to Sarah, our curate, to whom we bade farewell in January. We’ve already seen the massive hole that Sarah has left in our community, but I am personally so grateful for all she did, especially during that time when my mother was ill and following her death.

My thanks are also due to our churchwardens in this past year: Val C. whose dedication and commitment to our community is beyond measure; and Daphne, whose deep wisdom and calm makes her a perfect support. Daphne also works as our parish safeguarding officer, a role which involves more training than you might imagine, but which helps us to rebuild the church’s reputation as a safe place, and protects the vulnerable of our community. Val and Daphne have each faced significant personal and family challenges this year and yet have been steadfast in their service. Everything you do, from the tidying up, contributing to services, visiting the sick, joining in mission and ministry in any and every way; everything you do is seen, and valued.

If ever you think the church is ungrateful, try this - thank someone for what they are doing, and listen for what they say to you.

Our financial planning had anticipated that by now our renewal plans would be well underway. That the building work is not underway, yet; that our plans for discipleship and worship haven't started, yet; that our church is not experiencing rapid growth, yet; all means that we've some catching up to do. There's a lot to do, but the catching up has already started.

The chart shows our plan for discipleship pathways, i.e. how anyone, entering the church for the first time, is served by a community of similar people to themselves and served in their journey from unbeliever to devoted disciple of Jesus.



You'll see that we have some of the pieces in place. Some of the pieces need development. Some of the pieces need to be created by those we will recruit using the Renewal Project funding. Some if the pieces are not really part of the Renewal Project and we just need to be getting on with the job.

When you contribute to the church, whether practically, spiritually or financially, this is what your contribution is helping to build. New disciples will continue the mission of the church, sharing the good news of Jesus, and ensure its sustaining presence at the heart of our community. When all that is left to you is prayer, I hope you will be able to look on the church with satisfaction and gratitude and be able to say, I gave my life to building this glorious family of God.

Although 2024 proved to be something of a false dawn,
let us not lose hope, but continue to build for the future.

In Jesus' name

With every blessing

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Sillis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew Sillis

Vicar, St Thomas' Church, Stourbridge

Churchwardens

We thank Revd. Andrew for leading our Worship here at St Thomas'. We also realise that he has a heavy workload in his new post as Dean of the Greater Dudley Deanery.

Our Curate Sarah continued her training with us during 2023/24 and will be seeking her next ministry towards the end of 2024. Her Family have been involved in many of our musical events including being part of our Choir which adds immense joy to our Church services – singing, conducting etc. This has again continued to be encouraged our own Music Department to give a musical recital by members of our Choir (singing, and playing various instrument,) highlighting the various talents they are all gifted with.

We thank our Administrator Emma for the work she carries out in the Church Office. Bookings of the church hall have remained constant. We must not forget Gary, who continues to provide us with the production of our Magazine, ensures our IT systems are fully up to date and checks all our Heating requirements are covered to keep within a very tight budget, which helps to keep costs down where possible. With the help of Andrew and Gary a new photocopying machine has been supplied by a local Halesowen employee-owned firm, Copywise, who have now taken on our Contract requirements successfully and this move has proved to be a lot cheaper too with the machine much more user friendly for those requiring copies.

We are pleased to announce that David Hawkins has now agreed to become our Treasurer. Welcome on board David. Our thanks to Andrew and Val for providing cover to at least enable our bills to be paid on time.

We are extremely grateful to all the various Committees that often work behind the scenes throughout the year, giving their time freely and tirelessly to ensure our Church Buildings, Worship, and Community Garden are well kept. Thanks go to our PCC, the Standing Committee, the Fabric Committee, the Safeguarding Officer, Mission Group, Worship Committee, Music Dept., Pastoral Team, the History/Tours Group, Bell Ringers, Flower Guild, Welcome Team, Refreshments Team, Cleaners, Gardeners, (we received a very well deserved “Gold” by the Stourbridge Flowers in Bloom Committee for 2024.) The list is endless, so a big Thankyou to all who play very important roles here at St Thomas's. Naturally, “Newcomers” to any of these Committees are always welcome to join or to lend a hand when able.

We have had numerous Baptisms and a Wedding on Boxing Day. On Sunday 1st December to mark the start of Advent we enjoyed a meal together after the morning service.

Our Project 300 (Renewal Project) has taken a few setbacks, but we continue to persist with small amendments and maybe a few compromises. We expect a lot more work and patience along the way. Meetings have taken place to try to help the time frame of this ongoing project to continually move forward. For now, our vision remains steadfast we must be positive and pray for continuity with all involved so that this Project can then finally be given the “go ahead”, hopefully sooner rather than much later.

As Wardens and representing the whole of our Congregation let us give “Thanks and Praise” to everyone involved here at St Thomas's and the Dudley Deanery.

Finally, let us Pray with hope for the future as we move forward into 2025.

Val Charles and Daphne Darlington

Safeguarding

(Working with children & adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect)

I commenced the voluntary role of Parish Safeguarding Officer on 13.11.2014.

I took over the role at St. Thomas' Church in April 2023.

During the last 12 months DBS renewals have been completed together with the relevant training. This is ongoing.

I have attended Network Team Meetings on Zoom. These meetings are an opportunity to meet with other Parish Safeguarding Officers, as well as hear from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team including updates from the National Team and how these updates will impact upon local churches and the support which can be offered. It is also an opportunity to ask questions.

Relevant information from these meetings was passed to the PCC.

Dashboard

The Dashboard is an ongoing document which is updated during the year. This replaced the Toolkit which was prepared once a year for the Archdeacons Visitation in May. NO CONFIDENTIAL/PERSONAL DATA IS ENTERED.

All policies have been adopted and are reviewed annually. Copies of the policies are kept in the Parish Office. They are also available on the Diocesan website. The Parish Safeguarding Handbook is also available in the Parish Office.

The PCC has complied with the duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops "Safeguarding Policy & Practice Guidance".

Parish Policy on Handling, Use and Storage of Disclosure information has been complied with.

Daphne Darlington

Parish Safeguarding Officer

Toddler Praise

Toddler Praise continues to have ups and downs. As the children grow up and move on to school, we hope that they are replaced, and every family coming to us for Baptism, is invited to join the Toddler Praise congregation.

The Toddler Praise team also changes. Sarah left us at the end of the year, and Ellie has joined the fun. Judy continues to imagine ingenious and creative ways to add to the worship with art and crafts; and the children always enjoy the fruit and snacks that Jeannie puts together.

We know that one limitation of Toddler Praise is that we can only have it monthly (third Tuesdays). Parents order their days in a weekly schedule - play group on Monday, swimming on Tuesday... So having only monthly gatherings means that we're always having to advertise the services, and of course if you miss one, the habit of attending is easily lost. We're looking forward to increasing our frequency with the recruitment of a new leader, but in the meantime, would value additional volunteers to set up, put away, and generally get involved. Please pray for more volunteers and for new members of the congregation.

Please bring along any tiny relatives or friends you might have, and let them know about Toddler Praise
- Third Tuesday afternoons from about 1:45pm

Fabric

During the year we have undertaken many and various small jobs, but our main focus has been on:

- **Replacing the Church Hall gas heating system** after it was condemned. Installing an electric heating system has been problematical because of the installers wrongly saying the system would not need a 3-phase power supply. The 3-phase power supply has now been installed by National Grid and our electrician has added new wiring and equipment to complement it but our Utility company need to change their meter before the 3-phase can be used. Once this is installed the new heating installation can be fully turned-on and tested.
- **Facilitating a Quinquennial Inspection** by our Architect. Various minor issues were highlighted, and these have been or will be dealt with by our handyman. Other issues are part of the Project 300 scheme and will be attended to then. There were no major issues.
- **Tower Clock.** A new survey of the work required on the Tower Clock was undertaken so that funding could be obtained to make the repairs. The cost including VAT will be approximately £12k. A crowd funding appeal has been set up to raise funds.

(VAT payback for Listed Places of Worship has now been restricted for 2025/26 to £25,000 and is only funded until March 2026. This will impact Project 300).

- **Project 300.** Progress stalled in Summer 2024 when the Diocesan appointed Project Manager left. Since when we have been in regular discussions with a Diocesan appointed Heritage Management company. Fortunately, the Church of England's funding board SMMIB has been persuaded to allow us to be reimbursed for preparation work for the Project and to backdate this for Project items that had previously been paid from the Fabric Fund. This has enabled more detailed preparatory work to take place. At the time of writing the Churches Conservation Trust has agreed to support the project but the other amenity societies including Historic England need further persuasion.

THE FUTURE

- We need to get more help for the Community Garden. If you can weed, plant, tidy we need you. Sections of the garden can be allocated so you only take on a small part.
- We want to improve the Church Hall facilities.
- We want to find funds to tarmac areas of the car park and mark it out.
- Fabric Meetings are held once a month, usually on Monday evenings. What about joining us? It's interesting and challenging making improvements to our buildings and surroundings and you will definitely be helping St. Thomas' Community and members of the local community who use them. JOIN US!

Wendy Hemming

Director of Music

St Thomas' Church choir has continued to flourish this year, singing at many services, some of them a little different! We have attracted new members and helped with worship outside of the parish too.

Our first Choral Evensong of the year was at the beginning of March, in which we sang a new-to-us Preces and Responses by Nardone. One of our favourite Anthems Mathias' Lift Up Your Heads O Ye Gates was the Anthem for our next Choral Evensong in May. Both services had good size congregations who appreciated the choir's efforts.

The ever-popular choir concert was in July, in which they showcased both vocal and instrumental skills, ending the concert with an alternative version of Immortal Invisible (Immoral Impossible) which was difficult to perform whilst keeping a straight face.

The highlight of the year for the choir is always the Nine Lessons & Carols and this year we were privileged to be invited to All Saints Church in Sedgley to sing for their service. They must have liked what we did (the choir sang beautifully) as they asked us back for 2025 before the end of December!

Our own Nine Lessons & Carols service followed a week later. With a choir of 26 and an almost full church, it was a wonderful service, with many congratulatory comments, even several days after the event.

Boxing Day was a little different, with the choir singing for a wedding. The requested repertoire wasn't our usual style, but we had great fun, especially singing the 12 "silly" days of Christmas, complete with actions.

We look forward to continued growth, both in size and musically, and supporting services at St Thomas'.

Edward Roberts-Malpass, Director of Music



Pastoral

We visit three care homes and make two visits as one to one. The present team consists of Revd Andrew, Val Homer, Val Charles, Rose Hoey and myself and we would welcome any members of the congregation who would like to join us. The services all follow a form of worship that is very prayerful, and which addresses the needs of the residents. We ensure that we informally chat to every person before the service. Each service lasts for about 20 minutes.

PARKFIELD GRANGE is a large care home on the Hagley Road, and it is well attended by residents, staff and visiting friends & family members. Generally, a group of about 15 will join us in worship. At the Christmas visit last December, our Choir joined us, and we sang Carols accompanied on the piano by Sarah.

TUDOR MANOR is a smaller service, and the residents are quite elderly. The staff are very welcoming and will join in the service.

COMBERTON HOUSE Val Homer and I regularly visit one resident who very much looks forward to our visit. She is a retired nurse and has much in common with Val, so we do feel that it is a visit we enjoy.

If anyone would like to join us, please speak to Revd Andrew, Val Homer, Val Charles, Rose or myself

Jeannie Rogers

Mission and Social Concern

All are welcome to join us at any time. During the past year, we have discussed ways in which the smaller group can grow and involve our whole church community more. New ideas and better communication are essential to continue this work in our church. Having a focused service with follow up discussion might be one way to begin this process? We would welcome other suggestions too. Please talk to Andrew if you have any good ideas or an interest in this.

The group aims to provide support to many different charity organisations and communities both locally and across the wider world, and to join members of Churches Together for local events and awareness raising.

- In March 2024 the group hosted and joined in a Fairtrade coffee morning.
- During May some members took part in the Christian Aid sponsored “70K in May” fund raiser, as well as assisting in door to door collections.
- Some members joined the “Oh My Dog” walking group to mark the parish boundary, stopping for readings, prayer and a drink at Judi’s house along the way.
- We continue to add to our Eco status, and focus was on wildlife in the garden. Scouts provided a bug hotel; U3A contributed bird nesting boxes and Rainbows made winter fat and seed balls to hang in the trees.
- Andrew and Rose attended a “Three Confessions” conference with our partners in Magdeburg, Germany, focused on sharing different ways of utilising church buildings.
- The annual Garden party was organised for early September, and help jointly with heritage weekend when the church and tower were open too. The focus was on Fairtrade to celebrate their anniversary. Over £500 was raised to donate to “Transform Trade”(a business supporting and providing Fairtrade goods).
- Harvest goods were again donated to the local food bank, and generous gifts went to the Halesowen Refugee support group from Toy Sunday in December.

Rose Hoey, Chair

Belfry (St Thomas' Society of Change Ringers)

Formally The Stourbridge Society of Chapel Youths, founded prior to 1771.

A very progressive year for the technical abilities of members but also an advancement in the numbers attending the practices. We regularly get 6 or more visitors attending the Monday night practices. We've continued to hold an extra practice on a Friday evening on the simulator for the new recruits and this also continues to be well attended including visitors. Unfortunately, the 2 new recruits we had during the course of the year only stayed for a few weeks.

There were a number of notable events during the course of the year.

- 3 quarter peals were rung on St Thomas's bells during the year – one open and 2 half-muffled viz Stourbridge carnival, In memoriam Chris Kippin and the Service of the departed. (Chris Kippin was a very talented ringer who gave St Thomas's bellringers a lot of support over many years).
- 2 St. Thomas's ringers rang their first quarter peal on the bells at Amblecote
- 2 ringers rang their first quarter peal on 8 bells for Stourbridge Carnival.
- One ringer rang their 1st quarter peal of Grandsire Triples on an inside bell.
- Also, we rang quarter peals at Clent (Single Oxford Bob Triples) and Halesowen (Grandsire Triples)
- A group visited the bellringing teaching centre at Worcester Cathedral
- We rang for a wedding at Hanley Swan followed by ringing at Hanley Castle
- Went on a ringing outing organised by the Halesowen ringers (April 13th) which involved ringing at 4 towers including Tamworth, St Editha.
- St Thomas's started hosting a monthly higher numbers practice for the local branch of the Worcestershire Association. This involves any ringing on 10 or 12 bells.
- Scout group visited the tower for an open evening.
- Hung new peal board and quarter peal boards in the belfry to mark various historical events viz The Platinum Jubilee, The death of Queen Elizabeth II and the Coronation of King Charles III.
- We continued supporting St Mary's Oldswinford practice every week giving help with teaching their new ringers.
- One of our ringers was elected as the Association Branch Ringing Master.

Ringing provides physical and intellectual challenges as well as a social and group activity. Anyone interested in joining the group is welcome to visit the tower on any practice night or just get in touch. Our intention is to recruit new ringers to train over the next few months and years. We need to continue the tradition of ringing within the church.

Richard Hurst, Tower Captain

History Group

We are a small enthusiastic group who promote the fascinating history of St Thomas' and its place in Stourbridge. We welcome anyone interested in the historical aspect. Last September we welcomed Kathy into our team. We meet fairly regularly to keep abreast of any changes and are still available to do church or specialist tours on request until the church alterations no longer make this possible. If you know of anyone who would like a tour, please see one of the team – Wendy Hemming or Rose Hoey. We are always delighted to tell the St Thomas' story.

We welcomed the Victorian Society last year who were interested in the adapted chancel and our mention in 'Buildings of Birmingham and The Black Country' was updated as we were able to add extra information found through our research at The Hive Archive in Worcester. We are continuing to develop our own archive material which is available to anyone interested and this is now catalogued. Should you have anything that you would like to donate to it, we would be delighted to add it to that which we already have.

We have decided on the format of the new updated flier and guide to the church replacing the 'Journey Through Time' which is still on sale, but we await the changes which can then be included.

We had a successful Heritage Day that included the popular Tower Tours, and we are inviting Richard Hurst Captain of our bells or one of his team to give us an accurate talk on their history ready for inclusion in the proposed new guidebook.

Our coffee and book mornings, every 2nd Saturday of the month are very popular, but more people would be most welcome – a cup of coffee or drink of your choice with a slice of vegan, gluten-free or homemade fresh cake and a book or two for just a donation is always available, and a tour of the church or your questions answered included. We have an attractive large poster which is put out the front as a welcome invitation and we hope this notifies and draws people outside in. The donations at our coffee mornings have gone towards our future flower festival, the Church Fabric fund and last year to Transform Trade, a Fairtrade organisation.

We are developing specialist talks such as the special stained-glass windows, our organ and its music and of course the history of our bells. We will be planning a special evening event in the future similar to our successful 'Journey Through Time' but will be entitled 'Change Over Time' to include the proposed alterations when completed and other changes St Thomas' has experienced since the beginning hopefully in our new space. This will include the changes in vicars over the time as well as characters who influenced our church and not just the building itself!

Watch out for posters and fliers and events published in the weekly church bulletin or on the noticeboard in the porch.

Caroline Haycock, on behalf of the team.

Flower Guild

We started our year with our input of greenery for the Maundy Thursday evening service then 'All Hands on Deck' on the Saturday for the addition of flowers (usually lilies) for the Easter Sunday celebrations. The fragrances that met you on entering into the unlit church at the early morning vigil was an experience not to be missed. We thank you all for the generous donations given to us which enables the church to look so glorious for our services and special occasions.

Harvest Festival again found the church adorned with yellow and orange flowers along with the addition of fruits and groceries gave a plentiful and bounteous feeling.

Our Remembrance Sunday saw the church filled with red poppies and this last year a cascade of poppies down from the balcony to behind the Pulpit. We are still making poppies for the displays pending. Poppies were also added to the lawn in front of the church. Much fun in collecting and making and to the children who I am told ran around in between them.

Christmas was a very busy time, and I personally thank the guild members who turned out for 'all hands on deck' on the Monday 22nd December. I am grateful for all support as I was just out of hospital and not fit to help and again a wonderful display was given by the ladies who helped. Thank you.

The flowers were appreciated by the Wedding Party which was held on Boxing Day.

Unfortunately, two members have retired Margaret Bowley and Brenda Wilshire and we thank them for their time and help.

We welcome two new members Elizabeth Allport and Jean Bradshaw.

Anyone who would like to join us would be welcome or if you could help with Easter, Harvest and Christmas preparations they would be most be most welcome. Please see me. Any help would be welcome it may not be arranging flowers but in preparation and clearing so the church is beautiful for our celebrations.

Donations to the office for the remembrance of a loved one or a celebration of a birth, birthday, marriage or anniversary or own personal reason would be appreciated.

Thank you, **Judi Davies**

Chewsday Church

This group meet every 3rd Tuesday of the Month in the Church Hall Meeting Room between 12 noon and 2.00 p.m. various crafts are available (freestyle art, creative lettering, knitting, crochet, lace making, bead art, candle making, clay pot making, card making, creative colouring Mixed conversations move freely amongst those attending. Topics involving the past and present. An appropriate Bible verse is read, and open Prayers are spoken. Finally, a shared lunch is enjoyed concluding this much enjoyed Community Church Service.

Val Charles & Jean Evans

Rainbows

Our Rainbow Unit continues to thrive, we have a great group of girls who each week make never fail to make us smile. Each term we try and complete one Skills Builder, and an Interest Badge.

During the Spring term Rainbows really enjoyed making dragon masks to celebrate Chinese New Year and had great fun with lots of cotton wool and glue when they made sheep Easter cards.

The Summer Term started a little different as both leaders for different reasons were absent. It was with the help of our District Commissioner Sarah Fletcher and the Stourbridge Trefoil Guild our meetings were able to continue during our absence. The Rainbows completed an Unofficial Challenge Badge – A Journey to Australia, they did lots of activities including making Fairy Bread, Thong (Flip-Flops) Tossing and making Duck-Billed Platypus bookmarks. The Rainbows also started their Animal Lover interest badge and made sock bunnies to look after. These proved to be very popular with one bunny being a regular visitor to our meetings.

The summer term ended with a Beach Party, the Brownies invited the Rainbows to join them at the beach, we wore beach clothes and made paper plate fish. Despite the awful weather all the girls got into the beach spirit with two even wearing their swimming costumes!

During the summer holiday we held a four-hour session for both Rainbows and Brownies, the girls completed another unofficial challenge badge the Fairy Challenge. The girls each made a Fairy Garden's, a Peg Fairy, Fairy Cakes, and we played Fairy themed games.

In the Autumn term we had lots of fun with many activities. We had a busy session planting daffodil bulbs in the church garden and we also had a lot of fun making and launching our own rockets. As we reached December, we joined Rainbows and Brownies from around the Midlands Region at a take-over event at Black Country Living Museum – A Festive Journey Through Time.

As we started 2025, we have lots of fun planned including a Sparkle Party. We also have a trip planned at Bodenham Arboretum in the Easter Holidays when we will be off to Hunt for the Golden Egg.

I wish to thank Nicola Hill my joint leader, Helen Bloomfield DuRose and Hannah Morgan our unit helpers for all their support, hard work and enthusiasm. I also wish to thank Sarah Fletcher, all the Stourbridge Trefoil Guild members and Sally Mosznyski from Amblecote Brownies who helped us during my absence and enabled our meetings to continue.

Emma Leek, Leader in Charge

Brownies

After much consideration we decided that we would like to reopen the Brownie group at St Thomas' Church. We started the unit up in the Spring term with only 4 girls who had all been Rainbows at St Thomas'.

Our first meeting coincided with World Thinking Day. We thought this was the ideal opportunity to talk to the girls about their place in Girl Guiding and to see what they hoped our Brownies meetings would be like. We also made Pasta and decorated Elephants.

The rest of Spring term was filled with lots of cooking and eating as the girls decided that they would like to do an interest badge and chose Baking.

Both leaders were absent at the start of the summer term but with the help of our District Commissioner Sarah Fletcher, Sally Mosznyski from Amblecote Brownies and our unit helper Helen the meetings were able to go ahead. The Brownies completed an Unofficial Challenge Badge-A Journey to Australia, they did lots of activities including making Fairy Bread, Thong (flip-flop) Tossing, making the Sydney Harbour Bridge, making a Koala from newspaper and finished with a Barbecue.

We rounded the summer term off with a Beach Party. The Brownies planned the theme of the party, making invitations to give to their parents and to the Rainbows. They also made some Bunting to decorate the hall. We finished our Beach Party with the girls (we now have 6) making their Promise.

We have a summer holiday date planned in August, a four-hour session when we will be doing another unofficial challenge badge which is a Fairy Challenge.

We started the Autumn term with 12 girls, and the Brownies decided to complete their Local History Badge. Part of the badge was to explore your local area; we spent an evening going out and looking at the history of Stourbridge. We finished off with tea at McDonalds. We rounded off the year a trip with Girl Guiding Midlands to the Black Country Museum for a Festive Journey Through Time, and a Christmas party at Ronnie's Pizza restaurant making our own pizzas.

2025 we are hoping to welcome some more girls, we have lots planned including badges celebrating disability, Thinking Day and to visit a few more local attractions.

I wish to thank Emma Leek my fellow leader and Helen Bloomfield DuRose our unit helper for all their support and hard work. I also wish to thank Sarah Fletcher and Sally Mosznyski for helping us to continue running the meetings during my absence.

Lastly, we are so proud of all the girls who are always very enthusiastic, and we know we made the right decision to reopen Brownies so that the girls can continue their Guiding journey.

Nicola Hill, Leader in Charge

Cubs

Our Cub Scouts Section continues to thrive with youngsters hailing from Oldswinford, Greenfield and Gigmill Primary schools. It is wonderful to see how participation in our weekly activities helps the children integrate constructively and form new friendship groups.

Our Highlights from 2024 were:

Our weekend visit to Burwarton Cottage, a Scout facility in the Shropshire Hills, 1/2 mile from the nearest neighbours and the perfect spot for den building, tree swings and basic living - a true breath of fresh air. Nothing beats the outdoor life, open fire cooking, the smell of wood smoke and bringing home a dozen grubby, tired but delighted 8–10-year-olds.

We participated in the whole district Scouts camp at Blackwell Court, Bromsgrove, stuffed with adventurous activities for the children and for the adults, dealing with the challenges of that wild September storm! Plenty of wet tents to drape out on our return.

There was something new every week with a Bat Detection Walk at Saltwells Nature reserve among the favourites, along with den building at Lickey Hills visitor centre, and the craft and skills activities which form the core of our program each year.

2025 for the Cubs will bring Road Safety, Emergency Aid, meeting the PCSO's, creative and local history activities along with our varied evenings out in our local beauty spots including a Clent Hills bluebell walk in May.

For our older Cubs and Scouts, a Scouting trip of a lifetime to Kandersteg International Scout Camp in August - a truly memorable experience.

The enthusiasm of the young people never ceases to impress us and it is what keeps us enjoying Scouting leadership long after our own children have passed through. We love to be able to share this experience with other parents and adult helpers who, we hope, find it equally rewarding.

Graeme Lowcock

Community Groups

HAPPY HOURS (charity no. 1161030)

Happy Hours is a social club for adults with learning difficulties. We meet Tuesday evenings at the church hall from 7.00pm - 9.00pm.

Last year, 2024 was a really busy year for us. On average we have close to 50 members attending each week, plus carers and volunteers. We provide many activities. Included in these are games, art and craft, pool, a disco and a raffle. We have had visiting guests to entertain our members such as African drummers and 'Popdance' and evening trips out such as a canal boat trip from the Bonded Warehouse and a visit to the pantomime at Stourbridge Town Hall. Our Christmas party with a surprise visit from Santa in 2024 was a huge success!

Next year 2025 we would like to invite more groups in to help entertain our members. We aim to invite a choir in for a Disney night, a pop duo, the African drummers again as well as 'Pop Dance.' There will also be our Christmas Party with a visit from Santa (or The Grinch!) as usual. We welcome new ideas!

We really are one big happy family. Visitors always comment on what a great atmosphere it is and what a happy community we have created for our group. New volunteers are always needed as the demand for a social club such as Happy Hours continues to grow. It is fun and extremely rewarding!

For further details about volunteering please contact us:

Call 07473 873677 or email happyhoursstourbridge@outlook.com. Or check out and message us on Facebook – @HappyHours2008

PD PALADINS AND LIVE WELL WITH PARKINSONS

The exercise class was started in 2019 when I a qualified nurse was diagnosed with Parkinson's. So we started as one class a week and have gone from strength to strength and now have four classes a week. We meet on a Tuesday and Thursday morning from 10-11 and 11.30-12.30, the second class on Thursday is a seated class.

It became evident that we needed to have a support group which aims to help empower people to live the best possible life with Parkinson's. This group is still in its infancy and only began in 2024 and any volunteers would be very welcome. We have a committee and we aim to bring a social aspect as well as information. We aim to have speakers from various medical aspects but we also encourage crafts and really anything that our members would like.

We meet on the second Wednesday of the month from 11.00-13.00, and we encourage family involvement. Some of the activities we are planning is a seated yoga session, canal boat ride, another vintage tea, speakers to include Janine Barnes, a Parkinson's Nurse, and some quiz sessions and some craft sessions.

You can contact us via social media or by calling myself Wendy Barnett on 07775874893 if you would like to help or volunteer your help at events or perhaps you have a job or craft that you could share. This group is very fulfilling and you can make a huge difference to peoples lives. You would be made very welcome. May I add that St Thomas' Church has been very supportive to both groups and is a wonderful social community space.

Wendy Barnett RGN

REPAIR CAFÉ

Stourbridge Repair Cafe meets once a month in St Thomas' church hall.

We offer a repair service and advice for anyone who comes along with a broken item, electrical, mechanical, clothing, artwork – you name it, if it is damaged or not working, we will try and mend it. We are in a consumer society where we are encouraged to throw it away and buy a new one, but quite often a simple repair will considerably extend the expected lifespan. Thus saving, money, resources, and energy, all important in a time of climate instability.

Our services are free but we do ask for donations to cover our running costs.

In 2024 we had 11 repair sessions with over 400 items brought in for us to have a look at. Of these around 60% were successfully repaired. Even when an item is not repairable it is usually appreciated that we have had a go, "I can now throw it away with a good conscience" is something we often hear.

We are a group of friendly volunteers who are more than happy to share their skills and experience to help others and save things being thrown away unnecessarily. We are always looking for new people to join the team. If you have a particular skill you may want to join our repairers. We also need people who can help with the admin, checking jobs in and out, dealing with customers. Or maybe you would like to help in the kitchen, serving tea and cakes to people as they wait their turn for a repair.

If you are interested, come along to one of our repair sessions, see what we do and have a chat.

We are at St Thomas' church hall every 4th Saturday of the month, 10am to 2pm. Or you can send an email to repaircafe.stourbridge@gmail.com.

Treasurer

The following are draft end-of-year financial statements.

We have been unable to present fully examined statements at this time; because as David Hawkins, our previous independent examiner, became our Treasurer during the year, we have had to appoint a new independent examiner of accounts. That appointment has been made, but only recently, and the year-end accounts are, at time of printing, with the independent examiner.

Fully examined accounts, together with the Treasurers report will be made available in time for the Annual Parochial Church Meetings.

The Church Council has had the opportunity to review the draft financial statements.

Andrew Sillis
21st March 2025

The Parish Church of St Thomas Stourbridge
Receipts and Payments Account
For the period from 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

	Unrestricted funds	Designated funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Prior year total funds
Receipts						
Incoming resources from generated funds	-	-	-	-	-	355.00
Voluntary income	44,278.01	-	297.50	-	44,575.51	33,321.61
Activities for generating funds	-	-	675.40	-	675.40	180.00
Investment income	588.96	-	9,153.91	-	9,742.87	6,388.86
Incoming resources from charitable activities	29,024.26	-	232.26	-	29,256.52	23,981.95
Other incoming resources	-	-	-	-	-	4,409.19
Total Receipts	73,891.23	-	10,359.07	-	84,250.30	68,636.61
Payments						
Cost of generating funds	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cost of generating voluntary income	-	-	-	-	-	15.00
Fundraising trading cost of goods sold and other costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investment management costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Charitable activities	74,553.68	586.82	40,558.90	-	115,699.40	118,536.07
Governance costs	1,155.91	-	-	-	1,155.91	881.96
Other resources used	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Payments	75,709.59	586.82	40,558.90	-	116,855.31	119,433.03
Excess of receipts over payments before transfer	(1,818.36)	(586.82)	(30,199.83)	-	(32,605.01)	(50,796.42)
Transfers:						
Gross transfers between funds - in	25,195.48	9,856.07	72,292.25	-	107,343.80	1,097.32
Gross transfers between funds - out	(25,011.22)	(11,401.53)	(70,931.05)	-	(107,343.80)	(1,097.32)
Excess of receipts over payments before other gains	(1,634.10)	(2,132.28)	(28,838.63)	-	(32,605.01)	(50,796.42)
Net movement in funds	(1,634.10)	(2,132.28)	(28,838.63)	-	(32,605.01)	(49,799.20)
Reconciliation of funds						
Excess of receipts over payments at beginning of the year	2,041.17	4,396.13	180,105.35	10,599.30	197,141.95	246,941.15
Excess of receipts over payments for the year	407.07	2,263.85	151,266.72	10,599.30	164,536.94	197,141.95

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF
THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST THOMAS, STOURBRIDGE
FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**

I report to the charity Trustees ('the PCC Members') on my examination of the Receipts and Payments Statement, Assets and Liabilities Statement and Treasurer's Report, together rereferred to as 'the accounts', of the charity ('the PCC') for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Respective Responsibilities of PCC Members and Examiner

The PCC Members of The Parochial Church Council of St Thomas, Stourbridge are responsible for the preparation of the accounts for the period ended 31 December 2024 in accordance with the Charities Act 2022.

As the PCC Members have opted to prepare receipts and payments accounts, I have been appointed as an independent examiner to review these accounts under the terms of Charities Act 2022. My responsibility is to:

- Examine the accounts and consider whether they are consistent with the records kept by the PCC.
- Review whether the accounts comply with the applicable regulations.
- Assess whether any matters have come to my attention that require further explanation or clarification.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

I have carried out my examination in accordance with the guidance provided by the Charity Commission for England and Wales. My examination included a review of the accounting records maintained by the PCC and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also involved considering any unusual items or disclosures within the accounts.

The nature of an independent examination is substantially less detailed than a full audit. Consequently, I do not express an audit opinion on whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' but instead provide an independent report on whether any material issues have come to my attention.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In the course of my examination, no matters have come to my attention that give me cause to believe that:

1. Proper accounting records have not been kept in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2022.
2. The accounts do not agree with the underlying records.
3. There are material concerns that should be drawn to the attention of the PCC Members or the Charity Commission.

I confirm that, in my opinion, the accounts have been prepared in accordance with the applicable requirements and provide an accurate reflection of the receipts and payments made during the period.



Shaun Mooney FCCA, DChA, BA(Hons)

For and on behalf of **The M & C Partnership Limited**
10 Wilson Gardens
Malvern
Worcestershire
WR14 3FE

Date: 27 March 2025