

St Thomas's, Stopsley Seeking to Share God's Love



Annual Reports For Annual Church Meeting 2025

Welcome!

Welcome to our Reports for the Annual Church Meeting 2025. It is wonderful to have you as part of our Church Family, and thank you for reading through these reports and (hopefully) attending our APCM this year. If you have any queries or comments please raise them at the meeting, or mention them privately if you prefer to me or one of the Wardens of Church Council (PCC) members. There is also a slip at the end of this document.

As we meet together it is important to honour one another in the life of our church family and especially all those who do so much to care for members and to reach out to our community, and beyond, with the good news of Jesus. We are truly called to seek to share God's love with everyone!

Let us be praying ... that together we might be the Church God wants us to be, and the Church that Stopsley needs.

Welcome, indeed.

David Alexander (Vicar)

St Thomas's, Stopsley
Parish Profile & Mission Action Plan

Mission Statement: *Seeking to Share God's Love.*

- ❖ We seek to be a ***Mission-orientated*** evangelistic church, intent on sharing God's love with all in our local community, and beyond.
- ❖ We aim to reach out in ***love*** to all we can, witnessing for Christ through word and action.
- ❖ We wish to be a ***welcoming community*** in all we do.
- ❖ We offer a wide range of worship styles, including ***established*** services and ***Fresh Expressions*** for those presently unchurched and newcomers.
- ❖ We are aware of our need to be prayerful, seeking the power of the ***Holy Spirit***.
- ❖ We value being taught from the ***Scriptures***, desiring that they are expounded in a relevant and inspirational way.
- ❖ We endeavour to be a ***pastoral*** church, caring for the Church family and any others we can.
- ❖ We are a ***servant*** church seeking to serve people in our community and town, and further afield, in practical and caring ways in the name of Jesus.
- ❖ We prize our history and are ***forward-looking*** in faith to what God will do through us in the future.
- ❖ We are a ***friendly*** church, valuing fellowship, eating together, homegroups and hospitality.

SOME PARISH DETAILS

Population : 10,000 approx. (This figure gives some idea of the 'pastoral area' for our church, rather than exact count of the population).

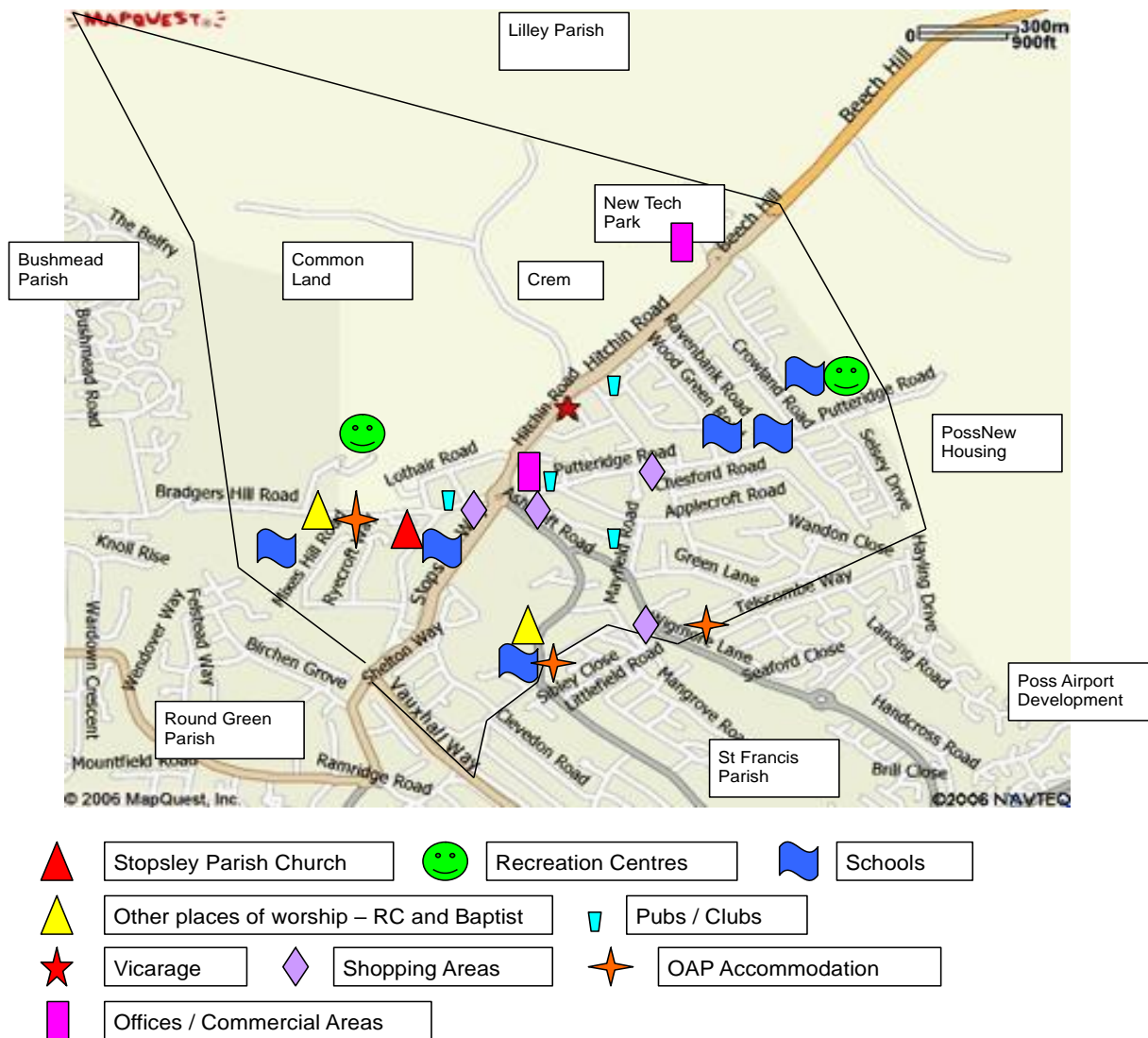
Location : North East area of Luton, at the boundary with Herts. The parish includes the wards of Stopsley and Putteridge. The busy A505 from Luton to Hitchin runs through the parish and separates the church geographically from much of the rest of the parish.

Type[s] of housing : Mainly owner occupied, with some rented accommodation, and pockets of housing association or council property.

Community facilities : Two high schools, two primary schools, one special needs school, and a large sports complex with Olympic swimming and diving facilities.

History of the community : In 1862, when the church was built, Stopsley was a village. Over the years since then Luton has gradually swallowed it up and it is now a suburb of the town. Some of the major employers of people in the community over the past 100 years have closed or declined in size, but employment remains fairly high. The airport and the car industry are major employers.

Parish boundaries: No longer quite the same natural cohesive community that it once was but boundaries mainly make sense except confusing boundary on Ramridge Estate with St. Francis.



PARTNERSHIP IN WORSHIP, MISSION & MINISTRY

We are active participants in the Luton Deanery in working together in mission to our town of Luton.

In the early 1990's we planted Christchurch, Bushmead, a thriving church largely within what was the much larger former parish of Stopsley.

Other Christian Churches : we have a good friendly relationship with Stopsley Baptist Church and Ramridge Baptist Church with whom we have co-operated on various events and projects. SBC has a much bigger congregation, and with its better facilities and style of worship it attracts younger people and people from a wider area. We have different styles of worship but complement one another in our evangelistic task. We have friendly relations with Sacred Heart (RC). Ministers are involved in local and town wide fraternals, and we also participate in a local evangelical hub for prayer and mission, and a similar but larger grouping for the whole town.

Annual Parish Report on 2024 (Prepared for AGM 2025)
by Stopsley (St Thomas) Parish Church Council (PCC)
Charity Number: 1175152

Background – What is the PCC?

Stopsley Parish Church P.C.C. has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, the Reverend David Alexander, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish of Stopsley the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Our Parish Mission Statement is as follows: **Seeking to share God's love with everyone.**

Membership – Who is on the PCC?

Members of the P.C.C are either ex officio or elected by the Annual Church Meeting (properly known as the Annual Parochial Church Meeting) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules.

During 2024 (after the 2024 AGM) the following served as members of the P. C. C:

Ex-officio Members

1. David Alexander (Vicar, Chairman)
2. Churchwarden – Natasha Cole
3. Churchwarden – vacant

Elected Lay Representatives (We are entitled to 12 elected representatives)

(The rules state: 6 reps if up to 50 on the Electoral roll
9 reps if up to 100 on the Electoral roll
12 reps if up to 200 on the Electoral roll
15 reps if over 200 on the Electoral roll)

	<u>Elected</u>	<u>Year Elected</u>	<u>Term of Office</u>	<u>Term Ends</u>
1	Rosemary Stipta	2022	3yr	2025
2	Mary Godfrey	2024	1yr	2025
3	Ian Marshall	2024	1yr	2025
4	Vacant	-	-	2025
5	Linda Clitheroe	2023	3yr	2026
6	John Kingham	2024	2yr	2026
7	Vacant	-	-	2026
8	Vacant	-	-	2026
9	Deborah Bachini	2024	3yr	2027
10	Kerri Green	2024	3yr	2027
11	Debbie Newbound	2024	3yr	2027
12	Neil Rolls	2024	3yr	2027

Elected Representatives on Deanery Synod** (automatically also serve on the PCC)

1	Christine Younger	2023	3yr	2026
2	Steve Dolby	2023	3yr	2026
3	Vacant	-	-	2026

*** We have between 100-199 names on our electoral roll and so are entitled to 3 Elected Deanery Synod Representatives.
NB Clergy of the church also serve on the Deanery Synod*

Co-opted PCC Member(s)

Nil

Office came to end at APCM 2024

PCC Members:

John Alexander*, Deborah Bachini*^, David Newbound*, Neil Rolls*^

*(Names marked * were office holders and so eligible for re-election.*

^Stood again and re-elected)

Deanery Synod Members : Christine Younger^, Steve Dolby^

Elections at 2025 AGM

We are very appreciative of the significant contributions of the PCC members coming to the end of their period of office. Under the present rules in place for our PCC, elected members who have served for 3 years, apart from 'office holders'*, are not eligible for re-election until 12 months after the end of their term of office.

Served for 3 years:

Rosemary Stipta

Served for 2 years, and coming to end of period of office. Eligible to stand for 1 year:

0

Served for 1 year, and coming to end of period of office. Eligible to stand for 2 years:

Mary Godfrey, Ian Marshall.

*(Any names marked * are eligible for re-election as they are office holders)*

There will be elections for the following positions:

4 PCC member(s)	to serve for 3 years to 2028
0 PCC member(s)	to serve for 2 years to 2027
2 PCC member(s)	to serve for 1 year to 2026
1 Deanery Synod member(s)	to serve to 2026

Committees - Standing Committee

The Standing Committee is the only committee required by law, and is our only official committee. It has power to transact the business of the P.C.C between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the council. In the past we also have had a number of 'Action Church Teams' (ACTs) that organise activities, or discuss matters, as directed by the P.C.C. and Vicar.

PCC Electoral Roll Report

There are 131 parishioners now on the Church Electoral Roll. This represents no change from the previous year's ACM Electoral Roll. There have been new members, and others have left the roll - changes due to new church attendees, parishioners moving, changing church, death or people who live outside the parish and no longer regularly attend St Thomas's.

PCC Review of the Year

This past year has been yet another year of recovery since the covid pandemic, which hit all churches badly, along with other institutions and charities. We recognise that we need to plan ahead, and have reviewed our Mission Action Plan during 2024.

We want to stress the importance of all being welcomed into a safe place, and the crucial role of safeguarding. We have worked hard to complete all the training provided by the diocese and national authorities, and all proper procedures and governance. We place a very high priority on excellence in this area and are working hard to constantly improve this aspect of our church's life. If anyone has any safeguarding concerns they should speak urgently to our Safeguarding Officer Linda Clitheroe, or the Vicar David Alexander, and we are delighted to welcome Julie Bailey to this team.

It has been a joy to receive the ministry of Steve Dolby, our Lay Reader. We are very grateful for him and all his hard work in the services at Church, and also in the Deanery.

We are thankful for the wonderful pastoral support offered by David Newbound as Pastoral Worker and Debbie Newbound as Parish Nurse. This work has expanded in various ways, including the Well Being Coffee Mornings and the Open Church meetings.

We are also very grateful for Deborah Bachini, our Administrator. Deborah has made the difficult decision to retire from her role, and we wish her and Steve well. We are glad she will still be around and be available to support our work. We are delighted to have appointed Guy Clark as the new Administrator and to welcome him.

We are delighted that Anne Abok will join us as Curate in June 2025. Anne was a member of our Church when she was selected for ordination by the Church of England. We were informed that it is 'never' possible for ordinands to return to their sending church, despite this being desired by both parties. However, Anne has proved to be the exception, in response to many prayers! We look forward to her 3 years of training amongst us.

We have continued to livestream our Daily Prayers, now from the church building, as well as to those who can join us via Facebook. We invite people to join us in the building if they can. As well as many church members, we have been joined by others, both locally and around the country and elsewhere in the world. We also livestream all our services from the church building. We are grateful to all who make this possible, especially John Pinnock and Rosemary Stipta. We have also worked hard at producing a weekly email to keep people in touch via a mailing list.

A priority continues to be care for, and support of one another, and for those we can in our local community. Thank you for all the ways in which each person has contributed to this.

The Sunday Club continues to blossom and everyone at the 10am Service enjoys the children sharing what they have been learning each week. Thank you to the children and to their leaders for all their creative hard work.

In 2024 we started the Wednesday Evening Gathering when people can join us for a meal, some worship, and to choose one of three streams: Christianity Explored, Bible Explored and Spirituality Explored.

During the year we have, as a church family, enjoyed many wonderful services and activities. We have also made many attempts to reach out to our community, not least in many acts of service and kindness shown by individual members. Another key part of our outreach has been our chaplaincy work in the community, working together with Stopsley Baptist Church in this.

The 'homegroup' and the Christianity Explored groups, and the Wednesday Gathering nurture fellowship and spiritual growth. This is a significant part of our church life and very important for future growth.

We continue to seek to give a warm welcome to visitors to the Church. Much effort and preparation is given to provide services that develop further an atmosphere of welcome. We particularly organised special events to welcome people over Christmas, Easter, Remembrance and throughout the year. We have enjoyed social activities that enhance our welcome to people.

Baptism policy for children offers a choice between a 'Thanksgiving Service' to families who want to have a celebration service in Church but who do not intend coming to Church regularly, and Baptism for those families willing to undertake preparation to make the commitment involved in that service (please see the vicar if you are interested in this). Thanksgivings are generally held after the usual services and Baptisms are held during the main Sunday Service. We also provide an informal detailed preparation for weddings. The weddings themselves appeared to be thoroughly enjoyed by the couples and their guests. Although these have diminished in number over the years, as they have elsewhere, these continue to be an excellent opportunity to provide a good witness for the Church, alongside our funeral ministry.

Thanks are due to John Alexander, our Director of Music, who plays our church organ, and has provided music recordings for when he is unavailable. We are grateful to all who have helped with the maintenance of the Church and Churchyard, especially Ian Clitheroe, and those who clean our Church, and to the flower arrangers. Their hard work enhances our worship.

The witness of individuals in their community, work and leisure environments remain vital for our evangelistic mission. We have also been keen to support the World-wide Church, particularly focussed through our links with 'Hands of Mercy' in the Philippines. Our Church has been open for prayer and visitors during weekday mornings. We served the community in caring for bereaved people at the time of funerals and welcome them to an annual commemoration service, as well as other services.

Communications within the Church are enhanced through the website and 'A Church Near You' advertising of events and our weekly email newssheet, the details of which are also projected onto the Church screen. Communications with the wider parish through our magazine is greatly appreciated by large numbers inside and outside of the Church family. Our thanks to the editorial team for all their hard work in producing our magazine.

We have continued to run our Stewardship Scheme. We are grateful to everyone who responds to stewardship initiatives, and all the Finance Team, our Treasurer, Neil Rolls, and our Stewardship Secretary, Les Sims, and the skilled help of Sarah Vyvyan. Full details of the finances are provided in the relevant reports and the presentation at the AGM.

We wish to thank many, both Church members and others, who have contributed to the ongoing work of the Church in the last year. We are also very appreciative of the sacrificial work of our Churchwarden, Natasha. The PCC wishes to thank all those who contributed to

the services: as sanctuary assistants, servers, sidesmen/women, readers and intercessors, not forgetting all who provided welcome refreshments after the morning service and on other important occasions, and also to those who have helped provide such excellent food at various events and meetings.

We are grateful for God's faithfulness in the past, and the present and look forward to the future with confident hope in God as we share His love together.

David Alexander, Vicar. On behalf of the P.C.C

Warden's Report

It's been a year of riding the roller coaster that is church warden life! The highs - up ladders dusting, cleaning, sorting the loft, drone flying and retrieving random items from the church roof. The lows (in height terms) - on my knees, weeding and tidying the church yard and crawling through small gaps behind the back of the organ. To the thrills of life events; weddings, baptisms, coffee mornings, Sunday club breakfast and for the music which uplifts me every week. To finally the spills - the down pours, the mopping up and carpet cleaning, to the tears we have shed together (both in laughter and sorrow). There's never a dull moment. To all that have supported me and the church this year, THANK YOU!

Administrators report

The Parish Office continues to be busy, overseeing the maintenance of the building and arrangements for weekly services, burial of ashes, baptisms, funerals, weddings, and for clubs and groups. There has been a lot going on following the ingress of water from the roof in October, but that is now all dry, cleaned up and repaired. Also we had the Quinquennial Inspection in November and await the report.

The office is the first point of contact for many who are contacting the church for the first time, for dropping off and picking up and many other reasons. We try to give a warm welcome and to be accessible.

My thanks go to the many volunteers helping to keep the church clean and tidy and running smoothly; a small team of people are giving help with cleaning, IT, flower arranging, silver cleaning, food bank collections, banking, shopping, tea making and many other behind the scenes jobs. It is all much appreciated, and if anyone has an hour or two to assist please do contact me in the office for details. I am also very grateful for the support of David our vicar

Although I still very much enjoy my work here I feel it is time to join my husband who has been retired for several years already. We're looking forward to lots more camping trips this summer. I wish Guy, the new administrator, well as he settles in to the role – it's a very rewarding job.

Deborah Bachini

Deanery Synod Report

Luton deanery Synod met four times during 2024. The “Growing younger and more diverse” bid for resources to boost our mission featured strongly in all our gatherings in 2024. This promises the possibility of strengthening the good work that is already underway across the deanery.

Elections to the Diocesan Synod took place in our summer meeting. Those elected were as follows

From the laity: David Dallinger, Janna Bond, Sandra Millar, Linda Logan

From the clergy: Mike Jones, Josias de Souza, Liz Hughes, Chris Burrows, Anne Crosby, David Kesterton

As David Kesterton became more involved with supporting Stephen Moore (Programme Manager) in the consultation work for the bid, two assistant Area Deans were commissioned to share in the deanery leadership. Revd Josias De Souza and Revd Anne Crosby took on this role in September.

The other deanery officers are

Lay Chair Peter Adams : Vice Lay Chair Steven Dolby: Treasurer David Dallinger:
Secretary Vacant

Thanks also go to Winnie Kinnimouth for minute taking and Lesley Dumigan for administrative support. Thanks to Josias for hosting a great deanery BBQ on 20th July. Look out for the date of the next one in 2025.

The year's meetings and main topics were as follows:

19th February – St. Thomas's Church Stopsley

We had a presentation on the work of NOAH and heard about the work of parish nurse attached to St Thomas's.

3rd June – St. Christopher's Church Round Green

We were challenged about the call towards being a carbon neutral church with input from Tom Abrahams the diocesan officer responsible. We also heard from LBC about their scheme to encourage collaborative approach in this area.

7th October – St. Mary's Church town centre.

A presentation on the Neighbourhood hubs model was given by Marek Lubelski (Head of social justice and community safety LBC) together with Fr Luke Larnier.

25th November – St. Hugh's Church Lewsey

The main focus was on engaging with the themes of the growing younger and more diverse bid. The Year of spiritual renewal and wellbeing was introduced with encouragement for us to book ourselves onto the various opportunities that are being offered.

Despite our divergent views on some of the current issues in the church, Luton deanery continues to be a strong and supportive grouping of churches and parishes across the town and neighbouring villages.

David Kesterton February 2025

With thanks to David Kesterton for sharing his report above.

Steve Dolby – Synod representative

Hands of Mercy



Some of the living conditions in the Philippines



A child receiving a Christmas gift through the Child Sponsorship Programme (CSP)

Thank you to St. Thomas' Church for all your support of Hands of Mercy over the years. Many of you have heard of us – but don't let that stop you reading on if you have! If you haven't, we are a Christian charity restoring hope to some of the poorest families in the Philippines. We do this through the local church – partnering with churches like St. Thomas' – and also individual Christians and groups.

Where we work and our programmes

We operate in nine urban poor communities, eight in Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila and one in Baguio, Benguet (about 155 miles north of Manila). Through our supporters, we provide various compassion programmes, the main ones being the Family Support

Programme (FSP), the Child Sponsorship Programme (CSP) and the Supplementary Feeding Programme (SFP).

How your support changes lives

For about 67p a day (£20 a month) sponsors literally provide life-saving food to a family each month (FSP) or help a child to break the cycle of poverty by sponsoring their education (CSP). Other supporters enable children to eat at least one meal four days a week (SFP) or give a gift to wherever it is needed the most (which can be medicine, surgery, disabled therapy or home repairs).

Most importantly, the support of churches like St. Thomas' invests in the lives of children and families who are very precious to Jesus but who face desperate hardship and poverty. Some families try to survive on a mere few pounds each day through basic work. Others scavenge for a living, including children who might only be 7-8 years old, picking through rubbish in the baking hot sun, trying to get just enough money to provide a meal that day. There's no 'day off' or NHS support – if someone gets sick or is so tired that they can't work or scavenge, they don't eat. It's a heartbreaking situation but we CAN make a difference by extending God's love and practical support. The Bible says, "...whoever is kind to the needy honours God" (Proverbs 14:31) and that couldn't be more true!

We've been operating since 1997, starting with a sponsor for just one child to now having over 100 sponsors on board supporting children to get an education each year!

In the last few years, through God's intervention, we've also been able to start a water filtering business called Ichthus which has provided jobs to people in the squatter communities and generated enough surplus to sponsor two children! Our prayer is that this will continue to grow – we would love to be able to sponsor more children through Ichthus.

We work REALLY hard to keep our UK costs low (typically 3% or less) so that everything else goes to the Philippines. Those who invest their sponsorship know where their money goes and how it's making an impact.

One of the CSP children said: "I can say that I am blessed because not every child has a chance like this. I am grateful because God gives us kind people to support [us]..."

Thank you again St. Thomas' for your care, love and support. We couldn't do this without you!

Find out more

If you would like to find out more about Hands of Mercy, we have a quarterly prayer diary (email or post) where you can learn more about what's happening in Hands of Mercy and receive prayer topics each month (see the contact details below).

Alternatively, you might consider if you could give 67p a day (or £20 a month) to sponsor a child or a family, or to make a practical difference to those who are struggling to survive.

If you would like to do any of these things, it would be great to hear from you! Denise, our wonderful administrator (and one of our trustees) is on-hand with more information and she can be contacted via info@handsofmercyph.org or 07467 127023.

Thank you again St. Thomas'. Until next year – “Pagpalain ka ng diyos” (God bless you)!

From Samantha,

God bless you,

Samantha, Keith, David, Sarah, Michael and Denise (administrator)

UK Trustees, Hands of Mercy International

Home Groups

Our Home Group has been running now for several years. We are a very warm, welcoming and friendly group comprising of approximately nine members that meets weekly on Thursday evenings in our home. We kick off at 8pm with refreshments while we catch up on the week's news and follow on with a bible study and discussion and close with prayers aiming to finish no later than 10pm.

No one is obliged to join in with the discussions or prayers but most of us do. We have lots of fun and are always happy for newcomers to see for themselves what we get up to. We usually suggest that people try us out for say six weeks to get a fuller picture and to see if it's for them or not. Ian.Marshall125@gmail.com 07968131997

If you are interested, please have a word with either Ruth or me or a member of the group. You could, if you prefer, leave a message with the church office and I'll get back to you. *One word of warning, I try not to tell too many jokes, but sometimes I can't help myself.*

Ian Marshall

Messenger Magazine

The Messenger is a monthly magazine produced initially for housebound and others who have not been able to return to church since Covid. It has reports and photos of events, items of interest and church dates plus much more.

There is no set charge for the magazine, we ask if recipients are able to offer a donation towards printing costs. There is a regular delivery round and the leftover magazines are put in church for any members of the congregation to take.

Linda Clitheroe

Parish Nurse

I have been the Parish Nurse at St Thomas's Church for four years now. We have just recredited for another four years. I am now a full time volunteer as a Parish Nurse since relocating from the L and D Hospital where I worked for 34 years. My role as Parish Nurse at St Thomas's Church covers from the very young to very elderly. As far as youth is concerned along with the club leaders, I have a responsibility to the young people to look after their wellbeing, checking in with them, showing interest in what they are doing and getting involved where I can.

I run a twin group for the very young babies and support mum and baby within the first year. I also work with teenagers in my role with life choices and changes. My role as Parish Nurse is to walk beside everyone in all aspects of their lives. Other groups are Cancer Support Group which is run once a month supporting people with cancer, had cancer, or looking after someone with cancer.

I facilitate an Alzheimer's Support Group. We have a Wellbeing Coffee Morning once a month where we enjoy a catch up, sometimes have speakers, but generally checking in on every one. We have recently started Open Church, Monday and Tuesday 10:30 to 12:30, open to all in the community. My work is supported by grants which are applied for each year with a great deal of work from Steve Dolby.

For more information on my role please email me on Debbie.newbound@gmail.com

Debbie Newbound

Pastoral Care Report

Over the past year, I have had the privilege of serving this church and community as the Director of Pastoral Care. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone for their generosity, compassion, love and prayerful support. It has been a challenging time, especially with the difficulties faced by my own family and the loss of our mum in June. During my period of grieving, I felt the need to withdraw slightly from much of my usual pastoral activities to avoid projecting my grief onto those I am called to engage with.

I am grateful for the ongoing supervision from Vicar David and the lead chaplain for Stopsley Community Chaplaincy as well as the unwavering support of the church family. I also gladly agreed to cover for the vicar during the second half of his sabbatical last year, which required some of my time and energy to be dedicated to preparing services and other commitments while the vicar was away.

Pastoral work is a collaborative effort, and I am thankful for the ongoing support and encouragement from David Alexander, Debbie Newbound, Steve Dolby, Deborah Bachini, Neil Rolls, the PCC and every member of the church family here at St Thomas.

Working together with the Vicar and the Parish Nurse we have been able to meet the needs of the church family, to reach out to support their families, friends and neighbours, as well as extending our work on behalf of the church family and within the wider community.

I think this also gives me the opportunity to remind members of the church who approach me asking for details concerning others, that because of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) and Privacy and Confidentiality under Safeguarding Regulations that I will never share information with anyone apart from the vicar and other professionals working to assist me with particular individuals or situations.

I look forward to being part of the ongoing Pastoral Care for both the church family and the wider community over the next 12 months.

David Newbound
Director of Pastoral Care

Safeguarding Report

The MORE safeguarding is discussed, the LESS likely a serious incident will occur! Our aim is to make everyone more AWARE of what safeguarding entails for us as a church. At St Thomas's we promote a SAFER CHURCH policy and we make sure that all safeguarding policies are updated, at least, annually. All those who work with young people have been DBS cleared and have completed the relevant training. As you will understand, the need for safeguarding is very relevant in churches, especially in the light of some high profile cases recently. We, at St. Thomas's, take safeguarding very seriously, and will be inviting the new PCC members to a workshop and we will share this work with congregations.

Linda Clitheroe
Safeguarding Officer

Social and Fundraising Team

Thanks go to those that have arranged any events this year which have brought in funds to St Thomas's. The Pancake evening in February, the Ploughman's Lunch and afternoon tea in September at the Bike 'n' Hike event, sponsorship for the Bike 'n' Hike, and the Stopsley Christmas Market. Sharing meals and coffee mornings have also brought in some much needed income. If anyone would like to organise a fundraising event please do contact the PCC or Parish Office.

Stewardship Report

The year 2024 has been a difficult year, which has affected all of us in various ways. Consequently, I wish to thank everyone who has faithfully been committed to supporting our Church during the financial year (2024).

As at 31st. December, 2024 the membership of the Scheme was 59. (couples count as one). A net loss of 10 from the previous year.

As you can appreciate, with increased running costs year on year, regular stewardship giving and donations are very important. This is because St. Thomas's costs exceed its income for the SIXTH year in succession. Legacy monies, which should be put aside to

maintain the fabric of the Church and for emergencies, are being used to make up the deficit. The deficits for the last THREE years have been over £30,000 each year. Eventually, this source will run out.

However, stewardship is not only about money, it is also about giving time and practical help to St. Thomas's Church. There is always a need for Sunday Club helpers, refreshment volunteers, and also cleaners, litter pickers and people to carry out odd jobs, etc. The list is endless. If you are in a position to help, please talk to the Administrator in the Parish Office.

Lastly, I would ask that you take this opportunity to pray and reflect on your giving. If you would like to join the Stewardship Scheme and make regular donations please ask me, the Treasurer or the Parish Administrator for details. Finally, I would ask all of you to consider leaving St. Thomas's Church a legacy in your will.

Remember: THE LORD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER.

Leslie Sims - Stewardship Secretary

Sunday Club Review



The usual pattern for Sunday Club is to meet in the Church Hall during the 10am service, except the First Sunday of each month when we join the rest of the congregation for the All-Age Service when some of the children often do the readings and lead the prayers. During the 3 academic terms, the topics we looked at this year included 'God's Love', 'The Joys of Obeying God' and 'God Provides'. During the school summer holidays we show videos and hand out snacks, which is always popular.

We try hard to do some activities outside of the Sunday sessions. (This is not always easy with leaders working full-time and shift work).

The year started with what is fast becoming a tradition, an Epiphany party. A successful event with all the youngsters encouraged to bring a friend along. We are supported and helped by parents, grandparents and adult friends to make this a fun and happy event.

We organised an Easter Breakfast on Easter Day – another successful regular event, with the congregation being invited to join us for a cooked breakfast (and of course Hot Cross Buns) on Easter morning.

The summer came and with it a Summer Picnic which took a slight change with a sports event in Stopsley 'Castle Park'. The weather behaved itself and enabled us to have a fun-afternoon with wider family members and various races with both adults and children joining in.

The Scarecrow Festival gave us the opportunity to join with the local community in raising some money for charity in a fun-way creating a Harvest Supper Scene (complete with various games for passers-by) in the Churchyard. We were all thrilled to win one of the prizes and a cup which is proudly displayed in the Church Hall.

Unfortunately, we were unable to arrange for the children to serve the wider community this Christmas but are hoping to manage it again in Year 2025.

This year we were delighted to welcome Becca Rutherford as a leader and are looking forward to working with and learning from her.

After several years loyal service Ian Marshall has decided to step down from Sunday Club and we would like to thank him for the time and effort he has put in to sharing his faith and belief with the youngsters.

We would be delighted if any members (male or female) of the congregation would like to join us – particularly as ‘helpers’ to support whoever is leading the section each week. We would also be delighted to welcome more youngsters to our friendly happy group. Numbers have dropped this year but with prayer and publicity we hope this can be turned around. We would be pleased if the whole Family of St Thomas would join us in praying for growth and remembering that Word of mouth is the best and most effective publicity.

We are also pleased to be able to say that in recent years we have been totally self-funding (raising our own funds through the Easter Breakfast and Christmas Market teas).

Ruth Marshall

Treasurer's Annual Report Year ended 31st December 2024

Financial Review

Incoming and outgoing resources

Total receipts were £80,344 and are detailed in the Financial Report.

The planned giving, including the Gift Day, though envelopes and banker's orders decreased by 4%. It was good to see the use of Gift Aid through the Parish Giving Scheme which avoids bank charges on cash/envelope donations. Our total voluntary income including tax recovered, but excluding legacies increased by 6%.

The PCC was grateful to receive a legacy of £1,137 from the estate of Josie Cumberland.

Sharing the ministry costs of the Diocese of St Albans

The largest expenditure of the PCC was the sum of £63,525 paid to the diocese for our share of all churches' Parish Ministry Costs. This year the contribution from St Thomas's increased by 0.5% on the previous year and the church is meeting 100% of these costs.

The total relates directly to the housing, support, stipend and pension costs of the clergy of this parish, training of new ordinands, a contribution to national church funds and, shared costs of the Christian family throughout the whole diocese, including assistance towards the upkeep of churches less able to manage than ourselves.

Staff costs

The PCC pays for the Administrator who deals with the running of the Church Office and Director of Pastoral Care.

Trustee payments and expenses

The PCC also supported the clergy by paying annual costs towards travel, hospitality, telephone, postage and broadband amounting to a little over £4,453.

One other trustee received £434 for telephone and travelling bills.

There were no payments to persons related to or connected to, the trustees.

Office costs

The PCC also approved the purchase of a replacement intruder system, costing £1,220 and a replacement shredder costing £123

Money in reserve

It is PCC policy to invest temporarily surplus general funds with Barclays Bank, returning proportionately these funds to our current account, as they are needed, to pay day-to-day bills. This year £80,843 was invested temporarily at 31st December.

Future uncertainties

The deficit for the year is a concern, but we hope to increase regular giving via a Stewardship campaign to ensure we are in a strong position to meet regular commitments. It is important to ensure that as the day-to-day costs rise, the growth in income is sustained through renewed giving pledges, to strengthen our underlying financial position. This will enable further improvements to be made to the fabric of our Church.

Gift Days regularly take place to emphasis God's generosity to the congregation and encourage the congregation to respond to that generosity in their giving through time, talents and money, as they are able.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express thanks to the people who help with the handling of the Church Cash and Accounting; Deborah Bachini who helps count and record the Collections at each Service; Les Sims who deals with the envelope giving and gift aid return; Godfrey Laws who has operated the Church PAYE scheme and Natasha Wilcox, who performed the Independent Examination of our 2024 Accounts.

Neil Rolls

(Hon. Treasurer St Thomas' PCC)

18 May 2025

Comments and Questions for the AGM or PCC or Vicar.

Any Comment:

Any Question:

St Thomas' P.C.C. Stopsley, Luton
Statement of Financial Activities
For the year ended 31st December 2024

Incoming Resources (all unrestricted)

	Note	2024	2023
		£	£
Incoming resources from donors	2(a)	59,408	62,753
Other voluntary incoming resources	2(b)	12,802	9,538
Income from charitable & ancillary trading	2(c)	277	291
Interest income		843	0
Other ordinary incoming resources	2(d)	7,014	5,115
Total Non-Designated Incoming resources		<u>80,344</u>	<u>77,697</u>

Resources Used

Grants	3(a)	550	(210)
Activities directly relating to the work of the Church	3(b)	115,478	104,380
Publicity, Church management & admin.	3(c)	816	1,114
		<u>116,844</u>	<u>105,284</u>
Net Annual Surplus / (Deficit)		<u>(36,500)</u>	<u>(27,587)</u>

St Thomas' P.C.C. Stopsley, Luton
Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
Fixed Assets	4	<u>1,024</u>	<u>788</u>
Current Assets			
Debtors	5	7,077	5,437
Cash at Bank and In Hand	6	<u>105,696</u>	<u>144,676</u>
		112,773	150,113
Liabilities: Amounts due within one year	7	<u>9,246</u>	<u>9,850</u>
Net current assets		103,527	140,263
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>104,551</u>	<u>141,051</u>
Funds			
General Account	8	0	0
Legacy Funds	9	103,476	139,976
Youth Project	8	<u>1,075</u>	<u>1,075</u>
		104,551	141,051

TREASURER'S STATEMENT

I have prepared the financial statements on pages 2 to 7 for the year ended 31 December 2024

Signed : 

Treasurer : Neil Rolls

Date: 28 April 2025

APPROVED by the Church Meeting held on 28 April 2025 and signed on its behalf by:

Signed :  vicar

Reverend David Alexander (Chairman)

Date: 28 April 2025

St Thomas' P.C.C. Stopsley, Luton
Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 December 2024

1. Accounting Policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 together with applicable accounting standards and the Charities SORP.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention except for the valuation of investment assets, which are shown at market value.

Funds

General funds represent the funds of the PCC that are not subject to any restrictions regarding their use and are available for application on the general purposes of the PCC. Funds designated for a particular purpose by the PCC are also unrestricted.

The accounts include all transactions, assets and liabilities for which the PCC is responsible in law. They do not include the accounts of church groups that owe their main affiliation to another body nor those that are informal gatherings of Church members.

Incoming Resources

Voluntary income and capital sources

Collections are recognised when received by or on behalf of the PCC.

Planned giving receivable under covenant is recognised only when received.

Income tax recoverable on covenants or gift aid donations is recognised when the income is recognised.

Grants and legacies to the PCC are accounted for as soon as the PCC is notified of its legal entitlement and the amount due,

Income from investments

Interest is accounted for when received.

Resources Used

Activities directly relating to the work of the Church

Fixed Assets

Consecrated land and buildings and movable church furnishings

Consecrated and beneficed property is excluded from the accounts by s.96 (2)(a) of the Charities Act 1993.

No value is placed on movable church furnishings held by the churchwardens on special trust for the PCC and which require a faculty for disposal since the PCC considers this to be inalienable property.

St Thomas' P.C.C. Stopsley, Luton

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year ended 31st December 2024

Equipment

Office Equipment and sound equipment is depreciated on the straight line basis at a rate of 33.3% per annum.

Individual items of Equipment with a purchase price of £250 or less are written off when the asset is acquired.

Current Assets

Amounts owing to the PCC at 31 December are shown as debtors less provision for amounts that may prove uncollectible.

2. Incoming resources (all unrestricted)

	Note	2024	2023
		£	£
2(a) Incoming from donors			
Planned Giving		41,249	44,370
Gift Day		1,805	480
Income Tax recoverable		9,793	9,981
Collections (open plate) at all Services		3,781	3,980
Collections (credit card) at all Services		1,643	692
Legacies		1,137	3,250
		<u>59,408</u>	<u>62,753</u>
2(b) Other voluntary incoming resources			
Coffee mornings, Lunches & Teas		1,019	1,001
Hire of and Donations for use of hall		4,002	1,900
Social Events		1,282	1,668
Miscellaneous Donations & Receipts		2,966	2,065
Parish Nursing Donations & Receipts		3,533	2,904
		<u>12,802</u>	<u>9,538</u>
2(c) Income from charitable and ancillary trading			
Magazine Subscriptions		277	291
Magazine Adverts		0	0
		<u>277</u>	<u>291</u>
2(d) Other ordinary income resources			
Wedding and funeral fees & receipts		<u>7,014</u>	<u>5,115</u>

St Thomas' P.C.C. Stopsley, Luton

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year ended 31st December 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
3 Resources Used		
3(a) Grants to Charities		
World Relief	0	532
World Mission	0	0
UK Social Concern/Relief	550	248
UK Church Mission	0	(990)
	<u>550</u>	<u>(210)</u>
3(b) Activities directly relating to the work of the Church		
Ministry: Parish Share	63,525	63,230
Clergy Expenses	4,453	5,098
Pastoral Worker	5,877	5,352
Pastoral Discretionary Expenditure	173	42
Church Office Wages	9,738	8,871
Church: Running Expenses	12,163	7,060
Routine Maintenance	5,698	4,246
Major Repairs	3,304	1,327
Service Costs	2,315	2,500
Parish Nursing Costs	3,533	2,926
Depreciation	984	689
Telephone Charges	2,294	2,058
Miscellaneous	1,421	981
	<u>115,478</u>	<u>104,380</u>
3(c) Publicity, Church Management & Administration		
Stationery & printing (incl. magazine)	761	1,284
Independent Examiner's fee	0	(240)
Miscellaneous	55	70
	<u>816</u>	<u>1,114</u>

St Thomas' P.C.C. Stopsley, Luton

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year ended 31st December 2024

4. Fixed Assets

	Sound Equipment	Office Equipment	Total
Cost/Valuation			
At 1 January 2024	10,233	7,666	17,899
Additions during year	0	1,220	1,220
At 31 December 2024	10,233	8,886	19,119
Depreciation			
At 1 January 2024	10,233	6,878	17,111
Charge for year	0	984	984
At 31 December 2024	10,233	7,862	18,095
Net Book Value			
At 31 December 2024	0	1,024	1,024
At 31 December 2023	0	788	788

5. Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Income Tax recoverable	4,586	4,401
Other Debtors	2,491	1,036
	7,077	5,437

6. Cash at Bank and In Hand

Cash on deposit	80,843	0
Cash at Bank	24,837	114,608
Cash in Hand	16	68
	105,696	114,676

7. Liabilities: Amounts due within one year

Donations	0	934
Other Creditors & Accruals	9,246	8,916
	9,246	9,850

8. Funds

	General Account	Legacy Funds (Unrestricted)	Youth Project	Total
At 1 January 2024	0	139,976	1,075	141,051
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	0	(36,500)	0	(36,500)
At 31 December 2024	0	103,476	1,075	104,551

9. Legacy Funds

	2024 £	2023 £
Jim Gabriel	99,089	136,726
Barbara Peters	3,000	3,000
William Biggs	250	250
Josie Cumberland	1,137	0
	103,476	139,976

Independent Examiner's Report to the PCC of St Thomas' Church, Stopsley, Luton

This report on the accounts of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2024, which are set out on pages 2 to 7 is in respect of an examination carried out under Regulation 3(3) of the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 and under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act).

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

As the members of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts, you consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 3(3) of the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 and under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) do not apply and that an independent examination is needed. It is my responsibility to issue this report on those accounts in accordance with the terms of Regulation 25 of the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 and Regulation 7 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 1995.

Basis of Independent examiners report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - To keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
 - To prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met; or
2. To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached

Signed: 

Date: 2 May 2025

Natasha Wilcox
1 Furze Close
Luton
LU2 7UB