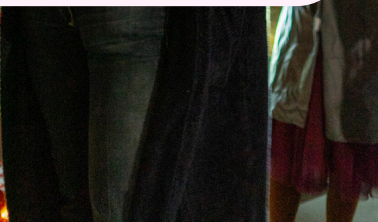
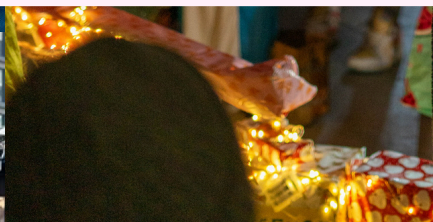


**CHRISTCHURCH**  
**THREE MILLS**  
LOVING-LIVING-BELONGING



# Annual Report: 2024



*Colours of Heaven*

# CONTENTS

## FROM THE VICAR

*page 2*

## SAFEGUARDING

*page 3*

## WORSHIP GATHERINGS

*page 5*

## COMMUNITY ORGANISING AND PARTNERSHIPS

*page 6*

## COMMUNITY GROUPS, DISCIPLESHIP AND PASTORAL CARE

*page 8*

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EVENTS

*page 9*

## YOUTH WORK

*page 12*

## COMMUNITY CAFE AND FOOD SHARE

*page 13*

## FINANCE

*pages 14,16*

## CHAIR'S REPORT

*page 17*

**PAT'S STORY - page 4**  
**TANIA'S STORY - page 7**  
**SIAN'S STOERY - page 10**  
**KELILAH'S STORY - page 11**  
**BORIS'S STORY - page 15**

## FROM THE VICAR



**2024, what a year! And this report captures so many of the amazing stories from it. We have celebrated with 4 church members being baptised and 2 confirmed, the joyful ordination of Rev Pat, and Sian graduating from her Community Organising Apprenticeship. We have seen a new youth pastor in Tosin bringing so much life to church, Agnes starting as our second apprentice and the amazing growth of the worship team which has had an incredible impact on Sunday mornings. We have also seen things that have been developing for a while - the leadership team thriving and taking on more responsibility under Maxine and Doyin's leadership, whilst other teams such as those for prayer, really starting to lead in vital areas of church life.**

**We have maintained and grown our heart to be a 'church without walls' and kept our vision to see the colours of heaven bursting out of every corner of our neighbourhood front and centre. We continued our community celebrations which grew significantly this year, and we found new ways to share the story of God in and with our neighbourhood. We celebrated when the council installed planters in our Community Corner, leading to an end of illegal parking, decrease in antisocial behaviour, and a feeling of peace & safety - this is God's kingdom in action.**



**It's so great to look around and just see the incredible joy-filled and diverse community God is growing here. Stories of lives impacted and changed by the Spirit and faithful work of God's people. Truth and love, justice and community, a growing table where everyone has a seat. The colours of heaven seen everywhere. So grateful to pastor and play my part in this incredible story, long may it continue!**

*Dan*

# SAFEGUARDING

This year, our initial safeguarding officer Pat Laroque stepped down on her ordination as diocesan policy states they should be a lay member of church. We are grateful to Pat for the way she oversaw safeguarding in the church as a core value and central to what we do as a community.

Pat was replaced by Rebecca Taylor, who had been serving as her assistant. Rebecca drew together a safeguarding team to oversee and regularly review policies & practices - members are Rebecca, Rev Pat, Deborah Olayinka, and Tosin Abrahams.

The team have audited our paper work and procedures, supported the implementation of Safer Recruitment policies and reviewed safeguarding procedures for our youth work.

We are committed to Christchurch Three Mills being a safe place for all and continue to encourage and train everyone that Safeguarding is all our responsibility. You can always speak to a member of the team or leadership about any concerns, which will always be listened to and taken seriously.



*As a church, we have have adopted the Church of England's policies and best practice on safeguarding which may be found on the Church of England's website. Any safeguarding concerns should be addressed to our safeguarding lead - Rebecca Taylor, [safeguarding@christchurchthreemills.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@christchurchthreemills.co.uk)  
For more details speak to any member of the leadership team*

## Pat's Story

### **How long have you been part of Christchurch?**

*I have been involved with Christchurch Three Mills from the start as I was called by God to step out for the gospel of Christ.*

### **How did you see your faith grow over 2024?**

*My faith has grown tremendously with confidence after I attended a year long training at St. Mellitus where I had the privilege to journey with other students and Calebs in being part of a formation team to make a difference in my life in listening to the Spirit of God and to help me develop a passion for Christ.*



**Having completed the Caleb Stream at St Mellitus last year, Pat was ordained deacon at Chelmsford Cathedral in September 2024. She now serves the church and neighbourhood in this new role and vocation.**

### **How have you seen God at work with Christchurch in 2024?**

*I see God at work in the lives of people and in the community as I go prayer-walking, home visits, distributing fliers, engagement with the children in the park, food share and praying for them. Significant moments are times when I pray and God answered, and people I would invite to church, would turn up for service unexpectedly.*



### **How were you personally touched by God last year?**

*I was touched at our Christmas nativity in the community; people coming out to play their part, ending with a Thanksgiving in Island Bikes for our celebration. I can see a vision of God at work in this place, in bringing people together through his power and strength to build his church.*

# WORSHIP GATHERINGS



Sunday mornings are always a key moment and highlight of the week as we gather as church family to worship, learn, pray and share Communion together. Attendance has been increasing and it's great to see new families and members of our community gathering regularly.

Our gatherings are always intentionally inter-generational and children and youth play an active role (reading, praying, distributing communion). as well as the

wonderful crafts they make during our times of preaching.

The worship team has grown considerably in the last year, and a number of new people have both preached and led services - a reflection of our commitment to everyone having a seat at the table and their own voice. We have seen baptisms, confirmations and thanksgiving services, as well as special services with both our bishop, Lynne, and archdeacon, Mike, visiting us in 2024.



Worship doesn't just happen on Sunday! We meet every Wednesday morning on the Green for a service of Morning Prayer - open air and open to all. Prayer days and communion services also happen here on feast days such as Ash Wednesday, All Saints, Christmas Day; marking our heart to be worshipping together as community. For the first time, we also held an outdoor roaming Nativity Service which was received incredibly well. We also held our Big Weekend in Summer - a series of worship and teaching events, with social activities with at least 50 members.



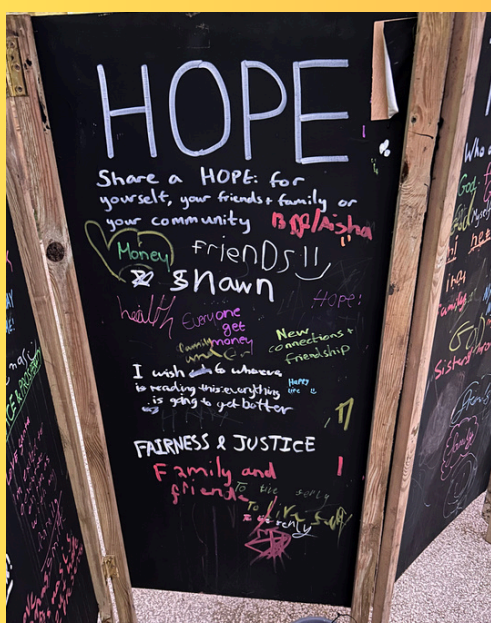
## COMMUNITY ORGANISING & PARTNERSHIPS



Our engagement with Citizens UK has strengthened over the year, allowing us to participate in mayoral assemblies, engage with wider issues of justice & enhancing our training in community organising and listening, empowering members to engage meaningfully with one another. Our partnership with CTC through the Congregational Development programme has led to rethinking our leadership model, and enable us to better listen and respond to the needs of the community.

One key fruit of this was a campaign alongside our neighbours, and with the backing of Newham citizens, to push the council to install new planters in an area of illegal parking/antisocial behaviour - this led to a more welcoming and spacious area now used for local gatherings for gardening, fun activities for children and opportunities for building relationships.

We proudly celebrated Sian's successful completion of the apprenticeship program in community organising with CTC, and are excited to continue the success of the apprenticeship programme with a new member.



So much of this work is possible through our ongoing presence in the neighbourhood, our community events, cafe and food share, and the neighbours we share life with. From community gardening to hot chocs at school to 121s and house meetings, it is God's kingdom in action; hope for all - working together to see life to the full.



## Tania's Story

Tania's family were significantly impacted by the illegal parking and anti-social behaviour by her house. We worked with her in 2024 to campaign and change this space into what is now our Community Corner.

**Were there any significant moments for you in engaging with church in 2024?**

*It's strengthened my belief in the power of coming together to help others, regardless of personal beliefs.*

**How did this impact your relationships and sense of belonging?**

*I've been drawn to the energy, kindness, and genuine commitment of the people involved, particularly in how they support one another and serve the wider community. I have found something deeply valuable in the collective spirit of the group*

**How did you see the church impact the neighbourhood in 2024?**

*They had a real, positive impact on the neighbourhood through inclusive events & community projects, litter picking and planting. My family and I take part whenever we can, it's a great way to connect with others and contribute to the wellbeing of our community.*

**How were you personally most touched by the church's work?**

*It's rare to find a space where people are so committed to doing good without judgment. That spirit has inspired me and made me feel more connected, hopeful and rooted in the idea that community can be a powerful force for good.*



**How, if at all, did your faith grow this year?**

*2024 has been a meaningful year for me in engaging with the church community. Being part of this community has made me feel more connected and perhaps more spiritual in a broader sense.*



## COMMUNITY GROUPS, DISCIPLESHIP AND PASTORAL CARE



**Our two community groups meet on Tuesday lunchtime and Thursday evening for food, followed by bible study, discussion and prayer. Last year a course on Theology and Leadership was completed, written by Dan, looking at God's story, our story, and the story of the church and community. It is great to see relationships developing here, as well as seeing people growing in their faith and actually some people finding this as more of Church than the Sunday services! The**

**sense of community is shown in the way those who join remark on how welcoming and friendly it is, sustaining us for spiritual growth.**

**A number of leaders attended a CTC course 'Listen and Lead' in 2024, helping us develop our gifts and grow in leadership here. Through this we have seen a growing number of church members taking part in 121s, building relationships and taking action together.**



**There has been a growing use of the church Whatsapp to encourage, reach out, share news and pray. Separate groups have also been established enabling people to connect and engage in prayer more deeply. Pastoral care continues with weekly prayer**



**walking, home visiting and prayer in community on Wednesday mornings, and on Zoom in evenings. Through presence and growing relationships we care for and serve all whom we can - especially those on the edge of church or community.**

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EVENTS

It has been so exciting to see our regular community outreach & mission events happening in new spaces and reaching new people through 2024.

Our biggest event of the year, the Easter Egg Hunt, saw over 150 and perhaps 200 people taking part; searching for eggs, getting faces painted and building relationships. We also held Pancake day, Light up the Night at All Hallows Eve, Light up the Green at the start of Advent (where Santa met and gave over 100 presents to local children) and events at the new Community Corner. Many of these events also introduce neighbours to spirituality or the Christian story in gentle, welcoming, yet meaningful ways. Alongside these, spaces are made for events that explicitly welcome people to worship and tell the Christian story in clear and relevant ways.



Our community cart has appeared regularly round the neighbourhood, serving up to 100 drinks in a session, engaging at times with close to 150 local residents of all ages. Our summer sports in the park continue to be well received and attended, with up to 70 people there at a time, with people bringing along food and other things to contribute to the sessions.

We have continued to engage with families in our neighbourhood through our activity packs. Distributed in 2024 at Lent, Easter and Advent, these contained 5-7 activities with crafts, challenges and a bible story, accompanied in Lent by YouTube videos explaining the stories.. We are able to reach 40-50 children with these and many eyes light up as we call to deliver them and we hear back of the impact they are having, not just on children but their parents too.



## Sian's Story

**Having grown up on our local estate, Sian became our first Community Organising Apprentice on leaving school, which she completed in summer 2024.**

**Were there any significant moments for you in 2024?**

*Connecting with people more in the church and having events for the children, youths and adults. Working with the church made me grow as a person and find myself more in who I am and what I believe in.*

**How did you see your faith grow through the year?**

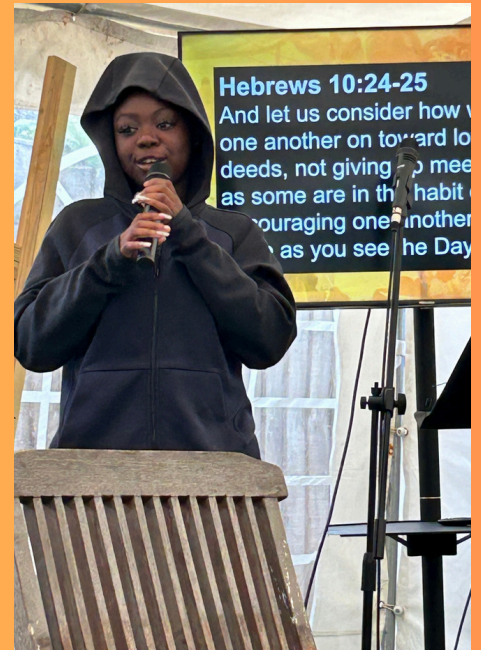
*My faith did grow a lot and brought more of a personal connection with me and God.*

**How did church and the apprenticeship impact your relationships and sense of belonging?**

*It made me actually go and find out who God is myself and made me feel more comfortable to have faith. The church has an inviting atmosphere and it makes it very easy to feel a sense of belonging and it's like a big family there is a lot of positive energy from everyone and you can go to them for anything you need to talk about.*

**How do you feel you were personally touched or impacted by God?**

*Being with everyone and talking to everyone when before I wouldn't be in the mood if I was upset about something. Developing connection with everyone and gradually getting closer to God it brought a sense of love and peace in my heart.*





## Kelilah's Story

Kelilah joined our church and the youth group in 2024, finding a place where she belonged and was excited to grow in faith. Her growing confidence has led her to leading worship and sharing her story with us on a Sunday.

**Were there any significant moments for you in engaging with church in 2024?**

*At Youth Group I learnt about God's peace, and I've started to*

*experience it more. Particularly with my school work, and in other areas of my life.*

**How did your faith grow over the year?**

*I have felt more peaceful and confident. Also sharing my faith with my friends, and inviting them to church. For example, I really liked the Big Weekend event, and I invited my friend to come too, and now she comes regularly to youth group on Friday. As my faith grows I've enjoyed sharing it with others.*

**How did you see the church impacting the neighbourhood?**

*I like the church community events because it involves and welcomes everyone in the neighbourhood. Some of my friends that come to youth group do not come to church every Sunday, but they still get to learn about God at youth and the church events which they attend. They also got involved in the Sunday youth service which was great.*

**In what ways were you personally touched or impacted last year?**

*Through the youth group. I like getting to learn about God with other youth. I also like singing in church sometimes on Sundays and helping with the kids, and being part of a church family. It's made a positive impact on me.*

## YOUTH WORK



There have been various areas of growth within the youth work in the last year, including Friday Youth Group which started in Spring. This initiative was planned to be extended to all youth in our community, and as a result the majority are regular attendees - they are still getting to know Christ in an effective way, and we can see the positive impact the group is having.

They have also taken part in other events in the neighbourhood, and have been committed to attending regular Youth Social gatherings and inviting friends along too!

We have also been encouraged by the willingness and enthusiasm to participate in Sunday Services led by the Youth - we are seeing them grow in confidence as they participate and engage well, demonstrating growth in their walk with God, and showing individual development of leadership skills. We have seen the young people thrive in taking on responsibility to stimulate their growth (preaching, singing in worship band, helping younger children and initiating communion).

As a church we have been serving hot chocolates, using that time to engage with young people, make them aware of what we're doing, inviting them to take part and building relationship with them.



We also started a monthly gathering for youth aged 8-11. We utilise this as an opportunity to extend the love of Christ and encourage the developmental aspects of our youth. We do this through playing a series of games, and some fun Bible themed activities. We aim to see more young people growing in faith and becoming socially active within our community.

# COMMUNITY CAFÉ AND FOOD SHARE

The cafe and food share has continued in strength through 2024, gives residents the opportunity to meet and socialise with others over a nice cup of tea, with a play space for toddlers so that parents can bring their children. Through grants obtained by Tesco and Newham Council, we have been able to run Wellbeing mornings during the cafe session - this started out as cooking together but now involve doing crafts (calligraphy, watercolour painting, Christmas card making and more). We have also arranged visits from different services including a presentation from Big Ideas on Nuclear Test Veterans. Participants



have included parents of children from the school, and a wide range of other local residents. Comments have been made on how exciting it is to meet other people and learn new skills together - finding a break from the hectic stresses of life, often in quite a mindful way.

The food share is run through donated food with people being able to take a bag of shopping for £1. We began a partnership with FareShare, enabling us



to collect food close to its expiry date and offer it alongside non-perishable items. Multiple households benefit from our foodshare each week, and through the connections made here, we have been able to introduce people to the school, our community activities and the church.

# FINANCE REPORT

The church, since its start in 2019-22, has been funded by money from the Church of England Strategic Development Fund (SDF). This funding is due to finish at the end of 2025 and so we must consider the long term sustainability of the church beyond this period.

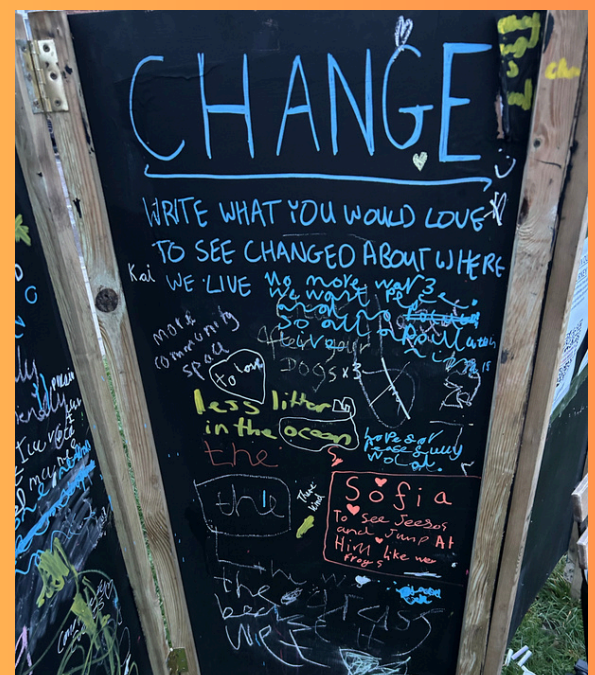


The overall income in 2024 totalled £85,669.98 and expenditure on charitable and support activities totalled £74,042.95 resulting in a surplus of £11,627.03. Giving, Gift Aid and local grants brought in £22,590.30, which shows the great progress the church is making. It is vital that this figure is further raised this year as we approach the end of SDF funding.

The main expense for the church is the salaries and benefits of the staff team these amounted to £38,369.93. During the year under review all staff worked on a part time basis. Spending on the mission and ministry of the church, including hire of premises, came to £28,473.02. It is really important that as a minimum, giving exceeds this figure in the future. The church has also contributed £7,200, via 'parish' share to the wider running of the Diocese.

As all SDF funding finishes at the end of 2025, we are left with an estimated £60k hole in our budget to fill, in order to continue with the ministry that is currently doing so much in this neighbourhood. To do this, three main avenues are being explored:

1. Applications for Grant Funding for the next three years
2. Local fundraising and increases in church regular giving
3. Wider sponsorship and the finding of donors to the work of the church.



Wherever you are reading this and whatever your connection to the church, perhaps you could have a part to play in ensuring the wonderful work described here is able to continue long into the future?

## Boris's Story

**How long have you been part of Christchurch?**

*2 years*

**What are the main ways you engaged with the church in 2024?**

*In 2024 I became a trustee and the church's treasurer. I attend church and the Thursday community group, and have helped at various neighbourhood events like the Easter Egg Hunt*



**What was your story of meeting with God in the last year?**

*In 2024 I was baptised at church. I am an adult and did not grow up going to church or (really) believing in God. Four years ago I could never have seen this coming. My faith in God has grown*



*because of God: from the start of this journey I have felt that God is my guide and leads me where he wants me to go. I was tremendously happy to be baptised in a church where I feel happy and a member of a community. Since my baptism I have felt stronger in my faith, and it has given me courage to make changes in my personal life, to grow closer to God. I pray for the strength to bring about the kind of transformation in my life I know God is capable of.*

# FINANCES - INCOME

<b>Total of all Giving to the General Fund</b>	<b>£15,269.73</b>
<b>Neighbourhood Fund Donations</b>	<b>£621.82</b>
<b>Gift Aid Collected</b>	<b>£3,178.10</b>
<b>Local Grants</b>	<b>£3,520.65</b>
<b>SDF Funding</b>	<b>£62,161.15</b>
<b>Other income (fees, tickets, interest etc)</b>	<b>£918.53</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£85,669.98</b>



**TOTAL INCOME  
EXCLUDING SDF FUNDING:  
£23508.83**

# FINANCES - EXPENDITURE



<b>Salaries</b>	<b>£38,369.93</b>
<b>Premises Hire</b>	<b>£7,050.00</b>
<b>Parish Share</b>	<b>£7,200.00</b>
<b>Spending on Mission</b>	<b>£9,944.54</b>
<b>Spending on Church</b>	<b>£5,474.51</b>
<b>Equipment</b>	<b>£3,116.20</b>
<b>Other (fees etc)</b>	<b>£1,742.70</b>
<b>Neighbourhood Fund</b>	<b>£1,145.07</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£74,042.95</b>

# CHAIR'S REPORT

**This year has been full of many highs and so much to be thankful for!**

**We have been able to accomplish so much as a community and we could not have achieved any of it without God bringing us together. We have not only been able to continue the events that are part of Christchurch DNA (such as the Community Cafe and Festive events), but we have achieved success from our commitment to community organising with Citizens UK - the Community Garden is a strong example Praise God!**



**We also think of how God has enabled spiritual growth for us with Sunday services, mid-week community groups and prayer. We also share the joy of those who made commitments to the faith: namely those who were baptised and confirmed, and Pat and Will who were ordained.**

**May all these achievements encourage us to lean into our Three Mills community and share with each other our thoughts for bettering our neighbourhood. Thank you to everyone who has assisted us as it's undeniable that with God's help, there is strength in numbers. How much more can we achieve if we continue on this path? What an exciting thought!**

**Looking to the future, we trust that God has already secured our successes and made our paths straight, so we readily encourage you to join us in following God's plan for Christchurch.**

**May God continue to bless you.**

*Maxine*

# Colours of Heaven

## The Story Continues

**We're so grateful to all our members, friends, neighbours and supporters making our mission in the neighbourhood possible.**

We know every prayer said, every person welcomed, every penny given and everyone who joins in makes a difference, helping us seek out the Colours of Heaven in the corners of our community.

**We face exciting times as we seek to continue to be God's family growing God's kingdom in this place. Challenging times too as we seek to fund our work and build a sustainable future for the church.**

Maybe there might be a step you can take to play your part in seeing this work continue. Whether it's your prayers, your encouragement, your showing up, or your financial support, we'd love to hear from you

**We all have a seat at the table.  
We all have a part to play.**

**CHRISTCHURCH THREE MILLS IS  
HERE TO SEE THE COLOURS OF  
HEAVEN BURSTING OUT OF  
EVERY CORNER OF OUR  
COMMUNITY**



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