

St Swithin's Walcot



**Annual
Report
2024**

For the
display
of God's
splendour



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St Swithin's is a grateful church. We are a church that is deeply rooted in gratitude, grateful for over 1000 years of Christian worship and service, for the life of Christ and the Spirit amongst us in the present and full of hope in the future.

As we look back on 2023 there will be so much personally and corporately to celebrate and be thankful for. While I recognise there has been much to weep and grieve over, it's important to remember thankfulness. I hope you take some time to count your blessings and 'if necessary name them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.'

Thank you so much for every part you've played in the life of St Swithin's from praying, organising, texting, encouraging, worshipping, cooking, cleaning, making tea, tech-ing, welcoming, serving, stewarding, reaching out, meeting, scooping others up. Every small act of loving service makes a difference.

As we journeyed through the book of Acts in 2023, there has been both a wonder of God's wonderful birthing of the church with 'normal but willing people' as well as being very challenged by the gap between their and our experience. In Acts it's clear they were looking for people 'full of the Spirit and wisdom' and God is manifestly at work in power.

God is looking for a people to partner with; we're not doing Him a favour, but offering all of ourselves in humble service. I love the stories small and large where others recognise God at work in and through us as a church, when 'We display God's Splendour'.

We have some very big challenges ahead of us, in mission, in our culture, in the work we need to do, but we have a big God, who is with us and there is no reason to fear.

There is plenty of room for us to grow in all directions and my prayer is that God would continue to fan into flame the gift of St Swithin's and that we would burn more brightly together over the coming year in a world that desperately needs the Hope we have.

"Come Lord Jesus, Come. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen."





Church Wardens' Report

Becs Armstrong & Alastair Gibson

Over the last year it seems that almost every Sunday there are new faces at St Swithin's! We believe this is a tangible sign of God at work in our church family and is reflective of His love being shown in the welcome received by everyone coming through our doors. We rejoice and give thanks for this.

We are so grateful for the steadfast and faithful leadership that Tim brings to our church. He is truly a leader who 'keeps watch over us as a man who must give an account' (Hebrews 13: 7, adapted). We are delighted that he can take a sabbatical this year and pray that this will be a time of refreshment and renewal for the whole family.

It is always a challenge to balance the requirements of maintaining a Grade II* Listed Church building with the need and desire to invest to move forward in ministry. The PCC has agreed a strategy for the next three years which, we believe, represents a reasonable balance. There are always, of course, unexpected events, such as the theft of lead off the Warden's Vestry roof, to deal with - the Quinquennial Inspection in June this year may well throw up others! Special thanks are due to Matthew Judd for his superb refurbishment of the Warden's Vestry. We are also excited that the crypt flooring is due to be replaced in June.

We are, as ever, grateful for our staff team and everyone who helps to support our ministry activities in so many ways, seen and unseen - you are so very much appreciated! We'd like to express particular thanks to David Chambers, who took over as Treasurer this year, and the Finance Team. Their hard work has ensured that our financial monitoring and other systems are very much up to date and fit for purpose. There is an ongoing challenge to meet the cost of resourcing our 'everyday ministry' going forward, which requires an increase in the level of overall giving by £20,000 this year and an additional £20,000 next year. As God continues to bless our fellowship with growth, we expect to see this reflected in the level of regular giving. This does, of course, mean that each of us should heed the exhortation of St Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:7, to 'give what we have decided in our heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver'.

As well as giving financially, there are so many other ways to offer your gifts to serve the Lord's work here at St Swithin's. Please come and talk to us about them!

'Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen' (Ephesians 3:20-21).



Stay and Play Group

Parents, Carers and Toddlers

On Thursday mornings we run our stay and play toddler group. All preschool aged children are welcome with a parent or carer to attend. We provide tea/coffee and biscuits for the adults, whilst we have loads of toys, crafts, snack time and songs for the children. We are so pleased with how the group is growing and feel that we are building a great community of parents and children who benefit from the social support. Each week around 20 children attend and many families from this group have also come to our other events such as Easter Adventure, Craftmas and Christmas Nativity service.

Prayer point:

Please pray for opportunities to share the gospel with the people that attend and pray that those that attend come to meet Jesus.

Bubbles

2 years old to Reception

Last year we had decided to pause Bubbles on Sunday morning. However, as the number of children have increased in this age range we now use the Bubbles room to live stream the service and provide toys for the children. Parents/carers can watch the service together and children are free to play and make lots of noise!

Prayer points:

Please pray for the children and families in this age group as this is a busy and stretching time for families. Pray that they would know God's peace and that they would feel a valued part of the church family.

Splash

Reception to Year 2

Since this January, Splash has been working through a series called 'The I Ams'.

It has been a wonderful opportunity to teach the children more about the character of Jesus. After last year focusing stories throughout the Bible it felt the right time to go more in depth about who Jesus was. The children of Splash really enjoy their time together in these sessions and are building lovely relationships which I hope will help sustain and strengthen their faith in years to come.

Prayer points:

Please pray for wisdom for the leaders as they prepare. Pray for the children that their hearts would be kept soft and what they learn would create strong foundation for their own faith.

Lightsharers

Year 3 to 6

On Sunday mornings Lightsharers have been working through a series called 'God is faithful', looking at characters in the Old Testament. Friendships have been deepening in this age group and we also have new volunteers which has been brilliant!

Prayer points:

Pray for the children in this age group that as they grow in maturity that they start to grasp the gospel message and start to choose Jesus for themselves. Please pray that they enjoy coming to church, have fun, make friends and generally feel that church is a safe, fun space for them to be. Please pray for the leaders for creative ideas and wisdom.



Ignite

Year 7 to 11

Ignite meet on Sunday mornings, once a month on a Friday evening at St Swithin's and once a month attend a city wide youth night called A2.

On Sunday mornings, Ignite are working through a series on The Sermon on The Mount, bringing a real depth of understanding to what it means to be a Christian. Great discussions have come from this but there are challenges as we aim to communicate to a broad age group in an engaging way.

Friday nights have been a brilliant time of fellowship and fun, providing a space for the youth to open up and build trust with their peers and leaders. We eat a lot of pizza, play card games and enjoy using the building for wide games such as murder in the dark. I hope that this soon becomes a place where the young people can invite their friends so that it can be a place for other young people in the city to explore their questions around faith and hopefully lead to more people meeting Jesus.

Prayer points:

Please pray for our young people as they go through what is an extremely pressurized time in the life. The pull of the world is strong at this age and being different can be so hard. Please pray for our young people to have boldness in their faith and a genuine love for Jesus that goes beyond their parents and upbringing. Please pray that they would know how loved and treasured they are by God and this church family.

General Prayer Requests

Please continue to pray for the children at St Swithin's that they would enjoy their time and have open hearts towards what God is wanting to teach them. Please pray for wisdom for all of our leaders to help communicate God's message in an engaging and age-appropriate way.

Please also pray for more volunteers for all the teams, so that they can have input from a range of adults who are passionate about children's ministry.





Students and Young Adults

James Collie

Our student and young adult ministry is in a season of flux, yet even as things are currently more programme-light, God has been at work behind the scenes.

We had a few graduates move onto pastures new in the summer. We said goodbye with sadness, but also with tremendous excitement for what God has in store for them. Like many of the students who have been with us over the last 7 years, we witnessed these recent graduates make significant personal growth during their time in Bath. And that's growth across the board; in their faith, their gifts, their sense of calling, their wellbeing and their relationships. It has been a privilege to walk with them; witnessing their courage, commitment and openness; and to watch God at work in their lives.

This cohort moving on means our Student Life Group is currently too small to run. So we have been putting more focus into regular one-to-one discipleship, and ad hoc hospitality, rather than a weekly group Bible study.

In these one-to-ones, myself and others have been struck by how complicated and weighty the challenges are for those embarking on adulthood. Culture is throwing so much at this generation. Yet, I observe an increasing desire to not simply get swept up in the present, but to humbly find a way of life and faith that will last a lifetime and that will help them to stand in the face of current storms.

It is also hugely encouraging to see the intentionality of a number of young adults who have recently joined us. There seems to be a tremendous desire from newcomers to get fully stuck into the life of the church, especially into Life groups. Plus the warmth of welcome expressed by the whole church has been beautiful and significant in seeing growth.

God is also clearly at work on Bath's university campuses. So whilst I thank you for praying for the ministry at St Swithin's, I would also urge us to pray for all the students in our city, especially those bearing witness and those coming to faith.

Worship has many facets, regardless of whether we are gathered altogether, or scattered and worshipping in our day-to-day lives. Wherever we find ourselves, the primary driving force behind our worship should always be to celebrate and give thanks for who He is and all He has done for us. And in a community where our vision is to 'live for the display of His splendour', there really is no wriggle room. We are here to bring Him glory.

So it has been a delight to see praise increasingly flow, and become more and more instinctive for us as a church family these last 12 months. To welcome new people to the church who have a real passion for worship and are encouraging us to wake up to praise from the pews. To witness our children come alive as they learn action songs together downstairs that give voice to their love for God. To hear of people from our church stepping up and leading worship in their Life groups and around the city in other settings. To be part of a city-wide, monthly worship gathering

called 'The Well' that's simply all about Jesus.

This may sound like an overly joyful portrayal of the past year, but I am conscious that praise often takes tremendous sacrifice. I often speak to people in our church who find their lives in complete disarray and yet find themselves completely at home worshipping at the feet of Jesus. I think of the households for whom it is a real battle to simply get through the church doors, or to be at home with the way we do things. Yet they come not because of what they want to gain, but because they want to bless and give away. I think of those who have taken brave steps to share of themselves and lead us in some way this last year, even when it feels completely beyond their abilities or capacity.

There are many opportunities and areas of growth ahead of us, from how we develop our PA resources, to how we grow in all-age worship, to how we grow in responding to the Spirit. Yet I am immensely grateful to God and to all of you for what this last year has been.

Worship

James Collie



Whenever you or anyone you know needs urgent prayer, a team of twenty-five church members are there to pray within minutes. Just text or phone 07974 387782 with your request. The leader in just a couple presses will send it by 'WhatsApp', text or by a phone call. All requests are kept confidential and must not be made the subject of general conversation.

Since I began taking over the leadership in October 2020 we have dealt with two hundred and sixty requests and seen some good results with others pending the Lord's timing. The group has been made up of the more elderly members of the church, but it is good having some of the younger side joining this ministry at last.

The Prayer Tree was originally known as the Prayer Chain which could be broken at the weakest link. Now we have a tree, so the message goes out to all the branches at once. Where ever the 'prayer' is, work, home or travelling a quick 'Arrow' prayer can be given or more in depth if possible. Do please consider whether you could be a branch in our tree.

Thank you to the team for all your support. Do please consider whether you could be a branch in our tree. Text me, the trunk, with your needs or most of all to be a branch, on **07974387782**.



Our global partners continue to excite and encourage us with their selfless work, often in inhospitable environments. We maintain close relationships with them all, but especially our primary partners.

This past year we enjoyed seven visits by establishing two events, which take place regularly through the year. The first, a Saturday Coffee Morning. The second, the Church's Sunday Lunch.

Most of all we welcome visits from all our partners whenever they are free to share their work and inspiration with us. Their experience of mission from very different parts of the world and different cultures is equally varied as they follow the vision God has given them.

We've had insights into their lives and work and the opportunity to increase our financial giving. Prayer being the seed bed of all they do, they would welcome your involvement in prayer.

We are very happy to visit Life Groups to give a comprehensive picture of our Global Partners. We would also be happy to send Life Group leaders brief prayer requests from our primary partners. Maybe Life Groups could 'adopt' a partner?

Please see a member of the team for the above or updates and prayer requests.

Global Mission Partners Report

Brenda Carter, Nicola Stuffins & Rosemary Bird

Our Primary Partners

Paul & Alison Guinness.
Burundi
Leadership training in mobilising mission worldwide.

Katia Rock
Brazil
Church planting and evangelism.

CHIT. Children's Home
India
Christ centred residential care and education.

David & Olivia Gatehouse
South East Asia
Equipping and preparing Asian believers on their return home.

The Warehouse.
South Africa
Serves the Church in its response to poverty, injustice & division.

Our Local Partner

Genesis Trust Bath
Support for homeless and vulnerable people.

Our International Partners

Wycliffe Bible Translators

Tearfund.
Christian relief & Development.

CMJ.
Church's Ministry to Jewish People.

Near Neighbours Report

Keith Stuffins

Which is the greatest commandment?
Love the Lord your God...
Love your neighbour as yourself.

Mark 12:29-31

We have been thinking and praying for our neighbours in Walcot Street. This year change is ever present. Some businesses have ceased trading – The Moghul Indian Take Away closed its doors for the last time. Some businesses have had new life breathed into them – The Curfew has a new manager Mick who is building a large following. And some businesses seem to go on for ever – last month Sheila from Jack and Danny's celebrated her 80th birthday with no sign of retiring; she has been in the street since 1967.

August marked the sudden passing of the Walcot Street lynch pin Adrian Dolan of Bath Aqua Glass. He enthusiastically devoted much time to decorating the street with flowers, art and bunting.

With great ability and much good

humour he chaired the Walcot Street Traders' Association. At his funeral hundreds of people walked behind the horse drawn hearse down Walcot Street to the Abbey where there was standing room only. Roger Driver and Tim Gleghorn took the service (the ministers from the churches that top and tail the street).

The Traders' Association is now re-named the Walcot Artisan Quarter, partly in recognition that not all members are traders, such as the churches. There is now a new chair: Jay Risbridger from the Green Stationery Company.

Taking Christmas cards from the church to the businesses in the parish was a richly rewarding task, meeting both familiar faces and many new neighbours.

Let us continue to search for ways to show our love to our Near Neighbours.





PCC Report

Catherine Harrison Smith

PCC Membership 2022/2023

Ex Officio members:

Tim Gleghorn (Rector), Rebecca Armstrong (Churchwarden), Alastair Gibson (Churchwarden)

Elected members:

Brenda Carter, David Chambers (Treasurer), Dan Darwin, Catherine Harrison-Smith (Secretary), Matthew Judd, Andy Waterman

The PCC had an Away Morning in February to pray together and discuss the Church's Vision for the coming years, as well as starting to discuss more complex things like Prayers of Love and Faith. We are particularly interested in how our vision will develop over the coming years as our site develops and we look to expand our outreach. Prayer for these plans is greatly appreciated!

The PCC have received regular Financial reports from David Chambers (Treasurer) and Operations Updates from the Operations Committee. We are grateful to all of them for their hard work and clear information.

The PCC supported lots of the initiatives this year and planned for the year ahead, including all the activities over Advent, the Summer Series for Life Groups, Giving Sunday and the Church Away Day in September, to name a few! The PCC would like to thank everyone involved in giving their time to help the community of St Swithin's grow and thrive in the past year.

We thank those who are stepping down from the PCC this April for their service. Prayer would be welcomed for any new members elected at the APCM and for the year ahead that we can continue the good work of St Swithin's.

It has been really good to help change our finance system from paper to a more robust and modern online operation.

In the past few years I was working with bank statements, which came through every month but were in arrears. It meant I spent at least three hours every week checking paper files for income and expenditure against our paper bank statements. We were never up to date and the end of year financial operation was a time consuming job for Nicola Stuffins, our then Acting Treasurer.

These days, with our new system ExpensePlus installed early last year, our financial position can be accessed instantly by logging into this system. Although paper records can be good and reassuring as I can always look back and see what I've been doing, the new system is quicker, more efficient and up to date.

One significant practical advantage is that we have been able to invest more of the money held in the current account into a savings account with interest. This has meant we have earned about £5,000 on our investment in the past year.

Another positive advantage of our new system is the installation of a card donating station. This means anyone who wishes to give to the church or church activities can use their card at the donation station.

All in all, it has been a good and eventful year.

	Bal b/fwd 1/1/23 £	Income & Gains £	Expenditure & Losses £	Transfer £	Bal c/fwd 31/12/23 £
Unrestricted					
PCC General Fund	222,459	204,998	(226,694)	-	200,763
Buildings Maintenance Designated Fund	19,000	-	-	-	19,000
	241,459	204,998	(226,694)	-	219,763
Restricted					
Overseas Mission	13,881	-	-	-	13,881
Endowment					
Monument Fund	9,051	-	-	-	9,051
Total Funds	264,391	204,998	(226,694)	-	242,695

