

# APCM

*For the display of God's splendor*



St Swithin's Walcot

23 March 2025 - 4.30pm

# Rector's Report

Tim Gleghorn

Gratitude continues to be at the heart of the life of St Swithin's. As we each reflect on 2024, some of us will have had joyous years, some will have endured grief and loss, some will have had a quiet year of service and faithfulness, some of new opportunities, but all of us will have lived and journeyed with '*the God who is for us, is with us and in us*'. That truth, that we joyously celebrate at Christmas, with Jesus' coming to us in the incarnation, shapes every Christian life.

Everyone will have some story to tell of God's presence in our lives in 2024. Our vision is '*To display God's Splendour*', so where you have seen, witnessed or experience God's work in the world, please don't shy away from celebrating, giving thanks and giving glory to God; it will grow your faith and encourage other people around you.

So, thank you to everyone who has played their part in the life of St Swithin's this year, whether praying, organising, texting, encouraging, worshipping, cooking, cleaning, making tea, tech-ing, welcoming, serving, stewarding, reaching out, meeting, scooping others up. Every small and large act of loving service makes a real difference. Our obedience counts. Thank you too, to the Collies, who headed to Northern Ireland with our blessing, after 7 years of faithful service.

Our Sundays in 2024 were focussed on overcoming the Seven deadly sins, celebrating all God's goodness during the summer (while we were away!) and discovering more of the whole story of Scripture in the autumn. There is plenty of opportunity for us to grow in the height, breadth, depth or width of God's love. There is more.

I had the privilege of a Sabbatical this Summer, so a particular thank you to friends far, near and wide who went the extra mile to make that possible. The time was a gift on so many levels, and coming out of it was an increased focus on things of primary importance. So we prioritised our prayer life in the Autumn and in 2025 we will focus our Sunday mornings on the person of Jesus in the book of Mark. There is much for us to discover and re-discover.

There is a real urgency for us to meet the worshipping, missional and discipleship challenges together in 2025 and not to hide away. We worship a big God who is able, and as we offer ourselves in hunger and humility, we pray that God would continue to fan into flame the gift of St Swithin's. As we walk forwards in the power of the Spirit with the 'God who is for us, the God who is with us, and the God who is in us', may that truth alone shape our lives to a greater extent in 2025 so that we shine brightly in a world that is looking for healing and hope in Christ.



# Warden's Report

**Becs Armstrong & Alastair Gibson**

Looking back over the past year, there's so much to be thankful for.

We're deeply grateful to Tim and Jo for their faithful and compassionate leadership, and for the blessing of rest and refreshment during Tim's sabbatical last summer. Huge thanks also to our staff team—Bryony, Suzi, and James—for their dedication and service over the past year, and our prayers for God's blessing on each of them and their families, including the Collies now in their new home in Northern Ireland. A heartfelt thank you also to our PCC members for all they do to support both the operations and ministry of St Swithins, and to the many volunteers who give their time so generously each week — you are truly valued and appreciated.

We've been able to share time together as a church family, including on our September away day in Batheaston, and at a surprisingly sunny New Wine last summer. Around 40 of us camped together, with more joining for the day, and we were blessed not only with good weather but also with inspiring teaching for adults, youth and children, as well as having time to encourage and enjoy one another's company. It's also been wonderful to welcome new members of our church family this year – we're so glad you've joined us.

As well as our regular Sunday and midweek services, it's been wonderful to welcome visitors for Christmas and other special events. We're also grateful that our church doors are open to the wider community throughout the week—for the café, toddler groups, book signings and many other events.

Life groups continue to meet at different times throughout the week across the city. They're a vital part of church life, helping us to strengthen community, grow in faith and support one another as we see God answering our prayers in so many ways. If you're not yet part of a small group and would like to be, please do let us know!

Our prayer for the coming year is that we would continue to grow not only in numbers but also in our faith, that we would be a Spirit-led, Christ-like community full of grace and truth, confident to step into the good plans God has for each of us and to share His love with those around us.

# Children's & Youth Ministry

Suzi Darwin

## **Bubbles (Ages 2 – Reception)**

We are thrilled to have relaunched our Bubbles group this year, following a rise in the number of children in this age range—what a blessing! However, we are in urgent need of more volunteers. Please pray for additional team members, as our current numbers make it difficult to run sessions every week. This is particularly challenging for parents of toddlers who are also on the rota.

## **Splash (Reception – Year 3)**

This term, Splash has been journeying through a series on the life of Jesus, leading up to Easter. It has been wonderful to focus on key events from His life, helping the children grow in their understanding of His character and love for them. Please pray that they continue to develop a deeper love and knowledge of Jesus.

## **Lightsharers (Year 3 – Year 6)**

On Sunday mornings, Lightsharers have been following the same series as Splash, exploring the life of Jesus in a way that is tailored to their age group. Our prayer is that their learning goes beyond head knowledge and truly takes root in their hearts. Please join us in praying that they develop a real and personal understanding of who Jesus is.

## **Ignite (Year 7 – Year 11)**

Ignite meets on Sunday mornings, once a month on a Friday evening at St Swithin's, and also takes part in a citywide youth night called A2.

On Sunday mornings, they have been working through the new Alpha Youth videos, which have sparked meaningful discussions and challenges. This has been a key opportunity for them to explore their beliefs and make personal faith decisions. Please pray that the Holy Spirit continues to move among them as they grow in faith.

Our Friday nights have been a fantastic time of fellowship and fun, creating a safe space for the youth to build trust with one another and their leaders. Recently, at a citywide youth event called *Deeper*, we had the privilege of



hearing from Elle Limebear, Jesse Fellingham, Sarah Yardley, and Xenia, who led an incredible night of worship and teaching about going deeper with God. It was truly inspiring to see young people across the city seeking more of Him!

### **Toddler Group**

Our toddler group is thriving! We are so encouraged by its growth and the wonderful opportunity it provides to build relationships within our local community. It has been a blessing both to the families who attend and to our team.

### **Prayer Requests**

Please pray for the children at St Swithin's—that they would enjoy their time with us and have open hearts to what God wants to teach them.

Pray for wisdom for our leaders, that they would be able to communicate God's message in engaging and age-appropriate ways.

We are in need of more volunteers across all teams. Please pray for people with a heart for children's ministry to come forward, so we can provide a rich and varied experience for the children in our care.

Thank you for your ongoing support and prayers!



# Financial Update

**David Chambers**

Overall, we ended the 2024 financial year with an operating surplus of £12K achieving our goal of funding our running costs from regular income. Additionally, we have invested around £38K of our planned 50K on various building improvements; carpeting/repainting downstairs, installing LED lights and refurbishing windows. This is despite the £8K additional cost of repairing the lead roof, the rest being met by an insurance claim.

Our income was greatly boosted by Hall rental of £28,461 – more than £10K over budget – together with continued letting of the café which brought in £14,314 (of which about half is spent on higher utility bills). Planned and one-off donations (together with Gift Aid) are up from £135K to £158K.

Measures have been taken to reduce costs, especially gas and electricity, by more closely monitoring/controlling energy usage and installing more efficient freezers and low power LED lights.

The PCC has approved a budget for 2025 which includes £5,000 of measures identified in a recent fire risk assessment and £6,000 of work identified in the architect's quinquennial survey report. We intend to continue our investment program including further refurbishment of external windows and installation of fixed video cameras for live-streaming.

I would like to thank all those who support St Swithins through donations and by volunteering, and to the staff and others who support church operations behind the scenes. This will be my last year as Treasurer during which it has been a pleasure to work alongside the staff team, PCC and congregation in such a thriving environment.

	<b>Bal b/fwd 1/1/24 (£)</b>	<b>Income &amp; Gains (£)</b>	<b>Expenditure &amp; Losses (£)</b>	<b>Bal c/fwd 31/12/24 (£)</b>
<b>Unrestricted</b>				
Unrestricted PCC General Fund	200,763	261,387	(286,915)	175,235
Buildings Maintenance Designated Fund	19,000	-	-	19,000
<b>Restricted</b>				
Overseas Mission	13,881	-	-	13,881
<b>Endowment</b>				
Monument Fund	9,051	-	-	9,051
<b>Total Funds</b>	242,695	261,387	(286,915)	217,167



# The PCC

## Anne Cameron

PCC Membership 2024/2025

Ex Officio members: Tim Gleghorn (Rector), Rebecca Armstrong (Churchwarden), Alastair Gibson (Churchwarden)

Elected members: Brenda Carter, David Chambers (Treasurer), Dan Darwin, Matthew Judd, Andy Waterman

Secretary: Anne Cameron

PCC meets every other month; discussions this year have focussed significantly on ongoing renovations to the church building, and it has been encouraging to see the results of renovations to the crypt, which included replacing the floor, redecorating and installing LED lighting. Many thanks to all who have supported this work.

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 the Summer Series for Life Groups, and the Church Away Day in September. 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.

The PCC will be having an Away Morning in May to pray together and discuss the church's vision for the coming year and the next phase of the renovations. 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!

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.



# Church Operations

**Alastair Gibson**

You may not be aware of just how much goes on 'behind the scenes' to keep a church like St Swithin's operating! The PCC has overall responsibility but, a few years ago, we set up an Operations Committee, which reports to the PCC, to deal with the 'nitty gritty' aspects of church life, such as finance, building management and policies. Its members comprise the Rector, Churchwardens, Treasurer and Operations Manager.

The last year has been very busy! Here's a snapshot of some aspects:

- A review and 'overhaul' of church policies, which is ongoing. These cover such matters as Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Social Media and Finances.
- A Fire Risk Assessment by an independent assessor, leading to the preparation of a new Fire Safety Policy, and guidelines for external users. Some alteration and improvement works to the building are also required, which are in the process of being implemented.
- Works to the roof above the vestry after theft of lead. Plaster repairs and redecoration of North stairwell.
- External painting of the windows on the south side of the church. Some additional stone repairs revealed by high level inspection off scaffolding.
- Repair of stone parapet above (old) church office and plaster repairs and painting of south stairwell.
- Replacement of carpeting in crypt with LVT.
- Programme of replacing light fittings with LED's.
- Obtaining faculty approval for a new servery in the main body of the church.

In addition, we had our five-yearly inspection (quinquennial) by the Church Architect this year. This confirmed that the church is generally in good condition but, inevitably with a building of this age, there is some more

work required. This is being included in a three-year maintenance and upgrade plan.

My thanks to the members of the committee for their hard work in ensuring that we responsibly steward the resources that we have been entrusted with, both in terms of the church building and the giving of church members.

Please contact me if you would like further detail on any aspect.



# Open Door

**Janet Cornish, Sandy Gooding and Melanie Wortham**

This is our new name for a group that's been meeting for a while but we hope it reflects more accurately what we are about rather than 'Midweek Gatherings'. We meet on an ad hoc basis and all are welcome if you happen to be free during the day, usually but not always on a Monday.

Over the last year our afternoons have covered a wide range of topics including Deaf Awareness, watching the films 'The Two Popes' and 'One Life', sharing ideas about prayer, afternoon tea with musical accompaniment from one of our teenage youngsters, our Christmas Celebration meal with carol singing and hearing Tim's sabbatical reflections. Oh, and we had a day out to the American Museum where Nicola gave us a guided tour of the garden. All our events include tea and cake and we hope the new name reflects the fact we really are open to anyone joining us whether you're a member of St Swithins or if you have a friend, neighbour, colleague or family member you think might appreciate some hospitality and input!!

Sandy, Melanie and Janet would be very happy to tell you more if you have any questions. The door is always open.





# Come to the Table

**Nicola Stuffins**

We continue to meet on the first Wednesday each month, at Midday, for a simple service of Holy Communion followed by lunch together. Our numbers have been growing over the last year and we have a faithful group of around 12 who join us regularly. To minimise the impact on the Honey Café we now prepare and serve our lunch upstairs. With our new arrangement we move from sharing the Lord's supper together at the front of the church to sitting around tables at the back of the church which beautifully echoes our fellowship and community together in Jesus.

In 2024 our teaching was centred around the theme "Follow me" using lessons on discipleship from Mark's Gospel. In 2025 we have the theme "Real wisdom for real life" based on Proverbs. It has been lovely to give some church members the opportunity to preach for the first time to a small and welcoming congregation. We have also appreciated Peter Norman's regularly leading our communion service, particularly his committed support during Tim's sabbatical.

I also have to mention the lunch which is always delicious and say thanks to Janet Cornish for cooking our soup and sweet things and Jenny Griffiths (Snr) for her practical help serving and tidying up. If you are free on a Wednesday lunchtime do come and join us around the table.





# The Prayer Tree

**Brian May**

The 'Prayer Tree' has had quite a busy year with requests coming in spurts then a few weeks of silence. What always puzzles me is when I hear of church members having falls or illness and yet they do not seek the power of prayer. For me to hear about someone needing prayer is not enough, I need their approval to publicise it on the prayer tree.

At the time of writing I have been preparing for our 'Life Group' and was reading Acts 4:23-31. When the believers prayed, first they praised God. Then they told God their specific problem and asked God for help. They did not ask God to remove the problem, but to help them deal with it. This is a model for us to follow when we pray. We may ask God to remove our problems, and he may choose to do so, but we must recognise that often he will leave the problem in place and give us the grace to deal with it.

At present we have a team of twenty five mostly using Whatsapp, which gives instant access. We could always do with more people in our group so if you feel that little 'ding' will not upset your day, please text 07974387782 giving your name and number to me, Brian May.



# Global Partners' Update

**Brenda Carter, Nicola Stuffins, Rosemary Bird**

After three years of leading our Global Partners team, we recognise the need to make some changes.

We have held regular events throughout this time; inviting representatives of our Global Partners to join us when possible, to learn more of the work they are doing in different parts of the world and to pray for them.

In order to more effectively engage the church membership with this important aspect of our church life, we are reducing the number of Global Partners to the four with whom we have strong relationships plus one local partner (see below). We believe this will enable us to build stronger and deeper relationships with them, both prayerfully and financially, and hopefully engage many more church members.

- We look forward to welcoming our partners during 2025 whenever they are able to join us.
- We plan to help church members to connect with our Partners via WhatsApp Broadcast (where no reply is necessary), Facebook, or newsletters.
- We encourage life groups to adopt a partner, get to know them and pray for them.
- We hope to keep the church family up to date in 'Connected' and also to have a 'Mission Sunday'.
- The team is happy to visit a life group to give a fuller picture of our partnerships.

If you would like to join the team, please speak to Brenda or Nicola.

## **Our Global Partners;**

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

**Katia Rock. Brazil.** Church planting. Evangelism.

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

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

**Local Partner: Genesis.** Support for homeless and vulnerable people.

# Near Neighbours Update

**Keith Stuffins**

In this year's report I've chosen to focus on the activities of "Wild Walcot".

Wild Walcot was set up to link together all the green corners in this urban corridor of Walcot Street, as well as encouraging the establishment of any new ones.

Opposite Harvest is a small community garden, which was the first area to be nurtured by Wild Walcot. The small trees, shrubs and herbaceous planting, among benches, raised beds and pallet fences, make a much-used oasis for passers-by.

The community-minded staff at Age UK in Beehive Yard have put in two beehives opposite their office. The profits from the honey they are now selling is donated to Wild Walcot to buy more plants.

Up and down the street there are around ten wooden planters, which get restocked each year. As well as furthering the greening of the street visually, our pollinators are also encouraged.

Jeanette is doing her bit for Wild Walcot by successfully re-wilding her back garden (which exits onto Walcot Street). In June I was strimming her lawn. When I raked up the long grass I found I had cut down a tall flowering spike of a bee orchid. The orchid tuber must have been under the lawn for over forty years waiting to flower!

At the entrance to Walcot Gate is Walcot Chapel. Enthusiastic near neighbours are putting in effort to turn the graveyard they look at into a wild flower meadow.

Less visible from the street is the St. Swithin's wild flower meadow, in the corner of the south garden. Our Wild Church children very successfully sowed yellow rattle seeds. In summer '24 there was a brilliant showing of this vital meadow plant.

Then at the top of the street we link up with the big green space of Hedgemoor Park. The Friends of Hedgemoor Park have a band of volunteers who do great work for the community. As well as offering my input, I get lots out of being part of this community in Walcot Street.

".....all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together." Colossians 1:16-17



# CreativityInAction

Sheila Andrews

Last June I put on an Art Show, **CreativityInAction** together with Pete Rogers and Nicola Stuffins.

We were able to include all 22 exhibits showing a wide range of entries from painting, drawing, printing, installations, arts and craft, a light show and more in the church auditorium.

It was amazing.

Five of the entries were from the talented young people in the church.

We had over a hundred visitors and many new connections were made amongst the Artists and visitors.

Than you all so very much for your support of this venture.

Thanks to Jenny Griffith Snr, Jeanette Self and Janet Cornish for help with providing refreshments.

