

St Mildred's
Church
APCM 2024



St Mildred's APCM Report 2024

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Welcome from the Vicar

Welcome to our 2024 APCM report! We give thanks to God our Father for his faithfulness in helping us in so many ways over the last year.

In April we had a prayer week for the building project and at the AGM this year we will consider how we can get involved to move the project forward. It is vital that we are dedicated in prayer and action and that we see a lot of progress this year. Let's cry out to our God and serve him together to do this.

In February, Peter Brooks stepped down as our part time youth worker. We give thanks to Pete for all he did whilst he was on the staff team and are delighted that we will continue to see him from time to time (for example, Pete helped at the Fun Day recently and will still return on Sundays occasionally).

We had a special time at Easter this year. The Fun Day was incredibly well attended and warmly received by those who came. 219 children and 173 adults (even more than last year!) came to the event, served by over 45 church volunteers. Of those who came, there were 61 groups (families or friends) that attended for the first time. We had a series of services to celebrate the season, including an outdoor hour at the cross on Good Friday, worship with the Psalms, and a very early start at 6am (which felt like 5am given that the clocks had gone forward) on Easter Sunday. The sausages and coffee afterwards seemed to taste particularly good!

Over the last year we had 3 baptisms (Yarah, Stacey, and Jamie) and our Electoral Roll was 131 at the AGM in 2023.

Sadly, we have also experienced bereavement. Besides the services that took place only at the crematorium, and the many members of our church who have experienced their own bereavement, we had two funeral services in church this last year – for Maggie Banton in November and Joyce Bennett in February this year.

Our 2024 Lent Course – the Prayer Course – gave us the opportunity to consider growing and deepening our prayer life.

There are so many people serving at our church in a variety of different ways: Homegroups, Prayer Ministry, Worship, Sidespeople, Communion, Alpha, Welcome, School Visits, Warm Space, Refreshments, Services, Parent and Toddlers, Cuppa and Cake, PCC, Kool Kidz, Sunday@Six. We thank our God and his people for this.

In April Cuppa and Cake joined with Warm Space to form Refresh at Warm Welcome Space, meeting monthly on a Wednesday. The first session was very well received.

Christmas 2023 was again memorable as we welcomed many people who visited us over the season.

Over the last year we have continued to engage with the Bank of Things and Afril via our Foodbank. Through our tithe, we continue to support our Mission Partners and we enjoyed a visit from Chris Binstead of AWM in January.

These have been particularly difficult times financially. Although our income increased slightly, our expenditure increased more sharply, and we carried a significant deficit last year. Looking ahead this year should be different as various things have changed in our financial circumstances.

The rest of this report gives more detail on many of these things. Please do enjoy it as we celebrate all that the Lord our God is doing amongst us.

Rev Tom Lake



APCM Minutes 2023

**THE PARISH OF ST MILDRED'S, LEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF PARISHIONERS FOR THE PURPOSE OF
ELECTING CHURCHWARDENS AND THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH
MEETING HELD IN CHURCH
ON SUNDAY 21st MAY 2023 AT 12.00 NOON.**

The vicar, Tom Lake, opened the meeting in prayer.

The APCM report and copies of the church accounts were distributed on the tables.

Election of Church wardens

The meeting began with election of the church wardens. Tom thanked Trevor and Shimona for their first year. Both were willing to stand again and were elected.

Election of PCC members

Elections for Deanery Synod (4 places) and PCC (4 places) took place. As there were only four nominations for PCC (Paul Nicolson, Hannah Cook, Maggie Brooks, and Marcus King), all were elected. There were four nominations for Deanery Synod (Chris Coutts, Trevor Gill, and David Nicolls were all re-standing, as well as Rob Sutton), all were elected. Tom thanked those standing down this year (Denise Sanderson, Suzanne Holmes, Chinedu Ifediora).

Appointment of independent Examiner

Chinedu Ifediora was appointed independent examiner for the accounts this year (passed unanimously).

Electoral Roll

Tom stated that there were currently 131 on the electoral roll.

Annual reports and accounts

Tom thanked Paul for his work as treasurer. Paul informed us that the full accounts can be found on the website. He highlighted that the statement of financial activities summarises how we are doing overall. Total income is £143,915 (up to December 2022). Expenditure is £146,336 (itemised spending is in the report) which has left us with a slight deficit. The amount going into the

general fund each year has been going down over the last few years and is mostly due to people moving away. Some of the giving will be tithed to other causes external to the church. Our major outgoing is given to the diocese. The expenditure listed does not include the spending towards the development project. No one had any specific questions on the accounts from last year. Paul moved onto the current year so far. Although he was not worried about the small deficit from 2022, he is worried moving forward as the cost of running the church has gone up 6-times this year (£30-40k estimate over the next year) so predicts our deficit for this financial year will therefore be much higher. Paul encouraged us to pray about this situation and also consider how we can be efficient and save money in the way we run in the church this year.

Marion asked whether the money given via the card machine could be gift aided? Paul indicated that people needed to complete a form at the time of giving. Paul mentioned that most people give by standing order and the gift-aid was collected this way. Leanne asked about the amount that we give to the Dioceses, how often was value was reviewed and whether it could this be reduced? Paul explained they ask us to make an offer and we usually increase it by a few % each year. This is discussed by the PCC before deciding. The cost covers Tom's salary and overheads of running the dioceses. Tom added that the giving had gone up since last year but a proportion of this does go to the development project. The church overall is being more generous. Most churches in the area are not trying to do a £4 million building project and the church members are incredibly generous. Tom agreed that the energy bills are a concern, and it will cost an extra £15/hr for heating over next winter. We need to move forward and not harm the church. Although we do have reserves, we can't keep carrying large deficits.

Vicar's remarks and look to the future

Tom compared attendance at church before and after the pandemic and between 2022 and 2023. Based on April services, the numbers of children are roughly the same for 2022 v 2023 (still 30% down from before the pandemic). The number of adults has gone up very slightly but this is still below levels in the pandemic. People are still tuning in on YouTube. An average 13 watch the livestream on a Sunday morning (down from 17.8) and service views are 54 (down from 67.8). Overall, ~40 people are engaging with YouTube on average. Larissa pointed out that this is devices, and these views could be by groups of people.

Tom reminded us that a key calling of the church is to Go and make disciples of all nations. This is something that only the church can do, and we need to think of opportunities to help people become Christians and to grow as Christians and

not just activities that help them outside of this (e.g. warm Wednesday). Possible ideas include guest services/events specifically aimed at non-Christians. Tom encouraged us to pray about this and how we can be involved.

Development Project

Stella repeated the thanks for those giving and praying for the development project. The three main barriers have been i) planning, ii) faculty and iii) funding. Planning consent was granted in 2021 and then amendments were made to reduce cost. These minor amendments have now been approved. Thorough plans are now being made and costed. Stella indicated that we are trying to make the building more efficient. Air source heat pumps are being considered to reduce the use of gas. A study was conducted, and it was found that the best option was to use a combination of gas boilers and heat pumps. The heat pumps would be sufficient for use in mid-season, but the gas boilers could be used in the coldest months. The air pumps would be placed next to the war memorial. A noise survey has been carried out in preparation for a planning application for the air source heat pumps. Stella asked us to pray for this. The faculty application can only be applied for after this point.

The next big questions are how much will it cost and where will the money come from? The current cost plan is very out of date, so the engineering update is a next important step. In parallel, PCC have agreed to engage a firm called Action Planning which is a charity consultancy who are doing research on possible avenues for applying for external funding. They will also meet with church members to get information on the vision of the church for the development project and how well we are connected with local groups, incorporations etc.. which will direct possible funding applications in the future. The cost plan is likely to be much higher than previously calculated due to inflation (previously £3.7 million). £200K+ has already been spent on the project.

Stella thanked the development team for all their hard work. Stella pointed out that we are all actually part of the development team. Stella said we need to continue to say thank you for the progress that has been made despite barriers and problems that have arisen. We should praise God for his faithfulness. Stella had prepared a little booklet with practical things that we can all do that will help us release funds without spending more money. Stella encouraged all to take the booklet and get involved. Stella encouraged us to ask about how we can help. Most importantly she encouraged us to keep praying for the project.

Tom closed the meeting in prayer.



East Lewisham Deanery Synod

A deanery is a local group of parishes who work together. In the Church of England there is a structure of synods, in a sort of democratic model where everyone gets the chance to influence the overall governance of the organisation.

Each Deanery Synod is made up of the clergy plus lay people who are elected by each parish. The Synod is presided over by the Area Dean. Deanery Synod members have a vote in elections to the Diocesan and General Synods. Our synod members are David Nicholls, Chris Coutts, Rob Sutton and Trevor Gill.

During 2023 East Lewisham Deanery Synod met three times, in June, November and February. Topics discussed during the year included:

10 June 2023 :-

St Luke Downham

“Church opportunities from community connections”.

8 November 2023 :-

St Stephen’s Lewisham

“Church of England Schools”

7 February 2024:-

St Mary’s Lewisham:-

“Health Care in Lewisham”

Chris Coutts on behalf of Deanery Synod Reps.



Churchwardens' Report

(including Fabric, Goods and Ornaments)

As ever, it is an utter privilege to serve as Churchwardens, working alongside everyone who contributes in such varied and diligent ways, both seen and unseen, all focused on the life of our church family. We are grateful to all the ideas and expertise people have presented for adjustments on day-to-day running and taking the time to trial these. With the many roles we both have outside of Church it would not be possible to fulfil our duties without Victoria Beck, our Church co-ordinator. Victoria works with attentiveness and dedication, taking time to ensure varied aspects of church function and building matters are overseen. We cannot thank her enough.

The part of the report that we are legally required to supply to the APCM is a report on the fabric of the church and what we have done to maintain it in the last year. You will have noticed that during the year some props have appeared supporting the arch over the entrance to the chapel. This is a result of cracks which have been present in the wall above for many years (they are mentioned in quinquennial reports dating back to at least the 1970s) but which became noticeably worse in 2023. There were also some cases of small pieces of falling mortar at the time. We have taken advice from CTP, the structural engineers who are also advising us on the design of the new hall. A pit was dug to allow the inspection of the foundations of the south wall. The resulting advice was that no urgent action was required, but we should monitor for further movement. We are also grateful for valuable advice from Rob Sutton who spends much of his time looking at cracks in walls as part of his day job. We now have monitoring points installed around the outside of the chapel and a fixed reference point set in a deep hole drilled nearby. These points will be monitored over the rest of this year to help us to identify how the whole building moves as the ground dries out over the summer. In due course, it is likely that we will incur some cost in reinforcing and repointing the cracked wall. There may also need to be some external underpinning of the foundations. A decision will need to be made before we commence construction of the new hall and any external work will best be done as part of that project. A side benefit of looking back at the history of this problem is that we now have searchable digital versions of all of the quinquennial reports on the church structure since 1969, which will help

future churchwardens to understand the history of any issues which may arise, and we can ship the original typed paper copies to Lewisham Library archives.

We mentioned in last year's report that there were a few actions outstanding from the 2020 quinquennial inspection. We are still working through the list to work out what has and has not been done, and can expect some costs in maintaining stonework during the year. We have made progress with plans to install solar panels on the south aisle roof. This will entail stripping off and re-fitting all of the roof tiles (hopefully re-using most of them). In the process we will add insulation to help reduce our future energy bills and address some of the quinquennial advice, sorting out various leaks which we have experienced around the edges of this roof in past months. Our architects, JBKS, have completed designs for the work and we have applied for "List B" permission from the Archdeacon. We hope to complete this work before the end of the year to give us a roof fit for another hundred years or so and a substantial contribution to our energy bills.

Apart from the issues above, we have had a few minor electrical niggles during the year, which have been relatively easily resolved and the church fabric is generally in good order. One of the niggles was the failure of the system controlling the church heating, which has been replaced with a new remote controlled thermostat which should also help to reduce our energy bills. Those bills were horribly large over the last year but have thankfully fallen massively since 1st April when we renewed our energy contract. There are some bits of minor infrastructure that are ageing and will need to be replaced in the coming year, but hopefully no major costs until we have risen to the challenge of completing the new hall.

We have certainly felt a sense of renewing and strengthening in our church family, this can only take place with the commitment, support and love shared by all throughout the year. We very much look forward the year ahead.

Shimona and Trevor, Churchwardens



Treasurer's Report

Like many others in 2023 we experienced rising costs and fairly static income which resulted in a considerable deficit for the year on our General Fund. We were particularly faced with a very large increase in our energy costs during the year and added to this our staff costs were increased as we employed two (part-time) workers during the year. The good news is that our energy costs have now reduced considerably, and our staff costs will also be reduced this year as we are currently without a youth worker following the departure of Peter Brooks in February. The total running costs for the church during 2023 amounted to £170,052 which was up by £23,716 on the previous year.

We are very fortunate that most of our giving comes through standing orders and giving online. We are so grateful to all of those who give faithfully month by month to the upkeep of the church. Our total income was actually up a little on the previous year at £144,551. Our expenses therefore exceeded our income by £25,501 which is the deficit for the year.

2024 is likely to be another challenging year for the church finances. Repair costs are always difficult to predict but we could be faced with substantial costs in dealing with repairs to the wall and arch into the side chapel. However, our trust is in God and we look forward to his provision as we go forward together.

I set out below the movement on our two funds during the year. All the figures refer to the year ended 31st December 2023 and are taken from the 2023 accounts.

General Fund: As set out above the total income was **£144,551** and expenses amounted to **£170,052** giving rises to a deficit of **£25,501**.

The balance at the bank at the end of the year was **£85,816**.

Development Fund: Total income for the year amounted to **£107,890**. Costs on the new building such as consultants fees are treated as capital expenditure and not part of the day to day running expenses. The capital expenditure is shown in Note 4 to the accounts and amounted to **£30,537**. We were also able to recover costs totalling **£35,458**. Total expenditure so far in connection with the

new building amounts to **£271,740**. This is principally architects' and consultants' fees and also the costs of demolishing the old hall.

Actual expenses during the year amounted **£25,248**. Deducting the total expenses from income leaves a surplus for the year of **£82,642**.

The expenses include a provision for a tithe of **£10,789**. To date we have provided for a tithe of **£231,409**. This money will be used for charitable purposes, and it is anticipated it will be used to fund a development project, probably overseas.

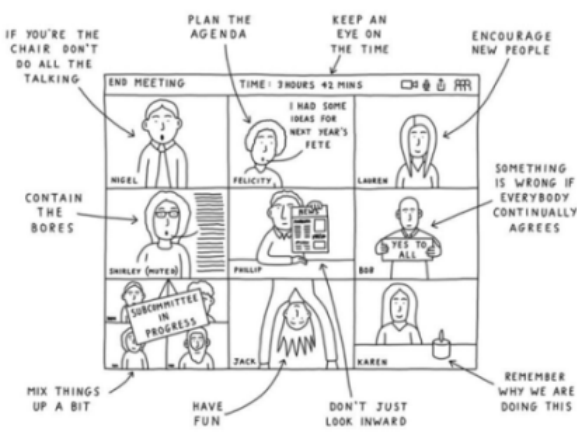
The balance at bank at the 31st December 2023 was **£2,143,174**.

Many thanks to Chinedu Ifediora, our Independent Examiner for making sure the accounts are all in order and also to Chris Coutts for his work in obtaining our tax refunds from HMRC.

Finally, a great big THANK YOU to everyone who has given so generously to fund the work of St Mildred's Church in the last year and going forward.

Paul Nicolson (Treasurer)

Proceedings of the PCC



Members of the PCC who served during 2023 and up to the date of the APCM were as follows:

CLERGY

Vicar

Rev. Tom Lake (Chair)

Assistant Minister

Rev. Daphne Clifton

CHURCHWARDENS

Shimona Gayle

Trevor Gill

DEANERY SYNOD

Chris Coutts

David Nicholls

Trevor Gill

Rob Sutton

ELECTED MEMBERS

Pauline Leslie

Andrew Beck

Stella Gill

Louise Wayman

Edna Petzen

Serena Atkins-Bibow

Katie Doores

Margaret Brooks

Matthew Shimwell

Susanne Holmes (until May 2023)

Chinedu Ifediora (until March 2023)

Ms Denise Estcourt (until May 2023)

Hannah Cook (from May 2023)

Marcus King (from May 2023)

Paul Nicolson (from May 2023)

HON. TREASURER

Paul Nicolson

SECRETARY TO PCC

Katie Doores

The purpose of the PCC is defined in law which states that “It shall be the duty of the minister and the parochial church council to consult together on matters of general concern and importance to the parish”. Its functions also include “co-operation with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical”.

The full PCC met in person 10 times during the year with an average level of attendance of 78%. Subgroups meet to discuss mission support and the Development Project and report back to the PCC with recommendations.

The Standing Committee is a sub-set of the PCC appointed by the PCC and consisting of 8 members including the Clergy, Churchwardens, Secretary, and

Treasurer. It has powers to transact the PCC's business between meetings. The standing committee met online six times during the year.

A report on the proceedings of the PCC is a legal requirement on the agenda of the APCM, here is a summary of the topics we have addressed during 2023:

- Safeguarding – ensuring we are taking all appropriate measures including training for those involved in church ministries, to ensure the safeguarding of everyone involved in any way with the church.
- Church finances, including moving our account to CCLA.
- Decisions on progress of the Development Project, including appointment of a professional fundraiser, planning application for heat pumps, design amendments, appointment of a project manager and inspector to ensure building regulation compliance.
- Updating of our fundraising policy.
- Discussion of plans for use of the new hall.
- Purchase of four tablets for use by the band.
- Special services and events at Christmas and Easter, including the Easter fun day.
- Support and funding of our mission partners.
- Continuation of Warm Welcome Wednesdays.
- Maintenance and updating of our church fabric, including lighting in the chancel, removing trees, planting and watering a street tree, rewiring of the cooker, monitoring the chapel stonework and installing appropriate support.
- Developments in children's and youthwork.
- Resumption of the peace during services.
- Our pledge to the "Parish Support Fund". This is our payment to the Diocese which funds central functions as well as Tom's salary & housing.
- Living in Love and Faith.
- Supporting Operation Christmas child by acting as a collection point.

Katie Doores (PCC Secretary)



Development Project

Progress towards replacing our old church hall has felt very slow over the past year, although a lot of work has been going on in the background.

Finally... there is good news and positive progress! We have now received from Lewisham Council a “Certificate of Lawful Development” which confirms the indefinite life of our planning consent, resolving significant uncertainty. Our faithful God has answered our prayers on this. This confirmation provided great encouragement just as we started our recent “Prayer Week” for the building project.

What next?

We have a large funding gap – currently estimated at £1.6m – between our budget (the money that we have, plus further gifts promised and an assessment of likely grant funding) and the anticipated total cost of the project. The uncertainty created by this funding gap has made us all feel that the project has got “stuck”. To help us move forward, Tom has encouraged us to see this shortfall as 16 “blocks” of £100,000. Our challenge is to pray that God will remove this shortfall by knocking each of these 16 “blocks” down, by reducing our costs and/or by increasing our funds.

We sense that the Lord is beginning to answer this prayer, by bringing together various recent third party discussions which together suggest that we might be able to reduce projected construction costs quite substantially. Encouraged by this, the PCC have now made a decision to take the building project forward through the next design stage. This will start shortly, involving our professional design team in about three or four months of detailed work. The aim of this process is to refine the designs so that costs can be assessed with greater certainty and to help us to work out what might sensibly be omitted, amended or deferred while still producing a building which consistent with our existing planning consent, and which is fully usable for most of the purposes that we intend. The output of this exercise will also provide the level of design detail necessary to resolve outstanding issues in our application for a Faculty (formal consent from the Diocese of Southwark).

If this detailed design process helps to demonstrate that estimated costs can be reduced sufficiently, then a building contract could be tendered towards the end of this year or early next year, with the objective of commencing construction in the spring or summer of 2025. Construction is likely to take about 12 months, so we could have a new hall in about 2 years' time.

In the meantime, we hope to bring forward the full renovation of the south aisle roof in order to accommodate approximately 100m² of solar cells. An application for consent for this work is currently under consideration by the Diocese. A roofing contract will be tendered soon, with the aim of getting the work done in September or October this year.

Please will you help?

All gifts of money will be received gratefully and spent with care. Not everyone is in a position to give financially, but there are other things that all church members can do to help to unlock funds from elsewhere. Do have a look at the "Funding Ideas" booklet (on the "Building Project" section of the church website) setting out small practical things which together could make a significant difference.

In addition to this... the most important thing that all of us can do in response to the funding challenge is to pray!! Please pray that our generous God will give us wisdom in all the decisions that need to be taken as the project moves forward, and provide generous funds from unexpected sources. We thank our Lord for his faithfulness so far, and we trust him to provide for his work – and his new building!

Stella Gill

Young people at St Mildred's – Kool Kidz



Truly our God is alive and knows what we need!

This has been so real for us in Koolkidz this last year with new leaders and helpers, never ever having to close a class because of last minute emergencies, wonderful weather even in Winter and the start of our Puddles group for nursery aged children. Our children meet outside each Sunday during term time for a welcome session and prayer before breaking into our four groups of Puddles, Bubbles, Splash and Streams.

The youngest group which started at the end of last year meet in the entrance foyer while the other three occupy the two double decker buses in the carpark. Streams go through a bible study with time for questions and discussion while Splash and Bubbles teachers share a bible story followed by craft and/or drama. Puddles also learn God's word through a much shorter story with a picture that they then colour in before enjoying a drink and snack.

In all our classes, our focus has been on learning about God in His word and we continue to encourage the memorization of scripture through weekly memory verses. Our prayer for all our children is that they all develop their own relationship with God and come to know Him personally. In addition, that they can all one day say as the Psalmist did:

'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee' and

'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.'

Koolkidz average 22 children weekly and our team of invaluable teachers and helpers now number 25. We meet at least once a quarter to plan for the term ahead, work out logistics, brainstorm ideas and eat lots of cake and biscuits!

Do continue to keep us in your prayers and we can't wait to see what God has in store for us in the next 12 months!



Sarah Lee



Young people at St Mildred's – Sunday@six



Sunday@six is St Mildreds current provision for any young person in school years six through to thirteen (ages of twelve to eighteen). It is probably best described as a home group for young people. Our aims are to build strong peer support networks, to build intergenerational relationships between the young people and youth team volunteers, to encourage a strong sense of belonging and commitment to Church community and, most of all, to help the young people to develop vital and life-long personal faith in Christ. Every Sunday evening is planned with the intension of meeting these aims. Whilst absolutely anyone is welcome at Sunday@six, you will notice that this is not an outreach ministry.

We meet on a Sunday. At 6pm. Currently we are thinking about 'who is Jesus?' as he is presented in the gospel of Luke.

Sunday@six comprises of two groups – our older (original!) group – school years nineish upwards – and our newer, younger, group who start from school year six. Currently we have around twenty young people attending each week and a few more who attend occasionally.

Besides our weekly Bible study sessions, we have regular social events, Q&A sessions, trips out - particularly popular are our lovely visits to eat in other people's homes! This year we have also had a number of visiting speakers who have shared their faith and given all of us great challenge and encouragement. Margaret Mizen and Mark from the Nehemiah Project have been especially memorable. These evenings help us to see what Jesus is doing beyond our immediate context. It has been great getting to know our mission partners in this way and we hope to do more of this in the next term.

Other highlights have been the Sunday@six 'Play in a Day' that was performed at Christmas 2023. This was an idea generated by the young people in which we attempted to build a performance from scratch in one day. Whilst the end result itself was very good, the really very amazing thing was watching the young people work together as a united team. Sunday@six also helped with the outdoor carol service - they were excellent! Sacrificial, passionate, competent and so enthusiastic to play a part. Enormous thanks to those people from our church family who enabled these opportunities for our young people.

Sustaining our youth work has required considerable determination and energy. We thank Jesus that He has led us all of the way, and has shown us what faithfulness looks like. The youth volunteers at St Mildred are exceptional; the energy, responsiveness, commitment, and real love shown by this tremendous team are a huge testimony to the character of our great God. Developing our youth provision together, as a team, has been an enormous privilege, as has developing relationships with the young people we see regularly.

We want Jesus to be reflected increasingly through the youth work at St Mildred's. Please pray for wisdom and vision to know how best to facilitate this going forward.

Helen Lake



Home Groups

Memberships of homegroups is stable with five homegroups (one daytime and four evening) with a total of about 50 members. All groups are now meeting in-person, but some groups also have members joining online and some groups occasionally meet online for convenience. In the summer, Paul Nicholson stood down after many years of faithful service as a Homegroup coordinator.

Homegroups provide a safe place where friendships can flourish with mutual support and prayer. Most meetings include bible readings with the aim of applying biblical principles to our complex lives and messy world we all live in.

We began 2023 by studying the book of Philippians. Over the summer we studied some of the Psalms. This is one of our studies planned to coincide with the Sunday sermons. In the autumn we followed a scheme called "Love Your Church" where we explored the function of the church and our contribution to it. Homegroups are a great way to get to know others and to build deep friendships. If you would like to know more about homegroups please speak to either myself (Alison Coutts) or Tom Lake.

Alison Coutts



Parent and Toddler

It has been wonderful to have achieved another very successful year of Parent and Toddler group, especially in a more normal fashion, without the need for different seating arrangements, face masks and so on, for which we thank God. Having said that, we do still maintain good hygiene levels and cleanliness.

We run two sessions per day on Tuesdays during term time, with copious amounts of age appropriate, good quality toys, and also a well-equipped baby area. This baby area has increasingly been used, as there have been six babies born already, to regular members recently! We thank God for his goodness and protection; we read the Bible and pray before we open in the morning, as well as acting out a Bible story and leading a worship song for the children each session, ending with a prayer; Our God is a great big God and Jesus love is very wonderful are very popular and where possible, we link the craft activity to the Bible story. We sing a variety of age-appropriate songs too, and some of the 'oldies' are really popular: for example, Head, shoulders, knees and toes; Row, row the boat; Incy Wincy Spider. Of course, newer songs like Sleeping Bunnies are also popular. Over the year, we averaged 59 adults and 78 children per Tuesday, with 78 adults and 111 children at the July end of term party. We pray that everyone, both grown-ups and children, will remember these times and continue wanting to know more of God and Jesus.

The enjoyable outing to Swanley Park took place, as usual, last June and we thank Chris Coutts for being the train driver for the day at the park. The final party at St Mildreds in July was also a hit, especially the bouncy castle, ice creams, and the gift of a Bible for children leaving us for school or Nursery.

In October, Kay, Kelly and Maggie attended an all-day parent and toddler conference in Wandsworth, which was well organised, friendly, useful and informative. In November we ran our cake sale to raise money for Covenant homes in Kenya, raising hundreds of pounds for them, and they kindly sent us some lovely film clips of their children thanking us. The puppet show of the Nativity was greatly appreciated at our Christmas parties, and we thank Tom for speaking to us too. Children also received a small book of the Christmas Story

and a chocolate filled stocking. Thanks, in particular, go to Kay and Ayee for making and sewing the stockings.

At the end of the recent Spring term, we held a lovely Easter service per session. The age-appropriate film of the Easter Story gets the message across powerfully and we thank Tom again for his message to us. Each child also went home with an Easter basket filled with chocolate eggs and a book of the Easter Story, while the adults enjoyed their hot cross bun. It was also wonderful to see so many of them enjoy our Easter Fun Day.

We are so grateful to God for keeping us and others safe, giving us energy, helping us pray and support people, and providing the right helpers for us, who are invaluable in a variety of ways. Special thanks go to Kay in her efforts organising this. It has been more difficult this year, as the church is often in use on Mondays now, which means most of the setting up for Parent and Toddlers has to be done from nine O' clock onwards on a Tuesday morning, rather than on Sunday. We are so thankful for the people who pop in to help us do this, as well as those who help us pack everything away in the afternoon. We also couldn't manage without our kitchen helpers, who chop up the fruit, provide drinks and biscuits, and clear away afterwards.

It really is a team effort and all of us ensure that people are safe and feel welcome. It is God's work that we are doing and the glory goes to Him.

Maggie Brooks

Cuppa and Cake (now Refresh)



Cuppa and Cake is our drop in, café-style morning for people of all ages and especially aims to reach those who may be isolated in our community. It has continued to run on the second Friday of the month with Louise, Jenny and the team. All who attend enjoy a warm welcome and Jenny's delicious cakes. Numbers have been up and down over the past year.

Cuppa and Cake has now become Refresh at Warm Welcome Space, meeting on the second Wednesday of the month from 11am-3pm. The first Refresh was held in April and was well attended with the teams from both our drop in ministries working together.

We look forward to the growth of Refresh as we welcome more people from our church family and the wider community for friendship and cake.

Victoria Beck



Warm Welcome Space

(as part of our Community Outreach)

Jesus said, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

The Bible reading (*Matthew 25: 35-36*) from our stained-glass windows continues to underpin this drop-in ministry and what a year we have had at Warm Space, starting with the national group renaming themselves, and us, Warm Welcome Space. You will see this new branding on all our publicity and notices, there is always a warm welcome and the space is often warm too! We are still listed on Lewisham Local – you can see the logo on the entrance lobby window.



As social media networks have expanded, we have been discovered by a slightly wider local audience including people who are passing by wanting to pray, and a local care home who visit and enjoy lighting candles, remembering family and friends who they miss, and taking photos for their diaries. Of course, our regulars drop in and out of the Space on a weekly basis, with a few new faces coming along to use the Work Space. We have a new sign outside the church, which we hope will draw more interest and passing trade.

In an endeavour to make Warm Welcome Space and Cuppa & Cake more sustainable for the teams we have, after a test month, combined the two groups on the SECOND Wednesday of each month with a rebrand to Refresh for the purposes of publicity. The main attraction for me with Refresh is the homemade cakes and we also bring board games out. The first session was very busy and we hope that will continue. I am so grateful to Louise, Jenny and the Cuppa and Cake team for making the transition such a joy.



One of the Home Groups has been meeting twice a month in the church at 10am, which is another example of how we are hoping to make the best use of our space and heating resources. We continue to have various church meetings during the day and we encourage those loosely connected with St Mildred's to come along for friendship each week.

If you are self-employed, in the area on a Wednesday or have recently retired, the team would appreciate you joining us so that we are always a safe space with two or more team members at church. The more the merrier! Iris, Kathryn, Maggie and Stella continue as stalwarts in the core team – grateful thanks to them.

Rev. Daphne Clifton

Assistant Minister

Alpha Course

When this report goes to print we will have just completed running the latest St Mildred's Alpha course. Over the last couple of years each course has been delivered by using a set format which seems to have worked very well. Trevor and Stella Gill have been great hosts providing the venue, a delicious, cooked meal and homemade cakes each week! Sheila Samuels and Pauline Leslie are the course leaders who are responsible for facilitating group discussions.

An all-important away day is central to the course. The aim of this is to provide guests with an opportunity to focus on learning about the Spirit of God and receiving from him without everyday distractions.

Sheila and Pauline have commented on how each course has been uniquely different. This is not only because of the group size but also what each individual brings to sessions with regards to where they are in their walk with the Lord.

We have received positive feedback from guests about how attending the course has impacted on their faith and prayer life. Hearing individual testimonies has been very encouraging. Several guests have also commented on how the sessions has promoted fellowship within the small group which has gone on to enrich their overall church life experience.

The Alpha course is for anyone who is interested in exploring faith, from the non-believer through to those who may have been a Christian for decades. The Aim of the course is to provide a friendly, non-threatening environment where people can feel safe to discuss their views within a confidential setting, on a range of topics, such as:

Why did Jesus die?

How does God guide us?

Why and how should I read the bible?

There is no such thing as a silly question and all opinions are treated with respect. The aim is for participants to grow in faith both individually and as a group as they seek to experience a deeper sense of Jesus walking alongside them.

As a team we are currently in discussion and seeking the Lords guidance regarding exploring different ways we can deliver future courses. Possibilities are – running a daytime course or maybe focusing on a particular group – men, teenagers, older people...any ideas will be most welcome.

If you know someone who is in any way curious about faith, do consider inviting them along and maybe coming with them. If you'd like to learn more, come and have a chat after church, drop us a line at alpha@stmildreds.org.uk or take a look at: <http://www.stmildreds.org.uk/alpha.html>

Pauline Leslie and Sheila Samuels



Missionary Giving

General Fund Tithe

As a church we set aside 10% of our income each year to fund mission in the UK and abroad. In 2023 St Mildred's continued support of our five mission partners both financially and in prayer. In 2023 the donation totalled £14,390. [please check this figure with Paul as I can't find the record of the final sum]

Below is a short summary of each partner and their work:

AWM-Pioneers - Arab World Ministry of Pioneers share the gospel with Muslims of the Arab world. They help people who have little opportunity to hear and understand the gospel and run several initiatives to help people share their faith with Muslims. We were blessed to welcome Chris Binstead, Church Development Co-ordinator from AWM, to St Mildred's in January 2024 to speak to us in the Sunday service and also the young people at Sunday@six. (www.awm-pioneers.org).

Covenant Homes Trust – The ministry continues under the leadership of a trustee board and local leadership. The focus has been to ensure that as many children and young people that the ministry can help are able to achieve their High School Diplomas, as without them it is difficult to get a job. Some of the children have specific sponsors whilst others are covered by people who give general support. (www.covenanthome.co.uk)

Nehemiah Project - provides a home and support for men with a history of addiction. Their residential programme is abstinence-based where men can address the root causes of their addiction within a supportive environment.

Nehemiah has five houses in south London, located in Streatham, Croydon, Clapham and Wandsworth. We had the pleasure of welcoming Mark Ash, a staff member at Nehemiah who was a former resident, in November 2022 to speak to the young people at Sunday@six. (www.tnp.org.uk)

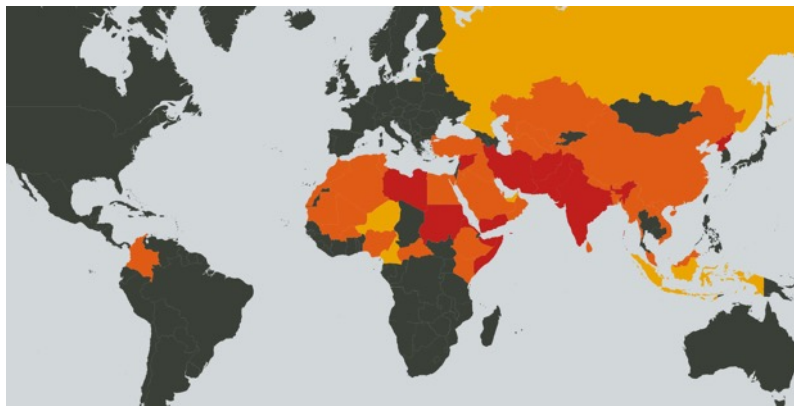
Open Doors - operates in over 60 countries, from training leaders to raising awareness about global persecution. Every day, millions of Christians risk their lives to follow Jesus. In more than 70 countries, Open Doors supports them by supplying Bibles, providing emergency relief and helping persecuted believers stand strong for the long-term. In the UK and Ireland, Open Doors helps the

church to pray, give and speak out for those who share our faith but not our freedom. (www.opendoorsuk.org)

Tearfund - is a Christian charity that partners with churches in more than 50 of the world's poorest countries. They tackle poverty and injustice through sustainable development, by responding to disasters and challenging injustice. Their aim is to end extreme poverty where possible by empowering local communities. (<https://www.tearfund.org>)

We are very thankful to the congregation at St Mildred's for the generosity of the financial gifts to the work of the church and mission.

Edna Petzen



Open doors world watch list



AWM worshippers-in-North-Africa

Promoting a safer church

The care and protection of children, young people and adults involved in Church activities is the responsibility of everyone who participates in the life of the Church

House of Bishops
Safeguarding Policy
for children, young
people & adults

Safeguarding

Over the last year, Annika & Laura have been:

- Accessible to all members of the church for discussion, advice and support around a variety of topics which are impacting on church life.
- Meeting with Tom regularly to discuss safeguarding matters and review live cases.
- Discussing cases and queries with the Diocesan safeguarding team as necessary.
- Attending PCC meetings to ensure that safeguarding remains a priority on the PCC's agenda.
- Working with our Church Administrator (to ensure that volunteers and staff are up to date with their mandatory training) and DBS officer (to ensure that these checks are processed for members of the congregation who are new to serving as well as those who are due for their checks to be renewed).
- Increasing visibility and awareness of our roles.
- Ensuring that information posters and helpline numbers are displayed in each of the toilets
- Sharing and developing best practice for safeguarding and promoting this as "everybody's business"
- Working with Tom to input into church policies, as necessary

"A Safe Church" is the recommended reading for those involved in any capacity with our children, young people or vulnerable adults. Please follow this link for further details: <https://southwark.anglican.org/safeguarding/diocesan-policies-and-procedures> or see the copy which is kept in church. Please also note that all levels of diocesan training are currently available to access online.

We welcome anyone to contact us to discuss any concerns you may have, big or small.

Please see the safeguarding page on the church website for more information

(www.stmildreds.org.uk/safeguarding). This includes the contact email for ourselves - safeguarding@stmildreds.org.uk as well as key contact details for the safeguarding team at the Diocese.

The PCC has complied with the duty to have 'due regard' to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding.

Laura Tewkesbury & Annika Okoro

