

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



Annual Reports For Annual Church Meeting 7th April 2019

Welcome!

Welcome to our Reports for the Annual Church Meeting 2019. It is wonderful to have you as part of our Church Family, and thank you for reading through these reports and (hopefully) attending our ACM this year. If you have any queries or comments please raise them at the meeting, or mention them privately if you prefer to me or one of the Wardens or Church Council (PCC) members. There is also a slip at the end of this document.

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

One exciting development is that we have been invited by the Diocese to participate in their LYCIG (Leading Your Church Into Growth) programme. A small group attended an intensive course in Derbyshire. We will soon be sharing this exciting programme with the whole church family. Watch this space!

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

Welcome, indeed.

David Alexander (Vicar)

AGENDA
Stopsley Parish Church ACM 2019
7th April 2019, 1.00pm in the Church Hall

1. Welcome and Prayers
2. Election of Secretary for the Meeting
3. Apologies
4. Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting (at the back of this document)
5. Matters arising from the Minutes

MEETING OF PARISHIONERS OF STOPSLEY

Open to members of the Church family and residents of the parish (only Church electoral roll members and parish residents on local government electoral roll may vote)

6. Election of Churchwardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

open to members of the Church family (only Church electoral roll members may vote)

7. Vicar's Report
8. PCC Report
9. Children and Youth Matters
10. Worship and Teaching Matters
11. Outreach & Communication Matters
12. Mission Matters
13. Pastoral Care Matters
14. Community & Social Matters
15. Fabric Matters
16. Administration Matters
17. Finance Matters, including
 - (a) Election of: Independent Examiner for the accounts.
 - (b) Financial Report & Independently Examined Accounts for year just ended.
 - (c) Stewardship Report
18. Partnership, Deanery, Diocese, Ecumenical and World Church News, including Deanery Synod Report
19. Election of Parochial Church Councillors (and Deanery Synod Members if required)
20. Election of: Sidesmen/women
21. Any Other Business
22. Date of next PCC meeting
23. Closing Prayers

St Thomas's, Stopsley

Parish Profile & Mission Action Plan

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

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

SOME PARISH DETAILS

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

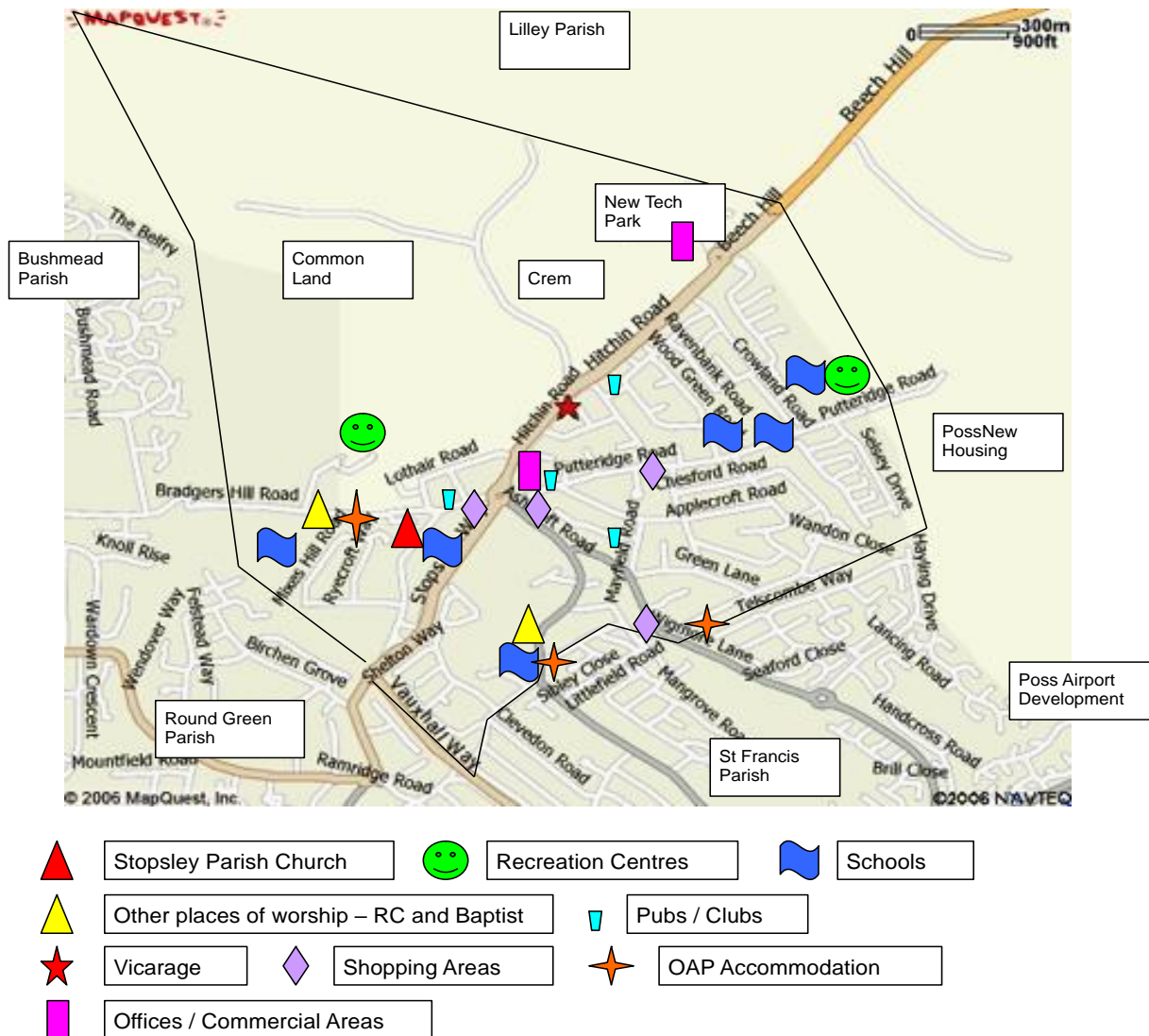
Location : North East area of Luton, at the boundary with Herts. The parish includes the wards of Stopsley and Putteridge. The busy A505 from Luton to Hitchin runs through the parish and separates the church geographically from much of the rest of the parish.

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

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

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

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



PARTNERSHIP IN WORSHIP, MISSION & MINISTRY

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

20 years ago we planted Christchurch, Bushmead, a thriving church largely within what was the much larger former parish of Stopsley.

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

Annual Parish Report on 2018 (Prepared for AGM 2019) by Stopsley (St Thomas) Parish Church Council (PCC)

Background – What is the PCC?

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

Membership – Who is on the PCC?

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

During 2018 (after the 2018 AGM) the following served as members of the P. C. C:

Ex-officio Members

1. David Alexander (Vicar, Chairman)
2. Steve Dolby (Churchwarden)
3. Ian Marshall (Churchwarden)
4. Ruth Barr (Curate)

Elected Lay Representatives We are entitled to 12 elected representatives:

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

Elected	Year Elected	Term of Office	Term Ends
1 John Barr	2018	1yr	2019
2 Louise Winter	2016	3yr	2019
3 Neil Rolls	2016	3yr	2019
4 Tony Holmes	2016	3yr	2019
5 Deborah Bachini	2017	3yr	2020
6 Linda Clitheroe	2017	3yr	2020
7 Vacant	---	3yr	2020
8 Rosemary Stipta	2017	3yr	2020
9 David Newbound	2018	3yr	2021
10 John Alexander	2018	3yr	2021
11 Vacant	2018	3yr	2021
12 Vacant	2018	3yr	2021

Representatives on the Deanery Synod who automatically also serve on the PCC

1	Steve Dolby*	2017	3yr	2020
2	Christine Younger	2017	3yr	2020
3	Vacant	---	---	---

NB The clergy of the church also serve on the Deanery Synod

Co-opted

None

*Steve Dolby counts twice! Elected as Churchwarden and Deanery Synod

Office came to end at APCM 2018

PCC Members:

John Alexander*

John Barr*

John Kingham

**But were eligible for re-election as office holders, and in John Barr's case as he had only served 1 year. There are no restrictions on Deanery Synod member standing for re-election.*

Elections at 2019 AGM

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

Neil Rolls*

Louise Winter

John Barr

Tony Holmes

There will be elections for the following positions:

4 PCC member(s) to serve for 3 years to 2022

2 PCC member(s) to serve for 2 years to 2021

1 PCC member(s) to serve for 1 year to 2020

1 Deanery Synod member(s) to serve to 2020

** Eligible for re-election as an Office Holder*

Committees

Standing Committee

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

Electoral Roll

This year all Church of England parishes are required to totally renew their Electoral Roll - existing members required to reapply, as well as new members welcome to apply. We attempted to contact all existing members, especially those living in the parish, and those who regularly attend worship. We also invited current worshippers not on the old roll to apply for the new. There are now 149 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll. This is -1 from the previous year's AGM Electoral Roll.

Review of the Year.

During the last year we continued enthusiastically with God's help our task of ***seeking to share God's love with all.***

We continued our 'Rolling Worship' service pattern which aims to provide a wide range of service styles, and enables different congregations meeting together as one Church. It is encouraging to see each element of the pattern developing new life. We also value the midweek service, which continues to be well supported. During the year the PCC decided that the evening service was no longer sustainable as the congregation had grown so small. We have, however, continued with a monthly 'Prayer Service' and termly Choral Evensongs. We sought to hold accessible services appropriate to different groups, blending the best of traditional and more informal styles. Much time and effort went into trying to prepare inspirational biblically based preaching.

We presently have two regular 'homegroups', one for women, and these are developing well in nurturing fellowship and spiritual growth. We consider this to be a significant part of our church life and very important for future growth, and we wish to grow other groups in coming years. The Tent Project continues to meet with high numbers of attendees appreciating their weekly gathering.

It has been an exciting and encouraging year amongst children and young people. The Sunday Club has excitingly grown in numbers and the children eagerly show off their work at the 10am service. A team led by Sara Sammons, Karen Ritchie and Ruth Marshall leads the Sunday Club programme which is enjoyable and helpful for members. We continue to appreciate our strong links with Uniformed Youth organisations. However, the Scouts and Cubs have now decided not to regularly attend the Parade Services. However, the Guides continue to do so, although numbers are not what they used to be. We started in 2018 to hold 'After Parade Parties' for the young people (not just from the uniformed organisations) which includes games, activities, food and some appropriate Christian input. These have been well attended, and included a bonfire event at Haverings. This gathering has now adopted a name, suggested by David Ritchie, one of our young people, after a poll amongst the participants. The new name is STUFF - St Thomas' Unbelievably Fabulous Fun! We hope STUFF will grow from strength to strength, meeting regularly not just after Parades - in fact that it will indeed be hot STUFF!

We continue to seek to give a warm welcome to visitors to the Church. Much effort and preparation is given to provide services that develop further an atmosphere of welcome. We particularly organised special events to welcome people over Christmas, Easter, Remembrance and throughout the year. This year we also held a memorable and well-attended Wedding Celebration for those married, whether this happened at St Ts or elsewhere. Participants varied from those freshly married (or soon to be!), to those married for many decades (65 was the longest!), and also those celebrating and also remembering

their marriage where their spouse had died.

Our Lunch Club thrived with fish and chip and other lunches. We have enjoyed social activities that enhance our welcome to people. The Pilgrimage to St Albans was another enjoyable activity, enjoyed by a small group of 'pilgrims'. We also held successful monthly Coffee Mornings. A course on Christian basics, "Alpha - Christianity Explored" is periodically held for people within and without the Church family. In 2018 this led to 5 church members being confirmed by the Bishop of Bedford, and another 5 affirming their baptismal faith, all in a lovely service at St Thomas's, along with some other candidates from other parishes.

Baptism policy for children offers a choice between a 'Thanksgiving Service' to families who want to have a celebration service in Church but who do not intend coming to Church regularly, and Baptism for those families willing to undertake preparation to make the commitment involved in that service. Thanksgivings are generally held after the Informal Service and Baptisms are held during the main Sunday Service. We also provide an informal detailed preparation for weddings. The weddings themselves appeared to be thoroughly enjoyed by the couples and their guests. We believe that these continue to be an important opportunity to provide a good witness for the Church, although along with a national trend the number of weddings in church has greatly decreased in recent years.

The choir continues to help lead the worship at the weekly 10am Family Communion and other services. Thanks are due to John Alexander, our Director of Music, who leads the Choir and plays our church organs. Our Music Group continues to creatively lead our Informal Service, and this is much appreciated by those who attend that service. Thanks are due to David Newbound who leads the meditation group, which is much appreciated by those who attend, and which enhances our spiritual life. We are grateful to all who have helped with the maintenance of Church and Churchyard, especially Ian Clitheroe, and those who clean our Church, and to the flower arrangers. Their hard work enhances our worship.

The Pastoral Care Team continued to meet regularly to oversee some of the pastoral needs in the Church, and have done marvellous work, which has included visiting, delivering cards and arranging lifts. Parishioners are asked to inform the Parish Office if visits or help is needed. We are very fortunate that David Newbound is 'released' (not least by the sacrificial support of his wife Debbie) into his ministry as Pastoral Worker. This has enabled the Church to greatly enhance the pastoral ministry and support that the Church offers. During 2018 Debbie has trained as a Parish Nurse and preparation has been made for this new ministry to begin in May 2019.

The witness of individuals in their community, work and leisure environments remain vital for our evangelistic mission. The Vicar is involved in ministry to the workplace with chaplaincy work at Vauxhall Motors. David Newbound has been chaplain at NOAH centre of

the homeless and at the coffee shop in the village. Steve Dolby is also involved in chaplaincy at Asda. Many of our members help serve at the NOAH 'Soup Kitchen' for the homeless. We have also been keen to support the World-wide Church, particularly focussed through our links with 'Hands of Mercy' in the Philippines. Our Church has been open for prayer and visitors during weekday mornings. We served the community in caring for bereaved people at the time of funerals and welcome them to an annual Commemoration service, as well as other services.

The Parish Office continues to handle much of the administrative work of the Church. We are grateful for the service of Linda Clitheroe, our Administrator and the work she does in the Office. This work is now shared with Deborah Bachini, who has settled well into the Office work. Linda has now decided to step down from her role, after 18 years! We are very grateful for the hard work she has given us. Deborah will be increasing her hours to fill the gap. Communications within the Church are good through a new website, advertising our events, and a weekly newssheet, the details of which are also projected onto the Church screen. Communications with the wider parish through our magazine is greatly appreciated by large numbers inside and outside of the Church family. Our thanks to the editorial team and to Tony Clitheroe for all their hard work in producing our magazine. We also contact interested people through emails and WhatsApp messages advertising services and events, and have a social network presence on Twitter and Facebook.

We have continued to run our Stewardship Scheme. We are grateful to everyone who responded to stewardship initiatives, and all the Finance Team, our Treasurer, Neil Rolls (and up to April 2018 John Kingham), and our Stewardship Secretary, Les Sims, and the skilled help of Sarah Vyvyan. Full details of the finances are provided in the relevant reports and the presentation at the AGM.

We wish to thank many, both Church members and others, who have contributed to the ongoing work of the Church in the last year. Gratitude is due to all involved in leading and preaching at services, especially Ruth Barr, our Curate, for this and all her much appreciated ministry in the church and wider parish. Many thanks are also due to Rosemary Stipta and John Pinnock for all their work with the audio and visual enhancement at our services. We are very thankful for the significant and important contribution of our Administrators, Linda Clitheroe and Deborah Bachini. We are also very appreciative of the sacrificial work of our Churchwardens, Steve and Ian. The PCC wishes to thank all those who contributed to the services: as sanctuary assistants, sidesmen/women, readers and intercessors, not forgetting all who provided welcome refreshments after the morning service and on other important occasions, and also to those who have helped provide such excellent food at Lunch Club and at other events. We are also grateful for the group of volunteers who have helped at Coffee Mornings and in many other ways as well.

We **look forward** to the future with confident hope in God as we share His love together.

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

Confessions of a curate 2018-2019 Rev Ruth Barr

This has been another busy year and my time with St Thomas's seems to fly by. Each different Church season brings new challenges and joys.

From Pentecost, David suggested that I become the Acting Vicar, so that I could gain experience of leading the church not only on Sundays but with the everyday parish affairs. This included more administrative roles, which is why we have had a different weekly newsletter format, which on the whole has been warmly received. Those on the church rota list had to be very patient though, as I struggled with the finalising of the monthly rota and sent out many erroneous copies before eventually getting it right.

May 2018 was the Royal Wedding and the Cup Final. As part of the Fresh Mission, alongside a number of other churches across Luton, over 600 pieces of wedding cake were handed out to people in the village to bless them, before coming back to the church to share a cream tea and to watch the Wedding together.

We had a number of weddings ourselves this year which are always such a joy. On the Saturday closest to Valentine's Day, we held a wedding blessing service which was attended by approximately 30 couples, five children and about 5 or 6 people who were on their own that day for various reasons and who wanted to honour the marriages they had had. It was a lot of work but was great fun and the sanctuary looked beautiful, lit up by our new LED lights, loads of candles and highlighting the number of wedding photos displayed on the communion table.

Love it or loathe it, I encouraged the PCC to agree to the Electronic Card Reader that we now have passed around each week on the stylish pink clipboard. For those who rarely carry cash, this is a way to enable more people to be part of the giving community at St Thomas's. If everyone who has a contactless card tapped it for just £1 each week, that would be an extra £100 or so coming into the church. Give it a go!

At Christmas, I was officially signed off by the Diocesan Bishop. This means that the St Albans Diocese feel that I have fulfilled enough in my training here to be allowed to become the vicar/rector/priest in my own church, or as part of a team ministry. From January I have been allowed to start the application process to find such a church, but regardless of the outcome of the selection and interview process, I will be staying at St Thomas's until at least the beginning of July 2019, which is three years after joining you.

Thank-you for the words of encouragement that you share with me; the texts, emails, WhatsApp messages, and Facebook posts as we continue this journey together and as the song says: "Oh, Dear Lord Three things I pray, To see thee more clearly, Love thee more dearly, Follow thee more nearly, Day by day"

Ruth Barr

Sunday Club



Sunday club over the last year has gone from strength to strength. We are now regularly having 12 – 15 children attend with the potential for more than 20 if all our regular children all came on the same day. It is so rewarding to see the children grow and engage in the activities. We have introduced the concept of our church youth growing as a family and came together outside of church on 2 outings last year. We visited the farm and a Christmas pantomime, both of which were enjoyed by all.

We have an exciting year ahead. We would like to welcome Stewart to the team who has recently joined us as an assistant. Stewart and Ian are concentrating on providing activities for the older children and we are getting some really positive feedback.

Our Sunday Club has grown and this was a very important step forward for us but more importantly for the children as their journey continues within the church family.

We are in a position now that the range of ages within the group is significant with the older children up at 14 and our younger children as young as a year. The necessity to ensure that we are not failing the children at either end of the scale is our biggest challenge and with Stewart and Ian's help we are moving forward but we really do need another helper each week. If anybody would consider joining us for one Sunday a month this would be a big help.

Lastly we would like to thank the whole team, without each and every one of you we wouldn't have a Sunday club and I think you will all agree that Sundays just wouldn't be the same now without our St Thomas youth family.

Thank you

Sara, Ruth and Karen



STUFF (St Thomas Unbelievably Fabulous Fun)

This is the wonderful new name for our 'After Parade Parties' that have been happening for young people in the last year. They have really been fun times and a good time has been had by all the young people – and a few oldies as well! The name was suggested by David Ritchie, one of our young people. Well Done David! Look out for more hot STUFF meetings later in the year.

Counselling at St Thomas' 2018

Throughout the year, counselling has been offered on a Wednesday afternoon/evening and as required on Monday evenings to adults in the Luton area. This has enabled, at any one time, to offer up to seven people, fifty-minute appointments, either weekly or fortnightly. In addition to the demand for low cost counselling, for some people, it is important to have a counsellor who shares their Christian faith.

I am grateful to all those who support the service, in particular Revd David Alexander, Revd Ruth Barr and David Newbound, also to Linda Clitheroe and Deborah Bachini for their help in taking referrals.

Sara Smith (BACP accredited counsellor)

Safeguarding

This past year we have been active in relation to training for Safeguarding.

We have ourselves received training from the Diocese and have held recently a training evening for PCC and cleared church members where we worked through the online training issued by the Diocese. This was fairly poorly attended but those who came along felt it was worthwhile. We hope to repeat this training with modifications as it was rather lengthy. This training was arranged to help the PCC and others to understand the various aspects of Safeguarding.

There are some changes in the process of Safeguarding within the Church. In future anyone – either voluntary or paid workers – will have to complete forms, be interviewed and provide references as well as being cleared by DBS. Something recently introduced is that all PCC members must be cleared before they can take up their role on PCC.

Those already cleared working within the Church will simply continue with their work.

We strive to conform to all that is required of us and believe that we are achieving this goal.

We thank you for your support and would ask that if anyone notices anything which causes concern then please mention it to either of us as it might just be very important. We are

very happy to be contacted and consulted about anything and can assure you all these conversations will be in the strictest confidence.

Judi Kingham

Linda Clitheroe

Safeguarding Officers

Home Groups

Our Home Group meets weekly on a Thursday during term time. We meet in our home and have a regular membership of six people. Meetings last about 90 minutes starting at 8pm with refreshments.

We look at various topics and issues surrounding the Christian faith all of which are bible based. We usually follow the sermon series and at Lent a specific bible based lent course to help us all grow our understanding and knowledge of the bible and issues facing Christians. We are a very friendly and welcoming group and get on well at our meetings, at church and on other occasions. Often we start and end a term with a social event especially at Christmas.

New members are always welcome and there is no pressure on anyone to make a long term commitment. We suggest anyone who is thinking about it to 'try us out' for say six weeks. This gives you a truer feel for what happens at a meeting and better helps you to decide whether or not you wish to stay. All evenings end in a short time of prayer and no one is under any pressure to contribute verbally if they prefer not to. All discussions and comments are treated in the strictest of confidence so everyone feels 'safe' to say what they think or share what may be bothering them.

Evenings end in a short time of prayer; and again no one is under any pressure to contribute verbally if they prefer not to. Why not give it a go maybe after Easter and see what you think.

NB Some evenings may be blighted by one of my jokes!!

Ian Marshall

MORNING PRAYER and MORNING PRAYER with COMMUNION REPORT

At 9.15am we meet each Monday, and Thursday for a half hour time of bible reading and praying, then on Tuesday we also have communion too.

It is a special time of coming before the Lord quietly and offering the day to Him. Each person on the church electoral roll is prayed for one day a month and the residents and

businesses in the parish of Stopsley are also named by street names. We pray for the charities and ministries we support also.

This is a lovely way to start the day and all are welcome to come and sit quietly and join us.

Ruth Barr

Christian Meditation

The Christian Meditation Group meets most Wednesdays throughout the year. The group is currently made up of between 3-4 people who meet weekly to silently wait upon God. During Christian Meditation we seek to be open and attentive to the still small voice of God. Each week we begin with a welcome, introduction, short meditation, followed by 45 minutes silence. After the silence we pray for those who have been asked to be remembered in our prayers. Our meeting ends with the Grace and a Blessing. Follow by a chat over tea or coffee. I would like to say thank you to everyone who supports the weekly meditation group. Additionally this year I have done a Meditation for the Mothers Union to celebrate Lady Day.

David Newbound.

Noah Soup Kitchen

We have a group of volunteers from St. Thomas' and surrounding churches who help at Noah Homeless Shelter on a Monday evening. They attend one Monday a month, on a rota basis, and support the Soup Kitchen. This involves warming pre-made soup and preparing sandwiches to serve alongside crisps, biscuits, tea and coffee. The volunteers arrive at 6.30pm and are usually cleared up by 8pm.

The Soup Kitchen opened in September 2010 and was only supposed to run for six months. It is however still going strong every night of the week. Without the volunteers providing this service, many homeless people in the town would have no food from lunchtime that day until breakfast the following morning.

I would like to thank all those from St. Thomas' who volunteer on a regular basis, many of whom bake or take in additional food for the homeless. Those who help at the Soup Kitchen really find it rewarding to help the service users, who always show their appreciation.

If you would be interested in helping at the Soup Kitchen, please contact Karen Ritchie on 07528 071519.

Karen Ritchie – Monday evening administrator.



Thank you to all the friends at **St. Thomas' Church** for your prayers and financial support of Hands of Mercy. They are greatly appreciated by many families in the squatter areas of the Philippines. God has greatly blessed the work and provided financially through many faithful people, churches, schools, clubs etc., As a result the Hands of Mercy staff in the Philippines can help the needy families who live in the squatter communities of Mandaluyong, Manila and Baguio, a town in the north of the country.

Some members of St. Thomas' church will already know that Keith Barter and Fran Gunn will be stepping down in 2019 and handing over their Hands of Mercy responsibilities of Treasurer and Administrator to others who can take on their roles. Keith has been faithfully helping Hands of Mercy International as Treasurer since 2005 and Fran has been the Administrator since the compassion ministry in the Philippines began in 1997.

We would value your prayers that God will raise up the right people to take over these very important part-time volunteer positions. If you feel that God is calling you to be involved with the Hands of Mercy compassion ministry, please contact Fran at the UK Hands of Mercy office (01582 416151)



A few squatter homes in Mandaluyong, Manila

Fran Gunn and the UK Hands of Mercy Trustees.

Pastoral Care Team

The Pastoral Care Team meets every fourth Monday of the month, excluding January and December. At present the Care Team members are Maureen Austin, Margaret Boniface, Jim Hearnshaw, Vreni Hearnshaw, Phyl Luck, David Newbound, Debbie Newbound, Louise Winter, Angela Scarlet Marshall, Richard Scarlet Marshall. Our aim is to prayerfully and practically support and uphold each and every member of the Church Family and those across of community and beyond.

We seek to achieve this by

- Friendly Chats
- Telephone Calls
- Visiting
- Sending of Cards
- Accompany me on Home Visits, Hospital Visits, and Communion.

I would like to thank everybody on the Care Team for their hard work and continued support.

David Newbound (Chairperson)

Director of Pastoral Care

As your Director of Pastoral Care, it is my role to work alongside the vicar, curate, and on behalf of Church Wardens, and PCC sharing the responsibility for the Pastoral oversight here at St Thomas and, in the wider community, across our town. While working with members of other churches across our community, and in partnership with others across our town, I seek to meet the ongoing Pastoral needs of all who the Lord brings to me on a daily basis throughout the year.

My main responsibilities involve:

- Home Communion
- Home Visits
- Hospital Visiting
- Care Team (Chairperson)
- Luton Town Centre Chaplain (Coffee Corner)

I am more than happy for people to approach me before or between services, on Sundays and Wednesdays. Or you can leave me a message on the Church Office Phone 01582 729194 or on my mobile 07885605977 or you can email me on

david.newbound@btinternet.com

I work in the Coffee Corner on Mondays and Fridays in my role as Pastoral Worker and Chaplain.

I see my ongoing ministry here at St Thomas as taking the Church beyond the walls of the existing building and out into the community and across the town, by being available, accessible, approachable.

A great part of my ministry involves attentively listening to others, sharing God's love and compassion with them, bringing the Gospel to life in practical ways in word, sacrament and action. Also, meeting each person at their point of need, creating a safe, secure, space and place, matching my pace with theirs, keeping in step with them as we travel together with Jesus as our guide and Holy Spirit as our enabler. I aim to oversee and develop the ongoing Pastoral Ministry with the assistance of The Care Team and under the guidance of the Vicar and Curate.

I would like to publicly give thanks to David and Ruth for their continued support, guidance, wisdom and assistance. Debbie who is a real woman of faith, a constant support and encourager, who daily makes a very real sacrifice in allowing me to grow and develop in this calling that God has given me.

David Newbound (Director of Pastoral Care)

Social and Fundraising Team

Over the last year we have had some events more successful than others. On many occasions attendance from St Thomas's has been low and often numbers were made up by people from outside the church family and although this is a great thing, bringing people into our church and allowing people who may not usually come to church to realise it's a safe and friendly environment where they can feel comfortable it would be nice if once here they could get to know more of us.

One of our most successful events last year was the afternoon tea with the Kinghams. Sadly this year our venue will change and the Tea will no longer be down Old Bedford Road, We would like to take this opportunity to thanks both John and Judi for all the hard work that they have put into this event over the years, from the rain that none of us will ever forget the first year to the amazing cakes and Disney friends keeping us company as we join together and enjoy each other's company each summer since.



It is important to us that the events we run are an opportunity for members of the church family to come together outside of the church service, to get to know each other and join together as a church family as well as providing an environment where you can invite your friends and family.

We have events planned for this year and have included the calendar so that you can add dates to your diary.

St Thomas's Social calendar 2019
COFFEE MORNING, FIRST SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH

JANUARY	FEBRUARY GAMES NIGHT SATURDAY 9 TH	MARCH A SPRING SUPPER FRIDAY 1 ST CHOIR HOMEVENT SATURDAY 23 RD E-WEEKLY	APRIL Men's Breakfast SATURDAY 6 TH EASTER BREAKFAST SUNDAY 21 ST
MAY LMV CHOIR SATURDAY 1 ST	JUNE PICNIC IN THE PARK SATURDAY 8 TH LADIES MORNING SATURDAY 15 TH	JULY AFTERNOON TEA SATURDAY 20 TH	AUGUST
SEPTEMBER BARN DANCE SATURDAY 2 ND	OCTOBER HARVEST SUPPER SATURDAY 5 TH	NOVEMBER QUIZ NIGHT SATURDAY 2 ND CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL SATURDAY 30 TH	DECEMBER CHRISTMAS DINNER SATURDAY 14 TH

We would like to ask that you take a moment this afternoon to complete the suggestion card on your chair by ticking any of the current events that you are interested in attending/ would like us to keep running and also with any ideas for future events so we can try to ensure that next year the events that are run are the events people actually want.

We are planning a Christmas tree festival this year and would really appreciate some volunteers to help out. If you think you may be able to help please indicate this on your comments card.

Sara, Ruth and the Social Team

Men's Breakfasts

Late in the year, a new initiative took off: 'Men's Breakfasts'. They are proving to be a great success. So far, we have met twice and had a fantastic time enjoying good food, great camaraderie and lots of chatting. We try to meet every two months on a Saturday morning at 9 o'clock for about an hour or so. We have now introduced a 'God slot' at the end when we digest a short 'thought for the day' and then go our separate ways. We meet at a café which provides a full English breakfast although if anyone prefers a continental style breakfast, they are able to enjoy that. Between 8 to 12 have been meeting up and these breakfasts are open to any menfolk who want to meet up with other men and enjoy their company. Friends are always very welcome. Many churches in the diocese have Men's breakfasts which are proving to be popular and meet a need for the menfolk so we are hoping that this will grow and develop over the coming months and years. If any man wants

to taste the event (and the food) please don't hesitate to come along and if you want more details of who, where, when and costs, please contact Ian Marshall on 07968131997. Lifts are always available to those who need one so that will not be a problem. Looking forward to the next one.

Ian Marshall

Wardens

2018 has been another challenging year for the wardens at St Thomas' given the range of problems and issues we are facing as a church but there have also been several highlights during the year.

As ever, our financial situation is a continuing source of concern as we struggle to balance our books. We are simply not generating enough income on a regular basis to cover our monthly costs which we have pared down almost to the bone. This has brought into question whether or not we can continue to share our God given wealth with those who are much less fortunate than we are. At the moment we are committed to give 10% of our income to a small number of very worthy charities but inevitably we may have to reconsider this if things don't get better. It is our firm belief that, within the body of St Thomas', God has provided us sufficient resources financially and in human skills and talents to not only make ends meet but to create an abundance of material and spiritual wealth.

Part of Discipleship is accepting that, as all things come from God and that we are only returning to Him, that which He has given us in the first place, we must seek His will for every part of our lives and trust and obey Him, even if it 'hurts'. If we embrace this, then He will shower us with innumerable blessings, riches and good gifts. If we don't, then we shall be facing yet another year of agonising decisions in connection with our finances and having to cope with the consequences of our actions.

On a more positive note, the alarming cracks in the sanctuary walls appear much worse than they are and the architects say there is no risk of collapse or immediate danger. Notwithstanding that, this situation will need to be addressed at some point. Also, our heating system is now up and running and we are all reaping the benefits of a cosy church building.

Our Sides men and women continue to do a magnificent job every Sunday and we have received several encouraging comments from regulars and visitors to the church about the warm and genuine welcome that they receive. First impressions mean a great deal and, for most people, the first person they see on a Sunday is a sides-person. So, well done to all.

Very sadly, Steve Dolby is, after several years of dedicated service as a church warden, stepping down from the role. We all owe him (and of course his lovely wife Ann) a huge

debt of gratitude for the incredible impact he has made on the life and people of St Thomas'. Steve does not plan to go anywhere but, in fact, continue pursuing a number of spiritual and theological activities and we wish him and Ann well in their continuing journey of faith and service to God. Thank you Steve.

Is 2019 going to be a year of stumbling blocks where we lurch from one problem to another or, if we trust and obey Him, will we embark on a journey of 'stepping stones' allowing God to honour His promise to shower us with countless blessings, gifts and riches? Only God knows the answer to that question.

Steve Dolby and Ian Marshall

St Thomas' Volunteers

We are a group of 11 ladies and two gentlemen who run the Coffee Mornings on the first Saturday of every month. At the Coffee Mornings, as well as refreshments, we have a raffle, a cake stall, a book stall, DVD stall and a stall with bric-a-brac and various other items. We are happy to help on other occasions when asked.

The Coffee Mornings are very popular and well attended and raised over £1,300 for the church during 2018. The money from one of the Coffee Mornings each year is donated to a charity and last year the one in May raised £225 for Sight Concern Bedfordshire.

We meet in the Church Hall on the third Wednesday of the month between 11.00am and 12 noon for discussion and we would be pleased to welcome anyone who would like to join our very friendly group.

Georgina Cook

Stewardship Report – YEAR 2018

Thank you to everyone who has faithfully committed to supporting the church this financial year (2018). The "Gift Day" appeal at the end of November raised £5962.00 and resulted in a final figure of £7171.38 after taking gift aid into consideration. As you can appreciate, with increased running costs year on year [together with unforeseen building maintenance] regular stewardship giving and "Gift Day" donations are more important than ever. However, stewardship is not only about money, it is also about giving time and practical help to St. Thomas's Church.

At 31st December, 2018 there were 89 members (couples counted as one) in the Scheme. This is a net reduction of 7 members from the previous year. However, there has been only a small reduction in planned giving. As we press on into 2019 there is a continuous challenge to meet the Church's running costs and the Parish Share.

With our Vicar's and the PCC's blessing, Ruth, our Curate, introduced a card payment scheme in December. It is aimed at those who do not carry cash and enable them to contribute to St. Thomas's work within the church and the parish. It is still in its infancy, but it is becoming a regular item at our services. Ruth has informed me that over £260.00 was donated by this method in December [2018]. A splendid achievement considering this is money that would not necessarily have been collected through the plate offerings.

In terms of giving your time and practical help to St. Thomas's Church there is a need for Sunday Club helpers, cleaners, litter pickers and people to carry out odd jobs, etc. The list is endless. If you are in a position to help please talk to the Churchwardens or the staff in the Parish Office.

Finally, I would ask that you take this opportunity to pray and reflect on your giving. If you would like to join the Stewardship Scheme and make regular donations please ask me, the Treasurer or the Churchwardens for details.

Leslie Sims - Stewardship Secretary

28th. February, 2019.

Administrators report

I am still enjoying the work in the church office, and look forward to the coming year, although with some trepidation now that Linda is retiring. She has been patiently teaching me her very varied job but I know she has much more knowledge in her head than I could ever write down in my notebook!

Thank you for everybody's patience as I learn.

The Parish Office is often the first point of contact for the church, and I will continue to provide cover during the office hours and to hopefully continue to provide an efficient and caring service.

I'd like to thank Linda for all her guidance and patience, and also for the wonderful work she has done over the last 18 years as your administrator.

Deborah Bachini

Linda's Retirement

It is with very mixed feelings that after nearly 18 years of being your Church administrator and David's Secretary, I have now decided that the time is right for me to retire from work.

I have loved (almost) every minute of my work and I remember shortly after I started, saying it was a privilege to be in such a beautiful building every day, which still holds strong, but

not only that, the kindness and friendship you have all shared with me over the years has been so very precious.

I remember our humble beginnings before the church office was built when Alan (my then colleague) and myself used to work in the choir vestry. The PC's were kept in a cupboard and wheeled out on a Monday and wheeled back again on a Friday. The general office paraphernalia was packed away to allow the space to become the choir vestry once again ready for Sunday services. I can also recall (before health and safety!) when I used to climb up on top of the choir vestry via the back window sill to get to bits stored up there. When I look up there now I wonder how I was brave enough to clamber up there.

Then in 2010 the hall and office was built and the rest is history.

Apart from working in the office, I have also had several roles within the church including Sunday Club leader for approximately 20 years, which I ceased about three years ago. I ran a couple of family camps which were enjoyed by several families with many other parishioners attending for a day visit. I began arranging the Church flowers with Rene Martin and Mabel Farrer many years back, and gradually took charge when they became unable to do so. This involved running several flower festivals on biennial intervals and sometimes with a Christmas festival in between. Recently I have joined the Safeguarding Team. I have cooked quite a few lunches for lunch clubs on Wednesdays and Sundays and have been the Verger since Jack Farrer passed away in 2003. As Verger I attended many funerals and weddings. I will always remember one of the very the first funerals I did with such sadness, as it was of a young baby, and the father carrying the tiny white coffin. The weddings, of course, have been very joyful occasions and it has been a pleasure sharing the run up to the couple's big day and indeed the day itself.

Of course, I will still be involved at St Ts and I will stay on the PCC until the end of my term in 2020, and also some of the above roles, but I will also look forward to building a new stage in life - with God's will - to spending more time with our grandchildren and enjoying some holidays with Ian. We have several dance breaks planned for this year so we can enjoy our love of the ballroom. We have also bought a camper and are looking forward to some wonderful weather (hopefully) for some adventures in that.

Recently in church, we have listened to some sermons on where God wants to best use us and our skills as we progress through life. I am feeling that in this new chapter of my life that this will become clearer for me in the months to come. This is both exciting and scary but I know and trust that God will be walking beside me.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for such amazing support and love during my time so far with St Thomas's.

Linda Clitheroe

Church Flowers report

Due to my forthcoming retirement, thus potentially not around Stopsley every week, I have tried a different idea of a silk arrangement at the altar from November to Christmas. As nobody commented on this, maybe it is an acceptable way to go forward. If there is anyone who would be interested in joining the flower team, that would be wonderful, maybe we could get a rota going. It will be a shame not to have fresh flowers each week as we have done at St Ts for so many years. Please contact me if this is something you would like to find out more about.

We will, of course, do fresh flowers for weddings and other events in church when required.

Thanks to Sylvia and David for their help. Also thanks to Elaine for her weekly watering and tending to keep the flowers looking good all week.

Linda Clitheroe

Deanery Synod Report

The Luton Deanery Synod usually meets four times a year and meetings are held in a weekday evening, usually in February, June, September and November. The Synod meets in a different Church or hall for each meeting. Meetings start with refreshments and allow a welcome chance to meet up or make new friendships with other Synod members. Luton Deanery Synod is made up of two groups. The groups are called The House of Clergy (the licensed clergy of the Deanery) and the House of Laity (Church members who are elected by each Church and normally serve, initially, for three years).

The House of Clergy is Chaired by the Area Dean who is appointed by the Bishop, after consultation with the Clergy of the Deanery, for a term of five years.

The person who chairs the House of Laity is elected by the lay members at the beginning of each three year term.

The Synod elects its own Secretary and Treasurer and such Committees as required. Luton Deanery has a Standing Committee and a Mission and Pastoral Committee.

During a term of office members of the Deanery Synod may be called upon to vote in the five-yearly General Synod elections. Members vote thoughtfully and prayerfully, knowing that the consequences of decisions made at the General Synod are felt by diocese, deanery and parish.

In June 2013 the Deanery Synod agreed that its aims and values would be

- To emphasise mission rather than maintenance in its outlook and planning
- To train, equip and empower laity to be active in mission in whatever their context.
- To affirm existing expressions of Church and also support and resource new expressions of Church.
- To be realistic, practical and creative in identifying and using our resources of money, buildings, paid workers and volunteers.
- To be willing to take risks and learn from our mistakes as we do our best to follow Jesus.

God's love and care for his people, for Society, and for creation needs to be expressed by our words and our deeds.

Parishes are finding great value in sharing best practices, working together, training and studying together, sharing resources and caring together.

The word "Synod" comes from two Greek words meaning "the way" and "together". It describes a partnership of Church members, bishops, clergy and lay people.

Deanery Synod members were thanked for all of their inputs recently to produce the Deanery Review and MAP which were presented to Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee last December. The presentation had been extremely well received and we were commended on the way it told the story of progress over recent years, and all the information created a "brilliant baseline" to measure our development in the future. The presentation slides and context document will be made available for reps to take back to their PCCs.

From time to time, Parishes work in Partnership groupings:

Partnership 1

Holy Trinity, Biscot

St. Saviour's

St. Mary's, Sundon

Holy Cross, Marsh Farm

Partnership 2

St. John's, Farley Hill

All Saints Caddington

St. Andrews Woodside

St Hughs, Lewsey

Partnership 3

St. Margaret's Streatley

St. Augustine's, Limbury

St. Andrew's

St. Luke's, Leagrave

All Saints with St. Peter

Partnership 4

Christchurch, Bushmead

Luton, St. Mary's

St. Mathew's

St. Paul's

Partnership 5

St. Anne and St. Christopher's

St. Thomas', Stopsley

St. Francis' with St. Hugh's Cockernhoe

Our current Deanery Synod representatives are David Alexander, Ruth Barr, Christine Younger and myself.

Steve Dolby

St Thomas' Church Treasurer's Annual Report Year ended 31st December 2018

Once again this has been a challenging financial year for our Church. Our total income increased by less than 1% from 2017 mainly due to lower donations for the repair of the building offsetting increased income elsewhere. Excluding the impact of these donations, other income rose by nearly 5%.

Total expenditure was slightly increased from last year, despite a £13,978 reduction in maintenance costs. During the year the heating system was repaired at a cost of £7,838, and we recommenced our customary tithe to charities.

Unfortunately as a result of this, in order to balance our income and expenditure, we underpaid our Parish Share by £19,383 making a combined total underpayment to the Diocese for 2017 and 2018 of £39,383.

By utilising the £7,400 of funds previously set aside for the heating system, our General Account has returned to surplus. We are also fortunate to still have significant Reserves in the form of the Legacy Funds that have accumulated over recent years. These Legacy Funds are 'Unrestricted' so they are available in case of for any other major repair work that may be required.

I am sure that 2019 will again be a challenging year. The Parish Share has further increased by £2,541 to £69,182 and with the age of the building it is unlikely that we will not incur some level of expenditure to maintain it in a good condition.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express thanks to the many people who help with the handling of the Church Cash and Accounting:
the Sidepersons who count and record the Collections at each Service;

the Monday Banking Team led by David White;
Sarah Vyvyan who operates the Church PAYE scheme; and
John Kingham, who despite stepping down from the role of Treasurer has been very
supportive in this handover year.
We are also appreciative of the fact that Godfrey Laws, who carry out the Independent
Examination of our Accounts, do so at a concessionary fee.
Neil Rolls
(Hon. Treasurer St Thomas' PCC) April 2019

Diocese of St Albans
Parish of St Thomas Stopsley

Seeking to share God's love

Minutes of the Annual Church Meeting held on Monday 23rd April 2018
At 19.30 in the Church Hall

Present:

David Alexander (Vicar and Chairman)
Ruth Barr (Curate)
Steve Dolby (Churchwarden)
Ian Marshall (Churchwarden)
John Kingham (Treasurer)
And 22 other parishioners.

2018.1 Welcome and Prayers

The Vicar opened the meeting by welcoming all and explaining the need to use microphones if anyone wished to speak – there was a handheld microphone that could be passed around. He then opened the meeting with a couple of verses from Romans 1, followed by prayer.

2018.2 Election of Secretary for the Meeting

Rosemary Stipta was proposed as secretary by Steve Dolby, seconded by John Kingham and elected unanimously.

2018.3 Apologies

Apologies were received from Jane Alexander, John Alexander, Bob Gunn, Fran Gunn, Jan Matthew, Jim Gabriel, Debbie Newbound, Christine Ling, Louise Winter, David Stipta, Deborah Bachini, Ken Pullan, Mike Clark, Elaine Deacon, Margaret Boniface, Sheila Clitheroe, Tony Clitheroe and Ian Clitheroe.

2018.4 Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 5th April 2017

These had been distributed with the AGM papers and had been checked by the PCC. Acceptance was proposed by David Newbound, seconded by John Barr, there were 2 abstentions with the remainder in favour.

2018.5 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

MEETING OF THE PARISHIONERS OF STOPSLEY

2018.6 Election of Churchwardens

The Vicar gave thanks to the Churchwardens, Steve Dolby and Ian Marshall, for all their hard work over the last year.

Written nominations were received for Steve Dolby and Ian Marshall. Steve Dolby was proposed by David Newbound and seconded by Gina Cook; Ian Marshall was proposed by Neil Rolls and seconded by John Kingham. In the absence of any other nominations Ian and Steve were duly elected.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

2018.7 Vicar's Report

The Vicar opened by thanking the many people who make a wonderful contribution to the church's life, including Ruth who has brought much to St Thomas's. From Pentecost, 20th May, she will be Acting Vicar – David stressed he would still be here but that in order for Ruth to gain experience she will be taking the lead on day-to-day parish matters, while he would continue to look after the more long-term matters. So Ruth would manage the rota, the News Sheet, planning the services, overseeing weddings, baptisms and funerals, chairing the PCC and next year's AGM, overseeing pastoral contacts (along with David Newbound), etc etc. He also expressed his thanks to John Barr and to Ruth's Mum Daphne. Also to David and Debbie Newbound. He proposed that David should have a new title of Director of Pastoral Care. He also thanked the Churchwardens, Linda Clitheroe and Deborah Bachini. He also thanked John Kingham, who has been Treasurer for over 50 years. He also expressed his thanks to John Pinnock and Rosemary Stipta; Tony Clitheroe, Ian Clitheroe, John Alexander, the sidespeople, preachers, prayers. He gave special mention to Bryan Sexton, who sadly passed away during the year. His final thanks were for Jane Alexander and all her support to him. He apologised for anyone he had missed out, saying that God knows what they do and great is their reward in heaven!

He reported that 10-12 people have expressed a desire to be confirmed or to renew their confirmation vows and preparations are in hand for the service on 9th May.

An exciting suggestion had been made by the Sunday Club children that children should be included in Communion and this is to be considered in the new PCC year.

Mention was also made of the financial hit we have suffered, more of which later. He asked all to try to bring in more people and increase giving. There is also a need to install new heating so that we will be toasty next winter!

The Vicar said he thought the services were generally going well with reasonable attendances although he felt that the 6.30pm services had “run out of puff” and reached the point when they were no longer sustainable. The plan therefore is to cease these services, apart from the Prayer Services and the Choral Evensong which would be quarterly. Special services would also continue. He expressed a desire to include TTT (This time tomorrow) in other services; currently it features only in the 11.30am service but could maybe feature monthly in other services.

There being no questions, the Vicar then invited the Curate, Rev Ruth Barr, to make her report.

Ruth commented that it had been another whirlwind year. She now considered Luton home but was struggling with her timetable! She thanks David A for mentoring her. She said the Diocese were keeping a close eye on her. She also thanked David Newbound, as well as Debs, Jane Alexander and John Barr. She commented that her preaching had now been assessed and thanked those who had helped with this.

2018.8 PCC Report

The PCC report has been circulated and those present were encouraged to read it at their leisure.

2018.9 Children and Youth

The Vicar thanked those leading the Sunday Club – and welcomed Alice to the meeting. He also thanked those who were thinking about a Youth Group and a possible Youth Camp. Ruth Marshall commented that it was great fun and that anyone wishing to try it should do so!!.

2018.10 Worship and Teaching

Rolling worship is going well and new people are coming along. Thanks also to the Choir and the Music Group, under the leaderships of John Alexander and John Pinnock respectively. The Vicar mentioned a quote that if you invite 5 people, 3 or 4 may say no but 1 person, maybe 2 will say yes.

2018.11 Outreach and Communications Matters

New website coming soon. News sheet continues, also magazine.

2018.12 Mission Matters

This involves all of us – This Time Tomorrow and any time. Noah, soup kitchens, Hands of Mercy, Luton Town Community Chaplaincy, the Vicar is Vauxhall Chaplain, David Newbound is Chaplain at Coffee Corner and Steve Dolby at Asda. Karen mentioned Fresh Mission on 19th and 20th May with a service on 20th.

2018.13 Pastoral Care Matters

The Vicar thanked all involved with this and said that everyone was the “eyes and ears” of the team and were asked to pass on information. David Newbound thanked everyone and emphasised that it is not just David A, Ruth, David N and the Care Team, but is everyone. If anyone is interested, they should chat to one of these people or to Debbie Newbound.

2018.14 Community and Social

Ian Marshall said the Social Committee works hard trying to put on an event per month and urged people to invite guests. Not all events are fund-raising but it does come into it. He said it was disappointing sometimes to see the lack of attendance and urged people to support the events.

2018.15 Fabric Matters

The Vicar commented that the Council were doing a good job on churchyard grass and had repaired a section of the wall. He also thanked John Pinnock and team for putting in the new screen so that the Pulpit was now back in use.

2018.16 Administration Matters

The Vicar thanked Linda Clitheroe and Deborah Bachini. He also mentioned the data protection letter and form, urging people to complete and return them as soon as possible.

2018.17 Finance Matters including (a) Election of Independent Examiner; (b) Financial Report and (c) Stewardship

- a) Election of Independent Examiner** – it was proposed by the PCC that Godfrey Laws should be elected as Independent Examiners. This was now proposed by Steve Dolby, seconded by Rosemary Stipta and supported unanimously.
- b) Financial Report** – John Kingham presented a slide show in support of this. He said the Legacy Funds amounted to just over £20,000 including £5,000 from Bryan Sexton’s estate. John thanked everyone for their help and support as he now stepped down from the role of Treasurer after over 50 years. He said that Neil Rolls had agreed to take over as Treasurer and this was supported by the

PCC. Les Sims asked about the restricted funds for heating – John Kingham said that £1,150 was restricted but £6,250 was not restricted so could be used elsewhere. Ian Marshall commented that heating costs could potentially be less, so presumably the donor would be consulted if not all the money was used and John Kingham agreed this should happen. David Alexander commented that the intention was to use the money on heating. David Alexander asked for a proposer to adopt the accounts – Les Sims proposed, Neil Rolls seconded and it was agreed unanimously. David Alexander, on behalf of everyone, said a big thank you to John Kingham, not just for this year, but for the last 50 years and more. A gift was presented to John and flowers to Judi Kingham.

- c) Stewardship** – Les Sims commented that although donors had increased, we had lost some very generous donors and were £3,500 down. He urged all to consider their giving and try to increase. He also wants to try to persuade those still on the Stewardship Scheme to go on the Parish Giving Scheme as this would help the Treasurer. Les commented that John Kingham had said he (Les) could not go until John Kingham retired, so Les was now giving notice!!!!

2018.18 Partnership etc

(St Thomas's, St Francis, St Anne's and St Christopher's). Steve Dolby commented on Deanery Synod and said that Rev Jan McKenzie had now moved on and that Rev Joe Pienaar is now the new Area Dean.

2018.19 Election of PCC and Deanery Synod

The Vicar said that the Deanery Synod representatives were one person down as we could have 3 people but only have 2 – if anyone would like to stand, speak to David A or Steve.

Election of PCC:

John Kingham needs a year off PCC before he is eligible for election again.

John Alexander – as Director of Music is able to continue.

John Barr – has only served one year so is able to be re-elected.

Sara Hillyard and David Stipta stood down.

We have: 4 PCC places for 3 years – until 2021

1 PCC place for 2 years – until 2020

1 PCC place for 1 year – until 2019

<u>Nominee</u>	<u>Proposed by</u>	<u>Seconded by</u>
David Newbound	Judi Kingham	John Kingham
John Alexander	John Barr	Neil Rolls
John Barr	David Newbound	Phyl Luck

The first two would be for 3 years and the last for 1 year.

There are still 2 people not able to join yet but it is hoped to co-opt them later in the year.

So we have two of the 3-year vacancies filled and the one year vacancy. There were no other nominations so David Newbound, John Alexander and John Barr were duly elected.

2018.20 Sidespersons

David Alexander thanked all, especially for welcoming people. He said it was suggested that all be re-elected en bloc and this was proposed by Steve Dolby, seconded by Ian Marshall and agreed unanimously, so all were re-elected.

2018.21 Any Other Business

- a) Steve thanked all for coming; he thanks John Barr for supporting Ruth and presented him with chocolates. He also thanked Jane Alexander and presented flowers for her to David; he also thanked Ruth Barr and presented her with flowers.
- b) Fabric – Les Sims asked about the guttering above the Vicar's Vestry and the Vicar said that PCC were aware of this and that a builder would be fixing it soon. Les also mentioned that now that the Pulpit is back in action it isn't possible to hide!!! He also wondered if it would be appropriate to remind people to return bibles at the end of the services. Finally, he wondered about the possibility of handing out the news sheets on exit as lots are currently left in the pews. Karen Ritchie commented that it is nice to look at the notices whilst they are being mentioned in the services.
- c) Ruth Marshall asked whether the news sheet would be going on the new website and John Pinnock said it would, along with a facility to email it.

2018.22 Date of Next PCC Meeting

Monday 14th May at 7.45pm

2018.23 Closing Prayers

David Alexander thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting in prayer.

Comments and Questions for the AGM or PCC or Vicar.

Any Comment:

Any Question:

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

This report on the accounts of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2018, which are set out on pages 2 to 7 is in respect of an examination carried out under Regulation 3(3) of the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 and under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act).

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145 of the 2011 Act and to be found in the guidance from the CBF. That examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the PCC and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.


Independent examiner's statement

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

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - To keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
 - To prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the requirements of the Act, as also contained in the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 have not been met; or
2. To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date:


5 Dec 19

Howard Ashmore
Godfrey Laws & Co. Ltd
Chartered Accountants &
Registered Auditors
69 Knowl Piece
Wilbury Way
HITCHIN
Hertfordshire
SG4 0TY

St Thomas' P.C.C. Stopsley, Luton
Statement of Financial Activities
For the year ended 31st December 2018

Incoming Resources (all unrestricted)

	Note	2018 £	2017 £
Incoming resources from donors	2(a)	86,350	84,074
Other voluntary incoming resources	2(b)	12,881	13,241
Income from charitable & ancillary trading	2(c)	1,668	1,844
Other ordinary incoming resources	2(d)	3,805	4,724
Total Non-Designated Incoming resources		<u>104,704</u>	<u>103,883</u>

Resources Used

Grants	3(a)	10,000	340
Activities directly relating to the work of the Church	3(b)	91,309	101,293
Publicity, Church management & admin.	3(c)	2,790	2,329
		<u>104,099</u>	<u>103,962</u>

Net Annual Surplus / (Deficit)

<u>605</u>	<u>(79)</u>
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St Thomas' P.C.C. Stopsley, Luton
Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2018

	Note	2018 £	2017 £
Fixed Assets	4	<u>549</u>	<u>831</u>
Current Assets			
Debtors	5	11,828	5,910
Bank Accounts		<u>24,591</u>	<u>49,653</u>
		36,419	55,563
Liabilities: Amounts due within one year	6	<u>5,768</u>	<u>25,799</u>
Net current assets		30,651	29,764
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>31,200</u>	<u>30,595</u>
Funds			
General Account	7	8,750	(155)
New Church Heating Fund	7		
<u>Restricted</u>		-	1,150
<u>Unrestricted</u>			6,250
New Noticeboard Fund	7	-	250
Vestry Furniture Fund	7	-	650
Legacy Funds	8	21,375	21,375
Youth Project		<u>1,075</u>	<u>1,075</u>
		31,200	30,595

St Thomas' P.C.C. Stopsley, Luton
Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 December 2018

1. Accounting Policies

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

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

Funds

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

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

Incoming Resources

Voluntary income and capital sources

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

Planned giving receivable under covenant is recognised only when received.

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

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

Income from investments

Interest is accounted for when received.

Resources Used

Activities directly relating to the work of the Church

Fixed Assets

Consecrated land and buildings and movable church furnishings

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

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

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

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year ended 31st December 2018

Equipment

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

Churchyard Maintenance Equipment is depreciated on the reducing balance basis at a rate of 30% per annum.

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

Current Assets

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

2. Incoming resources (all unrestricted)

	Note	2018 £	2017 £
2(a) Incoming from donors			
Planned Giving		60,216	60,505
Gift Day		5,962	5,286
Income Tax recoverable		14,273	14,179
Collections (open plate) at all Services		5,638	4,104
Collections (credit card) at all Services		261	0
		<u>86,350</u>	<u>84,074</u>
2(b) Other voluntary incoming resources			
Coffee mornings, Lunches & Teas		1,942	1,816
Hire of and Donations for use of hall		680	1,615
Social Events		1,623	1,581
Donations towards Roof Repairs & Graffiti		1,750	5,372
Miscellaneous Donations & Receipts		6,887	2,206
Christmas Tree Festival		0	651
		<u>12,881</u>	<u>13,241</u>
2(c) Income from charitable and ancillary trading			
Magazine Subscriptions		763	1,072
Magazine Adverts		905	772
		<u>1,668</u>	<u>1,844</u>
2(d) Other ordinary income resources			
Wedding and funeral fees & receipts		<u>3,805</u>	<u>4,724</u>

St Thomas' P.C.C. Stopsley, Luton
Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year ended 31st December 2018

	2018 £	2017 £
3 Resources Used		
3(a) Grants to Charities		
World Relief	4,510	0
World Mission	160	0
UK Social Concern/Relief	5,250	340
UK Church Mission	80	0
	<u>10,000</u>	<u>340</u>
3(b) Activities directly relating to the work of the Church		
Ministry: Parish Share	47,258	44,383
Clergy Expenses	5,188	5,286
Pastoral Worker	4,290	4,680
Pastoral Discretionary Expenditure	509	190
Church Office Wages	8,254	7,560
Church: Running Expenses	6,634	5,612
Routine Maintenance	3,874	3,151
Major Repairs	10,438	25,139
Graffiti (Insurance Excess)	0	500
Service Costs	1,137	673
Parish Nursing	345	0
Depreciation	282	16
Telephone Charges	1,669	1,737
Miscellaneous	1,431	2,366
	<u>91,309</u>	<u>101,293</u>
3(c) Publicity, Church Management & Administration		
Stationery & printing (incl. magazine)	2,133	1,951
Independent Examiner's fee	120	120
Miscellaneous	537	258
	<u>2,790</u>	<u>2,329</u>

St Thomas' P.C.C. Stopsley, Luton
Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year ended 31st December 2018

4. Fixed Assets

	Sound Equipment	Office Equipment	Churchyard Equipment	Total
Cost/Valuation				
At 1 January 2018	10,233	2,339	1,540	14,112
Additions during year	0	0	0	0
At 31 December 2018	10,233	2,339	1,540	14,112
Depreciation				
At 1 January 2018	10,233	1,540	1,508	13,281
Charge for year	0	266	16	282
At 31 December 2018	10,233	1,806	1,524	13,563
Net Book Value at 31 December 2017				
At 31 December 2018	0	533	16	549
At 31 December 2017	0	799	32	831

5. Debtors

	2018 £	2017 £
Income Tax recoverable	9,761	4,231
Other Debtors	2,067	1,679
	<u>11,828</u>	<u>5,910</u>

6. Liabilities: Amounts due within one year

Donations	680	340
Other Creditors & Accruals	5,088	25,459
	<u>5,768</u>	<u>29,116</u>

7. Funds

	General Account	New Church Heating Fund		New Noticeboard Fund	Vestry Furniture Fund	Total
		Restricted	Unrestricted			
At 1 January 2018	(155)	1,150	6,250	250	650	8,145
Surplus for the year	8,905	(1,150)	(6,250)	(250)	(650)	605
At 31 December 2018	<u>8,750</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>8,750</u>

8. Legacy Funds

	2018 £	2017 £
John Shaw for Church Maintenance	1,595	1,595
J L Kingham	10,000	10,000
James Dyer	1,000	1,000
Francis Estdale	2,280	2,280
Toyer	1,000	1,000
Waters	500	500
Bryan Sexton	5,000	5,000
	<u>21,375</u>	<u>21,375</u>