



**St Matthias', St Mark and Holy Trinity Church
Reports for the
Annual Parochial Church Meeting
18 May 2025**

You will find within this booklet reports from many of the 'activities' or ways we seek to serve God and His kingdom. We've listed them broadly under the umbrellas of each of the 'Action Groups' who help shape and lead what is going on at St Matthias. You can find more information about these groups in the main Annual Report.

Section 1: Social Action

1. St Matthias Pre-School and Childcare Centre

THE CHILDREN: It is a real privilege to be involved in the Pre-School and currently there are 46 children attending – 20 of these are 2 year olds. There is so much for these little ones to learn about, and the world is an exciting place!



We have been working hard fostering community connections by involving families and local organizations in various activities, creating a sense of belonging and promoting active citizenship among our children. We have been visiting a local Nursing Home - Mount Tryon – and have produced a remembrance display for Brunel Medical Surgery.

Members and clergy of the church continue to have an input with a bible story and activities taking place in the church each week together with end of term services to which the family are invited to attend – always a great occasion! It would be lovely to have church members supporting these services and would be much appreciated.



Pre-school never stays the same for long! We were very sorry to lose Amanda from our staff, but we welcomed Carol to join us. As many of you may be aware, our numbers of 2 year olds have increased dramatically since the Government have extended

the grant entitlement. As you will appreciate, working with a 2 year old is very different to a 3 or 4 year old and so to help separate the children for different activities, with the PCC's agreement, we are looking at plans to extend the outside enclosed area to house a cabin or learning centre. At present the various planning permissions are being sought, but to



have this extra space will be invaluable for the children.

The Management Committee continue to meet each term to support the staff and make decisions. Andrea Crump has been a valued member in the role of Secretary for many years. She has found it necessary to retire from the committee during 2024

and has been greatly missed. Many thanks go to her for all the support she has given Pre-school in so many ways.

Thank you for reading our report and if you should feel you could help in any way or have a hobby that you think the children might enjoy, or if you feel like attending our end of term services, please do get in touch with us!
Sylvia, Liz, Margaret, Martine and Kate



2. Welcome Space

During the past year, Welcome Space has continued to provide a warm welcome to all who have dropped by on Wednesdays between 12 noon – 2pm. We have several regular people who attend most weeks but others who drop in having seen the Welcome Space sign outside – some are local people, a few are visitors and others are from abroad who have moved to the UK. They all receive a warm welcome, soup, cake and a hot drink and company. Several people from St. Matthias come along to socialise and chat with those who attend. We have 4 teams for providing the refreshments, one for each week of the month, but we are always grateful if anyone else would like to join a team. The Lions Club of Babbacombe were unable to continue to cater once a month, but we appreciated all that they did.

If you feel you would like to socialise with our people or help with the refreshments, please do contact us and come along one Wednesday as we would love to see you. Thank you for your prayers.

Sylvia and the Team

3. The Church Centre

The church centre continues to offer some brilliant facilities for our local community to use for their social groups, exercise classes, counselling sessions, management meetings, ballroom tea-dances (we're told the wooden floor is lovely to dance on) and much more! In 2024 we welcomed a new exercise class (attended by some of the congregation!), a new counsellor and a young carers group run by Torbay Council. We also said goodbye to a long running 'Probus' group whose numbers had dwindled and the group sadly had to close. It is a real community space valued by many.

We have continued to hire out the church building to the Big Noise Chorus for their weekly practices and their Christmas concert and in November/December we were able to host an additional two concerts for South Devon Choir and Torbay Singers.

If you would like to see what is going on or would like to join a group please pick up a leaflet for further information. I'm sure you will be very welcome.

The toilet in the linkway was refurbished and enlarged during the year and was made into a more accessible up to date facility – thanks to all who helped to make this possible!

General maintenance and repairs to the centre continue and in particular we had to manage a large leak from the kitchen into the downstairs rooms – thankfully that has now been repaired and the kitchen has benefitted from a new floor and worktops!

Open Church The church is open for visitors or for those wanting a quiet space or for prayer during the Welcome Space group on Wednesdays from 12-2pm. We have a very small team of stewards to help with this – thank you - but if anyone would like to join the team please get in touch.

Office The office is open weekdays from 9-12.30 and 2-4pm (but not on Tuesday mornings) and so if you have any queries please do not hesitate to get in touch - either pop in, drop me an email or give me a call. You will be very welcome.

Pere Snow, Church Administrator/Centre Manager

Section 2: Schools, Children and Young People

We finished 2024 by launching the recruitment process for an **Emerging Generations Team Leader (EGTL)**. As we reflect on the year, there is much to be thankful for and some really encouraging signs of growth. However, some areas are struggling to attract children and/or volunteers. There are so many opportunities which with our current manpower resources, we are unable to pursue. It is hoped that an EGTL will be able to review the current situation and see areas that need developing, or indeed things that we need to drop in order to pursue other ventures. They will be tasked with motivating and building up teams, developing outreach opportunities, raising the profile of the children and young people in our church family and become the person that people both within and outside the church associate with our younger church family members.

(And the good news is that earlier this year we have appointed a youth leader! Welcome to Helen Baker.)

The **Youth Club** continues to flourish and out of this a Youth Alpha course is ongoing with the young people keen to learn more about a life following Jesus with many giving their lives to Christ. The team regularly gets very positive feedback from parents and it is encouraging to hear of young people who may find school or home life difficult but find a safe, fun, LIFE changing place here.

It has been a delight watching the young people take roles in our youth led praise service monthly. The young people take an active part in planning as well as delivering the service which includes them writing and performing dramas, writing prayers and talks and organising games, helping with liturgy and participating in the music.

The youth took part in fundraising for the YUM Bus through a car wash event and the congregation got behind one of the young people who was doing a charity fundraise so that she could go to Tanzania to work the following summer.

Hannah Aske has taken a back step as the current team of volunteers build on what she has taught them. However, she will still be around when needed to assist with planning next term and to make occasional 'guest' appearances.

Toddler Group is as popular as ever. It is however, struggling for leaders to assist. Help doesn't have to be direct contact with children as things like assisting with moving chairs on a Monday afternoon or making teas and coffees at 10am on Tuesday morning would take pressure off the leaders.

There are quite a few childminders who attend bringing several children each. One purpose for this group is for parents to form friendships and develop a relationship with the church and the presence of several childminders with a disproportionate number of children may hamper this. However, at least one childminder has said how often they aren't welcome at such groups and they really appreciate the welcome they get at St Matts.

Schools Monica continues to lead the team going into the schools. The team is always well received in the two schools they serve (Ilsham and Warberry Academies). Experience Easter was once again held in the church with pupils from Ilsham and Warberry attending. An Ethos Day was held at Kent's Cavern on the subject of 'Jesus as Light of the World'. Twenty-five pupils from each of the 4 academy schools attended. These pupils would then go back and share something of what they had learned with their schools.

Assemblies are taken weekly in Ilsham and Warberry schools and are based on the Bible Society's Open the Book plan which involves stories from The Storytelling Bible written by Bob Hartman.

Mummy and Me Lena continues to take this on a Friday morning assisted by Katie, an external facilitator with Sue N and Christine S also giving essential support. M&M is an external organisation providing a hugely valuable service,

recognised by the local community, the peri-natal mental health team and social services. M&M only works alongside churches and some people from M&M have requested baptism and stayed on for things such as toddler group.

Some words from Lena Fearnley - Mummy and Me leader and founder...

Good news, God is working in this much needed group! Mummy and Me continues to grow and support a huge number of families across Torbay with babies 0-12 months. Our charity provides friendship, education and support. All are welcome. We are thrilled to be working alongside St Matthias to outreach into the Torquay community every Friday morning during term time. The families often go on to join the Toddler group, Messy Church, Youth and, of course, Sunday worship. We love to develop these links, enabling the Church to grow its community, a number enjoying Baptisms this year. We enjoy seeing families start their faith journey here!

We provide a much needed programme of postnatal education, adapting all the time as families tackle the increasing crises around mental health, money, loneliness and more.

Mummy and Me is thrilled to come alongside other charities in the Bay, including Thriving Families and Eat that Frog, blessing each other as we work tirelessly to help families 24-7. We bring in professionals to provide the care and education families need such as NHS's speech and language, midwives and health care workers.

Mummy and Me is now Torbay's cloth nappy library and also Torbay's sling library, supporting families financially and the environment too!

We are hugely grateful to St Matthias for giving us the Church space enabling us to provide a fun, friendly, relaxed atmosphere where the Holy Spirit can flourish alongside these families.

We are very grateful to both Sue Newman for her baby weigh and health care support and Christine Sherriff.

Messy Church has been running monthly and whilst enjoyed and appreciated by those who come, numbers are disappointingly low. This has been the case since the pandemic. It seems that schools are offering more after school clubs which run weekly which is thought to have had an impact. In future, we will try running Messy Church 6 times a year to celebrate events such as Christmas, Valentines etc. As some of these will be during school holidays, it is hoped more will be free to attend.

Explore Services These services are now running every week apart from fifth Sundays. By running Explore every week it was hoped that people would get into a routine of attending church. The first Sunday Breakfast service is always popular though. Early signs are very encouraging.

Section 3: Mission and Outreach Action Group

1. Coffee Box

Coffee Box takes place on the piazza monthly on Saturday mornings from April to September. We offer friendly conversation, a listening ear, prayer if desired, and free refreshments to people passing by, who often include parents bringing their children to attend 11+ preparation sessions in the hall. We aim to make warm connections with people from our local community, and to convey that St Matthias is a friendly and welcoming church. If anyone would like to join the team, please speak to Joanna.

Mike Higgins and Joanna Wilkinson

2. Missions Action Group

St Matthias donates annually 10% of its regular voluntary income to Christian charities, in accordance with the biblical principle of tithing. Members of the Missions Action Group recommend to the PCC a list of charities to receive the tithe. St Matthias has six main charities to which we make substantial donations each year; these are: Church Mission Society (for our mission partner Nicci Maxwell), Church Pastoral Aid Society, Linx, Mission to Seafarers, Tearfund and Torbay United (for their social supermarket YUM bus). In 2024, the other charities chosen to receive donations were: Christian Fellowship to Eastern Europe, Compass Braille, Mercy Ships, Mission Aviation Fellowship, Open Doors, St Mags (for their washroom appeal) and WorldShare. Each year, money is also set aside from the tithe to respond to an emergency situation; in 2024, this was Christian Aid's Sudan Crisis Appeal. Thank you to everyone at St Matthias for your generous giving to the church, which enables us to support a wide range of Christian charities doing God's work on Earth in many places around the world.

Joanna Wilkinson

3. Parish Visiting

In September 2024, two weeks of parish visiting took place, with pairs of church members going door to door in streets around Wellswood. Each pair was upheld in prayer by one or more prayer supporters. The aim of the visits was to engage gently with people about their beliefs and concerns, and share what we believe as Christians. We offered information about services and activities at St Matthias. We were encouraged to find people were often willing to talk and appreciative of us making an effort to go out into the community. Visitors felt upheld by their prayer supporters. Another two weeks of visiting took place in early April 2025, this time in the Warberries. Again, there was a positive response from many of the people visited, who particularly appreciated us offering them a small Easter egg. Many thanks to everyone who has participated in this valuable outreach work.

Mike Higgins and Joanna Wilkinson

4. Girls Allowed

The group was started several years ago so that ladies from the different congregations in the church family could get to know each other better, encourage each other in our faith and have fun! As everyone has different commitments we meet on different days and times each month. Friends are always welcome and there is a voluntary donation of £3 for each meeting. We love eating together so activities over the last year have included coffee and croissants at Me and Mrs Jones, a pancake afternoon (with a short history of pancakes), a soup and pud evening, and a lunchtime boat trip to Brixham to sample the locally caught fish. (This turned out to be the stormiest day of the summer so we abandoned the boat and went by road!)

The summer walk explored the seafront, and as usual members of the group opened their homes and gardens for coffee and cake in August. We also had a great time decorating Advent candles to be given to families who came to Jollywe'en and making cards and gifts at the Christmas craft afternoon.

We would like to particularly thank Ruth Beckett, a founder member of the group, for her vision of bringing women together, her creativity, and for helping us to keep in touch through various lockdowns with some original ideas - who knew that it was possible to play on-line Pictionary?!

The programme for 2025 includes some similar events and we are also hoping to have a couple of mystery speakers. If you would like to find out more about the group, please see one of us on a Sunday or phone the church office.

Elaine Biden, Andrea Crump, Susie Higgins, Sue Day, Judi Stannard

5. St Matts Gospel Singers

St Matts Gospel Singers, part of GGCC (Gospel Generation Community Choir) had a great year building a new repertoire and strength in vocals. We continue to rehearse fortnightly on Wednesdays in the church. We enjoy singing traditional gospel songs and spirituals from our well-established repertoire as well as learning modern Christian and new gospel songs. We always look to improve and learn new vocal techniques and experiment with our voices and harmonies. We take part in some of the church services and participate in singing events at St Matthias and with our partners GGCC choirs in Bristol. This year, we are celebrating our 10th anniversary with an autumn concert – date *tbc*. New singers are welcome! Although we don't hold official auditions, we particularly welcome those with singing experience and/or musicality.



Anya Jones

6. Matts Knits

Knits is a social group set up 8 years ago. We seek to bless others whilst we knit and natter over a cup of tea or coffee, providing a friendship group as well as supporting various projects. We meet on Tuesday lunchtime from 12:00-13:30 in the church and welcome new members to join us at any time, to knit, crochet, sew or just natter!

We have had a busy year starting with knitting Easter chicks for the children at our Pre-school.



In the summer term we knitted 'positive potatoes' for all the children leaving pre school to start their journey at school, promoting the idea that although they're little they're important.



We continue to support Potters Village Uganda and although our mission partner Nicci Maxwell is no longer there, she said our parcels of matinee jackets and hats sent out in time for Christmas would be much appreciated.

Our final projects for the year were creating items for our stall at the Friends of St Matthias Christmas Market and star tree decorations for all the children at preschool.



Elaine Biden

Section 4: Pastoral Care Action Group

We continue to make visits and phone calls to keep in touch with people who are unwell or unable to attend church. Fortunately, many people continue to view the livestreamed service when unable to attend. We also visit and take Holy Communion to several Nursing and Care Homes in the parish. If you or someone you know has a Pastoral Care need please get in touch with one of us.

Sadly during 2024 we lost Kay Cooper Rogers, Patricia Haynes, Penny Barr, Graeme Whitaker, Marjorie Brooking, Brian Burrows and Sylvia Gardener-Jones from the church family.

If anyone would like to know more about joining the pastoral care team, please speak to the clergy or either Maureen or myself. We know that many of you who are not on the team, do visit and support people in their own homes as friends, especially members of your home groups, thank you.

Elaine Biden and Maureen Purdy - Pastoral Care Coordinators

Section 5: Facilities Management Action Group

Reroofing Hall – Work is planned to start in May 2025 and will include re-roofing, gutter repairs and preparatory work for the proposed solar panels. There will be redecorations to the hall and entrance foyer where roof leaks have caused damage.

Solar Panels – We have a quotation for this work, but we await planning permission from Torbay Council, which is proving a difficult process. It had been hoped that the solar panels would follow on from the roofing, using the scaffolding already in place, but this may not now be possible.

Upgrading disabled toilet in foyer – This is now complete and is a great improvement.

Sliding folding doors in church kitchen and doors on welcome desk – we are awaiting a quotation from another contractor; the original quotation was considered too high.

Car park – The two disabled parking spaces have been properly delineated, and an area marked as no parking adjacent to the Pre School.

Lighting issues – Many light fittings have been repaired, and the Pre School lights have been upgraded. A detailed report on the church lighting is being commissioned to save energy and provide better lighting control options for different events.

Kitchen repairs following water leaks – This has been a protracted process, but the kitchen has now been reinstated with new flooring and worktops. The reinstatement of the gents' toilet and plant room, which were damaged by water from the kitchen above, will be reinstated soon.

Closing off the void beneath the access ramp – It is proving difficult to obtain a quotation for an economical but visually acceptable solution. We will continue to try to find a solution.

Roof repair above South Transept back wall – There has been a misunderstanding about this problem which has caused damage to the wall adjacent to the organ. We thought that our contractor had fully repaired the roof some time ago, but it turned out that he had only done a temporary repair pending the erection of scaffolding to enable the proper job to be done. We are awaiting a quotation for this work.

Paul Sherriff

Section 6: Comms Action group

We continue to post our news on Facebook which has 623 followers and is steadily growing. Here are some stats!

At the time of writing (April 25)...

2000 people viewed the page in the last 28 days

Followers increased by 1.3% from previous 28 days

Follower gender breakdown:

74% women

26% men

Age group breakdown:

Others - 31.9%

35 – 44 - 23.4%

44 - 54 - 24.1%

65+ - 20.6%

We also post on Instagram and have 125 followers and good interaction especially with non regular church goers.

Suzy Wright

Section 7: Eco Action Group

By way of a reminder for the PCC and church community, we are St Matthias Eco-Action within St Matthias itself but operate as and with Torbay Christian Eco-Action, an umbrella group for churches across Torbay in respect of ecological matters but from which the St Matthias representatives give a significant involvement and are keen to serve local churches without similar resources. At times this creates a little difficulty of balance but we recognise the opportunity and responsibility within the Torbay area. To an extent therefore, this report covers both.

Over this past year, we have very much missed the dynamism and proactivity of Judi, who had given so much to this work over the previous couple of years and understandably had to take a step back. This impact was primarily with the accreditation process, below, but also other initiatives and ideas which she brought. We are glad she is now back with us in this work and in improving health. But more volunteers are much-needed.

We had planned a green gardening event for Saturday afternoon 18 January 2025. We had talks and speakers lined up on diverse matters such as wildlife gardening, small gardens, community gardens and well-being and similar. But inevitably the central feature in this discussion is the use of peat and similar environmental concerns. And on that, despite 6 months of searching, we could find nobody. Eventually we suspected a rift in thinking including amongst professionals in horticultural. There seem to be conversations not taking place in public. We still don't know. On this central issue and related ancillary issues, the event would have been silent. That would not have been a green gardening event with integrity. With huge reluctance we pulled it. The event may yet occur but not until we can find speakers for this issue.

We have made some progress towards the silver A Rocha accreditation but understandably last year this was paused. Then A Rocha decided to update the accreditation requirements, now published a month or so ago. We hope we can make progress this year but realistically the accreditation is likely to be 2026 with other compelling demands within the church.

In the autumn we held, once again, the successful Tearfund quiz, raising a good amount of money for this important Christian organisation as well as a very enjoyable evening.

One key element is our monthly newsletter, running now since the early spring, which can be found here: <https://davidhodson.com/green-issues>. It has a good mailing list of churches and Christians around the area. Please contact David Hodson to be added. It publicises local events, in Torbay and across South Devon, but also wider international events and short commentaries. We see this as a key resource. It has also enabled us to join up with equivalent Christian Green action groups in Plymouth and Exeter which is very positive.

One very important development is that Torbay Christian Eco-Action has been invited to join the Torbay Climate Partnership, including attending their quarterly meetings. This is run under the auspices of the local authority but brings together all in Torbay involved in environmental and climate issues. We are there explicitly as Christians, working with the Christian churches with a

similar mission to others involved in the group but with our distinctively Christian concerns.

We have been available to discuss with church members and have drawn attention where appropriate to developments. We have been very encouraged that climate care issues feature regularly in the intercessions at church and in the awareness expressed from the pulpit and in the general leadership of the church. We will of course be seeking that continuance in the future of the church.

David Hodson and Clare Whittaker

Section 8: Services



1. Sound and Visual

A small and dedicated team supports worship, operating audio and video in church. We continue to livestream 11.00 services and are frequently asked to stream weddings and funerals. This is appreciated by families as it allows any who are unable to travel to the church to be part of these important occasions. Also our local schools make good use of the A/V provision when they celebrate major Christian festivals and end of term

services in church.

Could you support the small A/V team by helping out on an occasional but regular basis? Full training and support are offered. Finally, thank you to all who play a part in making our worship accessible.

David and Joanna Wilkinson

2. Church Flowers

We continue to arrange flowers regularly in church and have been pleased to decorate fully for all the main festivals; Harvest, Remembrance Sunday, Christmas and Easter. We have been mindful of the “Green” agenda and have moved to using artificial flowers with fresh greenery and eco-friendly oasis (flower arrangers’ foam). We are very happy to fulfil special requests using fresh flowers for birthdays and funerals and in memory of friends or family. Please let us know if you would like us to do this.



We are a small but friendly group and would love any budding flower arrangers in the church to think about joining us. No qualifications necessary! You would be warmly welcomed.

Sue Newman

Section 9: Stepping Stones

home groups at  st matthias

Home Groups

Our homegroups have continued well in 2024/5. By the end of the year we had 8 active home groups, incorporating about 75 of our church family. The groups meet at different times during the week, and in different places with some meeting in homes, others in church and one meeting on zoom.

Homegroups are encouraged to study the Bible together as well as to pray, and pastorally support one another. In terms of Bible studies in the last 12 months, the groups have covered a range of topics, with many choosing to follow Andrew Ollerton's "Romans" series, The Bible Society's "Bible Course" and LICC's "Fruitfulness on the Frontline".

Over the last year, we started to promote membership of home groups more within our main services, as we believe being part of a home groups is integral to the life of the church and important for individual discipleship. More "plugs" for homegroups are planned over the coming months. We have also updated St Matthias' Home Groups and Life Groups leaflet.

We are incredibly grateful to Norman Doidge who stepped down as homegroup co-ordinator last year after an amazing 10 years! We are very blessed as well by our very committed home group leaders who continue to serve both their groups and the wider church family in this role. Our grateful thanks go to all of them.

Claire Reynolds and David Hodson

Section 10: Prayer

The Prayer Ministry Team

Our team mission is to encourage prayer in every part of church life. At a formal level of organized "meetings" that means:

Sunday 10.30 am "Gather to pray"

Sunday 12.10 pm “Prayer ministry” - as individuals ask for prayer after the service.

Sunday 5.30 pm “An hour of prayer” on the second Sunday of the month.

In all these meetings there has been real encouragement and a depth of prayer. We also encourage people to bring their personal prayer requests and put them on a prayer tree (located just to the right of the pulpit). The Wednesday morning service takes these requests and prays over them.

We also encourage people to pray on their own, day by day, by making a weekly prayer diary which is printed in our notice sheet. House Groups have also been allocated aspects of church life to bring to God in prayer - so that every church ministry has a cover of prayer.

We have added two new members to our prayer team. We meet as a team every 3 months to pray, plan and share - but also to ensure we are open and sensitive to the leading of the Spirit in this ministry.

Andrew Green

And a report from the Friends of St Matthias



The Friends were pleased to be able to fund the total refurbishment of the accessible toilet in the Linkway this year at a cost of £7,060.

We are now preparing for the biggest project since Wellspring - the long-discussed replacement and complete upgrading of the Church Centre roof, with improved insulation, solar panels and batteries. This is a joint project funded mainly by the Friends with support from other church funds and through the Church of England “Give to Go Green” match-funding programme.

We have organized a full and successful programme of events during the year. It included Christmas and New Year meals, a trip to the Little Theatre, a Ceilidh, an organ recital and the Christmas Market. (2025 date: 15th November)

Our thanks go to all our supporters for making it possible. You can learn more about the Friends’ plans for the coming year at our AGM, held after the 11am service on Sunday 22nd June. All are welcome – members and non-members alike.

Rob Newman - Chairman