

Christ Church South Nutfield

Annual Review 2022/23

Revd Len Abrams

Priest in Charge

God is Good – *All the time!*
All the time – *God is good!*

This is the refrain which we use at the beginning of the Family Service. I think it is a fitting refrain to use at this Annual Parochial Church Meeting. God is indeed good, and God is good all the time. God's goodness has been evident at Christ Church and in our community this year, as ever.



I would like to begin with a word of thanks to Sue Fairclough for producing, with the assistance of many people, the Parish Review of 2022. The Review sets out a rich picture of our church community and the ministry in which we are all involved. For me the most important thing is that there is a common theme throughout which is that we, in all we do, are doing things to support and promote the Kingdom of God. I quoted Psalm 127 in my review last year and I do so again this year:

Psalm 127 says:

“Unless the Lord builds the house,
the builders labour in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city,
the guards stand watch in vain.”

We need to remind ourselves constantly of this point. What we are involved in here at Christ Church is the ongoing ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is God's work in which we are participating, it is not our work and Christ Church is not “our church”. And so we ask that the Lord continues to build this house and we make ourselves available as willing labourers to participate. We ask the Lord to watch over our village and our community. This year has seen a continuing modest growth in people joining in our activities and services, especially the various aspects of our Full Family ministry.

I think all of this reinforces the Ministry of Presence which we all have in our wider community as light and salt. If you read the Gospels, you cannot avoid the excitement which people felt in His presence. He was attractive, he drew people towards himself both in large crowds and on a very intimate one-to-one level. He was warm, engaging, mystifying, challenging and all inclusive – especially of the poor, the outcasts, the odd, the foreigners. My hope and prayer is that Christ Church will increasingly become an open, attractive, challenging and fun place to come to, for EVERYONE – and I think that is beginning to happen more and more.



I want to briefly highlight a few areas of our activity.

1. Firstly, our presence in the community – there are a couple of areas to highlight:
 - a. Through our child focused activities, we are serving a considerable number of families in the community who do not otherwise come to church. In particular we are seeing growth in Rise and Shine with some 40 children and 20 adults here in the hall on 4th Sunday mornings at 9am. All credit to Charlotte, Sam and their team. We are experimenting with the format of the monthly Family Service on 2nd Sundays, using a ‘café church’ format which will be more of a safe and friendly space for families unfamiliar with church.
 - b. Our presence in the community is also achieved through our engagement in Nutfield Church Primary School. I take regular Collective Worship services of the whole school every 2nd Tuesday with the help of an ‘assistant’ who needs to be introduced – meet Henry [a puppet!]. I also frequently contribute to RE classes such as discussing baptism and marriage where the class brings their teddies to be baptised and married off! Three times a year the whole school, including parents, have services here in church which further strengthens the ties between us and the community.
 - c. In the past year a particular new ministry has arisen which has been supporting the refugee Ukrainian community in our homes, our village and surrounding areas through hosting and through offering Christ Church as a place of worship for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the UK. This does not go unnoticed in the wider community.
 - d. Our monthly Men’s Pub evening is going well and is supporting a regular group of chaps – do consider coming if you can and encourage others to come too.
 - e. And lastly the annual Village Pet Blessing service which was great fun in November and which we plan to hold each year.



– In all these events and ministries we bring people into Christ Church who would not otherwise come.

2. Secondly, maintaining our priorities. All of this outreach and our regular services is a Team endeavour – this is the People of God in action. There are so many individuals that it is not possible to mention everyone here. Thank you to each and every one of you. It is important, as I mentioned right in the beginning of this review, that we keep sight of the priorities – everything we do through Christ Church and in the community is to further the Kingdom of God – everything we do is a means to that end. We need to recall the Christ Church logo and motto: “Knowing Christ and making Him known”. Whilst the ‘end’ is to make Jesus known, we can only do that effectively and sustainably if we ourselves know Jesus and are growing in faith from day to day.



3. Regular worship. Regular Sunday worship at Christ Church will always be the anchor of who we are and the core of our spirituality. I want to make a couple of points:

a. We are richly endowed with many people who are gifted and keen to be involved including preaching, reading, praying, singing, making music, leading, welcoming, duty ‘wardening’, audio-visual ‘techie’ stuff, hospitality, flower arranging and decorating The list goes on. All of this adds to lively, inclusive family worship where we can meet Jesus as a community. We have a variety of types of services and music to meet most needs and preferences. For all of this, we should collectively be very thankful.

b. Communion is the centre of our liturgy where we commemorate Jesus’s death and resurrection for us. This past year we have made this much more inclusive, especially for the children. In line with the guidelines of Southwark Diocese we have given a special emphasis to admittance to Communion for chil-



dren and found a way for even the very young to join in through giving them the little fish biscuits. Whilst this is not the Eucharist, it is clear that the little ones love it and that they feel included. I find it pastorally very difficult to see the disappointed, sad little faces when they see everyone else getting something and they are excluded. I am aware that at least one other parish in the Diocese has taken our lead and is doing the same thing.

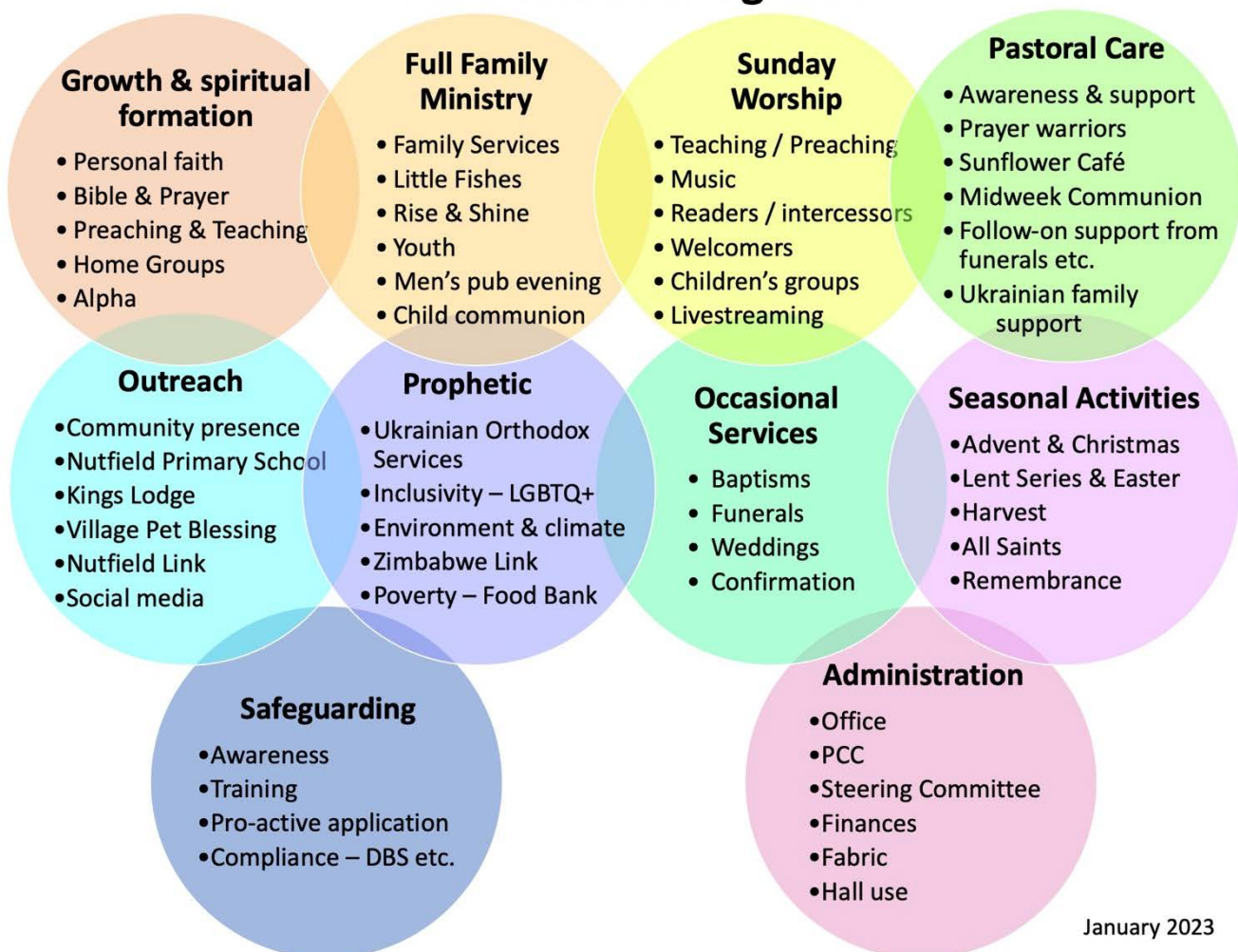
c. I want to express a special word of thanks to David Banbury. David has served Christ Church for a number of years as a Reader. We have all benefited from his preaching and leadership. David has decided to step back from ministry as a Reader. I have assured him that he will always be welcome here and I have expressed our gratitude to him for his service.

d. A very important but little known part of our ministry is the ongoing prayer which goes on behind the scenes by a faithful group of ‘prayers’ at Christ Church. This happens in a couple of homes in the village and here at church before and after services. This is very important and I believe that we see the fruits of this ministry as the Holy Spirit works in the church and the community.

4. Governance. The Parochial Church Council – the PCC – is often regarded as the ‘boring but necessary’ part of the Church process. However, this church, the buildings and contents belong to you all collectively (even if the mission belongs to God, as mentioned earlier.) I, as your priest, and all my predecessors and successors, are passing through, but you, the community, are permanent. We have felt recently that the PCC has not had the full role that it should have and that the PCC members have not been fully involved. Many members of the church do not even know who all the PCC members are. Partially this may have come about because the Steering Committee has taken on most of the day-to-day decision making. We need to find the right balance. We will apply ourselves to this issue as a ‘new’ PCC.

I am very thankful for the privilege of serving you as your priest. Do pray for me and Karen (without whom you would have a hopeless priest), and do approach me about any issue at all.

Christ Church at a glance



January 2023

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