

# ST LUKE with HOLY TRINITY CHARLTON APCM MAY 2024

## RECTOR'S REPORT FOR 2023



### THANKS

Churches are amazing organisations. They only exist, live and develop because of the contributions of people who give, expecting nothing in return. Some of those people worship here. Others don't, but they want to help and they want to give. St Luke's and St Richard's are alive because of the people who give: time, skills, energy, resources, money, presence and prayer. We encourage one another to give what we can in gratitude for all God has done for us. That is generous giving.

So thank you to people who read, pray, serve, lead worship, teach, tend the garden, carry out odd jobs, sit on committees, look after money, open and close the church, move furniture, feed and water us, smile, make decisions, ask questions, have ideas, deal with bookings, play music, sing, welcome, invite, keep in touch, visit the sick and frail, promote, attend courses, publicise and communicate, listen and care, clean and tidy, stream services, manage IT, link with schools, welcome, nurture and engage children, donate items, give money, raise money, offer hospitality, represent the church locally, make our church safe, take care of the building, keep records, run meetings. What have I left out? Thanks to you all.

### HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of the year?

Working with St Thomas to welcome 900 children from local schools to take part in the Easter journey, the Christmas Journey and many other curriculum based sessions at our churches; Admission of 11 St Luke's children to first communion by Archdeacon Alastair on St Luke's day; relaunch of children's church and their feedback brightening up the notices; All Age worship taking root and growing; finishing the year in a strong financial position, despite taking on an administrator and caretaker; securing grants for mission and for refurbishment of St Richards; concerts and gigs bringing joy and building community; hosting the Deanery

Confirmation service in May with Summer bringing her 3 day old baby to mummy's confirmation; adopting Prayers of Love and Faith to affirm same sex relationships; average weekly attendance increasing; employing Sarah, Benefice Administrator and Ashleigh, caretaker at St Richard's whose efficiency and enthusiasm have added so much; our Easter garden lovingly created with the empty tomb speaking to all who pass; Sundays where we dig deeper into God's call for justice and recommit ourselves to working for it; the weekly dedication that continues livestreaming of our services to an amazingly high standard (thanks Arek and Ali); our weekly email and monthly hard copy newsletters keeping people informed; our churchyard and memorial garden communicating welcome, peace and how much our church is cared for; working with St Mary's Leigh to get preloved school uniform to countless families in the benefice and designer clothes to Ukrainian refugee children; the generous response second year running from congregation members in buying vouchers to brighten up Ukrainian families' Christmas; the growth of our social media presence and the fruits it's borne; our friendship and partnership with our sibling church of St Thomas; financial support from the diocese in helping us forward our mission priorities – discipleship, connection and witness; Christmas trees gifted by Bee our friendly local greengrocer; community choir developing and Noah making choir practice so much fun; St Richard's refurbished into a comfy, hospitable meeting place for new church initiatives – play café, community café, music and poetry group; community carol service celebrating Charlton as well as Christmas; messy church starting to offer messy baptism; closer links developing with Charlton Neighbourhood Forum, Greenwich Carers Centre, CCRA and Safer Neighbourhood panels; Thursday communion service thriving; finance committee relaunched under the leadership of Joe Lee; Kinga's beautiful installations to help us celebrate the birth and resurrection of Jesus and share his story with neighbours; St Richard's starting to grow a separate Sunday congregation.

## **ONE WORLD**

We must never lose sight of the gift that church is to the world. I don't need to name the long list of things happening globally, in our country, our community that are distressing, worrying, alarming.

Church is a place where we may seek respite, comfort, rest, refreshment, peace and hope. But it shouldn't become a place where we seek to escape the world or cut ourselves off from it. The pattern of the eucharist is to gather, to be forgiven and fed. But then we're sent out to join in with what God's doing in the world. We mustn't lose sight of the gift that the gospel is to the human race. And if the world can feel more messed up than it's ever been, our faith is needed more than ever. I hope we can encourage one another to be people who believe the GOOD NEWS, live it and share it. Because we are one neighbourhood, one nation, one world and one human family. Our churches should never be an island to escape the world. But a place where we realise again that God asks us to care for and about the whole world.

## **AHEAD**

St Luke's congregation has grown from pre-covid levels. It would be great if we could grow more. We're called to nurture, notice, welcome, care, include. And to trust in God. If we do that, then we will grow, in depth of faith and in service. We hope to grow in numbers too, but let's leave that to God. Let's not be an anxious church, but a joyful one. No matter what our size.

As well as being joyful I hope we can also be a church that adapts to change. Charlton benefice is 2 parishes and 3 church buildings, each placed in a different area and each with their own character and particular space. In the months ahead I think it's important that we look together at how our churches can complement one another, with the intention that they should all thrive, all serve the people God's given us to love and all develop ways to connect with people who don't choose traditional church. I hope we can work across the benefice to become 3 churches that do traditional church well - but grow different ways of being church too. So God's good news reaches more people in Charlton than ever before.

What else is ahead? There are areas of our Mission Action Plan that need picking up so they can move forward in the year ahead. Working towards being a carbon-neutral eco church; revisiting our

aspiration to make St Luke's building more fit for mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are two that stand out clearly.

At the end of next month, Owen Morgan will be ordained and will join the benefice as our full time pioneer curate. Pioneers spend at least half their time with people who aren't church members – so Owen will be building on the amazing foundations already laid at St Richard's. He'll help us to find out how we can love and serve those who aren't church members and gently encourage them towards Jesus. He'll reach out to those who've shown early signs of seeking God that need tending and encouraging. And he'll learn more about traditional church at St Luke's. I couldn't be more excited about Owen joining us.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

We've said goodbye several times in the last year. To Rita Yardley, extraordinary humble friend and servant of the church over many decades who died in June. To Viscount Shane Gough, Patron of the Benefice, whose family history is entwined with the story of Charlton and whose quiet presence in the squire's pew we'll miss. To Karowei, the charismatic bishop of Woolwich, always an encourager of others. And most recently to Jenny Passmore, friend of children, passionate about justice, pusher of the buggy without a baby. Rest in peace Jenny. We've said goodbye as well to our curate Adelaide, who had to withdraw for personal reasons. May she find healing and new beginnings. These departures remind us that we're always in the midst of change and that each of us is only here for a season. But while partings bring sadness, we also trust in a God who makes all things new. And who uses what we give during our season, to grow the kingdom that will be forever.

It's the biggest privilege of my life to be Rector of Charlton. I look forward with joy to the year ahead and to all that God has in store for this church.

Liz Newman  
Rector

