

# Annual Report 2024



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# Letter from the Vicar



In your hand you are holding a report of a year in the life of St Chads church in Romiley, our attempt to capture the key things which happened in 2024. It is good to remember the highlights and honour all those who have poured their lives into our life together. In the following pages you will read about children and older people, worship and outreach, the excitement of fresh initiatives and the fruit of established ministries faithfully serving people for decades. Things aren't perfect at St Chads, we get things wrong, we experience disappointments, a church is made up of imperfect people. But the general picture I see here is encouraging and so I want to commend it to you and invite you to read it with a grateful heart.

2024 was a year of significant change in a number of ways. One highlight was the arrivals of both Katie Wade and Dave Hill. Having made the faith-fuelled decision in 2023 to create two new posts, Katie's arrival in April was a landmark celebration. I wasn't the only one in tears as Katie knelt to be licensed into this leadership role only a few metres away from the spot where nearly thirty years earlier she knelt to commit her life to Jesus. The party afterwards was full of joy and it was wonderful to welcome back so many friends and former members of St Chads from across the years. In the summer Dave was ordained and he, along with Rachel and the family, already feel very much part of the life of St Chads. We celebrate the joy, wisdom, love, faith and much more that Katie and Dave bring to our church and we recognise the huge contribution they are making to growing and strengthening various areas of ministry.

In this report you will read about all our midweek ministries and partnerships as we continue to share the love of God with our local community. We acknowledge the sadness for us, but the win for the kingdom that Vicky Reedy was called by God to move on from her paid role to take on a post at the Hideaway.

We pray for her new ministry there to be hugely fruitful. We also pray that in 2025 we will find the person God is calling to lead that forwards, as we are totally committed to seeing God's love and grace reach the families of Romiley.

Rather than repeating here what you will read in the rest of this report, I'd like to take a step back and look at some of the trends of what I believe we can see here and that God is teaching us and calling us to in the years ahead.

The first trend is growth. We have seen a number of new people come to join the St Chads family and that includes some who gave their lives to Jesus in the past year. Our 9.15am services have grown younger and our 11am services seem to grow fuller and fuller, especially kids church which has seen substantial growth. We rejoice in that.

There have been two other areas of growth in 2024 to celebrate, which are prayer and finances. Our monthly prayer events have found growing momentum and for many of us become a core part of our regular engagement in the life of our church. Charles Spurgeon said "whenever God determines to do a great work, He first sets His people to pray". There is always space for you to join us too, my heart would be for the prayer events to be the biggest event of the month. I believe we'd see so much more new life and lives transformed if that were to happen.

You will see from the financial report that 2024 was a very healthy year financially for St Chads, which is a huge encouragement after the PCC made the decision in late 2023 to stretch out in faith and prayer for financial provision for new posts. We are so grateful to you for your generous giving and investing into God's kingdom. I want to thank Jane for the incredibly hard work she does in managing and communicating the state of our finances, to enable us to steward the church's money carefully. We are not here to store up money, but to sow into God's kingdom. We are also aware that we enjoy the use of excellent facilities due to the sacrificial generosity of previous generations and therefore the PCC is asking what God is calling us to invest into now, for the sake of future generations of worshippers at St Chads. We have set another faith budget for 2025 and thank you for faithfully joining with us in this.

The second trend is our commitment to remain a family amidst the pressure to behave like an institution. As the church we are God's family. The first commandment is to love God, the second to love our neighbour, relationship with God and others comes first.

We are living in a society in which anxiety is rising and trust is falling. One result of this is the tendency to try and find safety and security in institutions and structures. Institutions exist as scaffolding to create a degree of safety and we need structure and law in a fallen world. I notice two things going on in society, an increased distrust and crumbling of over-stretched broken institutions alongside an increase in those institutions trying to fix things with more rules and bureaucracy. This impacts us in many ways as a large church, which is part of a long-established denomination. We need structures and processes, but our heart is to retain a sense of family and relationship and I wanted to share that at the start of this report for three reasons.

Firstly, this report is a document written for both our church family and an official report which is sent to the Chester diocese and Charity Commissioners as part of our governance. (If you're in an office somewhere reading this in a pile of Anglican Church reports - God bless you, may you have a wonderful day and know God's love in your life) So although parts of this report are by nature 'official', we've tried to avoid it being too dry and focused on information, but that's slightly unavoidable.

Secondly, two things we celebrate from last year are our bronze awards for eco-church and accessibility. I'm ambivalent about awards like these, we're not here to get plaques on the wall, but to see God's love change lives. We celebrate these awards as a sign of our commitment to our values of love. They are merely a notable expression of our love for the creation God has given us, a recognition that climate change has catastrophic impact on the global poor. The accessibility award highlights our commitment to show love and value to all God's children and recognise the particular efforts we make together to enable those who have additional needs to encounter his love and grow as disciples of Jesus.

Thirdly, we are part of the Church of England, a denomination which I feel is becoming more institutional as it experiences decline and division.

The additional burden this places on local churches grows ever heavier and I encourage you to pray for the leaders of the CofE for wisdom and faith to prioritise God's mission above propping up the institution. Recent months have been particularly challenging for the CofE, which is all the more challenging when played out in the national news with sensationalist headlines which only give a snapshot of complex situations.

A positive drive for institutionalism we are seeing in these days is a longing to hear the voices of survivors and victims of abuse and to create a safe culture for all, free from abuse in any form. The heart of creating safer churches is lives transformed by the love of Jesus and sharing his commitment to empower and protect the most vulnerable in our communities. We are thoroughly committed to that and are actively embracing both a safeguarding culture and the necessary processes which facilitate it.

A final theme which God was speaking to us about in 2024 was the kingdom priority of engaging in both evangelism and social action. We long to share the good news of salvation in Jesus with those we reach out to every week in our community. We also long to see God's love expressed practically in combating poverty, loneliness and other challenges people in our community face.

I have really wrestled with the question over the past year of which of these is primary? I have come to the conclusion that a biblical understanding of the kingdom of God requires a both/and approach. These two together are far more powerful than holding them against one another, we need more of both. We absolutely want to see people know Jesus now and into eternity, we also know that his love transforms lives and communities and this often starts practically. In this report you will read about both these things and I delight in that, because both are expressions of the love of God for Romiley.

So please read on, with an open grateful heart and as well as finding out more information. Before you read pray and ask God to touch your heart with the things that are on his heart as you read.

*Richard*



# Wardens' report

- Jan Ford & Andrew Goddard

Traditionally, the role of church warden is often seen as being focussed on looking after the building. Accordingly, this year, we're pleased to report that we did our job, and fixed the leaky roof. Actually, Jane (and some specialist builders) did most of the hard work, but Andrew enjoyed a number of site inspections, discussing which grade of lead to use on the south quatre foils.

But our fantastic, dry and (normally!) warm building is just one of many things we are thankful for, so we want to start our report by giving thanks for God's continued faithfulness. We are grateful for Richard and Nells' leadership and hard work in keeping us faithful to God's calling. We are also grateful for our wonderful staff team of Jane, Alys and Ian who keep the lights on in both literal and metaphorical ways.

Vicky Reedy moved on from her role as our Young Families Outreach Worker in September as God called her to an exciting new job opportunity. We are so grateful for all that she did in the role and delighted that she continues to worship as part of our church family. We are also grateful to all those who have stepped up to continue the work with young families; you can read their reports later on. Please pray as we continue to seek God's vision for the right person to lead this important ministry.

Our two Sunday Services (9.15am Parish Communion and 11am Informal Worship) and our mid-week communion (Wednesday 11am) have continued to flourish, providing our parish with diverse ways to worship and meet together. The Sanctuary continues to provide a special place for personal or corporate prayer, a place where members of the public can experience God's presence. We have regular prayer times weekdays from 9.00-9.20 plus 2 Zoom prayer times - Monday and Thursday at 7am.



As the ingress of rain stopped, the floodgates opened in other ways as not one, but two, new clergy joined us. It was a joyful occasion as the returning Katie Wade was licenced to be our Associate Vicar in April, she has been such a blessing and we are excited to see how God leads Richard and Katie to disciple St Chads. Then, in July, Dave Hill joined us as our curate with his family and we are all enjoying his deeply thought-provoking sermons. We are so blessed to have three Spirit filled and inspirational preachers.

As the Anglican Parish Church in Romiley, we welcomed those from our local community and beyond for infant baptisms, weddings and funerals.

We are blessed that so many of our church family serve across the week and on Sundays in order to bless our church and local community through our many varied ministries, and we thank all those who lead and serve week in, week out, to make these happen. Our volunteer evenings have also been a real encouragement to all who came.



# PCC report

Whilst the work of the PCC includes plenty of spreadsheets and policies, there has been a great deal of joy in our PCC meetings in the past year. The official language says that St Chads PCC is a registered charity with the responsibility of cooperating with the Incumbent in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church – pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. (The PCC (Powers) Measure 1956). But it is so much more than that, it is a group of friends, with a shared love for Jesus and his church, who are seeking in prayer, love and unity to keep our focus on our three strategic anchors of glorifying God, loving community and following Jesus.

The PCC is responsible for the oversight of St Chads: budgeting and finances, the management of our buildings and facilities, health and safety, safeguarding, employment and recruitment, volunteers, policy matters and ecumenical and diocesan engagement.

PCC members and Deanery Synod Representatives are elected for three year terms. Officers to the PCC (e.g. Treasurer) and the Standing Committee (SC) are elected annually following the annual meeting. The Standing Committee meets regularly and can make decisions and discharge business between PCC meetings where necessary.

St Chads PCC has adopted the Church of England's safeguarding policy, Promoting a Safer Church, and has complied with its duty under Section Five of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. All staff and volunteers in roles which involve working with children or vulnerable adults are recruited according to the House of Bishops Safer Recruitment Practice Guidance and training is followed under Church of England requirements.

## Main items of governance and discussion in 2024:

- Appointment of our new Associate Vicar Katie Wade, in conjunction with the LifeCentre's appointment of Katie as Leader of Ministry of the Life Centre
- Accepting the invitation from Chester diocese for Dave Hill to serve his curacy at St Chads, and supporting him in that role.
- Recruitment of a Young Families worker following Vicky's departure.
- Compliance review of all Chads policies and procedures, including a full GDPR review and the roll out of the new Church of England Parish Safeguarding Dashboard.

- Governance and stewardship of Chads financial resources.
- Ongoing oversight of the fabric of our buildings, including faculty agreement and repair to the two quatrefoils on the south-facing roof of church, removal of the large leylandii in the garden on 21 Guywood Lane, lowering the hedge at the rear of the Guywood and repairing the Guywood kitchen floor which had woodworm.

## PCC 2024

Paul Adshead	
Hilary Bentley	Stepped down
Helen Bray *	Deanery Synod Treasurer
Robert Bucknall	
George Burghel	Joined Apr '24
Andrew Cursham	Joined Apr '24
Molly Dow	Stepped down
Craig Fairfield	Stepped down
Jan Ford *	Warden
Kirstie Goddard	
Andrew Goddard *	Warden
Marilyn Gregory	
Carl Grimsditch	
Jane Higginbottom *	Secretary
Dave Hill	Clergy
John Macaulay	
Ruth Otto	Deanery Synod
Richard Pennystan *	Chair
Jeanette Simpson	
Katie Wade	Clergy
Mark Warburton	
Rob Williams	

\*Standing Committee Member

Molly, Hilary and Craig have stepped down from the PCC this year. Thank you for their service to the PCC and to St Chads. A special thanks to Molly for her many years of service to the Church of England in her role on various PCCs.

## Sidespersons

Church Representation Rules mean Sidespersons are elected by the PCC following the APCM.

Thank you to Malcolm Booker, Frank Moseley, Craig Fairfield and Geoff Walton for their willingness to serve for another year.

## Fabric & Facilities

A huge thank you to Ian Otto and for all that he does, seen and unseen, ensuring that our buildings are in good working order.

Ongoing upkeep of our buildings including: PAT testing, fire safety, lightning conductor inspections, piano and organ tuning, gas safety checks, air-conditioning and insurance.

We are working on a programme of building maintenance for Church and The Guywood, including in 2024 the church roof and the kitchen floor at the Guywood.

We are still awaiting the report on our five year church building inspection, the Quinquennial, that took place in 2020/21. All major works highlighted in the last report have been completed and the Diocese is pleased with our stewardship of St Chads.

## Deanery Synod

The Deanery Synod is the group of our 10 local Anglican churches that provides an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church.

The Deanery Synod met four times this year across our Deanery. Four members of the PCC currently sit on Deanery Synod.

## Electoral Roll

In 2019 the roll was fully revised. Following our 2024 review, we currently have 253 people on the Electoral Roll of St Chads. The roll is due to be fully revised in 2025 in accordance with Church of England governance.

The PCC employs four part time members of staff:

Head of Operations:	Jane Higginbottom
Facilities Manager:	Ian Otto
Operations Assistant:	Alys Bassett
Youth Worker:	Zeke Watts
Verger:	Ernie Cooper (unpaid)
Cleaner:	Kim Broderick

There are also many, many volunteers across all areas of church life. Thank you to EVERYONE who serves.



## Finance Report - Helen Bray

We continue to thank God for his ongoing provision to us through the generosity of our church family by way of regular giving, donations and legacies. A summary can be found on the Finance page of this report. Full accounts are available in church or by request to Jane in the church office.

The PCC sets the annual budget in faith and monitor both the budget comparison and cashflow regularly.

We thank Jane Higginbottom, who manages the daily financial affairs of our church and John Simpson, our Independent Examiner.

# Finance

## Missional Giving

Each year the PCC sets a mission budget based on 10% of the full income of the previous account year. This is given to missionary organisations, activities and individuals at home and overseas. The Missions Committee makes recommendations to the PCC for balance distribution of these funds as an expression of our shared values.

The majority of the mission budget is given as regular support to organisations and individuals where there is a link with St Chads. As a general rule, we review this regular giving on a two yearly basis, unless something significant changes.

Each year we retain a smaller part of our mission budget to be used flexibly during the year. This fund has been used to support members of the church family who are undertaking short-term mission trips. The fund also supports local community needs and occasional gifts to other charities.

This year we were delighted to support both local and worldwide charities with gifts at Christmas. Below are the details of our regular support and one-off gifts.

We have seen people filled with overflowing love in our church family this year, contributing financially to the following Mission Partners:

## Missional Partners

Partner	2024
TEARFUND	£2,000
CMS & SAMS	£1,500
MESSAGE TRUST	£1,000
BIBLE SOCIETY	£1,000
ALEXANDRIA LIBRARY	£1,000
NEW WINE	£2,000
THE HAMILTONS	£2,000
OPEN DOORS	£1,200
FUSION	£1,000
CHRISTIANS AGAINST POVERTY	£1,200
NAKED TRUTH	£1,000
NORA STURGES HEALTH CENTRE	£1,000
CHRISTIANS IN SCHOOLS	£2,500
GLO	£3,000
KBF	£2,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 23,400</b>

We are so grateful for the continuous regular giving from our church family. The vast majority of our missional works and ongoing costs can only happen because of these donations and the Gift Aid we receive because of them. In 2024 we were financially blessed through the remainder of the legacy from Frances Bingham of £5,500 and a legacy from Dorothy Holden of £76,000.

## Christmas Generosity

Your Christmas generosity was again overwhelming with (after available gift aid) over £3000 given in support of our initiatives.

Your giving enabled us to donate £700 to the Cherry Tree Project's Christmas Food Hampers initiative and distribute over 50 Christmas food vouchers and gifts to bless both our church family and the wider community, including families highlighted through our three local schools.

Money was more than matched with people's time, generosity and prayer; reaching out to our church family and community through Sundays and mid-week outreach activities, demonstrating Loving Community in action. THANK YOU

## One Off Gifts

Romiley Primary School (yr6 residential Feb '24)	£600
Jack Pennystan - Mission Trip	£250
Emma Goddard - Mission Trip	£250
Tearfund	£1,500
Embrace Middle East	£500
IJM	£500
Open Doors (Arise Africa)	£500
Growing Hope	£250
A Rocha	£250
Hideaway	£500
Stockport Refugee	£500
Tree of Life	£200
Embassy Bus	£200
Romiley Primary School (yr6 residential Oct '24)	£600
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6,600</b>

## Headline Figures

<b>Income 2024</b>	
Donations & legacies	£377,887
Other income	£ 28,489
	£406, 376
<b>Expenditure 2024</b>	
Grants & world mission	£29,500
Church activities	£158,109
Church maintenance & admin	£154,796
	£342,405
Surplus income over expenditure	£63,791
Cash at bank and short term investments	£219,406



# Following Jesus

## Alpha - Kirstie Goddard

We ran two Alpha courses in 2024: an evening course in the spring term and a daytime course in the summer term. Both were fabulous times of building relationship, having fun, eating together and learning about Jesus. Journeying with people on Alpha is a huge privilege and seeing Jesus' love becoming a reality in people's hearts and minds is awesome.

We can't wait for the next course to start! Thanks to all those who helped – running groups, washing up and cooking. We couldn't do it without you.

## Blast - Zeke Watts

BLAST is our primary school outreach group that meets mid-week in the Guywood Centre. We have a great core group of kids who come every week to play games, have fun and learn more about who Jesus is and what having a faith means for them in their own lives .

## Youth Church - Zeke Watts

Youth Church has really gone from strength to strength over the last year. The young people have really found their voice and it's been great to see them ask questions and go deeper in terms of what their faith is. We have also changed the way we run things, in terms of being out 3 out of 4 services instead of 2 out of 4.

We have already seen great results from this change in terms of them having more chance to build community and relationships with one another.

A big highlight was also seeing a few of our young people publicly declare their faith to the rest of the church at Easter by choosing to become baptised. We can't wait to what the next year holds for this group of young people.



## TNT & TBN - Zeke Watts

TNT (school years 7-11) has gone from strength to strength over the last year, with our numbers growing with new young people joining and bonds and friendships continuing to grow between them. We had a great trip to Alton Towers in the summer term where the young people had great fun spending the day on roller coasters and other fun rides. Recently we've been doing a series on good news, and we have also done the Onelife Leadership series which was great in growing their leadership. A particular highlight last term was when TBN planned and led a TNT session which was a great opportunity for the two groups to come together and for the younger ones to learn from the older ones.

2024 saw some changes in TBN (school years 11 to 13) with all our year 13 students leaving to go off to university in September. But before that there were many highs, including a group weekend away to London to attend the Onelife Conference which was a fantastic event where the young people were able to meet lots of Christians their age and grow in their faith.

Another youth takeover saw TBN all playing their part brilliantly serving and declaring their faith in front of the rest of the church and then finally culminating in a TBN prom as a great send off for the year 13's. Recently we've been looking into Romans 8 and also doing a series on prayer.

# Following Jesus

## Mini Church & Kids Church - Mini Church & Kids Church Team

Over the past 12 months, it has been a joy to welcome several new members into our Mini & Kids Church family. Sunday mornings have been filled with fun and meaningful activities, allowing children to explore God's special truths through multi-sensory experiences, including story time, prayer, craft, games. It is a pleasure to witness the children grow in their knowledge of God and to see them regularly demonstrate their understanding of His love for them. They are truly forming a vibrant community of Jesus followers.

This year, Mini's & Kid's Church has been a beautiful reminder of how eager children are to grow in their faith and deepen their understanding of God. Week after week, we see His presence in their lives, and it is an incredible blessing to witness their spiritual growth and enthusiasm.

Each child is on their own journey of getting to know Jesus and discovering who He has made them to be. As leaders, we have the privilege of joining them on this journey for an hour each week, and it has been a rewarding experience. We have engaged in numerous creative activities, such as planting wildflower seeds, crafting Rudolph reindeer from corks and twigs, making Christmas stars from lollipop sticks, and building a nature city inspired by Revelation. The children consistently bring creativity, colour, and energy beyond what we as leaders could imagine!

The children have demonstrated a profound hunger to know God. They are learning how to wait on Him through stillness and quiet reflection. Some have even shared that they hear from God during these times - an inspiring testament to their openness to His voice.

Kids Church has been an environment where children are not only learning about the Bible but also applying its teachings to their daily lives. Their curiosity is evident through the thoughtful questions they ask and the meaningful discussions they engage in. Many children are reading their Bibles regularly and even taking them to school to share with friends. For our younger children in Mini's, we strive to find creative and engaging ways to bring Bible stories to life, ensuring they connect with the messages in a way that is fun and meaningful.

We have made significant progress in improving our registration system, working towards a safer and more structured transition. This remains a work in progress, and we are deeply grateful to all parents for their patience and support in this process.

This year, Katie stepped into an oversight role for the team, which also involved working alongside Vic Stone to develop more inclusive approaches for Mini's & Kid's Church. Their leadership has been invaluable in shaping our vision moving forward.

We also want to extend our heartfelt thanks to Julie and Clare, who have recently stepped down after years of dedicated service to the children's ministry. Their contributions have been deeply impactful, and they will be greatly missed. Clare's beloved puppet, Maisie, has brought joy to so many.

As we reflect on this past year, we are filled with gratitude for all that God has done in Mini's & Kid's Church. However, we believe there is still much more to come! With your continued prayers, support, and possibly even your involvement, we can keep making a lasting impact on the lives of these children.



# Glorifying God

## Worship - Mark Warburton

It's so wonderful to have the freedom to worship the Father, Son and Spirit when we gather every week. We've overseen a year of gentle change too.

### 9.15

Our thanks to Audrey Murch and Judith Dixon who have faithfully served the 9.15 service for many years and who have now stepped down from regular playing.

This is also the year that Ken Earith, Bob Crockford and Geoff Thorpe have joined us regularly to lead gentle guitar-based worship songs and hymns. It may feel new for some but it adds a wonderful richness to what we sing and means we don't have to be quite so reliant on the hymn videos.

Over the next year, with Ken, Geoff and Bob's help, we hope to introduce a few more worship songs, still familiar and uplifting to sing. Once more special thanks to Craig for manning the 9.15 sound desk almost every single Sunday.

You'll also have noticed that - when we can - we're introducing gentle music to some of the Communion prayers, and a sung creed. We hope you agree this adds extra richness to our worship.

### 11.00

We've had a year of personnel changes as several young players have left for university - so you'll spot some weeks we have a stripped down band and no drums. Whilst we love having quieter chilled worship times, if there are any high-standard guitarists and drummers hiding their plectrums and drumsticks under a bushel, come and chat to a member of the team!

It's been great to welcome in new worship leaders John Kuyt and Millie Crosse. They share the role with me (Mark), Paul Dixon and Kirsty & Matt Pitt. Each of us have a slightly different focus and song choices, so across a month we get plenty of variety without feeling lost in unfamiliarity.

Thank you once again to our rota coordinator, Kirsty Pitt, who works out the perfect band line-ups week after week. Thank you also to our stellar crew of soundies Andrew, Chris, Jon and Paul and to our visuals team John, Jim, Mike, Michael & Caleb.

### General

We're always on the lookout for new pianists at 9.15 and band members and soundies for 11am. For musicians the standard does need to be high (we're fortunate to be able to say that!). An exploratory chat and/or invitation to a rehearsal always comes first, to see if you feel comfortable in the team. Remember it's not 'performance', it's the leading of others musically and pastorally.

Overall at St Chads our vision is for our music to be of a sufficiently high standard so as not to be a distraction to those who've come to worship. It's deliberate that the musicians are to one side in our church. We're not the focus! We hope and aim just to point the way.

As we continue, we thank God for the worshipping life of St Chad's and pray fervently to see even more signs of the Holy Spirit at work, changing hearts and lives.



# Loving Community

## Mini Chadders - Katie Wade and team

This year, we celebrated 35 years of St Chad's ministry to young families in Romiley - a remarkable milestone! In July, we marked the occasion with afternoon tea, where we were blessed to reconnect with many of the mums who had attended with their little ones over the years. We are so deeply grateful to everyone who has served faithfully in this ministry across the decades, making such a lasting impact on countless families.

As part of this new season, we brought all our preschool ministries under the new banner of Mini Chadders, which also gave us an exciting opportunity to refresh the branding. Prampushers became Prammies, and the Friday baby group is now known as Baby Buddies. These changes have allowed us to build a clearer, more unified identity while continuing to offer warm and welcoming spaces for families.

In July, we bid farewell to Vicky Reedy, who faithfully served in this ministry and has now stepped into a new role God has called her to. While we miss her, we have been so encouraged by the dedication of our team, who have stepped up wonderfully to carry this ministry forward. From the Tuesday evening setup crew to the Wednesday morning & afternoon, Friday morning and Saturday morning teams, your commitment has been invaluable. Thank you!

**Prammies** has continued to thrive, regularly welcoming 30-40 families on Wednesday mornings. The children (aged 0-3+) enjoy free play, while parents and carers can relax over a drink and catch up. Each session includes a craft activity, songs and a Bible story. Jan Ford, Heather Hills and Adele Youde have taken the lead during in the second half of the year. Meanwhile, Sarah Lawrence has taken **Baby Buddies** forward and has brought the **Snowdrops** group under their wing, providing vital support for mums facing postnatal depression (PND).

Our **Just for Dads Wednesday**, led by Dave Hill, continues to build relationships between dads and male carers. It's a small and transient group, with most dads taking a few months' parental leave with their babies before heading back to work. There have been valuable times of connection and conversations about Jesus, seeds scattered that we trust God will water in the coming years. Additionally, the two **Just for Dads Saturday** sessions have been well attended, with dads and babies at 9.30 then primary aged children with dads, grandads, and others coming together at 10.30 to enjoy sausages butties, coffee, craft and fun with Heather and Barry Hills leading the team.

Building friendships and sharing the love of Jesus is at the heart of what we do, and our mum's meal and dad's meals have been a fantastic way to build genuine community. Informal Summer meet ups have continued the work of building connection and relationships with those attending.

The Christmas season was another joyful highlight as we welcomed many parents and carers to our Christmas party - complete with Dicken the donkey - and our Scratch Nativity in church. It was wonderful to see families also joining us for other Christmas services at St Chads.

As we reflect on the year, we are filled with gratitude for God's faithfulness and the community we are blessed to serve. We are praying for many more years of touching lives, building connections, and sharing the love of Christ with young families in Romiley!



# Loving Community



## Oasis - Ken Earith

I am so glad to report that God continues to bless and provide for our wonderful Oasis ministry. We regularly have 70 to 80 people each week coming to share time together, have lunch together but also to experience the loving atmosphere that is Oasis.

We recently asked people to write down one or two words to describe what Oasis means to them and this is what they came up with:



In August we had our annual trip to the seaside and we had a wonderful lunch in a seafront hotel and a joyful afternoon with glorious sunny weather. We also managed to bring everyone back safely.

We followed up the success of our Oasis calendar that we produced two years ago by having our own Oasis book printed. This was again beautifully illustrated by one of our talented Oasis regulars.

We are supported by an amazing team of volunteers and our week by week sessions are only possible because of their faithful hard work and dedication. Please pray for us as we continue this valuable ministry.

## Pastoral Visiting - Irene & John Rockley

St Chads is a church where many people show the love of Jesus by caring for each other in all sorts of ways. The Pastoral Visiting Team faithfully visit some 15 people on a regular basis who are housebound or in care homes. We are grateful to every member of the team for their continuing support, wisdom, ideas and willingness to share experiences.

The team meet every 6 weeks to review and pray for those of our church family who are shut-in - they are not forgotten. Thanks to our young people who sang Christmas carols at Park View Court and the homes of some who are now unable to get to church as once they did. Thanks also to Ian Dixon for taking Communion to them when requested.

God has answered prayer and enabled us to provide monthly services at both Silverdale (with St Barnabas) and Cherry Tree Care Homes; thanks to everyone involved. The well-attended carol services are very special for everyone; one usually non-verbal resident was seen singing every word! This Christmas, we were able to gift every resident and staff member with a knitted angel - thanks knitters!

Grateful as we are for all God is doing through the Visitation Team, we are conscious that there is still room for improvement. Specifically, we are seeking ways of being more joined-up with others who care for God's people at St Chad's.

# Loving Community

## Early Essentials - Sally King

It has been a busy year for us! We have again provided over 100 baskets for vulnerable Mums and their babies. The health care professionals we work with tell us they make a real difference to the Mums, some of them say they have never received gifts in their life.

Last year we asked you to pray for our premises situation, thank you. We have news! Early in 2025, we are moving out of the cellar into Number 1 Stockport Road, still at The Lifecentre.

We are so grateful to the Trustees and St Chads for making this possible. It will be so good to bring everything upstairs where we feel more connected to everyone.

Our new name, Early Life, reflects the move, and we are now part of The LifeCentre charity.

We are also grateful to Stockport Council who have given us a grant as part of their proactive approach to addressing disadvantage across the borough. This will make a significant difference to the work we are able to do.

The plan is to increase the range of things we can supply to families and respond to increasing needs. It is a privilege to be involved with this project. We believe in generosity and grace as we seek to show love and support.



## Cherry Tree - Rachel Bresnahan & Jill Hookway

The Cherry Tree Project supports our local community, focusing on young people and those in need. We do this from our HUB on Cherry Tree and from the Guywood Centre. All of this happens to show and share the love of Jesus and, though a separate legal entity from St Chads, our work is very much carried out in partnership, and many of our volunteers are members of St Chads!

This year we have provided food parcels to around 35 households every week from the Guywood Centre and have served lunch on Cherry Tree every Friday to local people who are socially isolated. At Christmas, 100 food hampers worth £45 each were given out to local households in need.

Our 4 weekly young people's sessions continue to thrive, a highlight being 2 of our young people being baptised last Easter. We continue to run busy school holiday clubs (using the Guywood has been a real asset particularly in bad weather) and our work to support local families has expanded with the launch of Reloved, which takes in old school uniform, makes it "like new" and gets it back into the hands of those in need.

## Warm Spaces - Rachel Bresnahan & Jill Hookway

The Warm Space at The Guywood Centre has continued to go from strength to strength this year. Originally set up alongside the food provision, a beautiful community is now well established, as food bank users stay on to enjoy bacon sandwiches, teas and coffees together, having picked up their food bags!

A wonderful team from St Chads/The Cherry Tree Project "host" the warm space, enabling conversations and building relationships. At 11 o'clock, we pause together for the "God slot" where anybody can share a word about God, followed by an opportunity to pray. The Warm Space forms an important place in people's lives. We have seen the hungry fed, hearts opened, relationships repaired, the love of God and immense joy shared, and belonging created. The Christmas outings to Rainbow, Unplugged and a key member's birthday party, are testament to all of this!

Thank you to our team of volunteers who offer themselves week in, week out.

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## LifeCentre - Lesley Cranwell & Katie Wade

The Romiley LifeCentre is a vital part of our ministry and mission to Romiley, established to bless our community. Staffed by over 80 dedicated volunteers, it continues to flourish as a hub of connection and service. Many of our volunteers express how serving here has been a blessing in their own lives. We extend heartfelt thanks to each one for partnering with us to share God's love in this place.

This year, the LifeCentre was reconfigured to become a more flexible space. Thanks to a generous donation, we redecorated the Sanctuary, creating a comforting prayer space used by all and home to St Chads prayer groups.

Stockport Christian Counselling regularly uses our space, and plans are underway for a 2025 refresher course to expand the Hear & Now service. Early 2025 will also see Christians Against Poverty running their Money Course at the LifeCentre, alongside ongoing support from Stockport Credit Union. Additionally, we remain a Trussell Trust Foodbank location, providing food vouchers to those in need.

A significant milestone was the reallocation of No. 1 to house EarlyLife, our expanded mission to support new mums. This volunteer-led initiative provides hampers and essential items to mothers and babies, with referrals from healthcare professionals.



The LifeCentre café remains a warm, welcoming space, offering delicious meals and opportunities to connect.

A new "Talking Table" has become a community favourite, encouraging conversations over a cuppa. The café also supports local artists by displaying original works, strengthening our ties to the community.

Our conference facilities continue to serve local institutions, businesses, and St Chads ministries, while hosting groups that promote community wellbeing. This year, we welcomed back Katie Wade as leader of Ministry and we are grateful for her leadership during this season of growth.

Stay & Play continues to thrive, offering families a safe, well-equipped environment for play. Our Adoption & Fostering support group meets regularly, providing peer support for those on their family-building journeys. Knit & Gather fosters creativity and community, uniting diverse age groups and enriching lives with shared skills and support.

As we look forward, St Chads will run the Alpha course at the LifeCentre in early 2025, offering a chance to explore life's meaning over shared meals.

We are reminded of God's promise in Luke 6:38: "Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." May this inspire us to continue giving and growing together.

# Final word...

Thank you for getting this far and reading this report, and if you are just glancing at the back page before opening the report, then please do open it and read on! This report seeks to inform and encourage. There is a great deal to celebrate in the life of St Chads in 2024, and there are things to learn from and develop. We can only capture the headlines and highlights of the past year. A report can only capture a snapshot of the many stories, friendships, events and prayers of a beautiful, messy, changing, growing community of more than 300 people of all ages, each learning what it means to follow Jesus. What we hope you will find here is signs that, in an imperfect and very human way, 2024 was about glorifying God, loving community and following Jesus. All that we have here comes from God, all that we do is empowered by his Holy Spirit, all that we do is for Jesus and so I want to end with a simple prayer of gratitude.

*Loving God, thank you for pouring out your abundant blessings on St Chads over the past year. Thank you for the joy we experience in our life together. Sorry for where we have done things our way, not your way. Help us to stay rooted in your love and may it overflow into our community. We give you all the glory, all this is for you. Amen*



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