

# **St Thomas Church**

## **APCM**

12.30pm Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026



If you are of a certain age you may remember that classic line from the 1994 film Forrest Gump; “life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get.”

I don't know about you but every time I dip into a box of chocolates (which isn't too often!) I'm pretty careful to work out what I'm going to get. I'm keen to avoid those strawberry creams and anything with toffee. They're not terrible, just not my first choice. I'm not sure if Forrest is reflecting on life's unpredictability and the need to embrace uncertainty or that life is full of variety. Either way, perhaps local church is like a box of chocolates...

Following Jesus by the power of the Spirit as the family of God offers us a range of unexpected and diverse experiences as we grow together. If you want one statistic to encourage you from the outset, sixteen baptisms in 2025! Hopefully this report captures some of the rest of the life we've experience together during 2025.

## **Report from PCC**

PCC members are Trustees for the church, and this comes with shared responsibilities for oversight of the running of the Church, including the finances and assets, safeguarding, and working with Jono to promote the mission of God within the parish. PCC members are grateful for the experience, wisdom and time given by many people within St Toms who enable us to carry out this function.

The PCC year runs from APCM to APCM and meets every other month, with the ability to use email for “business by correspondence” in between for straightforward decision making such as renewing of policies.

This year PCC has had 17 members (with some changes over the year), met 6 times with good attendance, voted on 28 decisions and held discussions on many more topics.

Meetings start with prayer and reflection, following an agenda that can include discussing the shared reports from the sub committees and standing committee, topics such as the quiet revival, plans for services and activities in Holy Week or Christmas, decisions that need to be made, and then ending with sharing good news and closing in prayer. Decision making is varied, ranging from agreeing filming on site and supporting the Christian Union at Barton Peveril College, approving renewed or new policies, decisions on furniture, progressing the new internal door at the entrance to the Church building and continuing to develop our safeguarding policies and resources, to approval of the accounts and trustees report.

*Sue Lynham*  
*PCC Secretary*

## Loving and Serving

Looking back on 2025 one of the biggest highlights is that we held our first Kintsugi Hope Wellbeing Course. This was completed by 7 people and was really appreciated by those that attended. It's the first, but by no means the last, of a more pastoral course that form part of the makeup of our twice-monthly Wednesday Evening gatherings. During this course we covered the topics of: anxiety, depression, perfectionism, honesty, shame, anger, disappointment & loss, forgiveness, self-acceptance, healthy relationships and resilience. Interwoven into these discussions was the continued reminder that God cares about our whole being: body, mind and spirit.

Continuing on the theme of organised events: 2025 saw our third October 31st Light Trail. We tried something slightly different this year and, weather aside, it was a wonderful event that saw many people entering into the church and engaging with a message about light on a night reserved for darkness and evil. There were a few technical hiccups with the tags used and some lights going out, but the welcome (plus hot chocolates and hot dogs) was really appreciated by those that were out that evening. Despite the horrendous weather we still gave out over 150 hot dogs and hot chocolates as well as about the same again in goody bags. A huge thank you to the team that evening (Heidi, Caroline, Graham, Julie, Neil, Stuart W, Zoe, Stuart P, Kara, Dave A, Dave L, Teresa, Jono, Helen, Jim, Janina, Keaton, Baden, Tristan, Sandra B, Sandra D, and Sarah)

A big part of this layer of mission and ministry in St Tom's is the Support & Encouragement Team. This is a team of people that can be called on when people come to us in times of need. There is obviously a confidential nature to this area of ministry, but as example, over 2025 we have provided lifts to hospitals, GP appointments, banks and church; we have spent time with people at their bedside and in hospital and we have made meals for people. An offshoot from this team is our gardening team. Over 2025 we carried out approximately 25 hours of gardening for people both a part of St Tom's and not, whom have found themselves unable to, or in need of help with, managing an overgrown garden.

Through our Loving & Serving layer we have also been able to provide some financial relief through way of food gift vouchers for people who find themselves in sudden/unexpected financial difficulty. It's never nice to see people be thrown into these kinds of situations, but knowing we can practically help and bring some comfort and support is heartening.

I know all that I have written above is what has happened through the official layer of Loving & Serving, and I know that so much more goes on through Open Homes and through friendship that doesn't make its way into the report. I know that so many of you have come alongside and supported others in their time of need and have shown them God's love through your actions, so thank you. Thank you for your ministry of love and service to others.

*Revd Tom Young*

## Building community

The building community layer is all about giving people a space where they can feel they are a part of something, somewhere they belong and they have a community around them. The volunteers who make up these teams not only help with the logistics of running these groups, more importantly their role involves engaging with those who attend, making them feel welcome and included. We believe God's love is felt through what we deliver and have had many people ask why we do what we do and feedback that they always feel it's a warm and inviting place.

### Wednesday Lunch

Across 2025 we served 885 meals over 49 weeks. We have built a small group of 'regulars' who ask after each other and have built relationships with each other and the team. We have a range of people attending from, those with babies/young children through to those who are more advanced in years (I believe our eldest is 95!) We often have residents from Mill court attending and have had individuals quite literally wander in from the street and share a meal with us. We have a small team of volunteers who do a fantastic job, currently we don't have a volunteer available on our rota every week, so we are looking to grow the team.

### Teddies

Teddies is our toddler group, we have newborns up to 5 year olds in regular attendance and we always have a good number families coming along. Since the older children left to start school in September 2025 we have seen steady growth of new faces and some returning faces with younger siblings. We offer free refreshments, crafts/activities, toys, games and singing in each session, as well as marking special occasions such as Mother's Day, Easter, Christmas children leaving to start school with additional activities or gifts to bless the families. On average we see around 15 families each week, many times I have been told that they look forward to Thursdays and it's their favourite group to attend. We definitely see relationships being built and friendships forming between families and with the team. We have a team of 6 volunteers who come each week and show great dedication to making Teddies what it is.

### Youth Club

Aimed at year 11 to 18 year olds, attending without parents. In 2025 we rolled out the electronic check in system, which has been a more efficient way to track parental permissions and youth attendance. Numbers fluctuate, with some busy weeks and some quiet weeks. The team take it in turns to provide an activity for everyone to engage with, creating a more sociable space rather than everyone being spread out and 'doing their own thing'. Andy does a great job in leading the team and managing the complicated rota!

### With Love

With love is a ladies group with around 15-20 regular attendees. At the end of 2025 we switched our breakfast meet location to Pinkmead Bistro which has been a success. In April we had an away day called BREATHE in Poole, 36 ladies attended and it was a really beautiful day in every way, we also celebrated and thanked Eve who was stepping down from leading With Love after many years. With Love also hosted the afternoon tea on the

Saturday of the Durley weekend away. We love the fact that we can create spaces where people felt able to invite friends. We have been strategic in ensuring that everything we do enables us to build community.

#### Band of Brothers

A men's group with monthly meet-ups, cooked breakfast and a lively WhatsApp group! The meet-up takes place on the first Wednesday of the month as part of Wednesday Night Worship. The monthly breakfast takes place at the Alma in Upham and is growing both in number and range of ages. Perhaps the highlight of the year was the weekend away at the Greenhouse Centre in Poole. Tom led three sessions over the weekend looking at the life of king David. The Band of Brothers is a great place to know the support of other men as we work out what it means to follow Jesus together.

All this happens through the dedicated commitment of our volunteers. Thank you for all you do to make St Toms a welcoming and friendly place!

*Gary Stupple and Sarah Oswald*

## Exploring Faith

To encourage and support those who are beginning their journey of Faith. This includes -

**Hands On** - We have a fantastic team of volunteers who take turns in leading this breakout session. Through the year we have been following the theme of the books of the bible. We have an average of 20 people each week. The beauty of having different leaders is that they all bring their unique style and creativity meaning that there is a lovely variety of activities.

**Quest** - This Sunday morning breakout session is aimed at those asking questions about faith but there are no rules around who can attend. We have on average 8-10 people attend each week. We have covered a variety of themes from questions such as 'Does God answer prayer?' to 'Miracles in the bible' to practical exercises to hear from God. Each session allows for shared ideas and conversation. There may be a challenge or team game to emphasise a topic.

**Church@4** - We were meeting at Horton Heath Community Centre but we were finding that we were outgrowing the building. We now meet at Kings School Allington Lane. Often gathering as a group of over 30 people, we are very grateful for the partnering of Fair Oak Family Church who help to support this initiative. We meet once a month. Often running with a theme that fits with the church calendar - Christ the King, Love, Palm Sunday, we even had a guest donkey last Easter!! This is attended predominantly by families, however, all are welcome.

**Short Courses** - During 2025 we have run several short courses to equip those exploring faith.

**START** - A six-week course to help embed the fundamental foundations of Faith in Jesus. In 2025 we ran two of these. The first attended by 6 people the second by 4. We did run them on Sunday mornings at 10am when we then all came into join the 11am service.

**MOVING ON** - This is a seven-week course and follows on from Start. We ran one of these in 2025 and it was attended by the Start group plus anyone else who felt it may benefit them. It is aimed at helping people grow as disciples. It covers subjects such as 'growing in faith', 'Worship', 'Giving'. We ran this on a Sunday morning before the 11am service.

**PRAYER** - This is an eight-week course. Based on the Lords Prayer. Covering subjects such as - adoration, petition, unanswered prayer, spiritual warfare. We have run this twice so far. Once on a Sunday morning before the 11am service and again on Wednesday evening.

**FREEDOM in CHRIST** - This is a twelve-week course plus an away day. We ran this on a Sunday morning before the 11am service. It was well attended and was very powerful!! It helps us to recognise things in our lives that may be holding us back from going deeper with Jesus and stepping into the freedom He has for us.

**Schools** - We regularly go into Fair Oak Infants to lead assemblies. They also visit St. Thomas'; Year R to look around the outside of the building, Year 1 to visit us for their topic 'Special Places' and Year 2 for a Christingle service.

Fair Oak Juniors. Again we are invited in to take part in some of their assemblies. Also Year 5 attend a Christingle service in the church.

I would like to thank all the volunteers that help to make everything mentioned above happen. Your, time, energy, creativity, love and commitment makes everything possible.

*Caroline Oswald*

*Faith Explorer*

## **Gathering as Church**

Over 2025 we've continued to see growth in our gathering as church for worship at both 9.30am and 11am. Our monthly 4pm service remains constant at about 30 people with 50% under 11.

Over 2025 we've had one specific reminder that we are indeed part of the church of England - more people with 'collars'. It's been great to welcome Bryan and Tori Silletti and their family, and celebrate the return of Sam Scott. They have all been involved in leading worship and preaching and it's been great to enjoy their input.

Having celebrated our extended clergy team it's good to remember that we don't need a collar to play our part in the life of the church or the kingdom of God. The Bible is clear that we are part of the priesthood of all believers. There are so many ways that this is

expressed in the life of the church, and it's my joy to thank so many who help to make our gatherings for worship run smoothly. The church of England might call them sidesmen, but there are many people who serve on hospitality, welcome, and tech teams - it's great to be able to serve together.

We are also blessed with a large number of people who serve, lead and preach. It's been a privilege to see these teams grow and benefit from different people's skill, gifts and styles.

One area of change over 2025 has been in our sung worship. We have had a number of talented musicians over the years and remain thankful to Karen for playing the organ every week at our 9.30 service. Comings and goings have meant that the 11am service has moved to recorded music this year. I was worried how this would go but have personally found that the challenge of having to sing and not depend on people to lead us with microphones has meant we have all stepped up together. It's so encouraging to hear a voice break out from somewhere in the room and take the lead. We're gradually getting used to 'karaoke worship' and I think we've grown in our sense of worship together.

Wednesday Night Worship continues to give us a chance to gather mid week. 14:26\* in particular is a place where we can put into practice the gifts that God has given us. If you've not given it a go you are missing a treat.

Perhaps a highlight, despite the poor weather, was Pentecost at Berkley Farm. It's good to be together on these Feast days. Baptisms and anointing with oil were particularly significant!

As much as this is a recap of the journey of 2025 and a thank you to all who have been involved in our worship gatherings, it's also a reminder that there is space for others to contribute. Welcome, hospitality, tech, leading, preaching... If you'd like to find a way to play your part in our gatherings as church please do chat to me.

\*Look at 1 Corinthians 14:26 for an idea of the shape of this bi-weekly Wednesday evening gathering.

*Revd Jono Harvey*

## **Sharing Life as Disciples**

The highlights since APCM 2025 are:

### **Open Homes:**

Open Home Leaders have met in-person together on 5th Wednesday evenings on 29.01.25, 30.04.25 and 29.10.25. These evenings were well attended and were primarily an opportunity to discuss "best practice" and identify together each Open Homes main emphases when inviting new people to consider coming to an Open Home.

There are now six Open Homes representing approximately 50% of the present Worshipping Community.

**Corporate Prayer:**

14:26 had become primarily an evening of prophecy. The “Ark” and “Tidal Bore” revelations were particularly powerful.

Danny reported that fortnightly prayer started in October 2025 was now instituted 8-9am on Saturday mornings in the Extension but was not well attended.

**14-18s Discipleship Journey**

A 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday evenings offer was being taken up, with six young people regularly attending.

*Danny Stupple*

## **Partnership in the Gospel**

This Oversight Team met on 4 occasions during 2025 on 27.06.25, 05.09.25 and 12.12.25

**Mission Partners**

The PCC ceased our support for Fields of Wheat and Church Army and relocated this giving to Why Israel? and Transform Iran

Our present partners are therefore:

Miracle Street – Steve Lee

GLO – Simon Guillebaud

La Source – Francis Dognon

Why Israel? – Chip Kendall

Transform Iran – Simon Bayham

**Regional Partners**

Our present local partners are:

Fledge

Eastleigh Basics Bank

BiFOHH Street and School Pastors

CAP (Christians Against Poverty)

*Danny Stupple*

## **Fabric**

We have had a busy year of minor repairs and improvements to our building's fabric during 2025, with just a few major items being completed (see list below)

- Replacement of existing fire exit doors to the Extension.
- We have also completed the necessary Faculty for the pew alterations/removal at the back of the church, which has provided some welcome flexible space and the addition of some cushioned chairs.
- We added 3 picnic tables to the grassed area outside of the extension

We have also carried out a viability study for external works outside the Extension.

God continues to meet our needs in this area and as such, we continue to feel very blessed that we have sufficient funds for maintaining and improving our buildings and associated grounds! This has been primarily through the generous legacy donations we have received over recent years, for which we remain extremely grateful.

A few things to look forwards to in 2026:

- Repairing the existing porch front doors to the church building, due to wet rot.
- Replacement of the existing two-storey glazed screen and front door to the Stables.
- Replacement of the existing carpet to the whole area of the church building.
- Replacement of existing internal church front doors with glazed doors.
- New carpet to the Extension corridor
- Re-organisation of the choir vestry, incl. removal of partition wall.

*Matt Nicholson*  
*Churchwarden*

## **Stewardship Report**

During 2025 we have continued to be blessed by the generosity of our church family, which has ensured we were able to work in line with our overall budget for the year. Full financial details can be viewed in the Trustees Report and Accounts document

The total income into St Thomas' Church was £185,786 in 2025 compared to a total income of £184,851 in 2024. Our total outgoings for 2025 were £177,309, compared to £231,439 in 2024, where the shortfall was supported by monies from our legacy and project fund to cover the several high-cost fabric projects we undertook in the year.

Having previously established a Community Fund, this has continued to bless people in our local community and any specific donations for this fund are always welcome.

Stuart, our brilliant treasurer, has set up an additional 35-day savings account, to aid our income, and although our 3 -year fixed rate energy accounts ended in August, Stuart has secured favourable fixed rate terms with a new provider for the next 3 years

Dave Alford continues to offer his invaluable expertise and experience to Stuart, whilst specifically looking after our Gift Aid recovery, as well as payment of staff salaries.

So, as we look ahead, can I thank everyone for your continued financial support to St Thomas', it is very much appreciated. That being said, in the last 6 months of 2025 our income from the Parish Giving Scheme fell by 7.5%, so if you have not yet signed up to this Scheme, which has the advantage of allowing gift aid to be added, please do consider this means of donating and refer to the details, which are always shown on the Weekly Outlook

*Bob Carkeet*  
*Churchwarden*