

## Welcome Booklet 2017



**Christ Church** St Albans

**Beliefs, character, activities and  
organisation**

## Introduction

We very much welcome you to join us in the Christ Church community.

Whether you are beginning to explore matters of faith or are from an established Christian background, you probably have questions about us. You will no doubt want to know what kind of community you may be joining.

Our welcome evening and this booklet aim to demystify things as much as possible.

We'll start with what binds us together – our faith, what we believe in. We will then try to explain the character of our church, although that is difficult to pin down and will no doubt change as new people join us.

We then summarise the many activities that we run before finally setting out a few facts about how we are organised and financed.

## Our beliefs<sup>1</sup>

Our beliefs at Christ Church St Albans are consistent with the historic beliefs of the Church of England to which we belong. The main things are as follows.

- We, the earth and the whole universe have been created by a personal, thinking being, whom we call God and who is infinitely greater than we are in every way.
- The only way we can know him is by virtue of his revealing himself to us in ways that we can understand (though there remain many mysteries).
- The Bible, as a collection of 66 books written by many different authors, is a consistent story of how God reveals himself, initially to a family, then to a nation and finally, in the person of Christ, to all humanity.
- The Bible tells us that God is invisible “Spirit”, something that science has no concept of.
- The Bible shows that God is in some mysterious way three persons in one, a “Trinity”: Father, Son (Jesus Christ) and Holy Spirit. This describes a relationship of love which we are invited to join. However, our tendency towards independence and selfishness prevents us from being connected to God and feeling his love. The Bible calls this “sin” which basically messes everything up.

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<sup>1</sup> *This attempts to express in plain English what we believe as Christians in the Church of England. We accept the statements of faith, known as “creeds”, as formulated by the early church. We are not trying to supersede or replace any of these!*

- But God, in a unilateral act of grace, sent his Son Jesus in human form to show us how to reconnect with God and act in selfless love towards others. Even though entirely innocent, Jesus suffered a painful and undignified death by being nailed to a wooden cross and, in so doing, somehow took on responsibility for the sin of humankind, past, present and future.
- Jesus has therefore saved or “redeemed” us from the disconnection from God that we otherwise suffer, ultimately expressed in our death.
- Jesus is the “Christ” or “Messiah”, both terms meaning that he was “anointed” (like an ancient king or priest) for the role.
- The truth that Jesus Christ is God as well as human is revealed by his resurrection from the dead and the fact that he is alive now and able to be communicated with. This also shows that we can look forward to resurrection after our own death, as God has promised.
- Our part is to place our trust in Jesus and what he has done for us. In so doing, we submit to him as being the “king” whom we are to follow and serve in our lives.
- We follow Jesus Christ by learning about his life and teaching. By seeking to live as he did, through prayer and through study of the Bible, we learn from him how to live in a Christ-like way in a troubled world, helping us to grow spiritually closer to him.
- Jesus also fulfilled a promise made by God, through various prophets in the Old Testament that he would do a new thing and pour out his Holy Spirit on all people. Jesus explained to his

disciples that this would happen after his death and resurrection. This was fulfilled on a day called “Pentecost” when the Holy Spirit empowered them to speak boldly about Jesus in languages they had not learnt and to work miracles of healing. The part of the Bible called the “New Testament”, containing stories about Jesus written by the four gospel writers and the story of the early church and letters from Paul and other early converts to Christianity, shows that when people were converted to the faith, they too received the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

- The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in all people who make a faith commitment to Christ and follow him. By bringing the presence of Christ to us the Holy Spirit enables us to make the right choices in life.
- Jesus Christ still speaks to us today through the Holy Spirit enlightening us when we read the Bible and directly in dreams, pictures or words.
- We also believe that the Holy Spirit has not stopped giving “spiritual” gifts to build up God’s church – gifts of prophecy, healing, speaking in tongues, and so on. We believe we should seek such gifts and, to the extent we receive them, exercise them for the benefit of the church.
- God has entrusted to us his witnesses, ambassadors and servants, his plan to bring people into the kingdom established under Christ.

- We accept Jesus' teaching that the greatest commandments are to love God with all our mind, heart, spirit and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves and that we all have a mission to work together to spread the good news about Jesus and make more disciples.
- We believe there will come a time when Jesus reappears on earth in such a way that no-one will have any doubt about it. Those who have followed Jesus in life will enjoy the new and perfect heaven and earth which will then be established.

## The character of our church

- As a Church of England (CofE) church, Christ Church has a **geographical area of responsibility** insofar as the church cares for and provide appropriate ministry (including baptisms, weddings and funerals) to those who live in the parish. Our parish is an elongated tear-drop shape the thin end starting near the town centre, and encompassing the area from the City hospital as far as the end of the New Greens Estate (Townsend school). About half the congregation currently lives within the parish, the rest coming from neighbouring areas.
- We have a **small team of paid staff**. The church is led by the vicar, Jeremy Follett, who is supported by our children & families pastor, Becki Chafe. We also employ a part-time administrator (Jacqui Winterbourn) who works most mornings in the church office and a part-time personal assistant (Claire Cooper) for Jeremy.

Many other people in the church give time and expertise on a voluntary basis to keep the buildings and grounds in good condition and to run many activities.

- Essentially, our style and aim is for “**every-member ministry**” with everyone involved in the church community, caring for each other and helping run various activities. So although we are led by Jeremy and Becki, we are not an audience of spectators, but are expected to take full part.

- As a **community church**, we do not serve only a particular type of people or age group (such as a student church). Rather Christ Church aims to accommodate all ages and all-comers.
- This shows in the **variety of services** on Sundays, with a mix of traditional with modern. We also have “**Messy Church**” roughly once a month. We have special times devoted to **prayer** at other times of the week.
- We aim to **reach out to people in the local community** and to serve them, showing the love of God.

Being blessed with a **new church hall** and reception area, we are a focal point for community activities during the week.

Largely through our children & families pastor, Becki, we also support Christian teaching in **the local primary schools**.

- To help co-ordinate care for those in need through illness or bereavement or some other reason, we also have a “**pastoral co-ordinator**” to make sure no-one in the church community is overlooked.
- The average age of our congregation is increasing and we are not as outward-looking as we should be. In consequence, we have formed an “**Action for Growth Team**” (the “AGT”) to think through ideas enabling us all to grow more in our own faith and to bring more people, especially the young, into our church community and to faith in Jesus Christ. The AGT is trying out lots of initiatives (one of which is the welcome event and this welcome leaflet!).



## Our activities

Each Sunday we have worship services at 9:00 am and 10:40 am, each with a different style:

**9.00 am:** A more traditional hour-long service focusing on Bible teaching with contemporary relevance and prayer. Music is usually in classical church style. On the 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays of each month we take Holy Communion together.

**10.40 am:** An informal service with a relaxed style. The music style is more contemporary and prayer ministry is available each week. On the second Sunday of each month we have a Family Celebration service with Holy Communion. We also take Communion on the fourth Sunday of the month at this service.

**Family Celebrations at 10:40am:** These services are a great opportunity for the whole church family to meet together to worship, hear from God and learn together. The service starts at 10.40 am with an optional Family Breakfast (bacon rolls and pastries) in the hall from 10.00 am. These services run about once a month other children's groups not running on these occasions.

Refreshments follow our services in the main foyer. For the hard of hearing there is an induction loop system (switch hearing aid to "T"). There is also wheelchair access throughout the building and an accessible toilet facility. For those with restricted sight please ask stewards for material in large print.

We also have a monthly event focused on families and outreach:

**Messy Church (Sunday 3-5pm):** Messy Church is all about having fun together. For the first hour we're creative with activities to choose from based around the theme for that session. Then we come together for a time of celebration to hear a story, worship, pray and learn more about our theme. We finish with a lovely cooked dinner.

We welcome all family members of any age but children need to be accompanied by a grown up.

Messy Church dates for 2017 are:

- Sunday 23rd July (Messy BBQ & Games)
- August (Messy Church joins The Big Lunch each Wednesday)
- Sunday 24th September
- Tuesday 31st October (Messy Church joins The Big Tea) 5-7pm
- Sunday 26th November
- Sunday 24th December (3.00 - 4.00 pm)

We believe our young people benefit from their own style of church. Each Sunday we have the following groups where young people can have their own 'church' during the 10:40am service:

**Tots Church for 0-4 year olds:** a great place for under 5's. In the small lounge near the main church tots will be cared for, played with and begin to discover God's love for them through stories and singing. Parents can drop their child off or stay with them.

**Kids Church for primary school aged children:** in the hall. We believe God wants children to know him and experience him. At Kids Church we provide a safe and fun place where primary aged children can experience God and explore who he is for themselves. This will be done through sharing God's story, worship, prayer ministry, games and providing space for the kids to have fun, be themselves and build relationships with each other.

**Pathfinders for school years 7 – 10:** in the Garden Room.

Pathfinders is a place for finding out more about the Christian faith and how God and life work together. There's time to learn more about God, to chat and pray and have fun as we explore more of God's love and encourage you in your teenage years. Pathfinders happens during the 10.40am service after the sung worship.

**Refine (school years 10 - university):** Ever thought church was boring or for old people? Come along to Refine for teaching, discussions, prayer, worship and a lot of fun and find out how Jesus can be relevant in your life today! Refine also run social events and occasionally visit an evening service at Soul Survivor. Refine meet at church from 7.30 - 9.00 pm on Sundays during term time.

Our young people also link up with the following St Albans-wide event:

**Fuel (school years 7 - university)**

Fuel provides a quality experience for youth groups, a chance to connect with the wider church community as well as providing a safe space to encounter God in a fresh way. Each Fuel offers the same core ingredients: free refreshments, activity games to help participants get to know each other, contemporary worship, opportunity for prayer ministry and teaching that focuses on helping young people live out their faith.

Fuel meets on a Sunday, once a half term at Christ Church from 7.00 - 9.00 pm.

During the week we have other events running for young people:

**Messy Mondays** is a space for primary school age children to play, do crafts and relax after school on Mondays. Toast and drinks are provided at the start and there is a Bible story and a worship song at the end. This runs on Mondays in term time from 3.35-4.45pm.

**Little Acorns** is a toddler group run by members of Christ Church for parents/carers and their children. We provide a place where you and your children can make friends, have fun and relax. Our weekly activities include lots of toys, a craft activity, free tea, coffee and biscuits for adults, juice and a biscuit for the children, story time, singing and lots of fun! Once a month we have Toddler Praise where we tell (and act out!) a Bible story and sing.

Little Acorns meets on Wednesday mornings during term time from 9:30 - 11:15 am in the church centre and is aimed at pre-school aged children. We currently have a waiting list but please pop along any Wednesday for a trial session and to register for a place.

**The Shack** is a club for children school years 4 - 8 on Fridays during term time from 7.30 - 9.00 pm where you have the chance to hang out with your friends and do anything from dance competitions on the Wii, football on the Xbox, creative arts and crafts, mastering ping pong or running off steam playing group games. During the evening we have a snack break and a 'Look at Jesus' session where we hear input on life, God, the universe and everything!

There are a variety of groups for people aged 50+.

**Senior Lunches:** On the third Thursday of each month from 12.30 - 2.00 pm we run a lunch which is a two course hot meal, a short talk and time to chatter with friends. These lunches are themed.

**Tea and Talk:** On the first Thursday of each month from 2.30 - 4.30 pm we run tea and talk. Enjoying drinks and cake together there is often a speaker on a general theme or a craft activity to join in.

Christ Church members also run various small groups meeting in peoples' homes at different times of day, on a fortnightly basis. These groups meet to read the Bible, pray, build relationships and encourage one another. If you would like to get involved with a small group then please speak to John Truscott or Hilary Boyce on a Sunday morning or drop us an email at [enquiries@ccstalbens.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ccstalbens.org.uk)

## How we are organised

Christ Church is a Church of England (“CofE”) parish church falling within a larger CofE geographical area or “deanery” composed of a number of neighbouring parishes. These fall, for administrative purposes, within an “archdeaconry” and then within a wider area called a diocese, presided over by a bishop. All the dioceses in the UK come together under the oversight of the two Archbishops of Canterbury and York. (Don’t worry: you can come to church and never concern yourself with all that.)

Jeremy our vicar is responsible for running the church within this wider administrative CofE structure.

In accordance with Church of England rules, to assist Jeremy in running the Church, the congregation appoints the members of a Parochial Church Council (“PCC”) on a yearly basis.

Membership of the PCC includes: vicar, two churchwardens (formally officers of the bishop and, in practice help the vicar in day to day running of the church), 9 congregational members and 3 members of the administrative bodies that oversee the CofE at local and national levels (Synods). All these elections are for three-year periods and election takes place once a year (usually in April) at our annual parochial church meeting (or “APCM”).

The PCC meet about eight times during the year, usually in the evening, but at least once each year on a Saturday for a longer time of discussion or prayer. It makes decisions on, amongst other things, matters affecting the fabric of the church building, the finances, paid roles and the overall direction of the church.

Christ Church is a charity and members of the PCC are its trustees.

In a CofE church, membership is technically being “on the electoral role” which entitles a person to take part in the election of PCC members and attendance at the APCM. We encourage anyone who

wants to join our church to sign up to the electoral role (David Hill is the person who puts that together).

The funding of everything that happens at Christ Church is essentially through giving by the congregation. The CofE pays the vicar and provides his house, next door to the church, but the money for that is effectively taken from the giving of the congregation through a contribution which we make to the diocese.

Other costs, such as those of repairing and running the building are paid for by the congregation. In fact, the new hall and reception area at the front of the church building, constructed only a few years ago, were almost wholly funded by the very generous and sacrificial giving of members of the congregation at the time.

If you do make a commitment to our church, we would encourage you to join in with the rest of us in supporting the church financially according to your own means.

The church's overall expenditure in the last financial year ending in December 2016 was just short of £160,000.

Although a collection bowl is available at services for contributions, the great majority of the congregation gives to the church by monthly standing order into the church bank account. This is very much the preferred method of receipt as it greatly helps the church treasurer with annual budgeting. Please ask for details of the church's account if you would like to set up a standing order.

**As you will have picked up from the rest of this leaflet, we very much depend, not only on the financial donations of member, but also on the voluntary involvement of members in keeping our activities running. Please let us know if you would like to get involved in some way!**

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