

**September 2024 newsletter**

September for me heralds the start of a new year in many ways – things seem to crank back up into gear ready to go, not least with the schools returning after their summer break! We are however, moving forward into the Autumn with anxious thoughts over the cost of living together with the rise in fuel costs but hopefully we are moving forward together. Being part of the Body of Christ means that we are not travelling alone we have each other to encourage, comfort and support us but more than that we have Jesus walking with us.

At long last we can report that the planning application for the Beacon Project has been submitted to CWAC and so the wait begins as they process the application. We have been advised that there are a number of grants that we can apply for to help pay for the building costs but we cannot take this further until we have planning permission so we are having to play the waiting game. It has taken some time to get to this point as there have been many hurdles to overcome that only reared their head in the Spring due to new government regulations. We ended up having to have a Biodiversity Net Gain report done together with a separate report concentrating on Bats! Gemma, Rachel and I have learned much about biodiversity in the last few months! We are therefore planning a Beacon Day on Sunday 8 September when we shall be sharing and updating everyone together with a drive to encourage everyone to pray about the next steps.

**Harvest Festival** We shall be celebrating God’s goodness and provision at both churches on Sunday 29 September 2024 and I am pleased to advise that the Scout group will be joining us at St Thomas at the 10.45am service. We look forward to them joining us for the service along with their parents and friends. St Thomas will be supporting West Cheshire Foodbank so donations of UHT Juice, tinned meat, tinned veg/tomatoes, rice packets, biscuits, coffee, tinned potatoes, cuppa soups, pasta sauces, tinned fruit, jams and spreads would be most welcome. **They have plenty of baked beans and pasta**, thank you. St Lawrence will be supporting Save the Family once again. Donations of dried and tinned food as above would be most appreciated.

**St Thomas grounds & St Lawrence Churchyard**– a big thank you to those who have helped around the grounds over the summer. Needless to say, the work continues into the Autumn as the leaves begin to drop!!

**Fundraising**

We have several fundraising events planned for the next term to raise much needed funds for the general church fund. As a charity we rely on gifts and donations for which we are very grateful but like everyone else our outgoings are rising not least our utility bills. We may not have used much energy during the summer months but as a business our standing charges are astronomical in comparison and so we have to take action in order to keep our heads ‘above water’.

I mentioned in a recent sermon that God has vast reservoirs of might that can be realized as power in our Christian life. But His might does not work in us as we sit passively. His might works in us as we rely on it and ensuring that we have sufficient funds to cover our outgoings is essential to be good stewards of what God has entrusted to us.

**A drawing of food on a plate

Description automatically generated**Our first event is an ‘afternoon tea with the singing vicar- Ron Iveson’. This is to be held on **Saturday 21 September 2024 2pm – 4pm**. We shall be serving a beautiful afternoon tea with sandwiches, homemade cake and scones, jam and cream whilst enjoying the entertainment provided by Ron. Tickets £10 are available from both churches. We will need some homemade cakes on the day, so if you could help with that, please do let Gill know. Thank you.

**Jonathan Starkey** who is one of the organists at St Lawrence has very kindly offered to put on a concert for us and this is to be held at St Lawrence on Friday 15 November. Tickets and further details to follow.

**Christmas Fair!** Date for the diary – Saturday 7 December 2024. Planning meeting Monday 9 September 7.30pm coffee lounge – all welcome – please do join us and bring along any new ideas for stalls. Jean Welch is kindly looking after the preserves stall and so has asked for jam jars with lids please. Please drop them off at either church. Thank you. Do start to collect items – perhaps buy a bottle of anything when you are doing the weekly shop ready for the bottle stall or ask family and friends if they have any unwanted gifts etc

**Pray/Bake/Read at Christ Church School**

School welcomes volunteers to listen to children read. If you have an hour or two to spare each week or every fortnight and would like to join this initiative, then please do have a word with Rachel or Gill. Prayers are always needed for our schools and for the wonderful work they do with the children and their families. Once the children are back in school, we will have some specific prayer requests. And lastly, if you would like to bake a cake(s) for a treat for our teachers then please do let me know, they are always so surprised that we are thinking of them as well as the children!

**2024 Christmas Shoebox appeal**

We are continuing to support the T4U shoebox appeal this year and so we shall be requesting various items over the next months. There is a donation box at the back of St Thomas Church**.** September 2024 requested items – sweets (use by date from June) small ball, a soft toy, game or puzzle. We are also collecting empty shoeboxes for use in this project – would you please let Doreen have any girls/ladies shoeboxes – she does not want men’s shoeboxes thank you as they are too big! Thank you for your continued support.

**Cell groups** We have a number of cell groups that meet every fortnight for Bible study and fellowship and that support each other with prayer. If you would like to know a bit more about a cell group and perhaps even take the step of joining one then please do have a word with Rachel or myself, or even better speak to someone who attends a cell group!

**News from Gemma**

August has been a really exciting month for the Parish for our community work.  We started out with the second of our 'Cog on the Move!' session at Wolverham fields - and with lots of families joining us, and the weather treating us kindly, we had a fantastic time. The shooting rocket toys certainly seemed to be a hit!  As I write this I am getting the equipment out for our next session, and I cannot wait for it. What a fantastic way to end the month, with games and crafts out and about in the community, sharing the light and love of Jesus with all who we meet.

Whilst our ABC session at St Lawrence was a little quieter this month, we had a fantastic time out in the sun, enjoying an outdoor picnic together. The fellowship between all the children, despite the differences in their ages is such a delight to see.

Moving on to our Tea at Two afternoon - wow! The advertising work we have done for this has certainly paid off - having to bring out extra tables to fit everyone in, greeting new faces along with all of our regulars, and the wonderful atmosphere within the room, it was just a joy to be a part of. I cannot wait for next month to share this event again. Thank you to all who bake and come along to volunteer and make this such a success.

We have also had not one, but two fabulous family fun days this month (our volunteers have been really busy!). The first was our 'Port Olympics' in Whitby park. Archery, javelin, basketball, along with crafts, races and scavenger hunting, our olympics had it all!  Plus a picnic too, and to share in this fun and fellowship was so enjoyable. These events may take lots of planning, however they are all worth it when we see the smiles and the laughs and the families coming together and enjoying time together.  Our second event was a trip to the Crocky Trail. Daring slides, mazes, tunnels, even goats! Then coming back to a lovely hot meal cooked by our volunteers - what a fab day out! Again, smiles all round, and experiences for all the family to remember.

Plus our family cinema night is another way of us reaching out to our community, so to end the month with a further film night, after the success of our July cinema night, plus giving the opportunity for families to have one last treat before the children all return to school next week, seemed like a good idea to us!

But that is not all.....building on from our community work, as you may be aware, with our community work growing, and on many occasions now we have had to cap numbers for events which we have not wanted to do, just because of building regulations, we are looking at our wonderful Beacon Project, which is aiming to make the St Thomas Church Building a multipurpose, ecofriendly, star attraction in the area for **faith, hope,** and **charity,**acommunity hub, accessible for all with rooms able to be hired, to generate funds to help with our wider mission.  Well, I am pleased to tell you all, that our building plans have now been submitted - hooray! This means that we are well on our way with this project - this is a huge step for us, and we are all so excited.  We would like to ask for your ongoing prayers for the project as we move forwards in to the next phase, as underpinning this with **prayer will be vital to the success of the project**. Next steps are to now form the steering group to drive forwards the next phase.  We have a number of members already, but if you wish to be involved, all you need is to be interested and committed to the project, then please do speak to Gemma. We are also looking for community partners to join us on this group, who may have some experience of previous building project work, so if you know anyone who may be interested, please can you speak to Gemma about this.  Thank you for your support. The right mix of enthusiasm and expertise within this group will be needed to carry this forwards

**Dates for September 2024**

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| Sunday 1 | 10.45am | Café Church – ‘Back to School with God’ |
| Sunday 8 | 4pm | **BEACON FOCUS** Sunday  ABC at St Lawrence |
| Monday 9 | 7.30pm | Christmas Fair planning meeting in coffee lounge – all welcome |
| Wednesday 11 | 2pm | Tea at Two in coffee lounge |
| Thursday 12 | 9.30am  5pm - 6.30pm | Toms Tots re-starts in coffee lounge  ‘What next?’ Pizza and chat with Ignite children year 6 and above in St Thomas |
| Tuesday 17 | 7pm | PCC meeting in coffee lounge |
| Wednesday 18 | 10am | Holy Communion at Christ Church School – all welcome |
| Saturday 21 | 2pm – 4pm | Afternoon Tea with the ‘Singing Vicar’ - see above |
| Friday 27 | 1pm | PALS lunch in church hall |
| Sunday 29 |  | Harvest Festival in both churches – see above |

Pastoral matters – please do let the clergy or the churchwardens know of any church family members that are sick in hospital or at home and would appreciate a visit.

I think that is it for now. Take care & God bless

Rachel, Gill & the staff team

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