




ST MATTHEW'S

Contents...

<u>Slide</u>	<u>Contents</u>
3-5	Area Dean and Diocese Pages
6-8	Who and where are we
9-10	Who are we looking for?
12	The Team
13	Recent history
14-16	Worship and Teaching
17	Baptisms, Weddings, Blessings, Funerals
18	What's interesting here
19-23	Children's work and outreach
24	2024 Finances
25-32	Our (many!) partnerships
33-35	Our Buildings
36	Video: St Matts in Southcote context



Foreword from the Diocese

Thank you for taking time to consider this important missional role in a community which whilst under-resourced has a strong sense of identity.

The parish has a long track record of serving the community and of seeking new ways to make Jesus known. The tradition of the church community is clear from the profile as is the challenge of creating a greater sense of being one body. The wide-ranging partnerships demonstrates the congregation's commitment to leveraging its missional energy to the fullest effect.

You will be supported by a strong area team and a well-resourced diocese.

I would be very pleased to have a conversation if you would like to find out more. The Lord be with you as you discern if God is calling you to apply to be the next vicar of St Matthew's.

Stephen Pullin

Archdeacon of Berkshire

archdeacon.berkshire@oxford.Anglican.org

From Our Area Dean... (1)

Reading Deanery is very excited about the opportunity to welcome the next Vicar of St Matthew Southcote. This single church parish is a great role for someone who loves parish ministry and wants to see the local church thrive. Working across two distinct congregations, this role will suit someone who is comfortable with both traditional and less structured worship styles and who is ready to embrace the diversity this entails so that all may flourish as valued members of the same church family. Supported by a strong team of lay leaders, and with good existing links into the local community, there are also ample opportunities to build and grow external relationships that will help the local church to be increasingly at the heart of Southcote life.

With its 29 parishes covering 24 benefices, Reading deanery has one of the largest synods in the country, despite covering a relatively small geographical area focused largely on the town of Reading itself. We have an active Chapter, which meets regularly throughout the year. We work closely with churches from all denominations, particularly through the "Transform Reading" and "Churches Together" networks. The concentrated nature of Reading provides many opportunities to work together to bring God into the day-to-day lives of the town and the c. 280,000 people for whom it is home.

(continued)

From Our Area Dean... (2)

Recognising the size and variation in the deanery, we operate a dispersed leadership model, dividing the deanery into 4 operational zones (north, west, central, east/south). The Area Dean and Deanery Lay Chair have assistants to help resource these zones. Each pair of Area Dean and Lay Chair provides frontline support to clergy and parishes and oversee vacancies in their zone. They also take their share of cross-deanery work.

St Matthew's is in the western zone of the deanery. Our priorities as a deanery currently are to support parishes as they rebuild from the shocks of the last few years and discover new opportunities for mission and ministry both within individual churches and through partnership working. A particular focus – shared across Oxford Diocese – is to grow and develop our ministry to children and young people. Going forward, we believe that collaboration is the key to creating vibrant Christian communities, and we are keen to foster a culture where parishes are ready to co-operate with one another on areas of mutual interest, taking advantage of synergies and addressing gaps in local provision together. We are currently carrying out a review of future mission and ministry needs for West Reading to underpin a coherent strategy for the next season of our common life.

The Deanery is served by an effective and enthusiastic synod, whose meetings are structured to balance governance and administrative duties with opportunities to share good news and good practice, and to engage with a range of topics affecting the whole Church. We look forward to welcoming the new incumbent of St Matthew's and working alongside him or her within this forum.

Revd Dr Liz Ratcliffe, Associate Area Dean

Who are we?

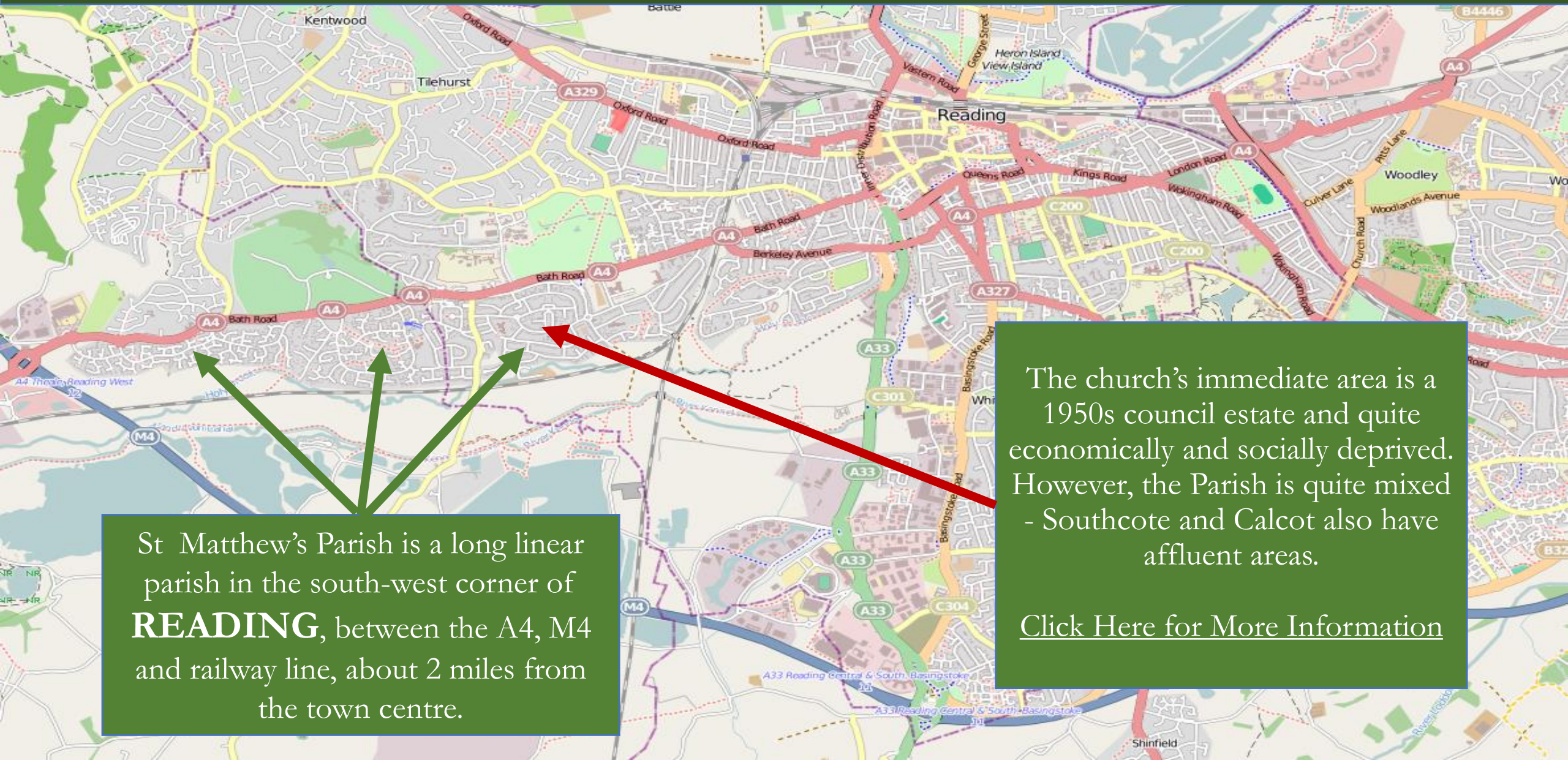
We are a small, urban, outreach-minded church family that punches above its weight.

We number around sixty regular worshippers on a Sunday – a multi-generational group from very diverse backgrounds.

We prize our orthodox biblical heritage and provide for both traditional and contemporary worship styles in different services.

<http://st-matts.org.uk/>

Where are we?



St Matthew's Parish is a long linear parish in the south-west corner of **READING**, between the A4, M4 and railway line, about 2 miles from the town centre.

The church's immediate area is a 1950s council estate and quite economically and socially deprived. However, the Parish is quite mixed - Southcote and Calcot also have affluent areas.

[Click Here for More Information](#)

One Parish, Five Neighbourhoods

Our parish is served by multiple Ofsted-rated **'good'** and **'outstanding'** schools.



No part of the parish is more than 400 yards from open countryside and parks (usually both), and the Kennet and Avon canal and Holybrook River are both on our doorstep



Who are we looking for? Congregational comment...

St Matthew's, Southcote

**A collaborative leader
who is willing to
encourage and utilize
the gifts of others**

**Someone relatable
to all age-groups,
strongly pastoral, a
good listener**

**Someone who is willing
to be hands-on with
existing outreaches**

**Someone with a
big heart to reach
local people, and
the vision to lead
initiatives**

**Someone who
is comfortable with
ministering across
worship styles**

**Someone
who really
loves and
respects the
Word of
God**

What sort of Vicar do we want?

The ideal candidate should:

- Be outward focused, thrive in teamwork, and possess a demonstrable heart for evangelism and disciple-making
- Be a confident biblical communicator, faithful to the historic teaching of the church and able to inspire, equip and empower members for ministry
- Have strong pastoral abilities and a Christlike servant-hearted leadership approach
- Secular work experience is highly valued for its relevance to engaging with the wider community

**Some other stuff you might
want to know...**

The Team

Lynn, our children and families community support worker, currently works 5 days a week



Karen, our administrator, works 13 hours a week

Chris and Jan are our current wardens



A snapshot of recent history...

Before 2011, St Matthews was traditional and liturgical in its churchmanship, but after the early retirement of the last-but-one incumbent, its dwindling congregation was joined by about thirty Christians from a more evangelical stable – mainly from Greyfriars Church, the largest town-centre C of E. Amongst them was the new priest-in-charge, later made Vicar.

Fusion has always been incomplete. 14 years on, the traditional and ‘new’ congregations largely worship independently in their preferred styles, but we do overlap.

Importantly, the congregations unite for both social and missional events, such as Church lunches, Southtots and other outreaches. They also transformed the main Sanctuary together, replacing uncomfortable old solid pine pews with 250 good-quality chairs – which has made the space much more flexible (and comfortable)!

More on Worship at St Matthew's (1)



St Matthew's, Southcote

The 10am Sunday service alternates between an informal 'Service of the Word' and a Family Service with Communion. Music is contemporary in style and led by a band – we've been extremely lucky to have willing, multi-talented musicians. The sermon is generally 20 minutes.

This informal service is liturgy-lite and appeals to families and individuals looking for a more relaxed and contemporary style of worship.

More on Worship at St Matthew's (2)

The 11.45a.m. Sunday service follows the 10am on alternate Sundays and are similar to the **weekly Wednesday service at 10.30a.m.** These services are centred around the Eucharist. Both follow the Church of England lectionary and use the Rite A liturgy from Common Worship. Vestments are traditionally worn.

We are fortunate to have an organist who plays at our Sunday services, but on Wednesdays the service is held in the Chapel (see opposite). We use 'Hymns Old and New' on CD.

Fellowship and refreshments follow!



Teaching and Preaching at St Matthew's

Under the last incumbent, St Matthews developed its own preaching team. At present, two lay-members have been formally licensed by the Bishop of Reading, with two others initially authorised and committed to fulfilling licensing requirements.

Historically, our last incumbent preached at half of the informal and all the formal services.

The teaching 10am programme is arranged around a conventional four-month term, rotating between gospels, New Testament and Old Testament. The Lectionary guides the other services.

Our approach to scripture is doctrinally orthodox.



Baptisms, Weddings, Blessings and Funerals

In 2024 we had:

- **8** Baptisms (5 of them adults)
- **1** Infant Thanksgiving
- **1** Wedding
- **1** Marriage Blessing
- **0** Funerals

NB. no incumbent for 4 months of this year...

What's Interesting About Our Parish?

- The parish houses around 15,000 people - and growing
- Opportunities – there are fresh new areas untouched by the gospel
- There are multiple partnerships: joint projects with other Christians in the area sharing Jesus' message through word and deed
- St Matthews has a wide spread of age groups
- The Parish has areas that are in the UK's 10% most deprived - AND the 5% least deprived! We are rich in cultural background – both in St Matthews and outside. We have growing numbers of people from *many* parts of the globe including Poland, Nigeria, Ethiopia and India, to name a few
- St Matthews is incredibly well-situated in a prime position within Southcote. Its buildings and grounds are substantial, with huge potential

Children and Youth work

In the last few years, children's work has developed hugely under Lynn (our Children and Families worker). **Kidz Church** runs each Sunday morning, plus a youth group for teens. Two weeks a year in half-terms, we also run **Holiday Club**, often fully subscribed with over 100 children each day:

St Matthew's, Southcote



[Click to run the video](#)

The Church Hub...



Click to run the video...

***“The friends I have
made at the hub
are lifetime
friends”***

***“The warm
hub isn’t
just a hub,
its a big
family”***

The Church hub started in January 2023 in response to the cost-of-living crisis and rising heating bills. What started as a winter ‘warm space’ project now runs year-round.

Each Friday after school, around 60 local people arrive to be fed and find friendship. In the better weather, the children play outside, whilst others enjoy crafts & games inside over a cuppa.

Where needed, support is given weekly to families we’ve met through the Hub. Several families have attended church as a result.

We collect food weekly from 3 organisations and distribute this among the families. We use what we can – it helps keep the food bill down! Over the year we have served up 1733 dinners, averaging around 46 meals a week.

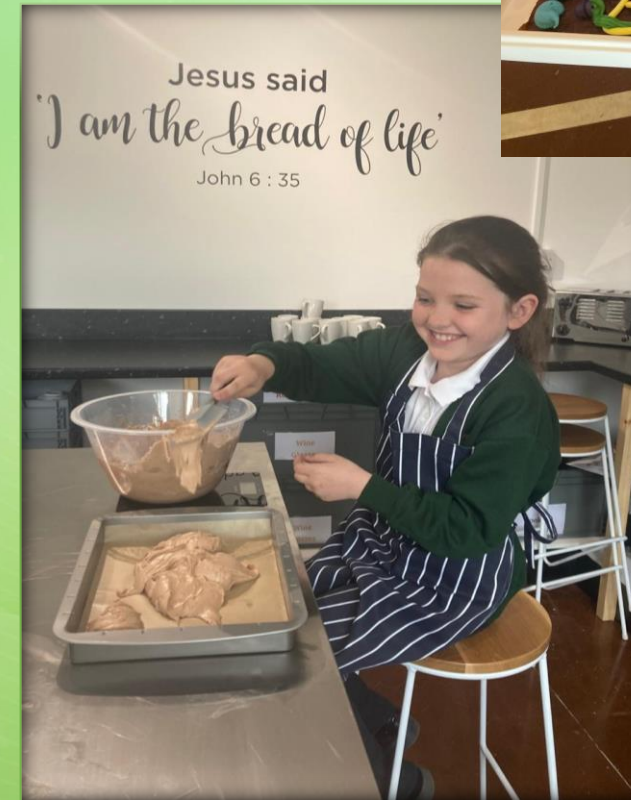
The Training Room

Why a training room? Several parents from the Hub asked if we would teach their children how to cook the meals we serve - so the cookery school was born.

One special moment of affirmation was finding a box in the PCC garage containing all we needed to get started. The box had been in the garage for 10 years and inside, (among other items), were aprons for both adults and children.

God has provided £20,000 through fundraising, which has enabled us to convert the old storage room into a training room and provide storage facilities elsewhere, as well as refurbish and upgrade the kitchen.

Whilst cooking, the children can talk openly. Each session is tailor-made, but we aim to boost self-esteem, as well as teach coping strategies to help with their anxieties, and encourage effective nutrition (ignore the pictures!) We also share the love of Jesus with them.



Southtots...

Southtots
is our
baby and
toddler
group
meeting
each
Friday
morning

Attendance is around
18 children each
session. We often
have a small waiting
list

Friendships are
being built with great
conversations for all
those who attend

Southtots

Southtots is a
mission tool to
reach out into the
community

The Southtots team
are dedicated in
service and
faithfulness to God's
calling through their
volunteering

Events
include a
Teddy
Bear's
Picnic and
a visit from
the Pop-Up
Play Village

St Matthew's, Southcote



Fellowship: Men's Ministry

- **Men's breakfasts** are held 2-3 times a year as a way for men to inspire and encourage one another
- A fortnightly **men's discipleship group** has come together from the work of The Hub, and includes men with no prior church background



Where we are financially

Over the last few years voluntary income has reduced whilst costs have increased significantly.

We have been highly successful in raising funds to refurbish the kitchen and training room. We are very thankful for the generous hearts of the congregation of St Matthew's who continue to give sacrificially towards our mission and ministry.

Opposite are the figures for the year 2024 compared with the previous year.

The PCC's policy is to keep three months of running costs in reserve to cover unforeseen circumstances.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF READING. ST.MATTHEW

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted £	2024 Restricted £	Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
Incoming Resources					
Voluntary Income	2a	101,240	-	101,240	103,401
Other Ordinary Income	2b	18,572	-	18,572	17,728
Material income	2c	270	55,984	56,254	37,216
Total Incoming Resources		120,082	55,984	176,066	158,345
Cost of Charitable Activities					
Clergy Expenses	3a	3,236		3,236	4,668
The Church and Services	3b	15,339		15,339	18,911
Other Parish Expenses	3c	44,378	22,245	66,623	72,021
Payments outside the Parish	3d	48,137	101	48,238	48,568
Development and maintenance	3e	5,160	-	5,160	3,418
Other operating expenses	3f	-	21,111	21,111	9,397
Total Resources Expended		116,250	43,457	159,707	156,983
Net Incoming (Outgoing) Resources		3,832	12,527	16,359	1,362
Transfer between funds			-	-	-
Net movements in funds		3,832	12,527	16,359	1,362
Balances Brought Forward at 1st Jan		41,202	26,660	67,862	66,500
Balances Carried Forward at 31st Dec		45,034	39,187	84,221	67,862

The Great Big World Outside...

Partnerships Galore!

Partnerships – Southcote Alive

SOUTHCOTE
ALIVE

Southcote Alive was created in 2011 to pull together Christians within Southcote from any church, for the purpose of creating a united witness. The three main Southcote Churches form the core. Several initiatives have sprung from this:

- Café Alive – 2014-present – hosted in Grange URC. Includes periodic outreach events like ‘hot potatoes and cool carols’!
- Southcote’s Good Friday ‘Walk of Witness’

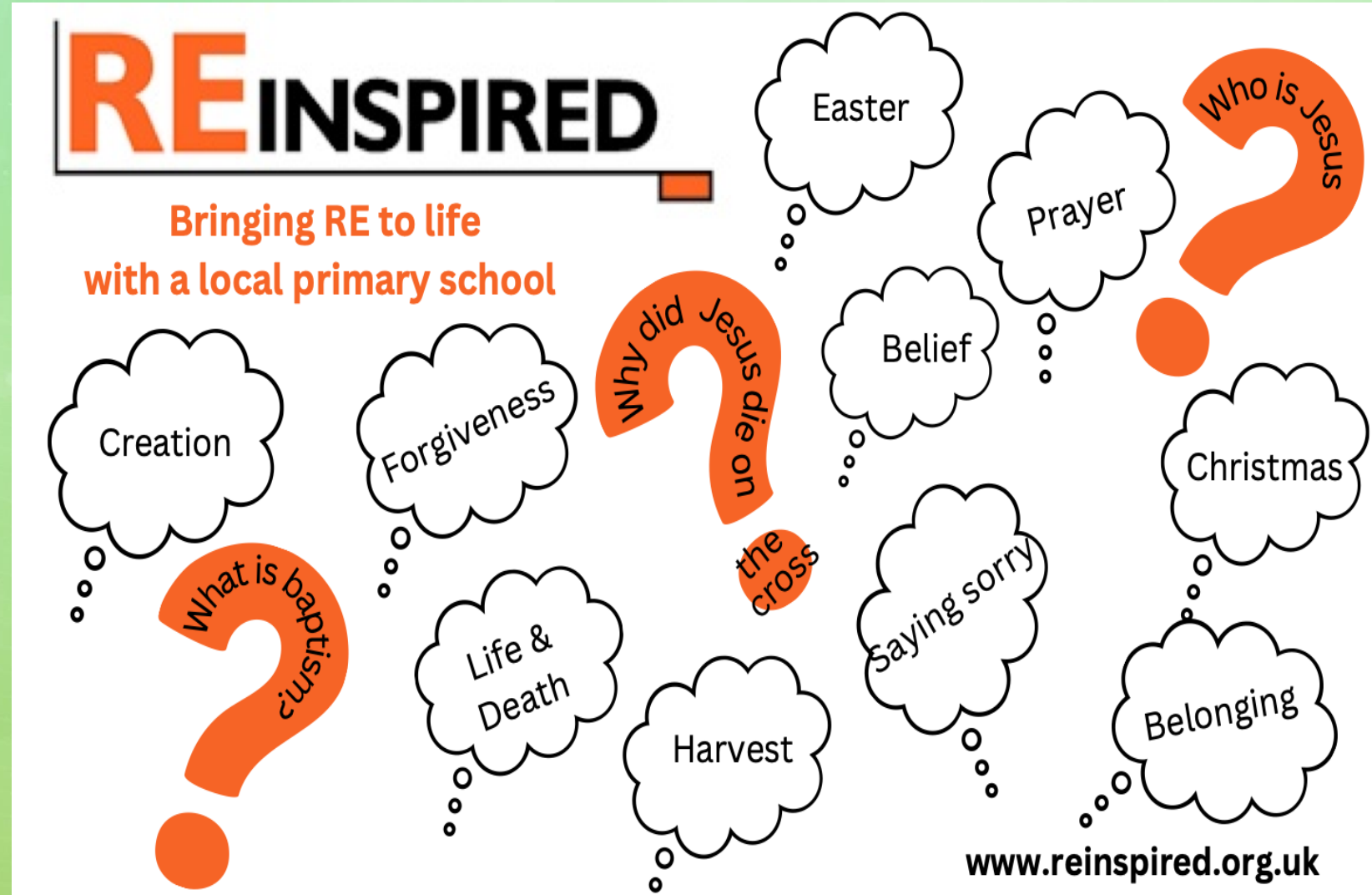


- "Carols in the Square" - annual outdoor carol service on the green opposite



Partnerships – RE Inspired and school links

- We have good links with our two local primary schools, Southcote Primary and Manor Primary School. We are able to take some assemblies in Manor Primary, and Southcote Primary visit our church 6 times a year for their school assemblies. They also take part in RE Inspired sessions.
- RE Inspired is where Christians from local churches work together with schools to 'bring RE to life' through creative activities. Encouraging children to feel at home in a church setting.
- Click here for more info
<http://reinspired.org.uk/>



Partnerships – TORCH

- TORCH (<https://torchhub.org.uk>) is a rapidly growing, Reading-wide partnership which started during Covid lockdown
- Originally church members picked up prescriptions for vulnerable people shielding at home
- The ministry has since widened both its range of activities and its volunteer base
- St Matthews has several active supporters



Coming Soon – The New Parish Nurse!

St Matthew's, Southcote



- Parish Nursing is a national charity:
www.parishnursing.org.uk
- South Reading already has a Parish Nurse, attached to an Anglican Church. It is a very well-received ministry.
- Coley and Southcote are an urban priority for Reading Borough Council's Wellbeing Board. As a result, they are supporting a new Parish Nurse serving these areas, with St Matthews leading within Southcote.
- TORCH (see previous slide) is funding and managing this venture and has appointed Melanie Gager, who starts in early April.

Partnerships – Local Street Pastors



Street Pastors - a national organization - aims to be 'the hands and eyes of Jesus on the local streets'.

Out of St Matthews and a local secondary school grew the idea of 'local Street Pastors', in 2022. Ordinarily, Street Pastors patrol town centres (plus Reading Festival) but local SPs are a first-of-a-kind initiative. A cut-down version is still active.

More info here: <http://streetpastors.org/>

Partnerships – The Pantry

St Matthew's, Southcote



Pantries are another national Christian initiative. FAITH (see below) operates several branches in Reading - Southcote being the latest addition.

Several members of St Matthews support this community outreach which currently runs weekly out of the local Community Centre

More info at: <http://fcg.org.uk/>

Partnerships - Transform Reading



St Matthews has been a supporter of both Transform Reading and Churches Together in Reading. Transform Reading is the more evangelical, soft-charismatic and evangelistically ambitious of the two.

St Matthews has been active in both, but more so Transform Reading over recent years.

Right-click on the logos and open 'Link' for the respective websites.

Buildings - the Main Church

Designed by Sir Basil Spence and graced by two John Piper windows, St Matthews opened in 1967.

The architectural appearance of the building, both externally and internally is minimalistic and designed for 'worship in the round'.

Originally pews, these have since been replaced with chair seating with a capacity to accommodate 250 people.

Not everyone's cup of tea aesthetically, but down to earth and unfussy, like the people in the parish.



Buildings - the Church Hall

St Matthew's, Southcote



Built in the 1950s along with most of central Southcote, this was the original church.

Now also home to the parish office, a recently installed extension to the kitchen.

The Vicarage

The vicarage was built in the 1960's and like the church building is simple in appearance.

Ground floor - study/reception room, toilet, kitchen, dining room and lounge.

First floor - 4 bedrooms, 1 bathroom

Sunny, south facing, large garden to the rear, with various shrubs and a rather nice cherry tree!



St Matthews in Southcote context

St Matthew's, Southcote

