

The Parish of St Thomas and St Edmund Salisbury

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE PARISH 2021



St Thomas's Church

St Thomas's Square

Salisbury

SP1 1BA

www.stthomassalisbury.co.uk

The Rector writes:

As the New Year began, the people of St Thomas's were relieved that Christmas 2020 had been celebrated well. The magnificent crib still stood and the nave was arranged choir-style. There were services at 8am and 4pm on the first Sunday of the year, but as the country entered its third lockdown, public worship was suspended once more at St Thomas's. This difficult period continued for nine Sundays until 14th March when an 8am service was held, and the evening service resumed on Easter Day 4th April.



The main Sunday service at 10.15am had not taken place in church since 15th March 2020. Each week, this service was painstakingly recorded, edited, sound-adjusted, subtitled, illustrated, advertised and published through the website. This arrangement continued through the first twenty Sundays of 2021. On Sunday 23rd May, the Feast of Pentecost, the 10.15am service was held in church for the first time in 61 weeks.

Highlights of these pre-recorded services included an online Charter Sunday service with contributions from the Lord Lieutenant, and the Mayor and the Leader of Salisbury City Council; a service with a contribution from Dr Joseph Bilal, the acting Vice Chancellor of the Episcopal Church University of South Sudan; and for the second time during the pandemic a Christian Aid themed service.

Even the resumption of our regular patterns of worship did not mean everything was back to normal. Congregational singing was thought by government to be a way of spreading the virus and could not be resumed until 25th July. For many months, the congregation simply listened to the choir during the hymns.

An important addition to St Thomas's ministry was the livestreaming of the 10.15am service each Sunday morning, together with occasional special services. This may well be a permanent innovation as, thanks to the hardworking team of IT volunteers, we are able to include those unable to get to church.



Much of the year saw the resumption of the busy life of the St Thomas's. In April, St Thomas's marked the death of the Duke of Edinburgh.

On 20th June, the Rt Revd Nicholas Holtam, shortly to retire, came to St Thomas's to preside and to pronounce God's blessing on the new nave altar and all the work to the church and the organ. Rose Petal Sunday, our patronal festival, was observed on 4th July, and in the same months there were wedding ceremonies. A civic service took place in August.

In early September, after eighteen months, the Saturday and Tuesday coffee morning and bookstall events started up – much missed by many. St Thomas's was represented at Pride 2022, at the Sudan Fete and at the Charter Fair, and a harvest lunch was held. We welcomed Canon James Woodward of Sarum College as our preacher on All Saints Sunday. The full ceremonies of Remembrance Sunday were observed and Christmas was back to normal, the only concession to these curious times being a repeat of the Carols for Busy People service, one of the biggest in normal times, to ensure the church was not too full. Visitors were delighted at the resumption of the Christmas Tree Festival.



There were some developments among the clergy at St Thomas's. Canon Tom Clammer became a novice brother of the Anglican Order of Cistercians in March. The Rector was installed as a Canon of Salisbury Cathedral in May although at that stage was unable to sit in his prebend stall Winterbourne Earls because of covid restrictions.



On 26 June, the Revd Ali Alexander was ordained priest in the cathedral by the Bishop of Salisbury. She presided at the Eucharist the next day with Sr Val Legg CA preaching the sermon.

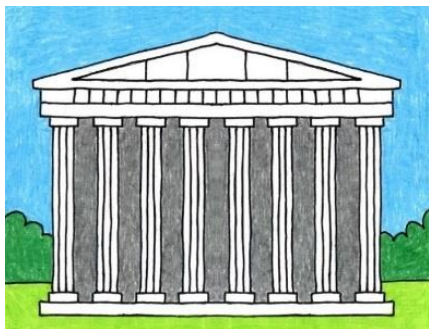


Never a church to avoid the limelight, St Thomas's appeared on prime time BBC1 in November when the Youtuber celebrity Joe Sugg learned that he was descended from a past vicar William Wapshare.

In November, the prestigious UK Church Architecture Awards took place and Salisbury's St Ann's Gate architects received the 2021 Presidents' Award for the project of renovation and re-ordering. Church architect Antony Feltham-King and project chair John Foster received the award from HRH The Duke of Gloucester at a ceremony at St Mary Magdalene's in Paddington. Particular mention was made of the way in which the works bring benefit to the local community.



As with many churches around the world, St Thomas's spent 2021 surviving in difficult circumstances, and then cautiously resuming its activities. Towards the end of the year, the Rector shared a paper that set out what we do in God's name, our strengths and weaknesses, and how we might direct our energies and resources.



Pediment	Inclusive Church Liturgical Tradition
Entablature	Finance Property Safeguarding
Columns	Charity City Culture Heritage Learning Pastoral Social Worship
Foundation	Prayer

The pediment reveals the distinctive characteristics of St Thomas's: inclusive and liturgical. The entablature holds the whole together and constitutes our essential tasks. The eight columns are the areas of activity that constitute our practical engagement with people in Christ's name. Finally, the foundation, of prayer, undergirds everything we do.

As the Christian community of St Thomas's emerges from these difficult times, we keep the words of St Paul to the Colossians close to our hearts.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Churchwardens' Report:

2021 started with such hope, we had enjoyed the wonderful Christmas services and enjoyed the brilliant new nativity scene.

Unfortunately, January brought yet another lockdown and all the restrictions that entailed. It felt like a case of 2 steps forward and 1 back.

Robert Lewis our verger took the opportunity of lockdown and closure to complete a host of jobs within the church.

Services restarted on 14th March, albeit only the Sunday 8am service. This was reviewed on a regular basis until normal services were resumed.

The streamed services were very well received, and many thanks should go to our amazing technical team, Ute our organist and John Dempster our Choir master who together with the clergy produced some wonderful services with an amazing array of photographs. The 10.15am service continues to be streamed and is greatly appreciated by those unable to attend in person.

The refurbished organ was revealed to all during a service in February, although its completion had been much delayed due to tragic circumstances.

The end of the ever-changing Covid 19 test and trace requirements during the year were met with some relief and although Covid 19 continues to be with us we have returned to some normality.

We have hosted various concerts and September saw the return of the coffee mornings and bookstall albeit with a slightly different layout. We are very grateful to all the teams for their adaptability during this time.

The return of the Christmas Tree Festival in person was achieved after a great deal of planning by the CTF committee and was a great success.

The dominance of the Omicron variant of Covid 19 during December gave us pause for thought and it was decided to limit the numbers attending the Candlelit Carol Service and the Carols for busy people to 200 (not including the choir). This enabled us to maintain social distancing. Fortunately, we did not have to turn anyone away.

We are very lucky to have numerous groups within the church who look after the very many aspects of our church activities, however there is a huge overlap of people on various committees. We need more volunteers to lighten the load to enable us to continue to offer all these activities. The coffee groups, bookstall, cleaning teams, flower arrangers, sidespeople, readers etc., all need your help. Please speak to one of the Churchwardens if you are able to help in any way.

Berenice Elliott & Michael Humphreys - Churchwardens

Safeguarding Report

Constant awareness and appreciation of the importance of safeguarding at St Thomas's continues, despite the pandemic and its restrictions.

Part of the year was inevitably spent keeping up with training, and many were able to do their Basic Awareness or Foundation course online via the Church of England training portal. For those unable to do their course in this way, a successful Foundation course was arranged on 12th July 2021. It took place in St Thomas's church so that social distancing could be maintained, and was led by Jonathan Whiter, the Diocesan Safeguarding Trainer and a very engaging speaker. 19 volunteers from St Thomas's attended and gained their certificates.

The Basic Awareness, Foundation and Leadership courses are all now available via the online training portal, although there are also a few face-to-face courses being arranged by the diocese.

Brian Sharpe continues sterling work as our Parish DBS Verifier, checking the identification documents for all those undergoing Disclosure and Barring Service checks.

As always, it is vital that we all look out for each other - more so now, than at any other time. If you have any concerns or queries, please contact one of the following:

- **Rosie Norman** or **Michael Humphreys** on 01722 322537 (Parish Office)
- or the Rector **Kelvin Inglis** on 01722 239463
- or email safeguarding@stthomassalisbury.co.uk

(your email will only be seen by a member of the Safeguarding Team).

Rosie Norman - Parish Safeguarding Officer

Adult Education Team:

The Adult Education Team exists to promote learning, discussion and spiritual growth among the congregation, and currently consists of Fiona Hulbert (Chair), Jill Britton, Wendy Pugh, Selina Deacon and Ian Alexander.

As in-person gatherings were not possible during Lent 2021 we organised two online courses. Selina led a six-week 'Pilgrim' course considering the Beatitudes, and Wendy led our first series of Bible Book Clubs, each one considering a whole book of the Bible (or a large part). A second series of online Bible Book Clubs were held in the summer making eleven sessions in the year.

In August, when gatherings were beginning again, Fiona and Kelvin each led a session of sharing 'lockdown stories', then Wendy gave an art-based presentation on 'Who was Judas?'

In September we were happy to be able to run a weekend at the Franciscan Hilfield Friary in Dorset, where a number of previous St Thomas's retreats have taken place. This was entitled 'Food for the Journey' and had a Celtic theme.

Fiona Hulbert

The Bellringers:

Times have been terrible for bellringing in the last couple of years, not just in Salisbury, because ringing was prohibited for a long time and then severely restricted by social distancing requirements. There are places where there has been a good recovery to advanced method ringing but many more where, as here, ringers have been lost to other hobbies that could continue during successive lockdowns and restrictions, some are not able to ring any more, and we have all got well out of practice. We have not been able to recruit and there has been lost availability of ringers owing to side effects of Covid such as delayed non-urgent operations.

The bells were lowered after ringing 5 of them for Christmas Day 2020 and they were not raised again until 3rd April 2021 to allow 5 bells to be rung for Easter Day. The tenor was tolled half muffled for the death and then the funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh. Ringing at 1 metre separation was resumed for the Sunday morning service on 23rd May with the next ringing for the farewell visit of Bishop Nicholas at a 4pm service on 20th June. Practice nights resumed on 15th July. Sunday morning service ringing and practices continued but there was no evensong ringing until the 6pm service on 24th October and it was patchy thereafter owing to a shortage of ringers. From the start of the pandemic, we have taken advantage of being able to open the windows and doors and create good ventilation in the ringing chamber but this does make it rather cold on occasions.

We rang for half an hour in the evening of 30th October for CoP26.

We continue to try to help ringing in the area by welcoming ringers from other local towers and in return acknowledge the help given by other local ringers who regularly support our service and practice ringing.

We did manage to ring for extra services before Christmas but we did not have enough to do the traditional ringing for the 08.00 service on Christmas morning. We continue to support the church with the monthly coffee mornings thanks to Penny's great organising and cake making. Once again, we were especially asked to do the Saturday morning of the Tree Festival because Penny makes us so well organised. We have continued to donate half the takings to the church.

We need more learners. We have three qualified Association of Ringing Teachers and are planning a recruitment drive. We are also working on ringing plans for the Queen's platinum jubilee.

Nigel Orchard – Tower Captain

Choir

Live services stopped at the beginning of 2021, but the choir continued to sing online due to the expertise of Ute Schwarting and Richard Laughton.

From Easter live services resumed with limited choir and from September we have been back to normal.

During this time Toby, William, Benjy, Cameron and Sam's voices changed.

Luckily, they are still participating in the choir and we thank them for their services as trebles. Elara, Benjy and Cameron gained the RSCM Bronze and Silver awards.

Special services included Faure's Requiem on Remembrance Sunday and Advent and Christmas Carol services. We have gained several new young members but would welcome more for the main choir and junior singers.

John Dempster – Director of Music

Christian Aid

With lockdowns thwarting so many activities in 2021, how were we going to do any fundraising for Christian Aid? The annual quiz moved from St Mark's to the internet, thanks to Zoom, and did well, raising £922 for Christian Aid.

By late Spring we were permitted to meet outside and Pip Carter, from the cathedral congregation, had the brilliant idea of a sponsored walk to Kenya. The distance (according to Google Maps) from Salisbury to the village in Kenya that was the focus for Christian Aid Week, was around 6000 miles. This was a hugely daunting prospect for one or two people, but could it be done over the month of May, with a whole gang of participants? Each walker would mark up their daily mileage on walks around Salisbury, Wiltshire and beyond, and Pip kept a tally. Even in late April we only had 30 walkers signed up, and it looked like we'd get only halfway to Kenya. But by the first week of May the walkers numbered 54, and the combined mileage began to mount up each week, taking the walkers (virtually) to Algeria, Niger and finally Kitui in Kenya. I had some wonderful walks with people ranged in age from their 50s to their 90s, from St Thomas's and other congregations. Between us we raised £6500, a great boost to Salisbury's Christian Aid Week efforts.

Last year we weren't permitted to knock on doors, but we did nevertheless deliver envelopes in a few streets, asking recipients to 'drop off' the filled envelopes to a central point, or trusted house in their street, or else give electronically. This worked fairly well, and we plan to expand it in 2022.

We organized a Christian Aid Summer Garden Party in August, which proved to be rather damp, but nevertheless a wonderful way to meet up and chat after all the months of lockdown.

The Young Christians Climate Network had organized to walk in relay from the G7 meeting in Cornwall to the COP 26 in Glasgow. Some of us donned our boots again and joined the group walking down the Woodford valley to Salisbury Cathedral on a very hot day in July. The presidency of COP is still with the UK during 2022, so we must continue to pressurize the government to prioritize action against climate change.

Clare Tawney

Christmas Tree Festival:

The 2021 Christmas Tree Festival – the seventeenth of its kind – was again a very popular and successful community event from 30th November to 5th December. It marked a welcome return to the church after the online Festival of the previous year and was the first Festival to benefit from the redeveloped interior of the church. We are so grateful to all the exhibitors, musicians, technicians, stewards, caterers, money counters and many other individuals who contributed their time and talents to the Festival. For the first time QR codes were available for people to access information about the exhibits on their phones, and iPads were in use for electronically accessing the music programme. Workshops were once more held in St Thomas's House for making Christmas wreaths and table decorations and were a much appreciated and enjoyable extension of the Festival.

At the Carols for Busy People Service on 22nd December the beneficiary charities, The Children's Society and the Wessex Stoma Support Group, each received a cheque for £4,440.06 as did St Thomas's general purposes fund.

Many thanks are due to the generosity of about 9,000 visitors to the Festival and to our sponsors for helping us to raise such a total.

Comments from the Visitors' Book:

An amazing Christmas Tree Festival – beautiful singing in a beautiful welcoming church. Thank you.

So uplifting – a great way to start Christmas. Love the new benches and restored floor.

Wonderful trees for everyone to see!

Gorgeous, well done – thanks to all who create a much-loved place.

Diane Emsley and John Cox, Christmas Tree Festival Co-organisers on behalf of the hard-working Festival Committee

Church Charities:

Two charitable funds are distributed under the auspices of the parish: (a) the St. Thomas & St. Edmunds Charity and (b) the parish's share of the Fricker Charity. The Trustees of the St. Thomas & St. Edmunds Charity are: The Rector, The Secretary, Nigel Orchard (Treasurer), Bobbie Chettleburgh and Martin Inglis. The Rector of St. Thomas's is the designated recipient and distributor of the parish's share of the Fricker Charity funds; he uses the St. Thomas's Charity trustees to advise him on distribution of the Fricker funds.

In June, Sally Vaughan retired as Secretary after serving since 2004 and we welcomed Bertie Ledingham as her replacement.

The St. Thomas & St. Edmund income comes from a Charities' Commission ethical fund (COIF) into which were consolidated the investments from 11 old charities. The St. Thomas & St. Edmunds Charity funds are restricted to the parish and to Bemerton Heath but, recognising the changes in demographics since 1982 when this charity was set up, the trustees have taken steps early in 2022 to enlarge the area to include the whole of the ecclesiastical deanery of Salisbury.

The income from the Fricker Charity (arising from the rental of a shop in Salisbury and distributed according to the terms of a will made in 1696) is passed equally to the rectors of St. Thomas's and St. Martin's and the trustees of The Trinity Hospital, Salisbury. The Fricker distribution area covers the ecclesiastical deanery of Salisbury.

Grants may be made to needy individuals or organisations serving the needy in the area of the two charities. The contact email is: StTCharities@btinternet.com or phone the parish office in the first instance.

In 2021, the St. Thomas & St. Edmunds Charity had an investment income of £4,065 and granted a total of £2,684. Covid restrictions and the need for maintenance of the shop meant that there was no Fricker Charity income received in the year. £1,069 was disbursed from accrued income. No expenses are incurred in the administration of these funds by the parish. Copies of the independently examined accounts are available on request. Covid restrictions also meant that business was conducted entirely by email.

Nigel Orchard - Treasurer

Coffee Mornings – Saturday:

In September 2021 Saturday morning coffee sessions resumed. Now coffee and cake is enjoyed in the church where it is light and there is plenty of room. At least twice a month, coffee mornings are held to raise money for St Thomas's.

Charities are encouraged to hold a coffee morning. They are charged for the use of the kitchen. If you would like to hold a coffee morning or know someone who works for a charity or would like to support one, please get in touch with me via the parish office or directly on 01722 328902.

If you would like to help occasionally do let me know. If you do not wish to hold a coffee morning or help, just come along to enjoy coffee and homemade cake, meet old friends and make new friends.

Brenda Whitehead

Contemplative Community:

Contemplative Community meets every Wednesday evening in St Thomas's House at 7.30.

We are a St Thomas's group that has been meeting every week for nearly seven years. Through lockdowns and other times when we have felt vulnerable, we met on Zoom but are delighted to be meeting in person again.

The idea of community is very important to of us, and it has been a joy to both give and receive support to those of us who have been in particular physical and emotional need.

In contemplation we seek to deepen our relationship with God; being in silence with others and trying to express to others our own walk with God is humbling, but also strengthening and enables personal growth in faith.

We have a consistent pattern of meetings: every other week we practice centering prayer. On the weeks in between we rotate between lectio divina, and a more general "community" meeting at which we might have a longer time of sharing or a discussion.

Although a group grounded in St Thomas's we also welcome members from other churches and denominations in Salisbury. At present we have 13 members and would welcome anyone who is interested in exploring spirituality and community.

Jill Britton

Flower Arrangers

It is a great pleasure for us to be back flower arranging in church again and we are looking forward to a number of weddings over the forthcoming months. As we respond to the need to become more environmentally friendly we are also preparing ourselves for the challenge of arranging without oasis.

Sadly, a number of our most experienced flower arrangers have decided to retire. They have collectively flower arranged for St Thomas's for over 125 years and we thank them sincerely for so many years of service - we will miss them very much indeed.

We would be delighted to hear from any enthusiastic arrangers who might be interested in joining our happy band of flower arrangers.

Jill Clark - St Thomas's Flower Arranging Supervisor

Olive Branch

Due to the pandemic the Olive Branch have not been able to meet regularly. However, when possible, we now meet from 2.30 pm in the afternoon on the second Thursday of the month in St. Thomas's House. This has proved to be very successful and welcomed by our members for an afternoon of tea and chat! We would be pleased to see any new ladies who would like to join us.

Jan Winterman

Praying Together:

Over the past year, the ministry of Praying Together has continued by way of email, because we have not met physically in the church building. I prepare the prayers and email them out to our members on a Monday in time for Tuesday morning, and we gather in our own homes at 10.00 am for 30 minutes.

We presently have 15 members who gather together for prayer. Emailing sits comfortably with us for the time being, and we hope to return into the church building in the future.

I wish to record my grateful thanks to the members of Praying Together for their continuing support and encouragement. The prayer ministry underpins our faith and we offer prayers for our congregation, the ministry team, our PCC and all involved in the life, work and mission of our church and for many other events within the Diocese and parish, and the world in general. We pray for people in need, those named on our parish prayer list, and we have the privilege and responsibility to offer the prayers placed upon the prayer board situated in the Lady Chapel.

We continue to see written prayer requests placed upon the prayer board by pilgrims, visitors and members of St Thomas's congregation, and we offer these written prayer requests on a weekly basis.

I would emphasise that all prayer requests are dealt with in confidence.

Again, we entered a Prayer Tree at the Christmas Tree Festival, and we had many prayers placed upon the Prayer Tree - hence a visible tangible sign of need.

Pat Inglis

Redevelopment Project Team:

2021 was a very frustrating year on the redevelopment project with little achieved. You can be forgiven for not knowing what we are still trying to achieve as so little has happened for some time. The remaining work includes replacing our existing font with a newly commissioned font by Matthew Burt in the central aisle in a similar style to his altar. We cannot have two fonts, so we have managed to find a church which would like our font in their newly refurbished Victorian building. The area in the southwest corner where our current font stands will have cupboards built round it to house the 150 chairs which are a back-up to our benches. A previous faculty was granted on the understanding that we would provide appropriate storage for the chairs so this is a requirement we must fulfil.

During 2021 Nigel Orchard has submitted several faculty applications to the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) for approval. Each one has been responded to with requests for further information or action on our part. In some cases this information had already been provided to the DAC. Each time this happens we are set back several months. By the time you read this we will have submitted yet another application which responds to all the requirements made of us last time round. All being well this will be considered at the next meeting of the DAC on 13th May. We really do feel that we will have given them absolutely everything they could possibly need in order to approve our application, so that we can then move on to the Chancellor for final approval with confidence.

John Foster

Website:

A New Website for St Thomas's

St Thomas's website is its electronic shop front window, telling the world what we are about, what we've done in the past, what we're doing now and what we hope for the future. In 2021 the Communications Sub-committee, chaired by Rob Lewis, agreed that it was time for a fresh, post-lockdown show window, and asked me, as website editor, to build a new website, which went live in July.

The new design follows these principles:

- St Thomas's current and future activities are on the main pages, while links to its past are below, in the footer;
- The Home page's 3-column layout groups St Thomas's activities under its 3-part strap line "Welcoming - Praying - Transforming";
- The right-hand sidebar has links to all current documents and livestreaming;
- The Home page shop window leads visitors to pages on See what's on, Get involved, Support us and Safeguarding;
- The screen display layouts are "responsive" - they change to look their best for the device being used: desktop/laptop, tablet or phone;
- Its user-friendly WordPress software can be updated by non-technical people.

The website currently has 31 pages and, on average per month, is attracting about 2,400 unique visitors, who are making 4,400 visits. About nine per cent of visitors are from the United States, and Sunday is the most popular day for accessing the website. The annual running costs are about £50, a tenth of the previous website costs.

Steve Hoffman – website editor



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