

Ministry Reports

APCM 2024



Children's and Families - Lauren Harrison

We have seen God move in so many ways within our children's and families ministry this year! We have seen children praying for each other and laying hands on each other and praying for healing, resulting in children being healed! Children have been hearing from God for themselves in kids work and in church during the first part of worship and experiencing His presence.

We have had 8 new volunteers join the kids team, and a growth in the sense of community and friendship amongst the kids team. We've had great times of prayer as team, kids team lunches and training, and kids team socials.

We have also run many successful events where we have seen many of those who aren't part of St Marks or any church at all, attend. We ran a Light Party in October with over 95 in attendance! We ran an Easter Egg Hunt followed by a celebration at St Marks with 76 children and 57 adults, two thirds of which aren't part of our church community. We've run two

successful half term clubs, a craft club and a movie club and saw a great deal of visitors at both. We also launched a stay and play 'Mini Marks' in September which has been running successfully since, with lots of local community attending and visitors who aren't part of St Marks. We have also seen a growth of new families at St Marks which has been really exciting!

Connect Groups - Rachel King

It continues to be a privilege to oversee Connect Groups this year and to see people being able to connect in with others outside of the main gatherings on a Sunday. Around 200 people are in connect groups currently, with many others joining our termly groups throughout the past year. This brings me so much joy to think of the connections and communities that have been and are being built! We are so thankful to connect group leaders who offer this space for people to gather.

We continue to run two types of connect groups. Community groups continue to be the place where members of St Marks can hang out, laugh and go deeper together as they study God's word and pray for one another. These groups are very popular. Many have been full since sign up opened and others with seemingly endless elastic walls to absorb more and more members! We are grateful for the Scholar's/Jones group multiplying and for Laura and Sandeep planting a new group in Earlsdon out of that. What has been created and has been so precious to many has been replicated so others can experience the joy of belonging.

Activity groups are a place of connection but not intentionally discipleship and are places where people can gather together around a hobby or interest. They are still the easiest invites to friends and family members as a first step to introduce them to St Marks (and ultimately Jesus, we pray!). Was great to see the community choir perform at Christmas at St Marks and go "on tour" to Wyken.

Whilst I hear and witness the power of connect groups in people's lives, it is frustrating that people that want to be in connect groups cannot always find a space. We would love to have more connect groups - still underpinned by our values and carrying our St Marks DNA - so many that all of them have some space for new people to connect in who join **us throughout the year.**

In order to support the growth of the church and to enable greater support and discipling we will be introducing Hubs in September which are groups of Connect Groups brought together under Hub leaders. We are excited about what God will do through this restructuring as we head into the next year.

St Marks Academy - Jonny Davies

At St. Marks Academy we develop missionary leaders with hearts, hands and heads alive to God. This is a key way in which we are a resource church for our city and region, sending out leaders who are going to be part of the next great moves of God in our neighbourhoods and beyond! Here's some stats on the past year at St. Marks Academy:

- 9 students graduated, and this year we have 16 students, of which 12 are new students on the programme, including 4 who transferred from Gas Street Academy when that closed.
- Jonny Davies began working full time as the Academy Leader, under the continued direction of Rachel Atkinson, Academy Principal, and he focuses on pastoring Academy students, leading the formation part of the programme, and strengthening partnerships with other churches.
- 3 new partner churches have come on board for 2024/25: St Laurence Foleshill, St James Styvechale, and CLM Church, enabling us to teach and develop more apprentices across our region.
- 78% of students responding to our Term 1 survey told us that their relationship with God has become stronger since starting the year, and of the half of students who have already completed the Term 2 survey, 87% told us their relationship with God had become stronger during Term 2.
- In our Term 1 survey 85% of students said they were growing in confidence, and 85% said they felt more hope for the future than they ever have.

Here's what a couple of our students have said about their experience so far this year: "The academy year has given me the community that I really needed. It has also been a safe place for me to grow and develop... The things taught in the teaching... have really stayed with me. It has been vital too for me to develop healthily in my thinking..."

"[It] makes me wonder why more young Christians are not being exposed to this stuff - it's a real privilege."

We would love to find those in our church family who have a heart to invest in the next generation of Christ-loving leaders, especially to support us in prayer. If that's something you'd like to get involved in, contact Jonny at jonny.davies@stmarkscoventry.org. We've recently revamped our Academy website and launched a new promo video to help us recruit more students and you can find both at www.stmarks.academy. Our biggest prayer need is recruiting future students, so please join us in praying that God would send us those He's preparing to be sent out!

Operations - Fiona Laycock

The past 12 months have been marked by significant improvements within our operational function, ensuring the well-being of our staff and congregation members, maintaining, and improving our facilities and fostering community engagement. Key highlights include:

HR:

- **Recruitment of Essential Ministry Leaders:** We successfully recruited dedicated leaders for crucial ministries within our church community, including a Children & Families Ministry Leader, a Youth Ministry Leader, and a Student Ministry Apprentice. These appointments have strengthened our ability to serve various age groups effectively.
- **Policy Development:** Essential policies have been implemented to safeguard our staff and community, including the complete review of a Lone Working Policy and a Data Protection Policy. These policies ensure compliance with legal requirements and promote a safe working environment.
- **Induction Process Enhancement:** A new comprehensive and online induction process was developed and implemented for all new staff members, streamlining the onboarding process, and providing valuable resources to new team members.
- **Maternity Policy Revision:** Our statutory maternity policy was reviewed for the first time and enhanced to ensure fairness and support for staff members during their maternity leave.

Facilities:

- **Fabric Works:** Various major and minor works were carried out as outlined in the fabric report, ensuring the safety and functionality of our building.
- **Waste Contract:** A change in waste management contract was implemented to improve our waste disposal process.

Parking Arrangements: In response to the implementation of new council parking fees & time limitations, the church secured free use of the Eden School car park, providing much-needed parking space for our congregation, helping to safeguard the prayer ministry & community time following our Sunday services.

Health & Safety:

The Operations Department reviewed health and safety measures to protect our staff, volunteers, and congregation members:

- **Fire Warden Training:** Online and in-house fire warden training sessions have been conducted to better equip designated personnel with the necessary skills to handle emergency situations effectively.

Operations - Fiona Laycock

Events:

Two key engaging events were organised by our operation department over the past year to foster community engagement and support charitable causes:

- **Charity Ball for Coventry Food Bank:** A successful charity ball was held to raise funds for the Coventry Food Bank, generating an impressive sum of £3235. A huge thank you must be given to all those who attended and donated, demonstrating St Mark's commitment to see the city of Coventry flourish! Thank you also to Neil Phipps who did an incredible job hosting the fundraising auction.
- **HTB Focus and Community Gatherings:** Our church community participated in HTB Focus, a spiritually enriching weekend away at Newark Showground, where we connected with other churches and deepened our faith through seminars and fellowship. Additionally, we organized various community gatherings, including sports days, festival celebrations, and karaoke sessions, fostering a sense of belonging and joy among our members.

Finance:

- **Essential Recruitment:** Recently, volunteer Finance Administrator, David Markham, has been safely recruited to assist with book-keeping tasks. This will release our Operations and Finance Manager, Fiona Laycock, into a greater strategic oversight of our financial functions.

Fiona would like to give special thanks to all of those who assisted in making the above achievements and improvements happen, including HR Group members; Nicola Lowe and Joy Sellars, Buildings

Group Chairmen and members; Andy Bavester, Matt Lancaster, and Laurence Wickens, garden hands Rob and Katy Hazelgrove and Isobel Wickens, who continues to support the operations department in the 'unnoticed' but integral day-to-day tasks.

Youth - Ros Ginn

This year we have seen God moving in some incredible ways in our youth work here at St Marks. We have launched a regular Youth Worship Night on a Friday night, which has been such a big hit. Many of our young people have opted in to those nights, expectant that God is going to move in our worship. We have seen young people grow in faith and confidence to lead worship, and young people encountering the Holy Spirit through prayer ministry at these events too.

Another new thing this year has been our Older Youth Tea and Toast. Still in its infancy, this has been a good way to connect with those in school years 9-13, and then the opportunity to be part of the evening service together is beautiful. There seems to have been a great impact on some of our youth in worshipping alongside students and young adults at the 6pm gathering.

The youth weekend away was a moment of incredible impact on many of our young people. With 3 young people bravely sharing words or pictures that they felt God had put on their hearts, and older youth stepping into praying for others during prayer ministry time. One beautiful moment over the weekend was watching as God showed one of the older girls his kindness and overwhelming love, as she was struggling with self-doubt and stress around exams. On the final day of the weekend away, we joined forces with the students for a big worship time. It was amazing watching these young people dancing around, praising Jesus. Two young people shared words or pictures for the whole room during that time as well which was fantastic, and one of our young people joined the band with the students.

In the January term we started youth Alpha on Sunday mornings, **where we have seen conversations deepen, and so importantly some parents have fed back that many of those conversations have been continued at home with enthusiasm! We have seen a lot of friendships (new and long-standing) deepen and flourish at Friday Night Youth socials, and a really exciting atmosphere of expectation of what God has in store next.**

Youth City Praise and Prayer.... I'm writing this before it has happened but I LOVE that so many of our youth are so excited for it, and that the event has reached full capacity.

Worship - Andy Shelton

Thank you to each person who serves the church each week through Worship & Production, at 10:30am, 6pm, and various activities throughout the week. There are now around 60 people who are part of the team. My 2 main focuses of the year have been establishing Worship for Everyone in the morning service and re-energising creativity in the team through songwriting.

Firstly we've established a healthy All Age worship culture in the morning. The vision is for everyone to encounter God together. It's been great to see families worshipping together, and seeing the congregation as a whole own the space together. I think it is helping us step into more freedom and joy in worship and is making space for younger generations to discover the joy of worshipping Jesus.

Secondly, we've been gathering the team monthly to work collaboratively on new song ideas. I've loved seeing a new enthusiasm for songwriting, and we're starting to see the fruits of it now. We have 4-5 ideas from different people now starting to be used in services, songs like; 'At The Foot Of The Cross', 'By Grace Alone', and 'Sinless Saviour'.

Other highlights I'll briefly mention are the joint St. Marks & Wyken Christmas Choir, starting monthly worship at Youth to train up youth to lead worship and enjoy God's presence together, installing new staging (thanks Andy Thatcher),

Lent; worshipping in the round and Encounter Room prayer and worship, and the workshops we've run train and develop the team.

Final thanks to Edwyn who has been interning with me this year. His service and passion for worship have helped make many of these things possible and it has been wonderful seeing him develop as a worship leader this year.

Students - Naomi Meek

At the very core of the community that we have seen develop in Students this year is a real readiness to love: to love God and love people. As a result, the dynamic cultivated is one of joy-filled unity focussed on pursuing the Lord together. We have seen each student propelled into an increased depth of personal discipleship, with an excited openness in worship and longing to learn. This tone has set the foundation of our Tuesdays together; now an established alternating rhythm of larger Student Night gatherings and student-led connect groups meeting across the city. This community of 50-70 students (from Warwick, Coventry and Nexus universities) has formed into such a Jesus-centric space of genuine friendship and boldness in their faith.

It is no surprise that their openness and expectancy to the move of the Spirit is giving much room for God's presence and power at work. We thank God for the encouraging stories of Him speaking, healing, freeing, and revealing Himself to us this year. We particularly praise Him for the time of powerful encounter we experienced on our Student Weekend Away together. In the posture of 'Here I am', we began by purposefully setting ourselves apart for Him. We left with the incredible testimony of every student having heard the voice of God and experiencing His closeness. For some, this was new spiritual gifts awakened (listening prophetically for one another; speaking in tongues; freedom in worship). For others, it was discovery of a new-found confidence in God's truth and discernible clarity in His words speaking over them. The beautiful diversity of what we saw the Spirit do amongst us is truly testament to God's goodness in our midst.

Such grace of His presence has also been evident within the living has also been evident within the living room-context of our connect groups, enriching our conversations and learning together whilst we **have been exploring the spiritual practices of fasting and solitude.**

We have been amazed at the eager devotion of the students as they build this intentionality of relationship with God into their weeks. Altogether, we see God raising up the next generation of leaders - empowered with an all-out devotion to Jesus, they have faith that is expectant and hearts that are receptive. We pray that the culture and connection we have seen grow at St Mark's students is one that continues to be sent out on to each of these university campuses.

Social Action - Nathan Leigh

Over the past year there has been some movements forward in how we are engaging in social action. Keeping with the commitment to tithe 10% of our churches income, the missional committee lead by Dave Stoker have been working hard at expanding the variety of organizations and individual missionaries that we are supporting. In particular we are now partnering with Sharon Jones in Latin America, whilst maintaining our support for Embrace, Carriers of Hope and CAP.

The World Food Hub has continued to meet food poverty needs in our city. There is a strong cohort of volunteers from St Marks, but we would love to see more regular volunteers. Over the past year the financial burden of the project has increased for Carriers of Hope and it has been noted that many of the clients actually don't need the subsidized food package anymore. In the near future the team are reorientating how the projects infrastructure works to maintain the project and release the dependency culture that has started to creep in.

We have started to run CAP money courses throughout **the year to help people budget responsibly so that they don't run into financial hardship or long term debt. We have seen numbers increase over the two terms, reaching 10 attendees in our most recent course.**

We are also developing two new projects targeting homelessness and mental health in the city. Both projects are in development phases as we discern what God is calling us to do in the future.