



St Laurence's
Church

Annual Review 2024

Parish of Foleshill St Laurence
Diocese of Coventry



St Laurence's Church in Spring © Rea Verdon 2024

Annual Review 2024

for the **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** of St Laurence's Foleshill
held on Sunday 11th May 2025

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Vicar's Report

Revd. Gareth Irvine

Vicar St Laurence's Foleshill



'This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace.' (Colossians 1:6)

In Paul's letter to the Colossians, he writes to encourage the young church of the power of the gospel that is alive and at work within them – changing their lives, and through them, impacting the people and world around them. He commends them on their love for others that they have received as a gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is this same love – this extraordinary, God given, deeply compassionate and urgent desire for all people, made in God's image, to live lives 'worthy of the good news' that sustains and overflows through all of the activities, groups and acts of sacrificial service that are reflected in this year's annual report; which I commend you to read, celebrate and hold in prayer.

As a church, we meet every Sunday morning at 10.30 for worship with Sunday Club for our primary aged Children, and spent part of 2024 focusing on and learning from the teaching from Colossians. On the last Sunday of the month we meet All-Together for Family worship in the Church Hall. Our Tuesday community Connect, led by Rea and Kate continues to every Tuesday during term-time. Encounter continues to evolve and has met several times a term in 2024, welcoming members from other churches across the deanery and mission hub. In September, we hosted the first Regional City Praise & Prayer for the North & East region, supported by Coventry Vineyard and St Marks' Coventry.

Changing patterns in regular Sunday worship attendance from our worshipping community have presented us challenges in resourcing worship, children's work and hospitality; especially as under 18's represent almost half of our worshipping community – demonstrating our commitment to welcoming, developing and growing faith amongst children in our church, schools and homes. Our pastoral lead Chris continues to stay in contact with members who are not presently able to worship with us in person, maintaining those vital links.

On the staff team, we welcomed Revd. Kate Pellereau as Mission Hub Associate at her licensing in February 2024, and it has been wonderful to have her as part of the team and her family as part of the church. Revd. Becca Henney was ordained Priest in July and continues to serve as a Curate in the parish. Rea Verdon began training for ordination in September, and although she has stepped back from the Family Link Worker Role and from PCC, she continues to serve in lots of ways as part of her context-based training.

The PCC has met bi-monthly and considered amongst other things finance, safeguarding, staff pay and conditions, fabric repairs and safety work in the church, and in 2024 the quinquennial inspection was completed – a big thank you to our wardens Chris & Ben for all their ongoing work helping us look after our building.

Our relationship with St Laurence's Primary School continues to grow, with Kate P, Thea and myself serving as Foundation Academy Governor members and assisting with leading and supporting Collective Worship and the Spiritual life of the school. In the autumn of 2024, the school received very positive SIAMS and Ofsted judgements, a testimony and reflection of the strong culture and community which exists between everyone in the school community. Following the award of low-income communities funding for St Laurence's & St Paul's from the Diocese, we are hoping to build on the work of the Family Link Worker by appointing a Growing Faith Leader across both parishes in 2025. One highlight for me has been to see the growing partnership and fruitfulness between the school, the church and iSingPop, who helped us put on a fantastic Christmas concert in the church.

Thank you to everyone who is part of our church, who contribute every week to beautiful, often messy and sometimes painful ministry that is Christ's body incarnate:

'We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light'. (Colossians 1:11-12)

With love,

Growing Faith: Children, Families & Schools

Rea Verdon – Family Link Worker

As most of you will know, I am no longer the St Laurence's Family Link Worker as I have been recommended to train for Ordination in the Church of England. I resigned the position in August of 2024 after nearly 7 years in the role. Until that point, the role had continued to be joyful and fruitful, and I am looking forward to the newly redefined role of Growing Faith Leader being filled soon. This new leader will be working not only with St Laurence's church and school but with St Paul's Foleshill too.

During 2024 I continued to run groups in St Laurence's school, including Little Stars stay and Play, a gardening group and life skills group, these were attended by children from the school and families from the local area. It fills me with happiness that these groups continued through the autumn term after I left, with thanks to the people who were willing to step into leading them.

I am so very grateful for the support of the PCC and the church over the last 7 years, and especially through this year of transition in 2024. I will continue to pray for the new Growing Faith Worker role to be filled quickly.

Ecochurch

Rea Verdon – Eco Lead to PCC

UPDATE THIS TO REFLECT SILVER AWARD?

2023: Last year St Laurence's signed up to be part of the National Eco Church project and we were quickly awarded the Bronze Award (the first in our Deanery!) and we are continuing to work towards the Silver Award.



Youth & Young People

Rea Verdon – Ordinand

The last year has had a number of changes in our children's and youth work at St Laurence's.

Our weekly youth groups, TT's and JJ's went from being held as home groups to meeting in the church hall, with the two groups sharing a meal in the middle of the two sessions. Over the summer TT's, the older youth group, drew to a natural close as some of the teenagers aged out and the others began new seasons of life in new education settings.

It was decided that I would take over the overall leadership of the JJs group that Gareth had been leading as part as my new training placement, and along with Ben Verdon, Becca and James Henney, the group restarted in September. The group is a lively mix of 11-14 year olds at different stages of their faith journeys, we meet each Thursday and share a meal, play games and have gentle faith conversations. The first term was all about getting to know the young people and build relationships with them but when the opportunity arose to take them to City Praise and Prayer in September we arranged to take a few of them and they had a wonderful time. There are plans for further evangelistic events for them in 2025.

I have continued to be involved in the children's worship on Sundays and there have been a number of changes in team and the approach to teaching. We continue to teach the same sermon series to the children as in the adult services to allow families to continue talking and learning together at home. As ever, there is a large range of ages and learning styles in our children's group and we continue to work to improve the sessions to make them more accessible for everyone so that they all get the opportunity to not only learn about Jesus but to encounter Him.

Please continue to pray for the young members of our church, they are wonderful and a vibrant part of our community!

Prayer in Riley Square

Revd. Rebecca Henney - Curate

At Pentecost 2024, a team of St Laurence's volunteers went into the square to hand out chocolates, sing songs and hand out invitations to a barbecue to people they encountered. The invite also had a prayer of blessing on it. The reception in the square was wonderful, lots of people took chocolates, leaflets, and many even stopped for a chat! Several people came along to the community barbecue which was held at St Laurence's that afternoon.

Things have been much quieter since then, but in February a small group of people formed to pray for the square regularly, which has been wonderful so far.

Behind the scenes, we are still praying about a more long term project in the square. Conversations with the council are ongoing, and the Diocese has been supporting us in those conversations. We are very hopeful that we might have an update on this before the autumn comes!

Hope Hub

Laura Edmunds – Hope Hub Manager

In April 2025, St Laurence's Hope Hub will have just celebrated its 5th Birthday. We initially opened the foodbank due to the worldwide pandemic and now we are all living through the cost-of-living crisis.

St Laurence's hope Hub is still reaching out to families and single Adults within the community and beyond, supporting them with Emergency Food, Support, Fuel Vouchers Referrals, Safe Space, Signposting and creating a Warm Space for people to come and have somewhere warm to stay, eat and drink as well as offering a charging point and Databank. St Laurence's Hope Hub is incredibly lucky to have Ian and Nadine from CAP who joins us each week to help our service users with Debt Support, Iris who comes along twice per month from Coventry City Council Job Shop and new to our Foodbank is Louise from CAB. St Laurence's is based within the Northeast of Coventry and is reported to be one of the top Wards who suffer with poverty.

We have been working closely with the Food Bank to provide food, cleaning, laundry, and hygiene packs as well as safely recruiting volunteers for our existing team. From previous secured grants we purchase have a delivery from Fareshare which consists of assorted items including, cooked and uncooked meats, ready to make meals, fresh fruit and vegetables, bread, biscuits, crisps, cheese, and yogurts to name just a few. As a team we believe that everyone should have healthy additional produce to their parcels. St Laurence's Hope Hub was open every Tuesday from 12.30pm to 2.30pm.

In July 2023 the original process was put back into place regarding Food Vouchers, 3 Vouchers within 6 months, this was due to the Foodbank

warehouse becoming dangerously low on stock, this has now changed again due to the cost of living which is really taking it's toll on the country and especially within the community, and the limit is now 6 within 6 months. There were some difficult conversations had with service users, however we were lucky enough to be able to offer food from our Fareshare at times. We have seen an increase in service users within the past few months and needing to order more food parcels on average about 20 per week.

In December 2024 St Laurence's Hope Hub arranged and funded a Christmas Dinner for 45-50 people, along with a hamper raffle (all free of charge) and gave out around 50 Christmas Hampers, particularly targeted at families within the community and service users. We were lucky enough to retain a grant from Coventry General Charities where we could purchase activity packs, games, soft toys and sweet treats as well as a local company called Elemental Consulting Group kindly donated food which included Mince Pies, Condiments, Selection Boxes, Tinned Meats, Tinned Fruit to name a few, without these generous acts of kindness we would not been possible to reach out to families who were worried about the basics over Christmas.

St Laurence's Hope Hub have provided support to a number of people ranging from single person households up to larger households, some of which could have up to 7 children and 2 adults occupying I am genuinely proud to say that with our continued efforts and "can do" attitude we have fulfilled 640 vouchers and fed approx. 1300 people from 1st April 2024 to date.

St Laurence's Hope Hub has continued to grow from strength to strength, and we are looking forward to the future and expanding our services and currently have a funding bid in with National Lottery Fund for a substantial amount of money so we can continue to support service users with additional resources. This would have not been possible without our wonderful, dedicated team

which consists of 10 people. Mick, Vivek, Ellen Ian & Charlotte in the back putting away deliveries and getting parcels ready for service users, Millicent & Sue in the Kitchen and bagging up Fruit & Vegetables, June, setting up, refilling refreshments, Dawn on Vouchers and Chris on welcome. I get involved with everything, talking to the service users, making calls on their behalf, being around in any area which needs help. Big massive shout out and thank you.

Safeguarding

Chris McKirdy – Parish Safeguarding Officer

Chris McKirdy and Laura Edmunds have continued to work on Safeguarding as part of their roles within St Laurence's. Chris McKirdy is the Safeguarding Officer and Laura Edmunds manages the Safeguarding Administration.

We use the Safeguarding Dashboard which is updated on a regular basis. We have only a few tasks outstanding, one of which is something that we are awaiting an update on and the additional are for the risk assessments for church activities. Overall, the Dashboard monitoring safeguarding actions is mainly on the Green for Good and on a 77% Progress rate. In addition to the Dashboard there was a Safeguarding Hub introduced in the later part of 2024, this is to improve all safeguarding training and DBS notifications i.e. when staff team, PCC and Volunteers need to update.

We have had no safeguarding reports throughout 2024.

Electoral roll

Laura Edmunds - Electoral roll Officer

There are XX people in the Church Electoral Roll.

Of this:

- XX people reside within the parish
- XX reside outside of the parish.

2025 saw the formation of a new roll, where existing and new members both had to apply to join again.

Fabric & buildings

Ben Verdon – Churchwarden

Gayer Street

The church's rental house on Gayer Street has had the tenancy renewed with the same tenant. They seem to be happy in their home and are looking after the property and keeping it clean and tidy.

This year's gas and electrical safety checks have been carried out and except for a minor electrical observation to be rectified (due to updated requirements) no other issues have been identified.



The letting agent advise that the property is still being well kept, clean and tidy.

- *The previous repair needed to the door into the front room has been completed.*
- *There has been a small leak on the boiler which was dealt with and repaired on the same day it was reported. We have been told that there is a small area of the living room ceiling with water staining from the leak but have not been given any more information yet. This will come through on the next letting agent inspection.*

Hall

The hall is generally in a good condition. We had a small leak on the roof due to a broken roof tile, but this has been replaced, and the hall is now water tight again.

In the last report a question had been raised about providing CCTV to the hall, the existing equipment is past its serviceable life so cannot be utilised. It may be beneficial if we could look for funding to provide CCTV coverage to the hall, garden and car park as this would help with continued

security and help to cut down on antisocial behaviour and fly tipping in the car park.

Church

Faculties

Heating: The submitted faculty for the heating replacement with an air-to-air heat pump has been approved and signed off by the DAC and Chancellor. We have however been in discussion about changing this proposal to a far infrared radiant heater system. This system is significantly cheaper to install but does have slightly higher running costs. We are currently exploring options for this and are trying to arrange a visit to All Saints Church in Leek Wootton to view a similar system they have had installed.

If we were to proceed with the original air to air system, we are required to submit a full planning application with heritage statement to the council to gain approval for the positioning of the external condenser units.

Quinquennial Inspection.

The required Quinquennial Inspection for the church was carried out on the 24th April by Rodney Melville + Partners Ltd the architects who carried out the previous inspections.

They were happy with the progress being made in terms of certification and compliance; thank you to everyone who helped during their time on site and in getting reports and paperwork ready for them.

Mission Hub

Rev Kate Pellereau – Associate Minister



On February 2nd Kate was licensed to her role at St Laurence's and the Mission Hub. She and Gareth got to work on their flight plan, praying and discerning what God was calling them to do together with the mission hub. Throughout the year we continued meeting monthly with missionally minded local leaders. In the summer and autumn we held these at breathing space in Allesley. On average around 10 people join us. We spend time in fellowship over lunch and then have a discussion around some aspect of mission. Becca and James Henney continued to lead Encounter for the first part of the year to support these leaders.

Something we wanted to do this year was to support one big evangelistic event. This happened partly on Pentecost when we split as a church and some people went to Riley square to worship and speak to people, inviting them to come to a barbecue at church, and then secondly it happened at the Nativity Live! event which happened at St Laurence's school. We used some of our budget to hire some nativity animals to the school grounds, and then invited everyone over to church to have a hot dog and hear a short message about Christmas.

We launched Greenhouse in September. This is a missional incubator where missionally excited local leaders come along for content and are then coached in how to work with what God is doing in their area. We have $\frac{3}{4}$ groups attending, the next Hub meeting is in May. Becca, Kate and a curate from Bulkington are the facilitators alongside Gareth Fitzpatrick from the diocese. We each have a group to coach between the sessions and have been meeting up with them and offering prayer and support.

The final thing we have been working on is recruitment of a Growing Faith worker. We have been given some money to recruit someone in our deanery. We spend the summer and autumn working on the job description between us and then began the recruitment process. The role will be based with us, but

then spread across us and St Pauls' Foleshill with the hope that in time some work might happen in the parish of St Thomas' Longford. Think of the role as the development from the role of family link worker. The job will be based in schools building connections across school, family and church.

Deanery Synod

Ann Weitzel - Deanery Lay Chair

This year the Deanery has met 3 times. It is a real privilege to be on synod and get to know the other churches

Clergy movements over the year were- Arriving Rev Sarah Ashelby at All Saints Allesley, Rev Kate Pellereau who has joined St Laurence as the Associate Minister at the Mission Hub. Leaving- Rev Mathew Bull (Curate at St Pauls- to be vicar at Willenhall in Cov East) Rev Rosalind Murphy (retiring from St Thomas Longford.

During 2024 the new Radford Parish (a merger of St Francis and St Nicholas) was completed (only about 20 years after it was proposed) St Nicholas is now a footprint parish- currently still in interregnum, but being looked after by Rev Dexter Bracey from St John's.

Every meeting has had updates on

- Finances – where David Fletcher keeps us up to date with Parish Share requirements- the Annual Treasurers & Incumbents meeting held in November agreed parish share contributions with little problem this year.
- Eco Church- Where Rev Charlotte Jackson continues to encourage us to take action towards the net zero 2030 target.

A brief summary of the meetings in 2024 is as follows.

February (St Paul's Foleshill): Acting Bishop Ruth spoke to the title 'A couple of thoughts'- Ones I remember were

- A question for all of us: what makes us feel welcome? How do we take that to our context.
- Recognizing where Jesus has gone before us, where God is already at work. Takes boldness and hard work on our part.
- Encouragement to continue to do what we do well, with prayerful watchfulness for opportunity.
- Colossians 3:12: ... clothing ourselves with compassion ... and be thankful.

Rev Kate Pellereau Associate Minister at the Mission Hub. She spoke about her new project, the “North Coventry Greenhouse”, a resource to help us grow and cultivate mission in our parishes/

June (St Laurence’s): This meeting took the form of a prayer and praise evening with parishes sharing good news to give thanks for and areas for prayer. We also focused on prayer for the wider deanery things- Eco church, serving the marginalised, finances, evangelism & reimagining parish mission, children and young people,

October (St Luke’s Holbrooks): Sarah Price, Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor provided an overview of the new standards and we looked at a document on “Promoting a Healthy and Safe Culture” which outlined the characteristics of healthy and safe churches. Two questions were brought back to PCC.

- What are the main strengths of the church culture?
- What are the main weaknesses of the church culture?

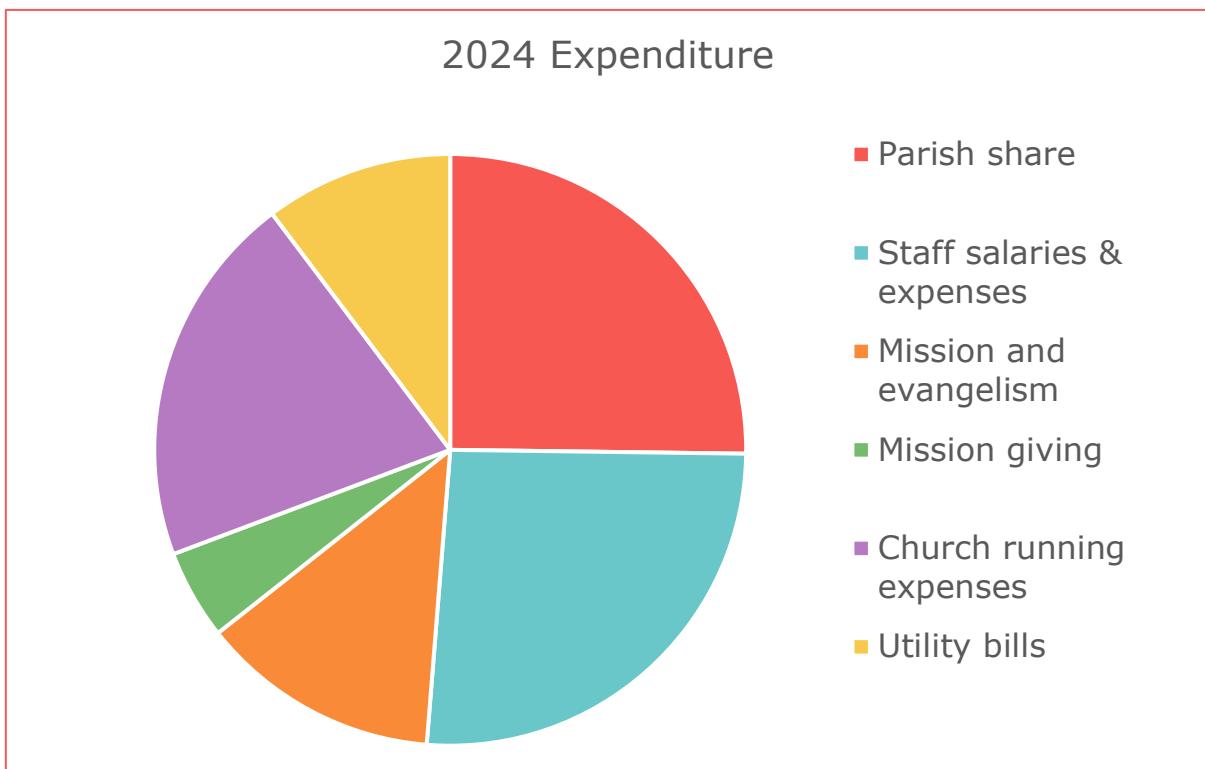
The St Laurence’s Deanery Synod representatives are Rea Verdon and Michelle Goodson-McDonald.

Finance

Margaret Locke-Wheaton – Treasurer

Finance

In this annual review you will be able to read about the many good things that St Laurence’s has been able to achieve during 2024. There have been various costs involved in doing these and our total expenditure for the year was £121,009.



Around 25% of our expenditure was our Parish Share. This contributes to the cost of the clergy that are provided by the diocese. Another 25% of our expenditure was for other staff costs – the salaries of the Family Link Worker, Administrator and Cleaner plus clergy costs (like travel, phone and broadband) that the parish is responsible for paying. We are fortunate to have a large staff team at St Laurence’s and we need to continue to meet these costs.

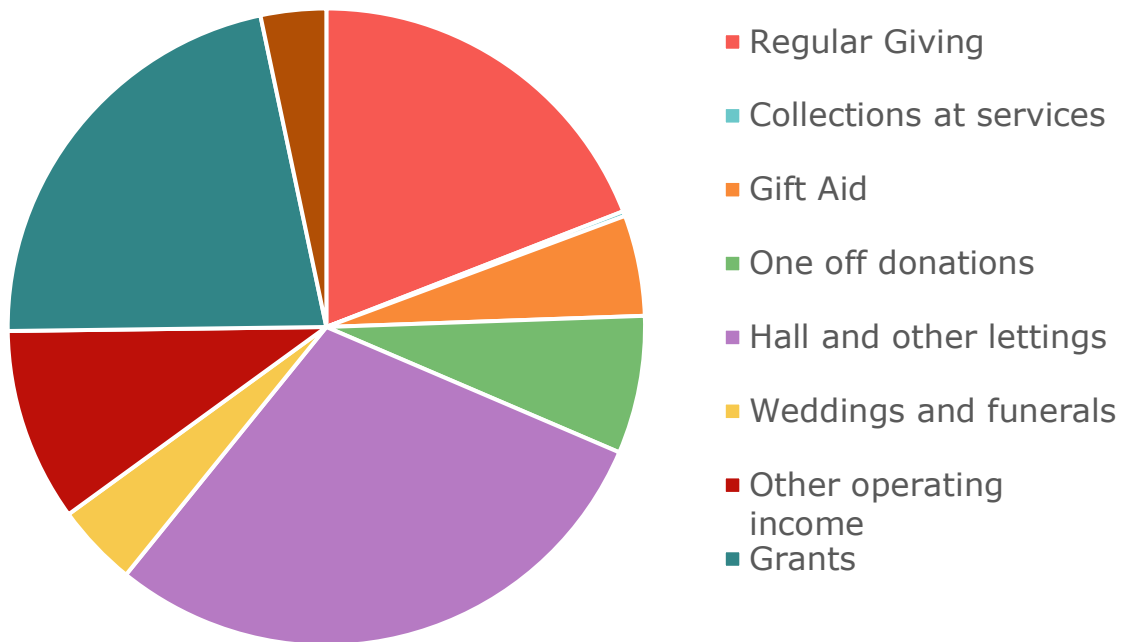
Another significant part of our expenditure (30%) is for the upkeep of our buildings. Utility bills continue to be high and some significant repairs to the church electrical

system and the lightening conductor were needed during the year on top of the normal day-to-day running costs for our church and hall.

In 2024 we were able to focus 13% of our expenditure specifically on supporting mission and evangelism activities (like worship services, the Hope Hub, Mission Hub, Connect and youth work), and we also gave just under £6,000 to support other charities who help us carry out our aims.

We are grateful to everyone who helps provide the money we need to pay for all these costs. Our total income during 2024 was £111,977.

2024 Income



Just over 30% of our income in 2024 came from donations, mainly from members of our congregation. We currently have 16 people who give regularly, plus a number of others who use the CollecTin or contribute to the loose cash collections, and we are able to claim Gift Aid on many of these donations. Thank you for all your gifts, whether large or small, that contribute this. Well done.

Another 1/3 of our income came from grants and income we received for specific aspects of our work. During 2024 we received a grant of £20,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund that will cover most of the costs of running the Hope Hub for the next 2 years. We also received grants from the diocese for the Mission Hub and the school contributed to the salary of the Family Link Worker.

We were able to raise further income from letting out a residential property that we own and by hiring out our church hall when we are not using it ourselves (particularly to the pre-school nursery). £32,901 was raised from rent/lettings during 2024.

The 2024 annual accounts have been presented to the independent examiner, who has completed the 2024 financial report giving more details of our income and expenditure together with our end of year cash and investment assets balances. These were approved by the PCC on 8 April 2024 and a copy is available on our website and at the APCM. They show a deficit for the year of just over £9,000. This would have been more if we hadn't received a large



St Laurence's Church

grant that is restricted to expenditure in 2025 and 2026, and we had to use some of our reserves that we had hoped to keep for future projects. Our budget for 2025 indicates that we are likely to need to draw on our reserves again this year. Please pray that we will continue to find ways of raising money to pay for all our costs.