

**THE ECCLESIASTICAL  
PARISH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH, ASHWELL**

*Registered Charity number 1134776*  
**in the Deanery of Buntingford and the Diocese of St Albans**

**Annual Meeting of Parishioners &  
Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

**Sunday 28 April 2024 at 12.00 noon**

**in the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Mill Street, Ashwell,  
Hertfordshire, SG7 5LY**



**Reports for 2023 and Information for the meetings**

**The Rev'd Chris Campbell, Rector of the United Benefice  
of Ashwell with Hinxworth and Newnham,  
including Edworth and Caldecote**

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## THE ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

The persons whose names are entered on the church electoral roll of the parish, and persons resident in the parish whose names are entered on a register of local government electors by reason of such residence, shall be deemed to be a meeting of the parishioners for the purposes of this Measure.

### Agenda

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | To approve the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners held on 30 April 2023 | 3 |
| 2 | To elect two churchwardens to serve for one year, 2024 / 2025                      |   |

## THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

All lay persons whose names are entered on the church electoral roll of the parish shall be entitled to attend the annual meeting. No other lay persons shall be so entitled.

### Agenda

- |   |  |    |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | To receive apologies for absence   |    |
| 2 | To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2023  | 4  |
| 3 | To receive from the parochial church council and be free to discuss:   |    |
|   | 3.1 A report on changes to the Electoral Roll since the last meeting;  | 6  |
|   | 3.2 A report on the proceedings of the parochial church council, including a statement as to whether the PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults); | 7  |
|   | 3.3 Reports of activities in the parish generally:   |    |
|   | 3.3.1 8 Swan Street  | 7  |
|   | 3.3.2 Ashwell Food Pantry  | 8  |
|   | 3.3.3 Ashwell Music Festival   | 8  |
|   | 3.3.4 Ashwell Village News   | 9  |
|   | 3.3.5 Bell ringers   | 10 |
|   | 3.3.6 Churchyard   | 10 |
|   | 3.3.7 Discoverers' and Children's activities   | 11 |
|   | 3.3.8 Flower Arrangers   | 12 |
|   | 3.3.9 Friday @ 5 Club  | 12 |
|   | 3.3.10 Liturgical Music & Choir  | 13 |
|   | 3.3.11 Parish Room Cards and Bric-a-Brac stalls  | 14 |
|   | 3.3.12 Sunday Afternoon Teas   | 15 |
|   | 3.3.13 The Book Swap   | 15 |
|   | 3.3.14 The Friend's of St Mary's, <i>Reg. Charity no. 1051078</i>  | 15 |
|   | 3.3.15 The Mothers' Union, <i>Reg. Charity no. 240531</i>  | 16 |
|   | 3.3.16 The Social Events committee   | 16 |
|   | 3.4 The financial statements of the parochial church council for the year ending 31 December 2023, independently examined  | 17 |
|   | 3.5 The annual fabric report under section 50 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018   | 23 |

3.6	A report on the proceedings of the Buntingford Deanery Synod	24
3.7	A report from the Rector	25
4	To elect the following representatives and make an appointment:	
4.1	Three parochial representatives of the laity to the PCC to APCM 2027;	
4.2	Three parochial representative of the laity to the PCC to APCM 2025;	
4.3	To appoint an independent examiner or auditor to the PCC for 2024. The person appointed must not be a member of the PCC.	
5	Business – miscellaneous	
	Any person who is entitled to attend the annual meeting may ask a question about parochial church matters or bring about a discussion of any matter of parochial or general church interest –	
5.1	by moving a general resolution, or	
5.2	by moving to make a particular recommendation to the council in relation to its duties.	
6	Legal and Administrative details	28

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## Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners held on Sunday 30 April 2023 at noon in St Mary the Virgin Church, Ashwell

- 1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2022 were approved and signed by the Rev'd Chris Campbell, Rector.
- 2 The purpose of the meeting is to elect two Churchwardens for one year.  
  
Two nominations had been received for:  
  

Julia Mitchell  
John Chilton

  
In the absence of any other nominations, both nominees were elected unanimously.
- 3 44 parishioners were in attendance.
- 4 The meeting closed at 12.10 pm.

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Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting  
held on Sunday 30 April 2023  
in St Mary the Virgin Church, Ashwell

- 1     **Apologies were received from:**  
Tony Gee, Linda Gee, Margaret Kerr and Rosemary Gillborn.
  
- 2     **Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2022**  
These were approved and signed by the Rev'd Chris Campbell. There were no matters arising
  
- 3     3.1     **Numbers entered on the Electoral Roll.**  
96. The next new Roll will be in 2025.
- 3.2     **Annual report on the proceedings of the PCC**  
This report was received and is included in the APCM pack. Included in the report is a statement as to whether the PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline measure 2016.
- 3.3     **Reports of Activities in 2022 within the Parish generally**  
All reports are included in the APCM pack, which is attached to these Minutes.  
Contributions were received from:  
**Ashwell Food Pantry; Ashwell Music Festival; Ashwell Village News; Bellringers; Discoverers and Children's activities; Flower Arrangers; Friday@5 Club; Liturgical Music and Choir; Parish Room cards and Bric-a-Brac stall; Sunday Afternoon Teas; The Book Swap; The Friend's of St Mary's; The Mothers' Union and the Social & Events committee.**  
Sarah Talks, Editor of the AVN, advised that the number printed will be reduced to 200 per month. Paper copies are not selling as well as in the past. Advertisers fees covered the cost of printing. Sarah thanked people who contributed to the AVN.
- 3.4     **Financial statements of the PCC for the 12 months to 31 December 2022, independently examined.**  
The financial review and statements are included in the APCM pack.
  - 3.4.1   Mark Eaton, Treasurer of the PCC, thanked John Rowlands for his help throughout 2022. 2023 will be more challenging. The refurbishment of 8 Swan Street in 2023 will require considerable funds.
  - 3.4.2   Andrew Gillborn expressed concern about the amount of paper involved with the reports etc and the annual accounts. There must have been some considerable cost. The Rector commented that copies were available on line and statutory requirements had to be met.
  - 3.4.3   John Rowlands commented the number of pew sheets available were insufficient for the Sunday service.
- 3.5     **The annual fabric report under 50 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 2018.**  
This report is included in the APCM pack.
  - 3.5.1   Andrew Gillborn asked about progress for a path relating to disabled access. David Richards replied that the Ashwell Show had contributed some funds. This was not time limited. The PCC were in discussions with the DAC and the cost was estimated at about £5,000.

- 3.5.2 In answer to a question about the roof leaking, the PCC awaited the Quinquennial Report and initial estimates to repair the north and south aisle roofs was £100,000 each.
- 3.5.3 The DAC estimated work on the tower could be £250,000.
- 3.5.4 The Rector advised that after 10 years on the PCC and being responsible for the fabric, David Richards was standing down. The rector said the parish owed him a huge gratitude for all his work during this time.
- 3.6 Report on the proceedings of the Buntingford Deanery Synod**  
This report is included in the APCM pack.
- 3.7 A report from the Rector**  
This report is included in the APCM pack.
- 3.7.1 The Rector added comments about a new curate and ministry and the updated Mission Action Plan. Also, appreciation for the parish being the “Church” life; the enlarged Ministry team and the basic management of the building.
- 3.7.2 Andrew Gillborn asked had any conclusions been made about an inclusive church? Should the Benefice be one umbrella organisation? The Rector asked for any thoughts.
- 3.7.3 Liz Moynihan commented about the lack of publicity. A banner for events and special occasions would be useful.
- 3.7.4 Jo Adams expressed her appreciation to the Rector for all she had done, work, enthusiasm and leadership. The meeting endorsed these comments with applause.
- 4 Elections and Appointments**
  - 4.1 Two parochial representatives of the laity to the Buntingford deanery Synod for the period 2023 to 2026  
Nominations were received from Jo Adams and Mark Eaton.  
Both people were elected.
  - 4.2 Three parochial representatives of the laity to the PCC to APCM 2026  
Nominations were received from John Hare, Ruth ten Hove and Stephen ten Hove.  
These people were elected.
  - Susan Greenbank who was not standing for re-election, was thanked for the hard and detailed work done during her term on the PCC.
  - 4.3 One parochial representative of the laity to the PCC to APCM 2025  
No nomination was received.
  - 4.4 Appointment of Independent Examiner  
The PCC recommended to the Annual Meeting, Mrs Jackie Pritchard, BComm, ACMA, CGMA to be the Independent Examiner for 2023.  
Proposed by Stephen ten Hove and seconded by Jo Adams.  
The meeting approved unanimously.
- 5 Miscellaneous Business**  
None.
- 6 The meeting ended with the Grace at 12.44.

### **3 The annual meeting shall receive from the PCC and be free to discuss:**

#### **3.1 A report on changes in the Electoral Roll since the last Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

	2024	2023	2019
<b>Electors at the APCM</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>97</b>

The Electoral Roll is the ecclesiastical parish's register of electors. It lists all who are qualified to attend and vote at this APCM. By enrolling you become a voting member of the Church of England and you are entitled to raise any question of parochial or general church interest at this meeting. Becoming a voting member of the Church of England ensures that synodical government of the Church (the PCC, the deanery synod, the diocesan synod and the General Synod) are fully representative of its members.

The last complete revision was in 2019. The next complete revision will be in 2025.

#### **3.2 An annual report on the proceedings of the PCC and the activities of the parish generally, which must include a statement as to whether the PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).**

The PCC met eleven times in 2023. We began the year with one churchwarden but ended the year with two, but amongst the elected members the position was reversed, with a vacancy from April. The PCC has not had its full complement during the year. The average attendance at a meeting has been 81%.

On 4 July at a TGIS service St Mary's welcomed the Rev'd Paulet Brown-Wilsher as a self-supporting curate. Paulet is a full-time senior Lecturer in Early Childhood & Education at the University of East London.

Some of the topics discussed during the year included, Ashwell at Home, church heating, new notice boards, organ tuning and maintenance, Friday @ 5 Club, NW corner donors' board which was dedicated at the end of the Harvest Festival, the building and the Quinquennial Inspection, the Lady Chapel to be reserved for prayer not storage, 8 Swan Street, Card Reader and distribution of the Ashwell Village News to the village. Through the Rector, contact with Ashwell Primary School has been maintained each term. In the autumn, the PCC launched a "Growing Generous Giving" campaign. We continued to review policies such as Youth Activities Contact and Consent Form, the terms to Hire the Church, Conflict of Interest, Financial Processes, A Guide for the PCC members, Data Privacy Notice, and Safeguarding policy statement which was updated. These policies and others come up on the agenda to be reviewed periodically. Fabric, including disabled access, and Finance are regular agenda items.

At the beginning of every new calendar year attendance statistics in churches are compiled over the previous twelve months in order to make a return to the Diocese. These provide data showing which parishes are growing or shrinking numerically. Here we had a good set of Christmas services; attendance at the Lessons & Carols was up by 33% and Midnight

Mass up 14%. Christmas Day morning service was down 13% compared with 2022 but attendance equal to 2019. As always regular people were away visiting their families.

However, growth cannot be measured by numbers and we should give thanks to God for this blessing. In 2022 the congregation was naturally wary about returning to normal custom and practices. Statistical measurements of attendance alone are not the only criteria gauging how vibrant a parish is, nor of what it means to be a Christian community.

The PCC gives thanks that due to the hard work of so many who contribute to the life of our parish, we are seeing a recovery after the pandemic.

## **Safeguarding**

The Parish is committed to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and to supporting those who have been victims of abuse, as well as those who may present a risk to others. The PCC has complied with the duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to the House of Bishop's guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults). The PCC has adopted all the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policies and Practice Guidance, as well as "Promoting a Safer Church" (child protection and vulnerable adults policy) and the Domestic Abuse statement. Links to these documents can be found on our website.

We have a Parish Safeguarding Officer/Lead Recruiter. Those who work with vulnerable groups in the Parish are recruited in accordance with the Practice Guidance Safer Recruitment July 2021. DBS checks were renewed every five years; changing to every three years from 2024 and all those who have been safely recruited and all members of the PCC, have undertaken or are about to complete the appropriate safeguarding training within the last 3 years.

Contact details for those wishing to obtain advice, raise any concerns or make referrals to the statutory authorities are displayed in church and on our website. Copies of the Parish safeguarding handbook are also displayed in church and in the parish room with a spare copy being available in the vestry.

There is adequate insurance cover for all activities involving children or adults undertaken in the name of the Parish.

All issues of safeguarding concern reported during 2023 were discussed by the Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Rector according to the relevant safeguarding policies. There have been no serious safeguarding incidents and no incidents to report to the Diocesan Safeguarding team.

The PCC approved this report at their meeting on 15 February 2023.

## **3.3 Reports of Activities within the Parish generally:**

### **3.3.1 8 Swan Street, Ashwell**

In 1986 Phyllis Good Simms passed away, and generously left her two-bedroom cottage on Swan Street to the church. It has been let out for many years and has been an important regular source of income for St Mary's.

In 2022 and 2023 the PCC had extensive discussions about the cottage and eventually made the difficult decision to end the previous tenancy, having decided that it both needed extensive renovation and that it should now be professionally managed, rather than the

responsibility of a member of the PCC. Given that there are now many more regulations involved in managing a property, it was agreed that we needed experts to help us meet our responsibilities as a landlord.

Thanks to another generous bequest the PCC had the funds to make many necessary improvements to the cottage, bringing it up to a good standard with a new bathroom and kitchen, flooring and paint before reletting it. As well as now being a very pleasant place to live, it will also significantly improve the revenue that St Mary's receives, making our financial position more secure. Many people have helped in this transition in very different ways and thanks are extended to all of them.

Julia Mitchell

### **3.3.2 Ashwell Food Pantry**

In the Spring of 2023, Ashwell Food Pantry was three years old. It started as a response to the pandemic, but one thing after another has meant it has continued to be in demand and we're glad to say that, so far, the generosity of the village has always managed to keep up with the need.

The pantry lives in St Mary's Church and is accessible every day. It is completely anonymous to use and anyone experiencing trouble in making ends meet is welcome to come and take up to six items a day. We also display information on the larger local food banks and other sources of financial help. At times, we may also have supermarket vouchers to distribute.

A dedicated team makes sure the pantry is stocked from local people and we're very glad of the support from local people to keep it going. Donations are placed in the box in St Mary's or left at the village store and taken over by one of the team. If you are able to add something regularly to your shopping list to donate, please do! We always need tinned meals, tuna, tinned vegetables and fruit, mayonnaise, cereals, desserts, tea, coffee, long life milk, cordials, jam, biscuits and toiletries. There is also a fresh food box for people to drop off any excess produce from their gardens, which all villagers, especially pantry users, are welcome to take.

The pantry has been described as a lifeline at difficult times in the month and is a way for people who can afford to give to make a big difference to those in need locally. It's only a small operation, but its existence means that no one in Ashwell has to go to bed hungry and we think that's worth all the effort. Thank you again to everyone who keeps it running.

Julia Mitchell

### **3.3.3 Ashwell Music Festival**

The 2023 Ashwell Music festival was well supported and enjoyable. Nearly 500 tickets were sold and the festival raised an amazing £2,900 for St Mary's Restoration Fund to assist with current work on our beautiful church, and a donation of £250 to United Reformed Church.

This year in a change from tradition, we opened the festival with Festal Evensong. The choir, led by Bene't Coldstream, performed beautifully and the Rev'd Chris Campbell was able to bless the performers, committee members and helpers for the week ahead. The following day, Ashwell Music Festival had its first livestream internet event. Ashwell's very own Oliver Gearing entertained the listeners with live Rock and Pop covers from the likes of Queen, Ed Sheeran and Pap Roach. Listeners were able to tune in via the platform Twitch, interacting with Ole and placing requests.



Mainline Big Band gave us music from great artists such as Glenn Miller's band and Louis Armstrong. The chance to learn a new instrument was available to all ages at the ukulele family workshop. Much fun was had, but I don't think anyone will be reaching the standard of George Formby any time soon! Eboracum Baroque brought us "Purcell and a Pint" – we were transported back to the alehouses of 17<sup>th</sup> century England, with the price of a ticket including a pint of beer from Buntingford Brewery.

The United Reformed Church was host to two events – An Evening of Flanders and Swann with Peter Chapman and Mike O'Neill, and the Dave Rance Rockin' Chair Band. Foot tapping was guaranteed in both concerts. The latter concert took place in the afternoon, and the audience enjoyed refreshments of tea and delicious cake. Many thanks to Judy Banham and her band of lovely helpers.

The participation of youth is a central tradition of the festival. Accordingly, the Young Musicians' Concert opened the festival. Students from The Knights Templar School, Ashwell School Choir and St Mary's Junior Choir provided a lively mix of vocal, string, brass and percussive music.

The standard of musicianship was as high as ever! We were also treated to a special performance by Bene't, Kit and Theo Coldstream of Nella Fantasia with music by Ennio Morricone and lyrics by Chiara Ferrau. There was not a dry eye in the audience by the end of their performance. Thanks to all the teachers involved, especially Hannah Back, Will Byers and Tim Welch. Many thanks also to the gentlemen of the Church Choir who provided a peaceful and moving end to the evening with the ancient plainsong service of *Compline*.

The festival closed with a live 6 piece party band, Lost in Music, performing songs which took us back to school discos of the 70s and 80s. The audience, some dressed in school uniform, sang and danced the night away.

The festival could not take place without the army of volunteers who help with staging, bar and front of house – many unseen tasks that enable us to enjoy a series of smoothly run events. Many thanks to them all. We are most grateful for the continuing support from you who buy tickets and come to be entertained during each festival. The 2024 Festival takes place from Sunday 4 May to Saturday 11 May. We hope to see as many of you as possible at our events. For further details please look online.

Tracy Young  
Chair

### **3.3.4 Ashwell Village News**

The Village News is produced by a team from St Mary's Church, but our remit is to cover all aspects of village life and to help publicise and promote groups and charities that are active in the village, as well as letting people know what is happening at St Mary's and the United Reformed Church. It is available every month as a paper copy available from the church, Parish Room and some village shops. It is also available online, with regular readers in Norway, New Zealand and America amongst other places. In December 2023 we were grateful for a donation from the Ashwell Show which allowed us to deliver a free copy of the Christmas edition to every house in the village. Please support us by buying a copy when you can, or donating via the donation boxes, and by sending in articles, pictures, poems, letters or items of interest. We are always pleased to have contributions.

We will be looking for more help with the production of the Village News in 2024. If you can offer help or would like to know more about what's involved, please email us. Many thanks to all who help put the AVN together, already contribute articles or distribute it in the village.

Sarah Talks

[Ashwellvillagenews@gmail.com](mailto:Ashwellvillagenews@gmail.com)

To find the electronic version <https://tinyurl.com/Ashwell-Village-News>

### **3.3.5 Bell ringers**

Over the course of 2023 we rang to celebrate three weddings and for the first time for several years we were able to raise a local band for each one instead of relying on ringers from other towers to make up numbers. Our learners are all competent enough to ring for Sunday services and weddings now and are starting to move on to learning more advanced ways to ring such as Plain Hunting.

In April we played host to the Northern district of the County Ringing Association for their regular monthly meeting which gave some of our ringers the chance to ring some more complicated methods.

On Saturday 6 May we joined with many other towers around the country in ringing to celebrate the coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla. All our ringers had an opportunity to take part in the ringing and as part of the celebrations we rang a piece called *Coronation Changes* that was originally composed for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth the Second.

In September we welcomed our newest and youngest recruit who made good progress over the rest of the year.

120 November saw us ringing half muffled to mark Remembrance Sunday. We have tried to ring for services at least twice a month through the year, as well as for the village carol concert and Christmas services in December.

We are always happy to welcome new ringers to the tower, whether beginner or experienced. We practice on Thursday evenings from 8pm, come along to the tower and you will be made most welcome.

Steve Wright, Tower Captain  
Ian Chandler, Tower Secretary

### **3.3.6 Churchyard**

The churchyard continues to be a much used and loved space. Many people walk their dog through the churchyard, and it is extra green space for families and visitors to enjoy.

There have been several working parties throughout the year, raking leaves and weeding and we are particularly grateful to Ethan and his family who established weed free gravel edging

around the north and west of the building. We are also grateful to Jeremy Fordham for providing most of the gravel.

We are a closed churchyard, but this year saw a burial, as Eric Gurney had reserved two plots before the closure rules came into force. We are able to accept internments of ashes, and those are between the south porch and the lychgate.

Because we are a closed churchyard, the Parish Council is the authority for maintaining the hedges and trees and grass cutting.

We are also grateful to those volunteers who help maintain and improve the churchyard more regularly, with donations of bulbs and pruning the box balls. Sadly, the box has now almost completely succumbed to box moth and will need to be removed. We are discussing what to replace them with.

A number of our youth group activities took place in the churchyard, from nature crafts to a firepit and sparkler evening for Remembrance.

The churchyard is managed for people and wildlife. We regularly have visiting peregrines. If you can help with this work in any way, by giving time or providing resources, please do let the churchwardens or PCC know.

If you walk your dog in the churchyard, please keep them under control and pick up any poo. Please use the dog poo bins provided in Mill Street and elsewhere. Chris picked up 24 bags from under the yew tree on the south side during a recent tidy!

Sarah Talks

### **3.3.7 Discoverers' and Children's activities**

*"Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a real blessing." Psalm 127:3*

During 2023 our church family has continued to welcome and encourage children and families to take part in a range of activities. The children and youth team, comprising Chris, Sarah and Jo have prioritized making our activities appealing, accessible and inclusive.

- Discoverers sessions for children aged 3 and over are offered during the 10.45 service on 3 Sundays out of 4. Each week, our games, stories and craft activities are linked to the theme of the Bible readings for the day. Towards the end of the service, we are invited to share what we have learnt with the congregation. This usually generates a round of applause!
- Young people are very welcome to sing in the choir. Unfortunately, changes to the arrangements for choir practise have meant that we no longer have separate junior choir rehearsals. Children now have the opportunity to do some singing at the Friday@5 youth group.
- We love to encourage children to participate in our all age 'Thank God It's Sunday' services. These less formal, monthly services provide more flexibility enabling greater interaction and creativity, with opportunities to sing, act, read etc.
- Our Easter egg hunt in the churchyard was well attended on Easter Saturday followed by an interactive story in church.
- Following the popularity of last summer's 'Holiday drop-in' sessions, we offered a Saturday session in July on the theme of welcome, two Friday sessions in August based around the miracles of Jesus, and one in half term.

- Special services: There have been 8 baptisms this year during which children were welcomed into God's family, supported by their parents, Godparents, friends and family members. Following a series of meetings to discuss and learn about commitment to God, 3 of our young people were confirmed at a Deanery service in Buntingford parish church in November. During this service they renewed the promises made at their baptisms and were blessed by the Bishop of Hertford. St Mary's Church was packed with children, parents and teachers at the Ashwell Primary School harvest festival service in the Autumn term. All the children sang along enthusiastically to the harvest songs and the year 6 pupils took centre stage with their poems and readings.
- Our church is open daily for visitors of all ages. There are books, toys and stories for little ones to enjoy in the children's area. We have plans to add to the resources and enhance the area once roof problems can be resolved and it can be moved to a dedicated space on the North side of the building.
- We welcomed lots more happy faces to our services in December, especially the Ashwell Primary School Christingle and the Christmas Eve Crib Service. Money from the retiring collections at these services were donated to the Children's society and Unicef respectively.

If you would like more information about our activities for children and young people, or would like to volunteer to help, please contact our Rector Chris, or Jo Adams

### **3.3.8 Flower Arrangers**

2023 has been a happy and successful year for the church flower team, a reflection on the wonderful group of flower arrangers we have on board and we would like to take this opportunity to thank every single person who has been involved for their hard work in making our church look so beautiful.

There have only been two weddings this year but we have been able to get creative on many other occasions, including Easter, Harvest and of course Christmas.

This year we have had to say goodbye to Christine Schwick who has been part of the flower team for many years and we would like to thank her for all that she has contributed over the years. A huge thank you also goes to Liz Moynihan, who although is still part of the team, has decided to take a step back from the rota for the time being. We have also been lucky enough to add to our team and would like to take this opportunity to welcome Ann Hardy, Charlotte Firth and Christa Bosch.

We are always most grateful for the kind donations we receive throughout the year for the flowers and for all the kind comments we receive. If you would like to discuss the flowers for any occasion or would like to be involved with our team, please contact one of the following:

Caroline Feast: 01462-743233; Suzanne Humbert: 07941-529849;  
Michelle Notley: 01462-742556

### **3.3.9 Friday @ 5 Club – St Mary's Youth Group**

- Our Friday@5 youth group is free to attend for boys and girls in school year 4 and above. We meet from 5.00 to 6.30 on Friday afternoons during term time in St Mary's church.
- Our lively sessions include lots of self-chosen play, alongside some organised activities such as games, crafts, model making, competitions, cooking and much more. Drinks and snacks are also provided. Now that junior choir rehearsals no longer take place on Friday

evenings, we also offer the chance for our young people to do some singing at the youth group. This is quite informal, but does provide an opportunity to practise some seasonal songs in preparation for festivals such as the music festival, harvest and Christmas.

- The group provides an opportunity for the children to socialise together in a safe space, to appreciate the impressive church building, to ask questions about any issues that are bothering them without fear of judgement or ridicule and to have fun.
- Activities this year have included:
- Making fruit kebabs
- Bug hotel
- Making sweets for Mothering Sunday
- Poppies for remembrance
- Outdoor parachute games
- A visit to the Greening Ashwell allotment
- Lego models
- Science experiments
- Fun with paint
- Toasting marshmallows around a fire pit
- Sparklers
- And much more!

If you would like more information about our activities for children and young people, or would like to volunteer to help, please contact our Rector Chris, or Jo Adams

### **3.3.10 Liturgical Music & Choir**

The choir remains such a vital part of church life in the village. It brings people of all ages together to do something they love. It is about singing to the glory of God, but it is also about teamwork, having fun, and giving pleasure to others.

In January we sang a new piece by Philip Stopford – *Do not be afraid*. Originally commissioned for a christening, the words can probably be apt for nearly every Sunday of the year. Other new music in the first half of the year included *Jesu Dulcis Memoria* (Victoria), *Emendemus in Melius* (Byrd) and *For the beauty of the earth* (Stopford).

I know I say this every year, but as the lucky soul who chooses the repertoire, Lent is the time for reflection and the haunting despair lends itself to some of the most meaningful compositions (in my opinion!). *Jesu grant me this I pray* (Whitlock), the lacrymosa from the Mozart *Requiem*, and the previously mentioned *Emendemus* (Byrd) were some of my favourite moments. Lent ends with Holy Week where we sang *Compline* on the first three evenings. Ladies from the choir now join the gentlemen doing this.

Maundy Thursday is so dramatic with the stripping of the altar as the service closes, and we sang *psalm 22*: “My God, my god, look upon me. Why hast thou forsaken me, and art so far from my health and from the words of my complaint”. Easter brings hope and joy and fulfilment of Old Testament promises. Chorally we move from sad to happy overnight, typified by the singing of the *Hallelujah Chorus* (from the Messiah by Handel) at the end of the service.

Back in February we raised funds for music in the church by putting on a Hymnathon. A marathon seven hour singing session where we sang (I think) 82 hymns. We asked people to sponsor a hymn choice and were knocked over by kind donations and phenomenal support. We raised well over £2,500 and plans are that we may repeat this. Thanks go to Ruth ten Hove and a team of helpers making this work with aplomb.

In July we needed to say goodbye, at least for normal term times, to the Coldstream boys, Kit and Theo. They have been choir regulars for nine years and have developed such skills that people rush to be their side in practices. I know they'll be back but we all miss them.

Christmas is a time for families and celebration of the birth of our dear lord, Jesus Christ. Chorally it has always been a favourite time of year not just for the choir but for the whole congregation.

Our carol service included lesser well known works, *Myn Liking* (RR Terry), *Hail Blessed Virgin Mary* (Wood) and *Masters in the Hall* (arranged by Willcocks) along with classics. We sang *Lully Lulla* (Stopford) and *Ding dong merrily on high* on Christmas day, and everyone was then in the mood for turkey.

We have a few new faces in the choir, but we can do with more. Please, if you want to sing, just come and give it a shot.

Lastly my thanks go to the rector, Chris Campbell, our new organist Pete Eaglesfield, and choir librarian Sheelagh Bennett. It's all about teamwork ..... did I say that earlier?

Bene't Coldstream  
07971 404481

### **3.3.11 Parish Room Cards & Bric-a-Brac stall**

The two bric a brac tables have enjoyed another good year with sales totalling £1200.50. This is £50 down on the previous year, but occasional Post Office days off plus Bank Holiday Mondays and Christmas closures had an impact on takings.

Donations of sales items have dropped a little but are continuing - for which we're most grateful. Small popular items are searched for elsewhere by Sheelagh and myself and donated by us jointly.

Greetings cards can be in very short supply and what we have, we share with the church Bookstand. The cards and framed drawings from Bob Swain have been most helpful, as have Mark's chutneys etc and items of embroidery from Rosemary and Viv.

The opening hours of the Post Office, the Parish Office three times a week, and Sunday Teas, are vital to the lifeblood of the stall so the new shorter Post Office presence (if it goes ahead) will NOT improve matters in 2024. In general, it is pleasing to note that the tables are still welcomed by Ashwellians and visitors alike.

We also keep the Bookstand in church stocked with interesting leaflets and books pertaining to St Mary's, as well as postcards, tea towels, and a few general cards and bookmarks showing the graffiti.

From the number of times these are replenished, we can deduce they are popular with the visiting public.

The profits made here are unaccountable for, as the slot in the wall is used for payment and we have no check on that.

We are of the opinion that this Bookstand which is open every day to the public, is a good sales point providing excellent publicity, and as such could carry more designated St Mary's articles to generate income, if such could be afforded.

Marjorie Fitt / Sheelagh Bennett.

### **3.3.12 Sunday Afternoon Teas**

Sunday afternoons can be a quiet time in Ashwell so it is good to know that there are opportunities to meet people over a cuppa and a piece of homemade cake. Parish Teas run for six months of the year between 16 April and 1 October and Museum Teas fills in the other half of the year. The Parish room has been an ideal meeting place for locals, visitors, walkers, cyclists, together with those visiting the church or museum.

None of this could take place without a band of dedicated volunteers who have kept things going through offers of serving teas, baking or both. In all, around 55 people have been involved in Parish teas in 2023 and have been responsible for raising a grand total of £2,189 which will go towards the St Mary's restoration Fund.

If anybody is interested in getting involved, please contact the number below, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Judy Banham  
07580 154020

### **3.3.13 The Book Swap**

Since the library service ceased to function in Ashwell the Book Swap facility has taken its place. St Mary's Church provides the Parish Room as the venue and, with a few volunteers, we are now well established and have a steady stream of borrowers. The service is free of charge and there is no signing in or out of books – bring a book or two to swap or, if you cannot bear to part with any books, we are happy for you to borrow one.

The Book Swap facility is available whenever the Post Office is open on Mondays and Thursdays between 10am and noon when the Post Office is open. It is also available on Sunday afternoons when you can enjoy a cup of tea and a piece of cake while browsing. Thanks to the Book Weekend we were able to change all our stock of books in October. Teresa King does an excellent job in keeping the books in order and selling those we no longer need for a nominal fee. Any money made goes to St Mary's Restoration Fund.

The Book Swap Café was started to bring the facility to the attention of more people but the team running this decided that it had served its purpose and was no longer needed. However, in March, the team hosted a soup and pudding lunch and raised a magnificent £790 for Jimmy's homeless shelter in Cambridge. We are so grateful to all of our soup and pudding makers, servers, washer-uppers and to all of you who came to support us. We hope to continue to host events to raise funds for such a worthwhile cause.

We look forward to welcoming you to our fund-raising events and, of course, the Book Swap is available whenever the Parish Room is open. Contact on behalf of the Book Swap team:

Eileen ten Hove

### **3.3.14 The Friend's of St Mary's, *Reg. Charity no. 1051078***

The Friends is a registered charity which was founded more than 25 years ago. Its sole purpose is to raise money to help maintain both the fabric and the contents of Ashwell's parish church.

The Friends is not a part of the Church or the Church of England, but is an independent charity which acts on its own initiative and which raises its own funds from its generous donors. Many of our donors are not otherwise involved in the life of the Church but are concerned that St Mary's is preserved and indeed enhanced for the enjoyment and use of future generations. We are very grateful to them all, particularly over the last two years when their continuing support has been very important to us in the absence of many of our normal fundraising activities.

In 2023, we were delighted that Karen Rogers and her colleagues were able, once again, to hold the Book Fair, which was an astonishing success raising almost £4800 for the Friends. The Book Fair takes a great deal of careful organisation and hard work and we are profoundly grateful to them all.

We have recently appointed new trustees to the Friends' Board of Trustees and anticipate appointing further new trustees in the very near future. Our website is being completely revised and our new trustees will bring with them new ideas and new ways of doing things. We hope to get back to our pre-Covid range of activities, and much more, very shortly.

In the last few years, the Friends have made substantial contributions to the repair work in the chancel, and to the work to the south aisle. Both are now in excellent repair and will be for many generations to come.

If you wish to join the Friends, given a one-off donation to us or become a regular donor, please let me know by contacting me at: [stephentenhove@icloud.com](mailto:stephentenhove@icloud.com) or on 742262.

I also look forward to welcoming you to our forthcoming events later in 2024 and 2025!

### **3.3.15 The Mothers' Union, *Reg. Charity no. 240531***

Ashwell Mothers' Union, has had another busy year. We continue to meet on a monthly basis and have enjoyed a variety of activities and speakers throughout the year. We heard from Kim Wilkinson, our past president, who led a session helping us to recognise our resources and how we can use them to help others. We also heard from Jo Adams about the work of Homestart, an organisation which, like us, supports families in need. Other meetings have included a prayer workshop led by Revd. Chris Campbell and a talk about the plight of refugees by Margaret Gilliam. Revd. Patrick Forbes also played us extracts from his inspirational 'Traveller's Tales' and we have had a craft session making items to sell at the Christmas fair.

In July we held our afternoon tea in Wolverley House. Several residents were able to attend and enjoyed the delicious tea that MU members had prepared.

We continue to support the Royston Refuge for those who have fled domestic abuse and Donna, who runs it, came to talk a little more about it and the problems she faces with these often traumatised people. We have supplied them with home packs throughout the year and Advent Calendars and Easter eggs for the children. We also give them some of our knitted baby packs.

We continue to support the Lister hospital with cheer up bags for children and emergency wash bags for all patients admitted in a hurry. I'd like to thank everyone who donated their hotel toiletries in the box at the back of church. Thanks to your kindness we were able, with a few additions of our own, to send 14 bags and I now have enough to make up about the same amount again!

As well as our activities within the village, some of us have also attended joint Cluster events such as services and coffee mornings which enable us to enjoy fellowship with other MU branches.

By the time you read this article, we will have changed our status from 'branch' to 'diocesan group'. This won't make a great deal of difference to our meetings and project work but it



does mean a lot less administration, as we no longer have a committee or a bank account, with members paying their annual subscription directly to the diocese. We always welcome new members so if you'd like to join us do get in touch.

Viv Hollow  
Group Contact  
[viv\\_and\\_ken@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:viv_and_ken@yahoo.co.uk)

### **3.3.16 The Social & Events committee.**

The importance of sharing food with others cannot be underestimated; in Luke's gospel for example much is made of eating together: fellowship and the breaking of bread. Again, this has been a year of doing just that; gathering as a church community and sharing food.

At the beginning of July we welcomed Paulet and her husband to St. Mary's with a bring and share lunch after our Sunday service. A happy, joyous and generous occasion with much food and even more fellowship.

A Patronal lunch took place in August and then towards the end of September we gathered once more to celebrate Harvest. Huge thanks to all those who baked jacket potatoes, cooked the cottage pie topping, prepared the vegetarian ratatouille, served the very delicious Maynards' ice cream, moved tables and chairs, washed and cleared up.

The joyfulness of our Lessons and Carols service was complimented by hot winter cordial, Lindisfarne mead and mince pies.

A simple meal for Maundy Thursday is in the process of being prepared and organised; a meal to reflect the solemnity and importance of this day.

Of course, the Social Committee is only able to organise these events because of the willingness of those who give of their time and cookery skills without hesitation, and to whom we are so grateful. Long may this way of sharing God's love continue.

Melanie Dawson-Dew on behalf of the Social Committee.

## **3.4 The Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council for the year ending 31 December 2023, independently examined**

In the year ending 31st December 2023 is non restricted and designated funds there was a small deficit of £146, after the transfer of £1,101 to the PCR Fund to bring the end year balance to zero.

Income was fairly stable but benefited for our being able to run the full range of Fundraising events such as the Music Festival, Ashwell at Home, the Flea Market and the Christmas Fair which had been compromised previously by restrictions emanating from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Gift and Card stall run by Marjorie Fitt and Sheelagh Bennett also brought in some very useful incremental income as did the Ashwell Calendar organised by Julia Mitchell. We were also grateful to receive a grant of £1,000 from the Village Show Committee to cover the cost of printing sufficient copies of the December Ashwell Village news to distribute to the whole village. We are hoping this will lead to higher sales of the publication in 2024.

We were also grateful to receive a grant of £5,000 from the Ashwell Show Committee for the refurbishment of the parish Room, principally the installation of a more practical wood effect floor and redecoration.

We hope this will make the venue more attractive to hirers and increase hire income in 2024. Rental income from 8 Swan Street was down as the historic tenant moved out at the end of October to facilitate our undertaking extensive refurbishment work. This cost of this will be covered out of the Waide legacy. It is hoped the property will be available to relet from March 2024.

The Parish Share remains the Church's most significant item of expenditure. This pays for our priest, and all employment, housing and training costs, including training costs for new priests and Readers. It pays for the support the church receives from the diocese and also helps to support those parishes in the diocese in need. The Diocesan Board of Finance is conscious of the financial pressures on parishes and working to contain costs and minimise increased in Parish Share. We are commended by the diocese for the fact that all three parishes in the benefice have regularly paid their Share in full.

Other expenditure was well contained and despite some second half year increases in electricity prices and in gas for the Parish Church Room, we benefitted significantly from our 4-year fixed price gas contract for the church and the fact the weather was fairly mild. Efforts continue to contain utility costs, shopping around for the best deals on gas and electricity. Last year's purchase of blankets to offer to members of the congregation to help them keep warm in church has been much appreciated and this has enabled us lower the thermostat by 1-2 degrees. A total of £12,033 was spent on repairs and restoration work in the church. Much of this was routine but we paid £5,255 for a thorough inspection of the tower inside and out using abseilers and £1052 for inspection and immediate repairs to the clerestory windows.

Because of the ongoing pressures on the General Fund, the PCC continues to focus donations to external charities on funds specially collected for such purposes, for example by the "Charity of the Month" approach. We have also processed donations through the church card reader for a charity events for Jimmys, which provides accommodation and support to the homeless in Cambridge, and Embrace the Middle East for relief in Gaza. The PCC continues to keep its approach to external giving under review.

We continue to consider our own fundraising strategy for how we maintain this medieval building and having been advised that the criteria for applications for large projects has changed, the PCC will focus now on a smaller application for up to £250,000 where the criteria are more straightforward. The Architect has recently completed the Quinquennial Inspection, in which he has indicated that there is urgent work required to re-roof the tower and the north side aisle. The PCC has decided to make the latter its first priority so that we can reopen that area internally. We are now setting about fund-raising for this.

In 2020, the PCC became aware that in 1971, the PCR had been set up as a separate trust with members of the PCC as the managing trustees. Following guidance from senior members of the diocesan finance team the PCC transferred the PCR into a separate restricted fund. The PCC retains responsibility for the financial operation of the PCR which continues to operate at a deficit.

As a service to the local community, the PCC continues to provide accommodation for the mobile post office in the Parish Room. Regrettably Post Office Ltd has decided to restrict the hours it will subsidise for the mobile post office service and as a result this will be reduced from three sessions per week to two. The Parish Council currently contributes £1,000 to support this service.

The Church remains heavily dependent on the services of the many people who offer their time voluntarily to support and facilitate its mission and activities. Likewise, with annual costs averaging £105,000 we know we couldn't operate without the very generous support of all our donors, to whom we are very grateful and the PCC would like to thank all those who offer their service and time in so many ways.

The PCC has a safeguarding officer (Jo Adams) and maintains a safeguarding policy in line with the recommendation of the church of England. No incidents were reported in 2023. All Church Officers and PCC members have a DBS check as required by the Church of England.

Taking the above into account the available (unrestricted) funds at 31 December 2023 stand at £116,120 compared with £116,267 at the close of 2022.

On behalf of the PCC  
 Revd Christine Campbell  
 Chair of PCC

Mark Eaton  
 Treasurer of PCC

**Parochial Church Council of St Mary the Virgin, Ashwell, Herts.,  
 Statement of Financial Activities  
 for the year ended 31 December 2023**

		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2023	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2022
	Note	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>									
Incoming resources from donors	2(a)	79,283	0	0	79,283	76,403	127,101	0	203,504
Other voluntary incoming resources	2(b)	9,024	8,166	0	17,190	67,705	250	0	67,955
Income from operating activities to generate funds	2(c)	18,239	12,951	0	31,190	17,476	12,491	0	29,967
Other ordinary incoming resources	2(d)	6,950	0	0	6,950	8,660	0	0	8,660
Income from investments	2(e)	3,194	32		3,226	754	12		767
<b>TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES</b>		<b>116,690</b>	<b>21,149</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>137,839</b>	<b>170,998</b>	<b>139,854</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>310,852</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>									
Grants	3(a)	1,798	0	0	1,798	1,253	0	0	1,253
Activities directly relating to the work of the Church	3(b)	92,929	13,754	0	106,683	90,693	12,559	0	103,252
Costs of generating funds	3(c)	6,780	0	0	6,780	2,301	0	0	2,301
Church management and administration	3(d)	14,228	88	0	14,317	11,424	0	0	11,424
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>		<b>115,735</b>	<b>13,842</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>129,577</b>	<b>105,672</b>	<b>12,559</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>118,230</b>
<b>NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES</b>		<b>955</b>	<b>7,307</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8,261</b>	<b>65,327</b>	<b>127,295</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>192,622</b>
<b>GAINS AND LOSSES ON INVESTMENTS</b>									
Realised	4(a)	0	0		0	0	0		0
Unrealised	4(a)	0	0	1,493	1,493	0	0	(2,118)	(2,118)
		<b>955</b>	<b>7,307</b>	<b>1,493</b>	<b>9,755</b>	<b>65,327</b>	<b>127,295</b>	<b>(2,118)</b>	<b>190,504</b>
<b>TRANSFERS BETWEEN FUNDS</b>		<b>(1,101)</b>	<b>1,101</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>(11)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>NET MOVEMENTS IN FUNDS</b>		<b>(146)</b>	<b>8,408</b>	<b>1,493</b>	<b>9,755</b>	<b>65,338</b>	<b>127,284</b>	<b>(2,118)</b>	<b>190,504</b>
<b>BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD AT 1st JANUARY</b>		<b>310,700</b>	<b>249,551</b>	<b>21,101</b>	<b>581,352</b>	<b>245,362</b>	<b>122,267</b>	<b>23,219</b>	<b>390,848</b>
<b>BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD AT 31st DECEMBER</b>		<b>310,554</b>	<b>257,959</b>	<b>22,595</b>	<b>591,107</b>	<b>310,700</b>	<b>249,551</b>	<b>21,101</b>	<b>581,352</b>

**BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st DECEMBER**

	<b>Note</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Tangible fixed assets	4(a)(i)	85,000	85,000
Tangible fixed assets - investment	4(a)(ii)	194,434	194,434
Investments	4(b)	17,365	15,872
		<u>296,799</u>	<u>295,306</u>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Short term deposits		1,015	983
Cash at bank and in hand		293,294	285,064
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<u>294,308</u>	<u>286,047</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u>591,108</u>	<u>581,353</u>
(see page 18)			
<b>FUNDS</b>	<b>5</b>		
Unrestricted		310,554	310,700
Restricted		257,959	249,551
Endowment		22,595	21,101
		<u>591,108</u>	<u>581,353</u>

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on March 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

TREASURER

M W Eaton

CHAIR

The notes on pages 7 to 15 form part of these accounts

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN, ASHWELL, HERTS.**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR  
THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2023**

**6 STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES - UNRESTRICTED FUND ANALYSIS 2023**

	General Fund £	Bequests Fund £	Hardship Fund £	Total £
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>				
Gift Aid donations	60,491			60,491
Tax recovered	13,472			13,472
Collections (open plate)	3,376			3,376
Donations & grants	5,838		200	6,038
Legacies		4,930		4,930
Rent on 8 Swan Street	6,950			6,950
Fees	6,252			6,252
Other events & sales	11,987			11,987
Interest	3,194			3,194
	<u>111,560</u>	<u>4,930</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>116,690</u>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>				
Charitable Giving	1,648		150	1,798
Parish Share	64,080			64,080
Fees	2,798			2,798
Church Running Expenses	8,306			8,306
Church Maintenance	6,282			6,282
Worship Resources	3,388			3,388
Choir and Music	5,514			5,514
Insurance	4,718			4,718
Swan Street Expenses	3,742			3,742
Parish Office	14,228			14,228
Sundry	881			881
	<u>115,585</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>150</u>	<u>115,735</u>
Inter fund transfers	<u>(1,101)</u>			<u>(1,101)</u>
<b>NET RESOURCES</b>	<u>(5,126)</u>	<u>4,930</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>(146)</u>
<b>BALANCE SHEET</b>				
Freehold Property	194,434			194,434
Bank current account	57,966	57,000	1,300	116,266
DBOF deposits				0
<b>FUND BALANCE</b>	<u>252,400</u>	<u>57,000</u>	<u>1,300</u>	<u>310,700</u>
Net movement	(5,126)	4,930	50	(146)
Balance b/fwd	252,400	57,000	1,300	310,700
Balance c/fwd	<u>247,274</u>	<u>61,930</u>	<u>1,350</u>	<u>310,554</u>

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN, ASHWELL, HERTS.**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2023**

**7. GENERAL FUND**

**Donations to Missions and Charities**

	<b>Collections etc. £</b>	<b>Donations from PCC £</b>	<b>TOTAL 2023 £</b>	<b>TOTAL 2022 £</b>
<b>HOME</b>				
Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust		25	25	25
Salvation Army (note 1)			0	0
Brave Trust	50		50	150
Children's Society (note 1)	140		140	180
Ashwell Museum (note 2)		14	14	
Donation ofrm Hardship Fund		150	150	
Jimmy's	112		112	142
	<u>302</u>	<u>189</u>	<u>491</u>	<u>497</u>
<b>OVERSEAS</b>				
Diapalante	130		130	0
DEC Ukraine Disaster Relief Fund			0	351
DEC Syria / Turkey Disaster Relief Fund	100		100	
Embrace the Middle East	61		61	170
Bishops Harvest Appeal	799		799	135
Christian Aid		218	218	100
	<u>432</u>	<u>218</u>	<u>1,307</u>	<u>756</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>734</u>	<u>407</u>	<u>1,798</u>	<u>1,253</u>

Note 1 In addition to the above figures, as part of the Charity of the Month initiative the PCC also collects donations In the Charity's own Gift Aid Envelopes for these charities.

Note 2 Donation from Calendar Income

	Restoration & Tower £	Legacies & Collections £	Internal Reordering £	Kneelers £	Parish Church Room £	Development Music Fund £	Organ £	Total £
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>								
Gift Aid donations								0
Tax recovered								0
Donations & grants	1,080				5,000	2,086		8,166
Legacies								0
Income from Lettings					2,815			2,815
Teas	2,784							2,784
Ashwell at Home/ Music Festival	4,282							4,282
Other events & sales	3,070							3,070
Interest	3	29						32
	11,219	29	0	0	7,815	2,086	0	21,149
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>								
Church maintenance, restoration, refurbishment	7,613		2,225					9,838
Professional fees								0
Running Costs					3,916			3,916
Donation								0
Purchase of goods for resale								0
Bank Charges	88							88
	7,701		2,225		3,916	0		13,842
<b>NET RESOURCES</b>	3,518	29	(2,225)	0	3,899	2,086	0	7,307
<b>Withdrawal</b>								
Unrealised gains/(losses)								
Inter fund transfers					1,101			1,101
	3,518	29	(2,225)	0	5,000	2,086	0	8,408
<b>BALANCE SHEET</b>								
Freehold Property					85,000			85,000
Bank current account	23,528	4,846	133,581		5,000	2,086	3,838	172,878
DBOF deposits	80							80
<b>FUND BALANCE</b>	23,608	4,846	133,581	0	90,000		3,838	257,958
<b>Net movement</b>	3,518	29	(2,225)	0	5,000	2,086	0	8,408
Balance b/fwd	20,090	4,817	135,806	0	85,000		3,838	249,551
Balance c/fwd	23,608	4,846	133,581	0	90,000	2,086	3,838	257,958

### 3.5 The annual Fabric Report under section 5 of The Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 2018

It has been a very busy and interesting year for the Fabric Group. We have received two major reports, the Quinquennial Report, which is for the whole of the buildings and grounds, and a separate one for the Church Tower.

**The Quinquennial Report** on the Church Building has shown that a great deal of restoration and repair work is necessary in the near future to ensure the satisfactory condition of the building. An indication of the work required is that six of our roofs will require major work, the Tower, Porches, Boiler Room and Aisles. Numerous other projects will have to be undertaken: the repair of stonework, damp prevention, draining rainwater from the roofs, all of these problems also apply to the tower and boiler room. We are looking at something in the region of a twenty year programme to complete the required known work. All these projects will cost several million pounds, initial estimates are in the order of over £5m. hopefully, some of this will come from grants that we can apply for, the remainder needing to be raised by St Mary's.

**The Tower** has been inspected using two very skilled workmen, a Climber and a Rigger, abseiling down the outside and inside of the Tower. Photographs were also taken using a drone. The inspection found that some previous attempts at repairs have in fact made matters worse, which is a problem all old churches suffer from. The condition of the Tower stonework is in a very poor state and some holding work will be required very soon. A rolling programme of repairs will be required to maintain and stabilise the tower structure.

**North Aisle Roof.** This has been designated as our first priority major restoration project. The Architect has been asked to prepare costs and a programme for the completion of this work.

**Clerestory Window** above the South Aisle. A smaller, but important, inspection has taken place. Some minor repairs have been carried out and further work will be required in the future.

**Further Investigations and Reports** are necessary for the Boiler Roof, Tower Buttress and the effects of Bell Ringing vibration on the Tower structure. Also a Conservator's inspection and report will be required for our Graffiti preservation.

### **Future Projects.**

The most immediate internal project that we are now progressing is the Access using the South Door. Consideration is being given to the following :

Make it possible for Wheelchair access without the need for movable ramps and the removal of any other obstacles between the south door path and the Nave floor.

Ease of opening the existing doors which are very difficult due to their size and weight and almost impossible when the latch is engaged for some of our elderly members. A proposal for Glass doors to be fitted, whilst retaining the ancient wooden doors in a fixed position, is also being considered.

An initial plan, prepared by a group member, has been shown to some members of the DAC and sent to our Church Architect for his comments. Thanks to a generous donation funds are available for this project and it will proceed as soon as possible.

**Choir Screens.** A proposal, in cooperation with the Music Committee's proposals for the reordering of the choir area, is to relocate the choir screens to the North Aisle to be part of a permeant children's area, after repairs to the north aisle roof have been completed.

**Kitchen and Toilets** have been completed during the year and have been a great asset to the congregation and those who visit or use the Church.

**Maintenance** has included PAT, testing of all electrical equipment, Fire Extinguishers and the Lightning Conductor, all examined and certified. Rain Water Gutters are now cleaned twice a year, summer and winter.

John D Chilton, Lead Fabric Group

## **3.6 A report on the proceedings of the Buntingford Deanery Synod**

### **Buntingford Deanery Synod Report**

Deanery synod meetings are held 4 times a year and are attended by clergy and PCC representatives from the churches in our deanery. They are chaired by the Rural Dean. Each meeting starts with prayer. They routinely include an update from the Diocesan Synod, including the financial situation and an update on parish share payments. There are regular reports from the BRAVE trust regarding their Christian youth work at schools in Buntingford and Royston. Opportunities for parishes to update the group on their current status are also provided.

In addition, each meeting had a particular focus as follows:-

**February 2023** - held in Royston

General Synod - first hand report from Canon Tim Bull, who is the link person for our Deanery. There was also discussion about the Living in Love and Faith initiative.

**May 2023** - held in Sandon

The BRAVE Trust - Rachael Went and Jonathan Scott explained the history of the Trust which was established in 2006. They also described the work that is going on in schools in



the Buntingford area and plans to develop ministry in Royston schools. Funding to facilitate this work continues to be a challenge.

Vacancies update - Baldock had appointed Phillippa Maddox; vacancies in Therfield, Royston and Barkway were being advertised; applications were in progress.

**September 2023** held in Great Hornead

Report from James Sawyer, Rural Dean. He wanted to make the Deanery more relevant in enabling and encouraging parishes to work more closely together and look for opportunities for growth and development. This might include a bid for funding under the growing younger and more diverse initiative. Other opportunities could be the development of pilgrim paths and perhaps a pilgrimage to the Holy Land or other trips.

Elections - Mark Eaton was elected as lay co-chair, Brenda Strangleman as secretary and Nicky Cottam as treasurer.

**November 2023** held in Buntingford

Net zero - Tom Abraham, the Diocesan Net Zero Carbon Officer gave a comprehensive presentation about our journey towards achieving net zero with particular reference to our Diocese and this Deanery. We should be working towards achieving net zero by 2030.

Energy audits can be arranged to enable a parish to understand their existing situation and to plan for the future. The Diocesan web site has useful information on available sources of grants and funding.

Deanery news - The Rural Dean welcomed Steve Sivyer, the new Vicar of Royston, to the Deanery.

Jo Adams & Mark Eaton

### **3.7 A report from the Rector**

St Mary's aims to be a welcoming and inclusive church, whose purpose is to share God's love with others. In 2023, we have continued to do that in many ways; including through our regular pattern of worship, our celebrations of important life events, and our hosting of wonderful community functions.

Over the last year, particular highlights for me have included: welcoming our new curate, Rev'd Dr Paulet Brown-Wilsher; our Passion Play on Palm Sunday, where Jo co-ordinated an enthusiastic band of actors to bring to life the story of Jesus' journey to the cross; our Festal Evensong, marking the Coronation of King Charles III; and our pet service, when dogs, hamsters and tortoises joined us in church to celebrate all God's creation! Alongside these there have been services of great celebration, such as our special Dawn Service (with fire and incense) on Easter Day, and services which are deeply reflective, such as our service on Maundy Thursday, with a meal, foot-washing and stripping the altar, and our service of Peace & Justice, to pray for peace in all places of conflict.

As well as our regular and special services during the church year, it has also been a privilege to marry new couples, welcome families for Christenings, and to say goodbye to much loved villagers at funerals. Together these remind us that the church is a place for the whole community, to celebrate life's joys and to come together during times of sadness. It has also been wonderful to welcome the school into church for both Harvest Festival and a Christingle Service, and to take part in regular assemblies with them.

I've continued to experience first-hand the part that the church plays in hosting amazing events, meals and exhibitions. This year, the Music Festival, the Book Fair, Flea Market and Christmas Fair have also been hugely successful and have together raised much needed funds for the church. These funds are more needed than ever, as we start preparing for important future works; including the North Aisle Roof, the Tower and a project to improve the accessibility of the building. In the next few months, we will finish producing our long-term plan, to help us schedule and fundraise for these, and we hope that you all will help us

in both the planning and the realisation of these much-needed restoration and improvement works on our iconic building.

## **Mission Action Planning**

As you will know, in 2022 we agreed our vision for St Mary's, that we are:

*'A welcoming community, sharing God's love'*

and our values of:

*'Exploring Faith, Following Jesus, Respecting Difference, Including Everyone'*

The PCC reflect often on these in our regular meeting, and you will hopefully have noticed this year, how these are becoming more and more embedded into both our everyday communication, and also our planning for the future. As part of this, in 2023 we continued to consider how these values shape our life together, and have particularly looked at the ways in which we gently share our faith during events in our building. As part of this, we've made a commitment that the Lady Chapel is kept as a 'holy space' during such events, and the Mission, Worship and Discipleship committee have continued to look at suitable prayer resources and faith displays for that area. We have also been considering how to keep engaging with those who come for baptisms, weddings and funerals; so that we continue to build on the relationships we are making, and ensure that St Mary's grows in its desire to welcome and include everyone, as we explore faith together. The plans for better access mentioned above are another strand of ensuring that, as is the growth of our work with children and young people, and our desire to make them feel welcome in all of our services.

## **Living in Love and Faith**

Myself and the PCC continue to try to keep abreast of developments across the Church of England, with regards to Living in Love and Faith. For those of you who don't know, broadly, this is the CofEs discernment about how questions about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage fit within the bigger picture of the good news of Jesus Christ. Some of you might remember we ran a course on this a couple of years ago, as part of the national discernment, and many of you will be aware of the disagreement over this in various churches; which has led to occasional flurries of media interest.

In mid-December the House of Bishops confirmed its earlier decision to commend some Prayers of Love and Faith, which can be used with same-sex couples in the context of regular scheduled services, such as a Parish Eucharist, Morning Prayer or at Evensong, but there isn't yet a date for when the prayers can be used in special 'standalone services' for same-sex couples. When the Prayers of Love and Faith are commended for use within Standalone Services for same-sex couples, we expect that the decision to use them will need to be agreed by the PCC and incumbent together, and reflected in a PCC Resolution, and this is something we'll keep the whole congregation informed about, as it progresses.

It is worth noting that the Church of England's teaching on marriage has not changed, but that these prayers make provision for a same-sex couple to give thanks for their faithful relationship and to ask for God's blessing on them and their families.

If you would like to know more, please do get in touch!

## **Thankfulness**

Of course, nothing at St Mary's can happen without the commitment of a huge collective of volunteers, who give their time, expertise, and money to support both the church building and the activities within it. Although there are far too many people to list here, I would like to attempt to thank some of you for all you have done in 2023.

Firstly, a huge thank you to our churchwardens Julia Mitchell and John Chilton. Churchwardens are vital to the health and wellbeing of our church communities, and their role description can seem exceptionally broad and varied, but I am so thankful that we've had two churchwardens this year, who have been so supportive of both me and my ministry, and the church as a whole.

They, in turn, are part of a bigger team, and I am also very grateful for our Duty Wardens, our PCC Secretary (Bernard), our Treasurer (Mark), the PCC Vice Chair (Ruth), our Safeguarding Officer (Jo) and the whole PCC. Everyone on the PCC puts in a huge time commitment and we couldn't be church together without them. Thank you also to those non-PCC members who have joined various sub-committees this year, as well as to John P for this work as our gift-aid officer. And this year, a particularly note of thanks to Stephen and those on the '8 Swan Street' Committee, for all their work on the refurbishment project.

I am enormously grateful for our new curate (Paulet) and the rest of our flourishing ministry team, comprising of Retired Clergy (Ian and Lindsay), our Lay Reader (Mark) and our Lay Leaders of Worship (Sarah and Margaret G). Together they assist me, with wisdom and creativity, to lead our services and worship, and it is fantastic to have such a supportive team. This year, it was sad to say good-bye to the final member of our ministry team, Patrick Forbes, as him and Annette moved to Bedfordshire – they are very missed, particularly at St Nicholas. Thank you also to remaining members of the TGiS team; both those who lead those services so creatively, and those who provide the music for them.

Of course, our services require more than just our ministry team and service leaders... So thank you also to Bernard who serves faithfully, to Frances who as Sacristan, always ensures everything is perfectly prepared, and to those who have acted as occasional acolytes during the year (Emily, Lucas, Daisy, Thomas and Laura). Thank you to our organist, Pete, also to John, who continues to assist. Thank you to our musical director, Bene't, and all our church choir; together your musical gifts enrich our worship and give it so much life. Thank you to those who contribute to services by reading or leading the intercessions – there is always more room on the rota if anyone would like to join that team! I am also so thankful to our dedicated 'tech team' who ensure we can hear what is being said and who have enabled Zoom worship to continue. Thank you to Jo and Sarah, for all their ministry with children and young people, both in Sunday services and through Fridays@5, Messy Church and more! Thank you to our Welcome Team (Sides people) who have risen to the challenge of making our welcome even warmer, and to those on the Coffee Rota, who have enabled us to warm up our hands over a cup of coffee; it makes such a difference to the way we share fellowship with each other.

There are many other people who have served the church over the last year; those running Lent and Advent courses, our flower team and cleaning team, gardening volunteers, our bell ringers, those who have assisted at weddings & funerals, the Friends of St Mary's, those who have run various events, those who have contributed to Sunday Afternoon Teas and those who have written, edited and published Ashwell Village News, including to Sarah and Alfie for their huge amount of work for this publication. I am also incredibly grateful to Guy, for all his support as Parish Administrator, and to Sheelagh for the many ways she cares for the church.

Finally, on top of all those I have named, and all I have forgotten to name (sorry if that includes you!), I am grateful to everyone in this congregation, for the love you share, for your examples of faith and for your prayerful witness in our community. May we all continue to live together, in God's love, in 2024.

Chris

## LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Rector	The Rev'd Chris Campbell
Rectory	109 High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, SG7 5PQ
Correspondence address	The Parish Church Room, 9 Swan Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, S7 5NX
Church	St Mary the Virgin, Mill Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, SG7 5LY
Other buildings	8 Swan Street Ashwell, Hertfordshire, SG7 5NX
Bankers	Barclays Bank Plc Market Place, Town Centre, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE87 2BB
Independent Examiner	Mrs J Pritchard, B.Com, ACMA, CGMA
Church Architect for Quinquennial Inspection	Mr Iain Frearson, BA (Hons), BArch, RIBA, AABC
Date of last Inspection	2024

## Membership of the Parochial Church Council (PCC)

PCC members who have served at any time during 2023.

Ex-officio members:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Retires</b>
Rector	The Rev'd Chris Campbell	
Churchwardens	Julia Mitchell John Chilton	from April 2023
Reader	Dr Mark Eaton	Treasurer
Representatives to the Buntingford Deanery Synod	Jo Adams Dr Mark Eaton	
Elected Members:	Melanie Dawson-Dew John Hare Chere Hunter Neil Inskip Gaye Rowlands Sarah Talks Ruth ten Hove , Vice-Chair Stephen ten Hove Vacancy	Term 2024 2026 2025 2024 2024 2025 2026 2026 2025

Susan Greenbank  
David Richards, Vice-Chair

to April 2024  
to April 2024

In attendance:

Bernard Allen

Secretary

### **Parish Officers:**

Ashwell News Editor  
Electoral Roll Officer  
Gift Aid Coordinator  
Health and Safety Officer  
Parish Church Administrator  
Parish Church Room  
Parish Safeguarding Officers  
Stewardship Officer  
Website Administrator

Sarah Talks  
Bernard Allen  
John Paramour  
Graham Chandler  
Guy MacKenzie  
Bookings through the Administrator  
Rector and Jo Adams  
John Paramour  
Guy MacKenzie

### **Committees and Action Groups**

The PCC operates through committees, which meet regularly and report to the next council meeting. The rector and churchwardens are ex-officio members of all committees.

The PCC has a standing committee constituted in accordance with Rule M31 of the Church Representation Rules 2022. Membership consists of the incumbent and the churchwardens (ex-officio), the lay vice-chair and the Safeguarding Officer. The committee may not discharge a duty of the PCC and may not exercise a power of the PCC which is subject to the passing of a resolution by the PCC. If the PCC gives the committee any directions as to the exercise of its power, the committee must exercise the power in accordance with those directions. The committee has no spending limit.

### **Status**

In March 2010 the parish became a registered charity with the Charity Commission. The charity number is 1134776 and our name is “The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mary, Ashwell”, using a working name of “PCC, St Mary’s Church, Ashwell”.

### **The Governing Documents of the Parochial Church**

The Church of England have agreed with the Charity Commission that for the purposes of agreeing “governing documents”, Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) are governed by two pieces of legislation. They are:

- The Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 as amended.  
This defines the principal function or purpose, of the PCC as “promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical”,  
and,
- The Church Representation Rules (contained in Schedule 3 to the Synodical Government Measure 1969 as amended).  
The full text is available in the Church Representation Rules 2022.

## **Parochial Church Council**

Membership of the PCC is detailed in the Church Representation Rules 2022, section B.

The PCC (Powers) Measure 1956 states the PCC “is to co-operate with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical”.

In law the PCC is a body corporate. This means that it is a separate body from the people who serve on it, and that no member is individually liable for its debts. A change in the membership of the PCC does not affect the PCC’s liability for its debts, and consequently each new PCC should honour the contracts and pledges undertaken by the previous PCC.

The composition and procedure of the PCC is regulated by the Church Representation Rules as contained in the Synodical Government Measure 1969 (as amended). The functions and powers of the PCC are contained in the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956, as amended by the 1969 Measure.

Elections to the PCC are held annually and all members of the church electoral roll are entitled to vote and stand for election. There is provision to co-opt members to the PCC, and the Rector is ex-officio a member and the chair.