

Trustees' Annual Report 2023

St Michael and All Angels Church Wilmington



NURTURING DISCIPLES OF JESUS ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

St. Michael and All Angels Church Wilmington, registered charity 1127656, is an Anglican Church, situated in the Ecclesiastical Parish of Wilmington and working under the jurisdictions of the Diocese of Rochester and the Church of England.

The Trustees' Annual Report explains how the Church fulfilled its objectives for the public benefit in 2023. It is based on the trustees' Annual Report presented to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 19th May 2024.

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Introduction

St. Michael's is a lively church for people of all ages, with a vision to be a growing and supportive Church at the heart of the Parish of Wilmington. We aim to be welcoming to all: a place where people come to know God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through clear and relevant teaching of the Bible, where personal faith can grow and flourish. Our mission work aims to encompass local, Diocesan, national and international communities and to serve through prayer, pastoral support, practical help and financial aid.

There are many aspects to our life at St Michael's, but our Sunday gatherings are at the heart of all we do. Details of our Sunday services, and activities for children and young people can be found on our website. Bible teaching is central to our meeting together because we believe the Bible to be God's means of building up and equipping His Church. As well as meeting on Sundays, many of our members also get together during the week in House Groups for friendship, Bible study and mutual support and at various social events throughout the year. Our conviction is that the local church is the hope of the world because Jesus Christ is at its centre.

Church Contact Details

Website: www.stmichaelswilmington.org.uk

St. Michael and All Angels Church

Church Hill

Wilmington

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DA2 7EH

<https://www.stmichaelswilmington.org.uk/contactus.htm>)

The Church Office

Office Hours: Monday to Thursday 10.00 to 3.30 pm

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Worshipping Community

At the end of 2023, St Michael's had a regular worshipping community of 135 people, including 7 children under 11 years, 9 young people under 17 years and 62 adults aged over 69 years. The average weekly attendance at church services, counted during March 2024, was 95, including 10 children and young people aged under 16 years. 148 people attended services on Easter Day 2023. 261 people took part in special services for the congregation and local community during Advent 2023, with 258 people taking part in special services held for schools during this period. 319 people took part in services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

There were 119 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll, at last year's revision, 66 of whom were Parish residents. The Revised Electoral Roll 2024 will be reported on 5th May 2024.

Team Work

St Michael's small paid workforce consists of a full-time Vicar and Children, Youth and Family Minister, supported by a part-time Parish Administrator and a team of over 60 hard-working volunteers who are central to church life. The Revd. Carl Chambers and the Children, Youth and Families Minister, Sharon Stirman, lead the church's teaching ministry supported by Licensed Lay Ministers, Jean Hook and Richard Kinderman; Licensed Lay Readers, Eric Hookins and Penny Culliford; and Pastoral Assistant, Christine Hookins.

Volunteers work in a range of roles and teams, helping to lead worship in both the church and the community, leading home study groups and in pastoral, outreach, finance, safeguarding, technology and administration ministries. Our Safeguarding Team, for example, oversees compliance with The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance, including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) regulations and training requirements. The Church's two elected Church Wardens, the Bishop's Officers, supported by two Assistant Church Wardens, play a leading role in the management of church services and the careful stewardship of church resources.

The Parochial Church Council

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2020) and a registered charity (number 1127656). PCC members are trustees, who are collectively responsible for promoting the evangelistic, pastoral and ecumenical aims of the Church and the careful stewardship of Church finances and property.

PCC members serve a three year term of office. Lay members of the PCC are either elected at the APCM, co-opted onto the PCC, or occupy an ex-officio place. At the time of writing this report, there are 21 members of the PCC in post: 7 ex-officio members; 12 elected members and 2 co-opted members, with 23 members, in total, serving during the review period. The PCC meets six times a year, with additional meetings convened as and when necessary. In addition, the Leadership Group, the Stewardship Task Group, the Mission Task Group and the Outreach and Social Task Group report regularly to the PCC.

The Vicar's Annual Report

Worship

Our corporate worship is the centre of our life as the people of God. We have sadly lost several much beloved members of our church family through sudden or unexpected deaths, but have also regularly seen visitors, whom we pray might return and become regular worshippers, established as disciples of Christ. It has been encouraging to see how God has answered these prayers with a number of people.

We celebrate the Lord's Supper on the second and fourth Sundays of the month at 10.30am, and three times a month at 8.30am. The first Sunday is always an "All Age" service, partly to encourage greater mixing across the generations, and partly to give the leaders of BEEs, the group for children up to and including Year 9, a chance to enjoy corporate worship with the rest of the church. The third (and fifth) Sundays will be a regular 'Service of the Word'. Evensong is held on the first Sunday of the month at 5pm and a meditative service on the third Sunday at 5pm.

I continue to be keen to encourage us to think of ways we can encourage corporate worship for the whole congregation but believe that a primary focus on the 10.30am service is still the best way for us to grow as a church, both individually and together. It is encouraging to see the majority of people remaining for informal fellowship over coffee after the service.

Our monthly prayer meetings continue on the first Wednesday (8-9pm on Zoom) and have occasionally occurred in the church on the following Saturday (9-10am in the Church or Parish Centre). From April this year, we will try a 'hybrid' meeting on Wednesdays, both on Zoom and in the Church. If there was one other meeting I would encourage people from our church to commit to, apart from their weekly commitment to a service on a Sunday, it would be the prayer meeting. I think this is even more important than our Home Groups (which are important!). As we pray, we are showing our worship of God and our dependence on him. We're seeking his good and glory in the world. We are showing that we surrender our passions and desires and control to Him and seek Him to be more Himself in our lives and our church.

The Westminster catechism asks: What is the chief end of man? The response: To glorify God and enjoy him forever. Our prayer lives are a litmus test of how we truly seek to glorify and enjoy God together. My role as Vicar is to encourage our worship, so seeking to encourage prayer must continue to be a priority.

Teaching, Preaching and Evangelism

Our aim as a church is to 'nurture disciples across the generations'. In practice, this means seeking to teach the Bible so that we know and understand just how much the God of Heaven and Earth has loved us in Jesus, and what this means for us in response.

A 'first step' is our outreach. This depends on relationships with people who are not yet committed to Christ but is far more than friendship or being social. The word 'evangelism' means the teaching of the Good News (the 'evangel'), which means explaining how we have fallen far short of living God's way in God's world, and what he has done to bring us back.

We've run "Christianity Explored" this year, both on Zoom (Wednesday evenings) and Tuesdays after Coffee Pop In, as well as in home groups. Although primarily an outreach course, it is a helpful reminder for all Christians of the goodness of God in Christ Jesus. This was followed by "Hope Explored" and, on Tuesdays only, "Tales of the Unexpected". The "Hope Explored" group included a few folk who were coming to Coffee Pop In after their morning walk and stayed.

The Leadership Group meets termly now, but continues to discuss discipleship in each of its forms. The areas of preaching chosen included: a series on giving after Easter, the book of Esther, Colossians, Matthew 7, Matthew 25, the 9 lessons for the Carol service leading up to Christmas, and then Mark's Gospel in the first three months of 2024.

A real advancement, this year, has been the PCC's development of a governance document on the Church's corporate responsibilities to both employees and volunteers, which identifies all the different people serving in the Church. This policy aims to foster a safe and healthy church culture in which people learn from and support each other through a loving ethos underpinned by robust, workable communication systems.

The PCC also had a very useful 'Away Day' in September, which encouraged conversation and collaboration. When giving a reflection on "Towards a Vision for our Church", I shared "three loves": love for God, love for each other and love for the world (those outside the church). We are slowly seeking to work out what greater love might look like in each area.

Administration

The PCC has been through a journey of employing an administrator, initially for one day a week but, after careful review of the needs of the church, this was extended to 22 hours per week. The

process of decision-making was very encouraging as we sought to ensure clarity, efficiency and duty of care. The new administrator had been a member of the Church for six months before beginning this role. He has removed a large administrative burden from the Vicar and, in part, from the Children, Youth and Family Minister.

Ecumenical Relationships

I continue to meet with the local deanery chapter of Anglican ministers, regularly. It has been less easy to get to the monthly 'Dartford Churches' lunchtime meetings, typically because of being double-booked by all kinds of things. However, I meet up with the two neighbouring vicars (Hextable and Christ Church Dartford), every couple of months, and the minister of Wilmington Community Church, from time to time.

I have also been encouraged by fellow ministers in the Rochester Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship and, this year, was invited to join their committee. To be an 'Evangelical' is, essentially, to believe in the supreme authority and sufficiency of scripture, and in Jesus Christ as God's Son, who died on the cross to pay the penalty for all our sins and, through faith alone, to bring us to God.

Annual Reports should seek to provide an overview of the year and mention the most significant developments. It would, therefore, be remiss of me to fail to mention the remarkable support from Rochester Good Stewards' Trust, which we continue to receive, towards Sharon Stirman's post as Children, Youth and Family Minister. This is a remarkable affirmation, both of the calling Sharon has, and of the ministry we seek to train her for: a ministry that seeks to teach and preach God's Word, with all faithfulness, to a generation of children, youth and families, as well as training us as a church in the same. The primary church supporting us is St Nicholas', Sevenoaks. Their minister, Revd Angus Macleay, invited me to lead their staff training last September (they have over 20 people on their staff), where we looked at how we see Christ in Proverbs. Sharon and I were invited to share something in their church prayer meeting that month. We have further plans for collaboration in 2024.

Children, Youth and Family Ministry

What a busy year it has been since the last APCM and I continue to love every minute of my role with the aim that my work continues to follow the church's vision to nurture disciples across the generations.

Sunday Children and Youth Work

The youth area is used as a creche available for parents and small children to use during the morning service, with specific toys and books available for them, along with colouring and activity sheets. This is increasingly being used as we now have three to four toddlers who regularly attend with their parents.

BEEs (The Bible's Eager Explorers) runs for children aged 3 to 14 in the Parish Centre during term time and currently has approximately 5 or 6 regular members with visitors always welcomed and included. This number will drop this year as those moving into year 9 move to staying in services, but we do have some toddlers who will start BEEs next year! We continue to use the method of 'whole church teaching' meaning that all age groups study the same Bible passage, encouraging discussions about what has been understood and taught and also building up relationships through the generations. The support of Jenny and Jane is invaluable but a rota is in place to ensure that they do not miss out on worship and teaching for themselves.

EPIC (Every Person in Christ) is a Bible study group for ages 11 to 18 who meet weekly on a Sunday evening during term time, in the SNUG. Following a meeting in January, the young people wanted to shorten it to one hour and concentrate more on Bible study which is a delight to do with them. Studying the passage preached at the 10.30am service, we have good in depth discussions and the young people often surprise me with their understanding and ask really thought provoking questions. There are always three or four regular attendees but can be as many as nine and it is really special to see them growing in faith together. It is important that the young people also know the importance of serving the church family and so they set up tables for coffee pop-in at the start of each EPIC session and are also on the rota to serve church coffee - and they even wash up!

All Age Worship

I have worked closely with Carl to make All Age worship more inclusive for everyone, thinking about engagement with God's word, the hymns and songs, and keeping it to within the hour. Children and young people are actively involved in these services, welcoming people as they arrive, reading from the Bible and the writing and leading of prayers for the whole church. This is still work in progress as we look for further ways for generations to worship as God's family together and I welcome any feedback on how we can ensure that our all-age services on the first Sunday of every month are engaging and relevant to the youngest, the oldest and everyone in between!

Family Support

This year, my focus is on supporting family discipleship and how I can best love and serve families in sharing the Gospel together in whatever way is best for each of them. It is apparent that there is no 'one size fits all'. Fortunately, there are many, varied resources available, but most important is simply bringing the Gospel into everyday life, recognizing God's provision, praising Him and talking to Him in prayer. I regularly visit families and/or invite them to share a meal or coffee, and am in regular contact through emails and a parents' WhatsApp group. I have also visited and supported couples in baptism preparation.

Weekly Activities

At the end of the school year 2023, after lots of prayer and discussion, it was agreed that the **After School Drop-In** would not be continued due to lack of attendees. Last July, we finished the weekly sessions with a tea-party for everyone who had been involved and all the ladies were thanked for their wonderful encouragement and support. However, the two girls who were regular attendees wanted to continue to meet for a termly craft session and I am grateful to Meryl for planning the crafts and working alongside me - they have enjoyed making harvest and Christmas crafts and have both helped with the preparation and leading crafts for the Christmas and Easter family events.

I support Jean Hook with the **Under 5s group**, on Thursday mornings. This is growing and growing - several new mums and grandmas are now attending with children ranging from a few months to 3 years old. We look at various stories from the Bible each month in an age appropriate way. Good relationships are nurtured and several families have attended other church events as a result of attending Under 5s. Long may this continue!

Links with the **Beavers Group** and visits to Church have continued with the most recent last December where it was a pleasure to share the story of Christmas through craft with them - and to see their excitement at being able to ring the church bells!

Work with Schools

Strong relationships with the Wilmington Grammar Schools continue to be upheld with bi-annual meetings with the Head Teachers.

Girls' Grammar: Following their annual Christmas hamper competition, the church distributed over 50 hampers to local parishioners with another ten being used by Wilmington Community Church for their Advent of Giving project – a big thank you goes to all who helped with this in any way.

Boys' Grammar: We took delivery of several boxes of food from the school's Christmas Food Collection and used this to make up specific food hampers for local families in need which were gratefully received and thanks were passed onto the school. The school hosted Afternoon Teas for Christmas and Easter and on both occasions lovely afternoons were shared by many retired members of the church family along with students over tea, sandwiches, cake and entertainment. The next one is planned for July and I look forward to once again liaising with the school for this.

The Boys' and Girls' Grammar Schools joint Christmas Concert was a wonderful evening of Christmas entertainment with over 200 people in attendance - all of which heard how to find the true meaning of Christmas, Jesus, in a candy cane! It was also a delight to welcome into church all Year 7 students from both grammar schools for back to back carol services. Seeing and hearing 180 students sing carols was such a blessing. All heard how Jesus's birth means that Jesus 'is home' (using the Three Lions "Football's Coming Home" nativity parody)!

Wilmington Primary: The church was again full to bursting for their Christmas concert and it was a pleasure to share the Christmas story through a cracker with all who attended. I continue to liaise with the Head Teacher who supports thorough inclusion of event information in their weekly parent emails.

Oakfield Primary: I continue to have excellent relationships with Oakfield Primary and it is an absolute pleasure to visit the school and lead termly assemblies covering a variety of themes including friendship, harvest, 'goodbye' and, of course, Christmas and Easter. In December 2023, ninety reception children visited the church to discover how Christmas is celebrated in the Church of England which was a great success. In March this year, we welcomed the whole of Year 1 as

well as Reception classes into church where they heard about how and why we celebrate Easter and they even went on a treasure hunt around the church! It is always a real joy to see so many children exploring the church and learning about Jesus and thanks go to those who have helped in hiding eggs and giving out stars and stickers.

Special Activities and Services

October 2023: The children and young people joined forces to lead the Harvest Festival service in church where we looked at the word 'harvest' and, using the rearranged letters, we showed how harvest is about thanking God for what we 'have' to 'eat', for the harvest of the 'earth' and 'sea', and to remember that we 'have' so much yet throw away food as 'trash' while millions 'starve'.

Light Parties celebrating Jesus being the light of the world were held in October - one for families and one for teenagers. We had approximately 20 children, along with parents and grandparents, in the afternoon and 13 youngsters enjoyed fun in the dark in the evening, including toasting marshmallows around the firepit - all learning how Jesus is the light of the world through a pumpkin! One mum of a teenager sent me a lovely message saying her daughter (who has autism and struggles socially) had a fantastic time and didn't stop talking about it for an hour when she got home! Good fun as well as Christian fellowship was shared by all who attended. Huge thanks to everyone who supported.

December 2023: As part of the Church Christmas Fair, the Children's Make and Take was hugely successful with 52 children taking a bag and filling it with crafts telling the nativity story: lollipop stick Mary and Joseph, jelly baby Jesus in a Rice Krispy manger, a toilet roll tube shepherd, a colour by number wise man, a doily star and a candle reminding that Jesus was born to be the light of the world. They also brought their parents and families to enjoy the fun of the fair!

Those who attended the family carol service enjoyed singing traditional carols and seeing the nativity story presented through a series of gifts left hidden under chairs. It was particularly heart-warming to hear from the care workers at Sonya Lodge how much joy the residents who attended had received as, for some, hearing the nativity in a childlike way was relevant and appropriate.

The **Christmas Eve Crib Service** was well attended with many non-church families enjoying glow sticks and 'phone torches lighting up the darkened church showing Jesus is the Light of the World, while the **BEEs** and **EPIC Nativity** was one which will never be forgotten!

January 2024: For the annual Christingle Service, in the format of a cafe church, we welcomed thirty-two people of all ages who enjoyed joining in with singing, stories and making a Christingle showing God's love for us in sending his son to be the light of the world. Seeing the church lit by just the light of the Christingle candles is something really special and never ceases to give me tingles.

March 2024: The children and young people wonderfully led the Mothering Sunday service, celebrating and remembering the love of mothers and many who attended commented how well the children and young people had led.

As I write this, I am busy preparing the crafts for the Family Easter Craft Morning and Egg Hunt planned for Tuesday 9th April which, once again, will be combined with Coffee Pop-In for all ages to enjoy.

Lakeview Camp: In August 2023, I attended Lakeview as a group leader with eight young people from St Michael's. Although extremely tiring (walking nearly 40 miles over eight days), it was inspiring to see 180 young people enjoying time together, and learning about Jesus and praising God together. This led to the young people and myself leading a special Lakeview Service at the beginning of September where we were able to share a little of our experiences, so the church family could get a flavour of what camp is all about.

Lakeview 2024 is August 19th to 25th and I have already been involved in online prayer meetings for the planning and am looking forward to meeting up with the team in June for face to face training. I will again be attending as a leader, this year, with five of our young people attending - one for the first time.

Living in the village and being the Children, Youth and Family Minister for St Michael's is truly a gift from God and I want to thank everyone who supports me, helps me and prays for me. Praise be to God!

Safeguarding Report

St Michael and All Angels Church has adopted the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy Statement, which is displayed on the internal notice board by the main entrance to the church. There have been no formal safeguarding concerns since the last APCM. Sharon and Louise continue to monitor the safeguarding email account, attend the Annual Diocesan Safeguarding Conference and read the regular Diocesan Safeguarding Bulletins, reporting any changes and/or updates to the PCC. Reports are given to the PCC at every meeting and currently the Safeguarding training data is as follows:

Those holding current basic training certificates:	26
Those required but yet to undertake training:	0
Those holding current foundation training certificates:	38
Those required but yet to undertake training:	0
Those holding current leadership certificates:	8
Those required but yet to undertake training:	2
Those holding current awareness of domestic abuse certificates:	27
Those required but yet to undertake training:	0

All volunteers, **in any role**, are required to undertake a Basic Safeguarding course. All PCC members must complete both Basic and Foundation safeguarding courses either individually online or through the church hosting formal training as a group to be completed by August 2024. All those volunteering with children and youth activities must complete both Basic and Foundation safeguarding courses as soon as possible after offering to volunteer - they must not be left unsupervised until this training is complete. All Church Wardens are to have completed both Basic and Foundation courses and to be booked onto a Leadership course by the end of August 2024. All PCC members and church wardens are also required to complete the on-line Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse training. Provisional training dates for new PCC members and sides persons are to be confirmed.

In addition, all PCC members are required to undertake an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) check as are all volunteers who support work with children, young people and vulnerable adults or hold leadership roles such as Home Group Leaders. DBS checks are ongoing and individuals are contacted individually by the DBS Lead. DBS invitations, for new PCC members and sides persons, as elected, will be generated for completion of DBS within 10 days of the APCM. There are no outstanding DBS checks as of 03.04.2024.

Pastoral Work

The church's pastoral ministry is central to our mission to be a loving and caring presence in Wilmington. Both spiritual and practical, our pastoral work includes fellowship and support in times of personal need and challenge.

A small group of people meet regularly to consider prayerfully whether those in our fellowship who are suffering or troubled in some way may need help, comfort and support. They may be housebound through illness, disability or advancing years and no longer able to get to church as they once did; they may be grieving the death of a loved one, lonely or struggling with varying circumstances of life. It is important that each person feels valued and part of the family of Christ here in Wilmington. Prayer, phone calls, visits and Home Communion can really help with this. Some may also be in need of practical assistance, for example lifts to church or a hospital appointment, or help with shopping.

Of course, it is not just those in the pastoral group who minister in this way – many in our congregation make frequent phone calls and visits to others. May we all continue to show the love and compassion of Jesus, in practical and spiritual ways, to our friends and neighbours. Specific prayer needs can be shared on the prayer lines which operate either by telephone or via WhatsApp. Prayer ministry during 10.30am Communion services has been recommenced.

“Holiday at Home” for older people could not be held for 2-3 years because of Covid but two events took place in October 2022 and April 2023, when an average of about 40 people enjoyed fellowship and took part in various activities and entertainment. Unfortunately, Chris Hookins is no longer able to organise this much-loved event - it would be wonderful if someone else felt called to lead this valuable ministry. Please commit this to your prayers.

Wilmington Care Homes and Sheltered Accommodation

Pastoral visits and church services for residents of local care homes and units of sheltered accommodation, Farrell Court, Emily Court, Sonya Lodge and Wilmington Manor, reach out to residents, helping them to feel part of the family of St Michael's. We pray for residents regularly and keep in touch during any times when we are unable to meet in person.

Mission Work

The church supports six charities:

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, working to support people across the world who are being persecuted for their faith;

Porchlight, which helps people in Kent with problems of homelessness, poverty and mental health;

High Hopes for Children, a local charity operating in Uganda and Moldova which enables children suffering a disability to access education;

Wycliffe Bible Translators, bringing the Word of God to people in their own language;

Christian Aid, supporting communities with diverse needs, both financially and practically, especially after natural disasters.

In addition to the above charities, St Michael's has had a link with Chemba Church in Kondoa Diocese, Tanzania, since 2007, fostering good relationships between our congregations and supporting building work.

Social and Outreach Work

The church organises many different social and outreach activities, including a free monthly full English 'Village Breakfast', following Jesus' example of eating with others. One of the PCC's task groups focuses on this ministry by organising a variety of events for members of the Church and its wider community. Recent highlights have included a delicious international Agape meal prepared by various members of the church family, a hilarious "Comedy and Carols" event at Christmas and a moving presentation on Handel's "Messiah". Later this year, we will be participating in the August Bank Holiday Fair on Wilmington Common, a wonderful community event.

Wilmington Parish News

The “Wilmington Parish News” is produced 4 times a year. The magazine, which has existed for many years, is distributed to approximately 500 households in Wilmington. We strive to achieve an editorial balance that reflects the role of St Michael’s Church, together with items of general interest to Parish residents, including historical articles, biographies and the activities of local groups. Extra copies of the magazine are placed at the back of the church and are available to purchase in the weekly Wilmington Village Market.

Coffee Pop In

Coffee Pop In is held in the Church between 10.00 and 12.00, every Tuesday. The idea is for people in the local community to pop in for tea/coffee and homemade cakes. Some people bring their grandchildren and we welcome residents from Sonya Lodge and Farrell Court. More people seem to be staying for the full two hours and some seem reluctant to go home! It's encouraging that Coffee Pop In is continuing to be so popular and fulfilling a need in the community. People who are not regular church attenders receive a warm welcome from the church family who want everyone to feel at home. It is also enjoyable for our team, who work really well together and are always ready to help each other.

St Michael’s Craft Group

Craft Group is an informal group for adults of any age, run entirely on donations, that welcomes church members and non-members in roughly equal numbers. We offer a range of personal crafts such as knitting and crochet, and welcome new suggestions from group members.

The Church Hall

We want our church hall to benefit both parishioners and the wider community by providing a safe and attractive multi-purpose space. The hall is used for various church activities such as Village Breakfast, together with external bookings which generate income. These include our regular users, St Michael’s Preschool, ‘Dance-a-Cise’, Brownies and Guides, and one-off events such as birthday parties and local elections.

Fabric Report

This report covers the period of 2023-2024, during which time the church underwent its Quinquennial Inspection. This inspection independently carried out has uncovered no major structural or building issues relating to the fabric of the church. The building is still monitored and by maintaining clear gullies on the roof, the leaks from previous years did not occur this winter. Standard works have continued, including bulb replacement etc., but in the main, other than general accepted maintenance (boilers etc) there have been no major issues. Externally, within the graveyard, the trees have been reviewed and detailed. The tree situation remains under review to address the risk of trees causing damage or injury. The church perimeter wall is, also, under review, as we move towards an informed decision. Last summer, the Church Hall flooring was replaced and this has vastly improved user experience. During the next year, we will continue to monitor and maintain our church buildings within the budgets available.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who assist with the upkeep of the church, in any form, for their sterling service and devotion. This includes those who maintain the churchyard and gardens, those involved in the cleaning, maintenance and decoration of the church buildings and to the church's Technical Team. All these roles are essential.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Treasurer's Report

Overview

The Financial Review is based upon the accounting period 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023, on a Receipts and Payments basis. 2023 is the second year that the new Finance Team has been in post, as well as the second year that Expense Plus has been used as our digital accounting package.

The Finance Team works collaboratively over all financial aspects affecting the church's financial health. We have gradually become accustomed to the intricacies of Expense Plus and feel that we were sensible to initiate its use in 2022. However, despite all our best endeavours, 2023 has been extremely challenging from the point of view of the PCC's financial position.

Reserves Policy

This has not altered from that reported in both 2021 and 2022. The PCC continues to aim to have a minimum of three months' general expenditure available as a contingency. This was estimated to be £30,000 for 2023 and accordingly the Reserves Fund was increased to £30,000 in early 2023, with monies transferred from the General Fund, which at that time was showing a surplus.

Comparing with 2021 and 2022

Total Receipts in Unrestricted Funds

2021: £104,791

2022: £110,177

2023: £119,477 IMPROVED

Total Receipts in Restricted Funds

2021: £50,434

2022: £73,788 (significant donation of £15,000)

2023: £58,863 REDUCED

Total Receipts

2022: £183,965

2023: £178,340 REDUCED

Total Expenditure from Unrestricted Funds

2021: £105,935

2022: £105,577

2023: £128,840 INCREASED (primarily due to the cost of utilities increasing)

Total Expenditure from Restricted Funds

2021: £38,038

2022: £59,361

2023: £64,960 INCREASED

Total Expenditure

2022: £164,938

2023: £193,800 INCREASED

Excess of Receipts over Payments

2022: + £19,027

2023: - £15,460

Comment

The PCC entered 2023 in a relatively secure position, with a balance of £93,955, Reserves of £22,007 and a surplus in the General Fund of £5,862. The cost of utilities, however, increased exorbitantly during the year, seriously undermining our position by the end of the year.

The overall balance at the end of the year has reduced to £78,495, with reserves of £30,000 but, unfortunately, with a deficit in the General Fund of £6,836 compared to a surplus of £5,862 at the end of 2022. It should be noted that the overall balance would have been similar to 2022, if we had not incurred a major expense when replacing the Church Hall floor. However, had those monies not been spent from a restricted fund, the increased overall balance would have effectively masked the poor performance of the General Fund in 2023 and given a false sense of security when considering the financial position of the PCC in 2024. The expenditure on the Church Hall floor was therefore affordable in 2023, but the position this has left the PCC in, when entering 2024, with continuing high expenditure, means there will be little or no funds available for projects or repairs of a similar nature in 2024 or for the foreseeable future.

Although the assumption might be that we could recoup some of our balance in 2024 by avoiding expenditure on further 'projects', it should be noted that, currently, there is very little available for 'projects' in any event and thus very little to save. Unfortunately, a high proportion of our capital is unavailable for general use as it is held within Restricted Funds and, in particular, the Youth Minister Fund. This is illustrated by the Youth Minister Fund having a balance of £39,032 which, when combined with Reserves, accounts for 88% of the PCC's capital (£69,032/£78,495).

The PCC, therefore, starts 2024 with negligible funds available for unforeseen costs and this situation will worsen if the General Fund continues to run a deficit in future.

Receipts and Payments

Unrestricted Income was increased in 2023 from £110,177 to £119,477, primarily due to increased giving. However, the overall receipts were reduced from £183,965 to £178,340 (- £5,625, or a 3% reduction). Unrestricted Expenditure was increased from £105,577 to £128,840, primarily due to the cost of utilities. The overall payments increased from £164,938 to £193,800 (+ £28,862, or a 17.5% increase). We have, therefore, in respect of Receipts against Payments, moved from a surplus in 2022 of £19,027 to a deficit of £15,460 in 2023.

The reduction of the General Fund in 2023, by £12,698, accounts for the majority of the overall deficit, with all other Funds being fairly stable. The PCC should, therefore, be concerned as to what actions should be taken if the General Fund continues to run a deficit in 2024, which seems likely. The Parish Share has already been substantially reduced for 2024 but administrative costs have increased in turn. The PCC will almost certainly struggle to maintain three months of general expenditure in its Reserve Fund on current performance. Trustees are, therefore, encouraged to explore all avenues to increase income as well as reduce expenditure, where possible, in order to meet basic costs, let alone consider funding for further projects /repairs /unforeseen costs, etc. On a positive note, the Youth Minister Fund has grown during 2023 as a result of a continuing generous grant from the Rochester Good Stewards Trust, which will continue for the next two years (£102,000 over three years).

2023 has been extremely challenging with a reduction in capital but also a marked reduction in 'available' funds for general use leading into 2024. The PCC is encouraged to explore all avenues to increase income as well as reduce expenditure, where possible, in order to meet its basic costs let alone consider funding for further projects, repairs and unforeseen costs.

Gift Aid Report for Year Ending 31 December 2023

(Figures in brackets are those for year ending 2022, for the purpose of comparison.)

Gift Aid is a government scheme that allows charities to reclaim the basic rate of tax on donations - if you are a taxpayer we can claim 25p of tax for every £1 you donate, at no extra cost to you. During the year we promoted gift aid as a good way to support the Church finances, and seven of us signed new declarations. Three gift aid declarations were cancelled during the year or no longer used. During 2023, we claimed gift aid on donations from 45 (53) people, with 40 (42) of us using Gift Aid for regular giving as at the end of the year. We received £12219.22 (£14683.93) in gift aid from the Inland Revenue on donations received during 2023. In addition we were able to claim some additional gift aid on donations received in previous years as a result of the new gift aid declarations.

Gift Aid Small Donation Scheme (GASDS)

The GASDS allows us to claim a gift aid style repayment on small cash donations of £30 or less for which we don't hold a gift aid declaration. (For us, this is generally the loose notes and coins in the offering, but also includes planned giving envelope donations where we do not hold a declaration, and anonymous cash donations). For 2023, we were able to claim £1306.73 (£1302.58).

Gift Aid Declarations

Please talk to me if you are a taxpayer and have not yet signed a gift aid declaration, and you want to know more. Gift aid declarations can be downloaded from the church website or are available from the church office, one of the wardens or myself. If you have signed a gift aid declaration, please remember to let me know if you no longer pay tax, do not pay sufficient tax to cover the amount we can claim on your donations or if you change address.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT 2024

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the church for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the church's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the church's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the church as required by section 130 of the Act;
or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached. Nigel Bate, 2024-05-05

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2024

The Annual Accounts were approved by the Parochial Church Council and signed on its behalf by the Revd Carl Chambers on 5th May 2024. The Annual Accounts were presented to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 19th May 2024.

Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

Receipts and Payments Accounts

		Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL 2023 £	TOTAL 2022 £
RECEIPTS					
Donations & Legacies		86,461	52,829	139,290	145,798
Charitable Activities	8a	13,542	0	13,542	13,926
Investments		58	0	58	363
Trading Activities	8b	19,416	0	19,416	18,661
Other	8f	0	6,034	6,034	5,217
TOTAL RECEIPTS		119,477	58,863	178,340	183,965
PAYMENTS					
Charitable Activities	8c	59,540	59,410	118,950	96,923
Raising Funds	8d	16,883	615	17,498	10,692
Other Activities	8f	0	4,935	4,935	5,238
Support	8e	52,417	0	52,417	52,085
TOTAL PAYMENTS		128,840	64,960	193,780	164,938
Excess of Receipts over Payments		- 9,363	- 6,097	- 15,460	19,027
TRANSFERS BETWEEN FUNDS					
Fund Transfers In		14,658	12,918	27,576	48,473
Fund Transfers Out		15,869	11,707	27,576	48,473
Cash at bank & in hand at 1 st January 2023		33,738	60,217	93,955	74,928
Cash at bank & in hand at 31 st December 2023		23,164	55,331	78,495	93,955

Statement of Assets & Liabilities

		Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL 2023 £	TOTAL 2022 £
CASH FUNDS	7	23,164	55,331	78,495	93,955
OTHER MONETARY ASSETS					
Gift Aid Recoverable		1,476	319	1,795	1,855
Assets Retained for Church Use	3	212,982	0	212,982	212,982
LIABILITIES					
Utilities December				1,687	2,869
Diocesan Fees				647	416
Away Giving				3,358	2,480
TOTAL				5,692	5,765

NOTES

1. The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared under the Charities Act 2011 and in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 using the Receipts and Payments basis, as agreed by the PCC in November 2021.
2. 2023 is the second year that Expense Plus as an 'accounting package' has been used.
3. The assets retained for church use is the church hall and the value shown is the value for insurance purposes in 1999 plus subsequent improvements at cost.

Land in Whitehead Close currently rented to 1st Wilmington Scouts Group and owned by the Church is not valued above. The survey carried out on the 9 March 2016 in accordance with section 119 of the Charities Act 2011 and the Charities (Qualified Surveyors' Report Regulations 1992) on this land stated: "given the compact nature of the site and the lack of vehicular access, we are of the opinion that redevelopment of the site for any other purposes would be extremely difficult to achieve and therefore the continued use by the Scouts is recommended". The Scouts currently occupy the land, having signed a 50-year lease in 2017, and pay a rent to the PCC. This is currently £558 per annum following a 5-year review in early 2023.

4. Funds

The PCC's receipts and payments are allocated to a number of different funds depending on the purpose for which they are used. **Unrestricted funds** are available for spending on general purposes including those within Designated funds (D) which have been earmarked for particular projects.

Restricted funds are only able to be used for a particular purpose for which they were established or monies donated. The PCC has to authorise any transfers from these funds if they are to be used for any other purpose.

UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	
General Fund	Meets the day to day running costs of the Church.
External Organisation Holding Fund	Monies received but intended for other organisations.
Youth Minister Support Fund (D)	Closed 2023 but not as yet deleted - funds transferred to General Fund in 2023.
Church Repairs (D)	Fund deleted 2023.
Hall Repairs (D)	Fund deleted 2023.
Three Churches Events	Monies for events held jointly with Christchurch, Dartford and St Peter's, Hextable - funds transferred to Projects Fund in 2023.
Vicarage Internal Maintenance Fund	Monies set aside by the PCC for the Vicarage – funds transferred to Projects Fund in 2023.
Legacies (D)	Fund deleted 2023.
Reserves (D)	Previously "Repairs" – should hold 3 months of 'general expenditure' in line with PCC policy. The PCC has, despite severe constraints upon the budget in 2023, managed to adhere to its policy of retaining three months of 'general' expenditure in the Reserves Fund, i.e. £30,000, as agreed in 2023. The ongoing pressure on expenditure in 2024 will make this aim extremely challenging.

RESTRICTED FUNDS	
Youth Minister	Meets the costs of employing a Youth Minister on a full time basis using donations, gifts and grants.
Fees Not Retained	Fees collected by the church on behalf of Rochester Diocese and others.
Flower Donations	Displays in church funded by gifts and donations.
Repairs Donations	Gifts given for specific repairs to the church buildings – funds transferred to the Projects Fund in 2023.
Churchyard Donations	Gifts for the upkeep of the churchyard – funds transferred to the General Fund in 2023.
Churchyard Wall Donations	Gifts given to fund work on repairing the churchyard wall - funds transferred to the Projects Fund in 2023.
Local Support	Donations to help local families.
Holiday at Home	Donations and grants to support the "Holiday at Home" events.
Pat Iveson Memorial	Fund deleted 2023.
MA Course	Donations to fund Rev. Carl Chambers' course.
Christmas Day Lunch	Donations and grants to support the Christmas Day lunch - funds transferred to the Repairs Donations Fund and subsequently to the Projects Fund in 2023. Closed in 2023 but not as yet deleted.

Pastor Tito-Cornhill	Donations and grants to support Pastor Tito (Kondoa) attend a training course - funds transferred to the Kondoa Fund - closed 2023 but not as yet deleted.
Kondoa	Donations and grants to support the Diocese of Kondoa Tanzania and Chemba Church.
Railway Exhibition	Fund deleted 2023.
Hall RTR Project	Fund deleted 2023.
Hall Disabled Toilet	Donations and grants towards the provision of a disabled toilet in the Church Hall - funds transferred to the Projects Fund in 2023.
Projects	New fund in 2023 to serve as a holding fund for monies that are destined for specific projects now and in future. As a consequence several funds were amalgamated into this one fund to reduce the overall number of funds subject to PCC approval and oversight. Funds merged into the Projects Fund include 'Repairs Donations', 'Hall Disabled Toilet', 'Vicarage Internal Maintenance Fund', 'Three Churches Fund' and 'Churchyard wall donations'.
Third Party Money Fund	This fund is yet to be established - aiming to merge Local Support / Fees Not Retained and the External Organisation Holding - a decision that is for review by the Stewardship Task Group.

The movements in the funds during the year were:

	Bal/b/fwd £	Receipts £	Payments £	Transfers £	Bal/c/fwd £
General	5,862	119,477	128,840	- 3,335	- 6836
Youth Minister	30,457	47,377	38,802	0	39,032
Fees Not Retained	- 21	6,034	4,935	- 167	911
Flower donations	0	1,057	680	- 24	353
Repairs Donations	23,825	317	16,857	- 7,285	0
Churchyard Donations	645	0	0	- 645	0
Churchyard Wall Donations	950	200	0	-1,150	0
Local Support	564	90	0	0	654
Holiday at Home	1,176	375	270	0	1,281
MA Course	427	0	0	0	427
Christmas Day Lunch	917	78	171	- 824	0
Pastor Tito - Cornhill	21	0	0	-21	0
Kondoa	0	1,030	0	+1,030	0
Reserves	22,007	0	0	+ 7,993	30,000
Hall Disabled Toilet	768	0	0	- 768	0
External Organisation	489	2,558	2,214	0	833
HOLDING FUND					
Youth Minister Support Fund	5,329	0	0	- 5329	0
Thee Churches Events	39	0	0	-39	0
Vicarage Internal Maintenance	500	0	0	-500	0
Projects	0	776	0	+ 11,064	11,840
TOTAL	93,955	178,339	193,799	0	78,495

6. Various Funds have been set to zero at the end of 2023 with a view to their closing in 2024 in order to reduce the number of funds. The monies were transferred to the Projects Fund from where they will be sourced instead - see Note 4.

The Rochester Good Stewards Fund kindly agreed to continue with the grant for the Youth Minister for a further three years, i.e. 2023-2025, to a total of £102,000, with £35,000 to be received in the first continuing year of funding starting in the spring of 2023.

7. Cash Funds

CASH FUNDS	£
Short Term Deposits	60,403
CAF Bank	17,611
Miscellaneous Cash/Floats	481
TOTAL	78,495

8. Further Analysis of Receipts and Payments

RECEIPTS	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL 2023 £	TOTAL 2022 £
a) CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES				
PCC Fees	10,872	0	10,872	9,027
Previous year income	0	0	0	3,091
Fundraising	2,670	0	2,670	1,808
TOTAL	13,542	0	13,542	13,926
b) TRADING ACTIVITIES				
Premises Hire	17,239	0	17,239	16,396
Parish News	2,028	0	2,028	2,234
Bookstall	149	0	149	31
TOTAL	19,416	0	19,416	18,661
PAYMENTS				
c) CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES				
Churchyard Running Costs	10,026	0	10,026	2,885
Church Running Costs	13,571	17,537	31,108	20,683
Church Utilities	16,565	0	16,565	7,572
Ministry	4,768	24,236	29,004	35,602
Mission & Evangelism	604	441	1,045	2,580

Missionary & Charitable Giving	5,310	2,630	7,940	4,559
Office Costs	1,590	0	1,590	3,573
Salaries¹ & Honoraria	5,696	14,566	20,262	15,613
Youth & Children	1,410	0	1,410	2,456
DBF Fees	0	0	0	1,400
TOTAL	59,540	59,410	118,950	96,923

d) RAISING FUNDS	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL 2023 £	TOTAL 2022 £
Fund Raising	650	615	1,265	235
Hall Running Costs	13,268	0	13,268	8,346
Parish News	2,768	0	2,768	2,111
Book Stall	197	0	197	0
TOTAL	16,883	615	17,498	10,692

e) Diocesan Parish Share

f) These are fees associated with activities, including weddings and funerals, which are collected on behalf of several parties, including the Diocese, and subsequently paid to them.

¹ Parish Administrator (Unrestricted) 10 months; Children Youth and Families Minister (Restricted) Full Year.