



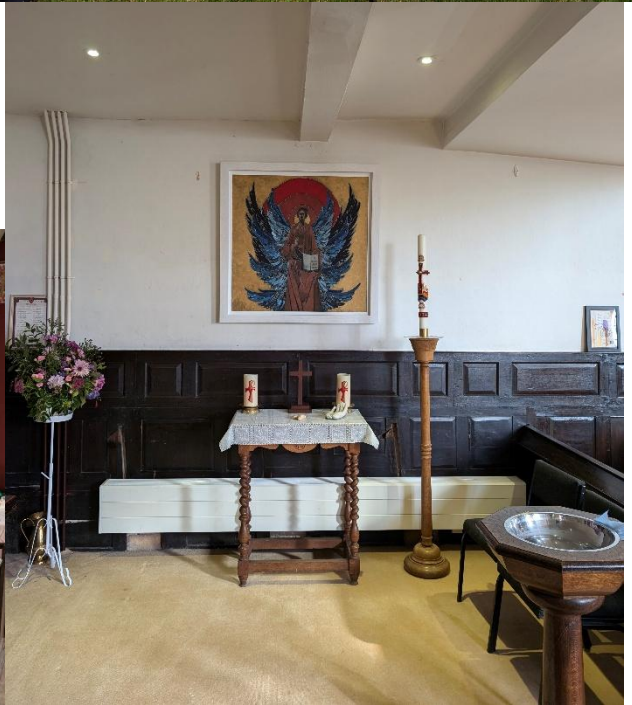
PARISH OF BERKSWICH

GOD'S LOVE IN COMMUNITY



Annual Report for the year ending 31st December 2024

Charity Commission registration number: 1129997



Dear all,

Welcome to our 2024 Annual Report.

This report is always a good opportunity to spend some time taking stock—reflecting on who we are, strengthening relationships, and looking ahead to the future.

We are truly blessed with a dedicated team of volunteers who serve on the PCC and work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the smooth running of our three places of worship. Without their commitment, much of what we do would not be possible, and I am deeply grateful for their service.

On a personal note, having spent the last part of this year ill, the family and myself have been grateful for your support and prayers and look forward to the year ahead. The path ahead may not be easy or what we expect, but I trust that it will be the right one. My hope is that Christ's Church here in Berkswich will continue to grow—like tender new shoots taking root for the future. Growth in service and mission can only happen when we are confident in ourselves and our faith, and that is something we continue to nurture together.

Serving God

Worship remains at the heart of our parish. All Saints, Holy Trinity and St Thomas provide spaces where people can encounter God—whether through personal prayer or in corporate worship.

Holy Trinity, as the parish church, holds a special place as the heart of our community— as a space in which we gather together to offer mutual support and love through our drop-in, Crafty Café, and other events we have seen many testify to this. It is also a house of prayer, and those who join us for other community events feel this too – as the steady increase in candle usage during these times attests to.

The celebration of the Sacraments offers us a regular rhythm in our worship life. It is a joy to witness and participate in both personal and communal expressions of faith both at our Sunday services and our Midweek services. As a parish, we came together for several key celebrations, including the Feasts of SS Thomas, All Saints, Holy Trinity, the Triduum and our 'fifth Sunday' parish eucharists.

While as with most other parishes in the nation our congregational numbers are still recovering post-COVID, we remain hopeful and are still seeing growth. Baptisms and weddings have declined significantly from the past, while funerals, interments, and ashes burials have remained steady. Interestingly, even after humanist or civic funerals, many still seek comfort and hope from the church—reminding us of the deep and enduring need for God in people's lives.

Serving Our Community

Our churches remain open and welcoming to the wider community, striving to serve all ages and backgrounds. We firmly believe that no one is excluded from God's love, and we seek to reflect that in our parish life.

I hope that people see all our churches as an extension of their own homes—places of peace, refuge, and connection. Our engagement with local schools remains. Last year, we welcomed pupils and teachers from Berkswich CofE Primary School, Oakridge, Barnfields and have involvement with Walton High School too. We are pleased to see these relationships continue into 2025.

Our churches also serve as vibrant community hubs. Holy Trinity hosts a well-attended weekly drop-in and Crafty Café; St Thomas hosts our Church School on many occasions along with our thriving chapter of the Mothers' Union, and All Saints sees people regularly gather to share poetry and support at our Poetry Café. Finally, our churchyard and gardens continue to be a place of solace for visitors, dog walkers, and those remembering loved ones.

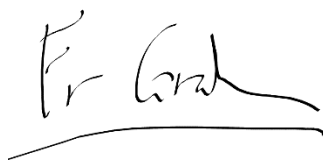
Serving You

At its heart, our parish is a welcoming place—a home for all who seek God. It has been a privilege to gather together, pray, and serve alongside so many of you over the past year.

Safeguarding remains a top priority. In light of national concerns, we continue to review and strengthen our policies to ensure that our parish is a safe space for everyone. The Parish of Berkswich is a place where individuals can find their own space to connect—with God, with others, and with themselves. As we look to the year ahead, we build upon all that has been, trusting in God's guidance for what is to come.

We move forward in faith, hope, and love.

Thank you again for all you have done. I commend all the reports which await you in this review of 2024 and look forward to walking with you with anticipation and an eagerness to be transformed by God's Spirit.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fr Graham', with a horizontal line underneath.

Fr Graham

Objectives and Activities

The Parochial Church Council of Berkswich (the PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, the Reverend Graham Adamson, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelical, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also spiritually responsible for the maintenance of the church.

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community at Berkswich. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer, scripture, music and sacrament. Also, through non sacramental activities of hospitality and fellowship we aim to reach and provide loving support to non church members of the community.

Statement of Public Benefit

The trustees of the PCC are aware of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in The Advancement of Religion for the Public Benefit and have had regard to it in their administration of the Charity. The trustees believe that, by promoting the work of the Church of England in the Ecclesiastical Parish of Berkswich it helps to promote the whole mission of the Church (pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical) more effectively, within the Ecclesiastical Parish, and that in doing so it provides a benefit to the public by:

- Providing facilities for public worship, pastoral care and spiritual, moral and intellectual development, both for its members and for anyone who wishes to benefit from what the Church offers; and
- Promoting Christian values and service by members of the Church in and to their communities, to the benefit of individuals and society as a whole.

The Parish of Berkswich demonstrates public benefit with the following activities

- Regular physical and virtual public worship open to all.
- The provision of sacred space for personal prayer and contemplation.
- Pastoral work, including visiting the sick, frail and bereaved.
- Teaching of Christianity through sermons, courses and small groups.
- Taking of religious assemblies in schools.
- Promotion of Christianity through staging of events and meetings and the distribution of literature.
- Promotion of the whole mission of the church through provision of activities for senior citizens, parents, toddlers, young people and other special needs groups.
- Teaching and discussion of Christian Ethics.

- Environmental/Ethical issues e.g. jumble sales (unsold items recycled), supporting other charities in the UK and overseas.
- Community involvement, including the support of local cultural events (music, artistic, etc) and social action.
- Encouraging local community and commercial activities, through advertising local services and facilities via the Three Decker, our Parish Magazine.

Achievements and Performance

1. Development of opportunities for prayer, reflection and faith sharing

- a. Baptism and Marriage preparation provide opportunities for teaching, support and welcome to the church.
- b. The number of Special Christmas services in each church to welcome as many families to joyful celebration as we could.
- c. Our All Souls service and Blue Christmas service offered opportunity for the recently bereaved to have a space where they can have peace to reflect.
- d. The drop-in provides much valued and appreciated opportunities for support and fellowship.
- e. A space by the Lychgate is being developed as an area to use art to help our community reflect and react to events. This year, the space was provided to reflect on the conflict in Ukraine and to mark Harvest, Easter and Christmas.
- f. Following the success of Berkswich Unlocked art exhibition, we launched Crafty Café – a café with a specific focus on providing mindfulness and mental health support to the community. The café has been used by providers in the area as a ‘social prescription’.

2. Planning and development of fundraising activities

Following the pandemic we were able to relaunch our Christmas and Summer Fayre fundraising activities, organise concerts, coffee mornings and other events. We look forward to doing more in 2024.

3. Exploration of Eucharistic and Social Life in ways that lead to growth opportunities.

Discipleship courses and discussions were held which gave opportunities to learn and worship together in formal and informal settings, and to meet people. A Lent and Advent WhatsApp Daily Reflection provided a successful way for the congregation to consider their faith during these important festivals. Special welcome services and Patronal Festivals and social events are joyful occasions and give opportunities to welcome members of other churches, and our local community.

4. Ecumenical links

The parish remains a part of the LoveStafford ecumenical group.

Church Attendance 2024

The average **Sunday** service attendances are as follows (2023 in brackets):

Holy Trinity: 64 (52) – NB these exclude online worshippers.

St Thomas': 30 (Choral Evensong)

All Saints: 21 (18)

Online Worship: 8 households; approx. 120 Facebook 'views'

The average **weekday** service attendances are as follows:

Holy Trinity: 6 (5)

St Thomas': 25 (17)

All Saints: 0 (3)

Dora Rose Nursing Home (monthly): 25

Winchester Court (monthly): 12 (8)

Parish Electoral Roll: there are currently **135** people on the Electoral Roll (APCM 2023 =153)

Fresh Expressions average **monthly** attendance

Holy Trinity	40
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St Thomas'	0
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All Saints	0
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Occasional Offices (parish-wide)

Baptisms	15 (12)
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Banns	2 (1)
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Weddings	5 (3)
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Funerals	35 (66)
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Issues raised for action at PCC meetings included:

Social events.

Wider Deanery and Diocesan Matters.

Responses to national safeguarding issues and what we can do to offer a reassuring voice to the wider parish community

Reviews to regular service pattern, including the continuing success of monthly Choral Evensong and Digging Deeper

Continued management of and development of our church buildings.

Deepening discipleship through WhatsApp reflections, and other activities.

Deeper engagement with and development of our new (and established) 'cafes' – including Tuesday Drop-in, Crafty Café, Poetry Café, after-worship coffee.

Integration of and development of Digging Deeper services with parish life

Continuing parish involvement in wider Deanery Synod discussions around Shaping for Mission

Financial Review

See Treasurers report.

Reserves Policy

It is PCC policy to try to maintain a balance on free reserves (net current assets) which equates to at least three months unrestricted payments. This is equivalent to £33,084. It is held to smooth out fluctuations in cash flow and to meet emergencies. The balance of the free reserves at the year end was £52,36) which is substantially higher than this target. The PCC are comfortable with this surplus during the current economic uncertainty.

Investment policy

The charity is granted power to invest in suitable investments under the PCC Powers Measure 1956 and the Trustees Act 2000. As a charity, the Trustees have a duty of care to take such advice as is appropriate before investments are undertaken. This advice is sought from the Central Board of Finance (CCLA) in London.

The charity's investment policies are based on two key principles: -

- Ethical Investment – this includes ensuring that investments are held in companies which have high standards of corporate governance and act in a responsible way towards stakeholders.
- Long-term responsibilities – the trustees are aware of their long-term responsibilities in respect of the Restricted and Unrestricted reserves and as a result follow a prudent approach to investment decisions.

Investment policy for long-term funds is aimed primarily at generating a sustainable income, with due regard to the need for the preservation of capital value, and the possible need to realise investments to meet operational needs. The charity does not have a policy of generating income at excessive or high risk – known as “purchasing income”, where high returns are guaranteed at the expense of capital.

In summary, the charity has an overall policy to maximise income while preserving the real value of its funds. Due to the nature of the charity, an ethical investment policy is taken into consideration when investments are made:

The charity follows the Ethical Investment Advisory policy as recommended by the Lichfield Diocese which includes the following:

“We aim to invest in companies that:

- * will develop their business in the interests of shareholders;
- * demonstrate responsible employment practices;
- * are conscientious concerning issues of corporate governance, the environment and human rights;
- * are sensitive to the community in which they operate.”

Planned giving, collections and donations are the main sources of fund raising along with tax recoverable.

Safeguarding

The PCC believe they have fulfilled their duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to House of Bishops’ guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults). Safeguarding is a standing item on all PCC Agendas and is considered at every meeting). All PCC members (and members of the congregation) have been encouraged to complete the on-line safeguarding courses, Basic and Foundation (previously C0 and C1), and all who have a statutory obligation to obtain a DBS are expected to do so.

Reporting Serious Incidents

A Serious Incident is an adverse event, whether actual or alleged, which results in or risks significant harm to the charity’s beneficiaries, employees, office holders, volunteers or to others

who come into contact with the charity through its work, loss of the charity's money or assets, damage to the charity's property or harm to the charity's work or reputation.

The trustees are not aware of any Serious Incidents in the last year. Incident Reporting is a standing item on all PCC Agendas and considered at every meeting.

Fundraising

The PCC takes its fundraising responsibilities seriously and is very grateful to all donors – whether regular or occasional – for their support of the church and church events. PCC supporters are never taken for granted. The PCC take full responsibility for fundraising and do not use commercial organisations or professional fundraisers. All money raised is either by donations, fundraising events, special appeals or legacies for which the PCC are most grateful.

Volunteers

The members of the PCC would like to thank all the volunteers who work so hard to make our Church a lively and vibrant community. Our especial thanks go to our congregational wardens, Church Wardens, PCC and appointed officers who have all worked so tirelessly on our behalf.

Risk Management

The Church Wardens with the Parish Health and Safety Officer carry out regular Health and Safety Reviews and regularly inspect premises for potential hazards. We have safeguarding policies in place for child protection and for work with vulnerable adults, including rigorous DBS checking of staff and volunteers. Our insurances are reviewed annually to ensure adequate cover. An informal review of any new risks which may impact the work of the Church in the Parish is ongoing.

Structure, Management and Governance

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a body corporate established by the Church of England and is a charity registered with the Charity Commission. The PCC is governed by the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure (1956) as amended that came into effect on 2nd January 1957, and the Church Representation Rules (contained in Schedule 3 to the Synodical Government Measure 1969 as amended).

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. The Council comprises the Incumbent, the Churchwardens, a representative of the Readers, those elected to the Deanery or Diocesan Synod, and other members who are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, by those on the Electoral Roll. Members of the congregation are always urged to join the Electoral Roll, and to stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance in the parish, and for all financial matters. The PCC meet 9 times a year. Given its responsibilities, the PCC has a number of sub committees, each dealing with a particular aspect of parish life. These include Employment, Mission and Outreach, Buildings and Churchyards and Finance. Each reports back to the PCC.

PCC meetings are all public meetings and all members of the congregation are invited to attend. Members are entitled to attend at all PCC meetings, but do not have a vote.

Related Parties

Donations from Related Parties

Donations from related parties during the year totalled £11,232. All these donations were received without conditions.

Remuneration paid to Trustees

None of the trustees have been paid any remuneration or received any other benefits from employment with the PCC

Expenses paid to Trustees

1 trustee was reimbursed £1,217 for travel and subsistence during the year.

Reference and Administrative details

The Parish of Berkswich is a Registered Charity number 1129997 and has three churches: Holy Trinity (the Parish Church) is situated in Baswich; St Thomas' is situated in Walton-on-the-Hill, and All Saints is situated in Brocton. The parish is part of the Diocese of Lichfield within the Church of England. The correspondence address is: Parish Office, Holy Trinity Church, Baswich Lane, ST17 0BY. Website: www.berkswich.org.uk

PCC members who have served from 1st January 2023 until the date this report was approved were:

Ex-Officio

Vicar	The Revd Graham Adamson SCP
Curate	The Revd David Clark
Assistant Priests	The Revd Joy Bishop The Revd John Sterling
Church Wardens	Chris Bowen Mary Moss
Diocesan Synod	Dorothy Sterling
Deanery Synod Reps	Julie Morrison (and Planned Giving) Mary Sapsford

Elected Members

Euan Adamson (until May 2024)
Maddy Dudek
Mark Dudek
Julie Grymel
Sue Hatton (PCC Secretary)
Sarah Mitchell
Andrew Morrison (PCC Treasurer and Finance until May 2023)
Mary Moss (Mission & Outreach and Safeguarding Officer)
Julie Wainwright (from May 2022)
Paul Browne (Treasurer from May 2023)
Kathy Browne (from May 2023)

Non PCC members, who help with the running of the churches

Rosie Broom (Parish Office Administrator from January 2023)

Colin Jones (Congregational Warden – St Thomas)

Bob Gilson (Congregational Warden – All Saints then St Thomas)

Beryl Foster (Congregational Warden – Holy Trinity)

After serving on the PCC for six years it is currently the parish policy for people to take a year off before standing again.

PCC Sub-Committees

Standing Committee

Fr. Graham Adamson (Vicar), Mary Moss (Parish Warden), Chris Bowen (Parish Warden), Andrew Morrison (until May 2023) (Finance Officer), Paul Browne (Finance Officer), Sue Hatton (Secretary).

Buildings and Churchyards Committee

Fr Graham Adamson, Chris Bowen, Judith Rennard, Colin Jones, Beryl Foster, Bob Gilson, Dave Hatton, Robert MacFarland, Mark Garside

Employment Committee

Fr Graham Adamson, Chris Bowen, Andrew Morrison (until May 2023), Paul Browne (from May 2023), Phil Botfield (advisory)

In addition, ad-hoc committees and teams were formed to fulfil specific functions through the year – for example the Christmas Fayre Committee.

PCC members receive information on trustee responsibilities, basic health and safety, risk management and safeguarding procedures.

Day to day management control of the churches is exercised by the Incumbent Revd. Graham Adamson, and the Churchwardens, Mary Moss and Chris Bowen, contactable through the Parish Office, Baswich Lane, Stafford, ST17 0BN, Telephone 01785 253111 or email at:

- graham.adamson@berkswich.org.uk
- wardenmary@berkswich.org.uk
- wardenchris@berkswich.org.uk

Name and addresses of advisers

Parish Bankers Cooperative Bank, PO Box 250, Delf House, Southway, Skelmersdale,
WN8 6WT

Independent Examiner Jonathan Hill
Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance, St Marys House, The Close, Licfield.
WS13 7LD

Architects Adrian Mathias, BHB Architects

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Revd. Graham Adamson SCP, Vicar of Berkswich

Berkswich PCC Reports

Stafford Synod Reports 2024

Significant discussions for us as a Church and parish took place in both Diocesan and Deanery Synod this year.

Diocesan Synod in 2024 discussed both local, national and global issues. These included

- the now formal link between the Diocese of Lichfield and the Diocese of Hyderabad in Pakistan (which will be focused on links with our church schools)
- the financial situation the Diocese finds itself in
- clergy wellbeing and recruitment
- a new Net-Zero Carbon Action plan 2024-30

The last meeting of 2023 had asked Stafford Deanery to consider what they wanted Synod to discuss and reflect on, and this has shaped the meetings in 2024.

We began in February with a 'Discussion time', providing a place for Synod Reps to consider how we welcome people into our churches; what we can do to respond to the ongoing situation in Ukraine; what our voice in the next General Election should be; are we too hung up on church instead of being Christians; and how we encourage our communities to go deeper into God.

During our June meeting we had a presentation from Tim Watson of the *Greenhouse Project*. Greenhouse is a way of supporting parishes in developing Fresh Expressions and Pioneer Ministries, giving them grass-roots support and resources to introduce new initiatives and gain support in growing them. The project was due to be launched in Stafford Episcopal Area in September 2024, but this was cancelled due to staffing changes and, sadly, has not been rearranged.

In September Synod met not in a church but in one of our Deanery Church Schools. The meeting took the form of a Question and Answer with Julie Jones, the Diocesan CEO. Julie answered many challenging questions comprehensively and honestly, including considering whether the Diocese was too 'admin top heavy'. Julie has close Stafford connections, and it was good to hear from her at Deanery.

In December, the last meeting of the year involved a presentation from the Diocesan organisation *Transforming Communities*. The team from Transforming Communities discussed many of the initiatives we have been involved in – including *Enabling All* and *Places of Welcome*, but also some we have not yet introduced in the parish, including *Dementia Friendly Church*.

The finances of the Deanery were also discussed, our bank account being closed by Barclays earlier that year. It was decided that we will not investigate setting up a new bank account until newly

revealed plans to merge Stafford Deanery with Eccleshall and Stone are finalised. This possible merger is due to be the focus of the first Synod of 2025.

Buildings and Churchyards

I shall be standing down as Chair of this committee this year and would like to record my thanks to the committee members for their help and patience as it has been a relatively quiet year for buildings work. In particular, I wish to express my thanks to Mark Garside, David Hatton and my fellow Warden, Mary Moss. Without the involvement of these three very little would have been done. I will, however, continue in the role until a replacement comes forward. Mark has produced a spreadsheet listing all the church buildings and work required at each together with a priority for that work. This is an extremely useful document for the committee to focus their efforts.

A big thank you also to our gardening teams at St Thomas' and Holy Trinity who keep our churchyards tidy.

Issues listed by Church

All Churches and Hall: The Lighting in place in our churches has, or is in the process of being brought up to date, with LED fittings and bulbs installed wherever possible. Replacement Fire Extinguishers have been procured and are in the process of replacing the existing ones. Unlike traditional extinguishers, these units are general purpose and do not require the same level of inspection. Both these items are intended to reduce ongoing costs to the Parish. To aid access to buildings key safes have been installed at St Thomas's and the Hall.

All Saints: There are existing issues at All Saints which require attention, namely external painting, problems with the bell and clearing of the east side drainage grills. These items will be addressed in the coming months. Following the utility billing issue Dave Hatton has continued to monitor the meter readings and send them in. On a minor matter the Vestry mirror has been relocated, following a general tidy up of the vestry and kitchen areas.

Holy Trinity: The churchyard clean-up was well supported but yet again we ran out of time before a significant impact could be made. Going forward, it may be prudent to consider an additional date perhaps in the autumn. There is still an ongoing problem with neighbours to the churchyard having issues relating to the trees and part of the boundary wall, but we are hoping to meet with the principal person, with a representative from the Diocese shortly. Since the last report the doors have been repaired but the weather seems to have caused them to warp when it is damp. Also, one of the top bolts had come adrift but Dave H has refixed it. The problems with the guttering over the main door and on the corner of the transept have been addressed and a roof leak where the transept

extension meets the original church pillar has been addressed. Since the last report the rear door closer has been removed and refixed. Also following the theft reported last year a security system has been installed at the back door.

St Thomas': Work continues to replace internal lights but the main concern over the past year has been the falling plaster, predominantly in the altar area but in other areas too. 2024 was an extremely wet year and this has taken its toll on the church. There has been work carried out to remove all loose plaster and make good the roof that was causing water ingress. Going forward more work will be required on the roof to the leadwork but the contractor is happy that the immediate issues have been resolved but we do need to review regularly.

Parish Treasurer's Report

Over the course of the year there were a number fund raising events which provided a major input to the Parish funds – the most notable being the Summer Fete and the Christmas Fayre both of which raised significant sums. Other Events such as the Makers Market and additional social events all made contribution to our funds. The success of these events is due in large part both to the many volunteers who generously gave of their time in organisation and running them and to those who provided monetary and material contributions.

As ever a mainstay of the parish finances are the dependable and generous donations given by regular donors and are much appreciated.

As we go into 2025 and beyond the question of finding finance for building maintenance will be an important aspect of our finances as well as ensuring that we fulfil our Common Fund obligation.

Paul Browne Treasurer 2024

Planned Giving and Gift Aid Officer's Report

We started 2022 with 87 people in the scheme. The number of people on the scheme decreases every year, with some moving to the Direct Giving (direct debit) scheme run by Lichfield diocese.

I have completed a table showing the last three years of Parish Planned Giving and Gift Aid contributions from you, as shown below.

Source of donation	2022	2023	2024
Total Planned Giving Donations Gift Aided	£36,482	£31,834	£28,488
Total Planned Giving Donations Not Gift Aided	£5,482	£6,720	£7,631
Grand Total from Planned giving Scheme	£41,964	£38,554	£36,079

One-Off White Gift Aided Donation Envelopes	£2,411	£1,883	£3,310
Gift Aided Tax reclaim on Gift Aided Donations	£9,237	£8,008	£7,552
Grand Total Income for Year	£53,613	£48,445	£46,981

These figures do not include money from Direct Giving. This is sorted out by the Lichfield Diocesan Gift Aid Team who send any monies from this scheme directly to the church bank account. We have an approximate total for the year of £11,500 from the Direct Giving.

The majority of the Parish income comes from some sort of Planned Giving donations and where possible Gift Aided Tax is reclaimed. This money is used to pay the Parish Share, which in turn pays the clergy wages and the upkeep for the churches; it also helps other churches who have only a small congregation and so are unable to support themselves.

If anyone wishes to join a Planned Giving Scheme, you can contact myself. My phone number can be found in the church magazine.

Julie Morrison – Parish Gift Aid Secretary

19/4/25

Safeguarding

Safeguarding countrywide has become a feature in the news of late. However, in 2024 as a parish we continued to take safeguarding seriously and to try to make sure that everyone is made aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and reporting any concern however small. We encouraged members of our congregations to follow the basic and foundation courses online to give them a clearer understanding.

All clergy and those responsible for safeguarding are up to date with the Diocesan safeguarding training. All PCC members are encouraged to gain the Basic and Foundation certificates and have an up-to-date DBS certificate. Our Safeguarding Policy was updated and can be viewed on our website.

In addition we intend to continue the practice of having a Sunday dedicated to Safeguarding.

Music and choir

The choir appreciate the dedication and support from our organist and choir master, Roy Wightman. He is willing to take time to find suitable music to suit the voices of our choir. He also sometimes composes his own version of an anthem or setting. We are grateful for his and Jeremy's time in accompanying our sung services and for the recessional organ voluntaries played weekly.

The choir has regular practices on a Friday during the school term. They concentrate on the hymns and settings for the up-and-coming Sunday along with any major events coming up like the Christmas Nine Lessons and Carols and the Triduum at Easter. Eight/ nine months out of twelve the choir sing at the monthly Choral Evensong. This requires the learning of new anthems, new and varied settings, Magnificat, Nunc Dimittis and psalm.

We are very fortunate in the parish to have some very talented musicians, whether on the violin, organ or piano. Patrick and Kerry on the violin and Roy and Jeremy on the organ and piano. All these give so much time to the enjoyment of music and praise within the parish. In June 2024 everyone, including the choir, joined together to perform a concert in support of Iona in her quest to attend a youth choral training week.

St Thomas and Holy Trinity Churchyard gardening team

Another year has passed and once again St Thomas's church garden has been maintained to a high standard. Kept neat and tidy by a regular group of 6-8 volunteers, weeding, mowing, trimming, path clearing and cutting back of shrubs which have overgrown, it is admired by passers by and visitors to the church. The Bench has been sanded and re varnished and draws people in to sit and have a moment of quiet.

David helps to keep the lawns maintained along with sharpening and cleaning the mowers. Christine keeps the tubs by the front door stocked with beautiful seasonal plants to cheer us as we enter. Roger P Jones spent a couple of days cutting back all the trees which were overgrown which was brilliant as it was too big a job for all of us. The perimeter church wall is also kept tidy and free of weeds. The team is led by John Morris and our reward is hearing visitors say how lovely our treasured garden is.

Holy Trinity Churchyard is maintained by a small but dedicated team, who are never unwilling to accept offers of help from others! We are always willing to accept any assistance (and that does not just require heavy lifting – help with lighter work is useful too). One stretch of the churchyard is strimmed just twice a year, left the rest of the time as a 'wild-area'. This has seen a marked increase in biodiversity within the whole of the churchyard.

Drop-in

This is going strongly with attendance of 17 – 20 plus each week, so obviously answering a need in the community. The drop in has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. Some people spend their time helping each other with crosswords. Other games and puzzles are available but mostly talk. All birthdays are celebrated with a cake, homemade of course! We have had several new people join the group over the last year. It's open to all, so if you know someone who may be lonely, or is recently bereaved, they would be very welcome.

Thanks again to Berly Foster who does a lot of the organising and to all who help so much.

Dora Rose

David visits Dora Rose most weeks. The normal pattern is for a pastoral call, chatting to residents and staff and introducing himself to new residents on one week and the following week he holds an act of worship which includes distribution of Holy Communion.

Three or four times a year there is a said Eucharist, generally at Epiphany, Easter, Harvest and for another significant event in the life of the Church or the nation. Services are well attended by residents and visitors sometimes join us as do staff if their duties permit.

At Christmas we held a Carol Service, ably supported by members of the Church choir, and to mark Remembrance Day Stafford Grammar School contributed to the service with readings and a trumpeter to play the Last Post and Reveille.

Healing Ministry

In November twelve members of the congregations gathered at Winchester Court to explore Christian Healing Ministry. One outcome was to offer the laying on of hands and anointing as part of the monthly Eucharist at Winchester Court. This has been well received by those who attend that service. Following that session four people have been trained to offer the ministry of laying on of hands with prayer for healing. They have begun to exercise this ministry during our time of healing at Eucharists in the Parish, including at Winchester Court.

David's healing ministry extends to his role at Katharine House Hospice. This ministry was recognised by the diocese when David was licensed as Volunteer Chaplain by Bishop Matthew in April.

Crafty Café

This successful craft group is now in its 3rd year and continues to serve and engage with the wider local community, offering a safe space for people to be creative, socialise and form positive relationships. We continue to be mindful of and clear about our safeguarding responsibilities.

It is now well known that crafting can alleviate the symptoms of anxiety, depression, loneliness and even dementia according to research (Crafts Council, 2020).

Various crafts are on offer each week, including painting, stitching, colouring, knitting, crochet and various other activities.

We also organise regular group activities such as decorating the lychgate for Christmas, with knitted nativity figures; making over a hundred angels to decorate the Church for Michaelmas; and recently, some members knitted a prayer blanket for a church member moving to a new home.

Whilst we do not overtly discuss religion unless someone initiates the conversation, the topic often arises in conversation. Some people now attend church regularly and some for special occasions. Many, who may not engage with the Church will still ask for our prayers for themselves or for loved ones.

The group is perhaps best summed up in the words of a carer who attends regularly:

‘ I love this group; it’s two hours a week when I can forget about my worries and it doesn’t matter if I cry...I’m just accepted.’

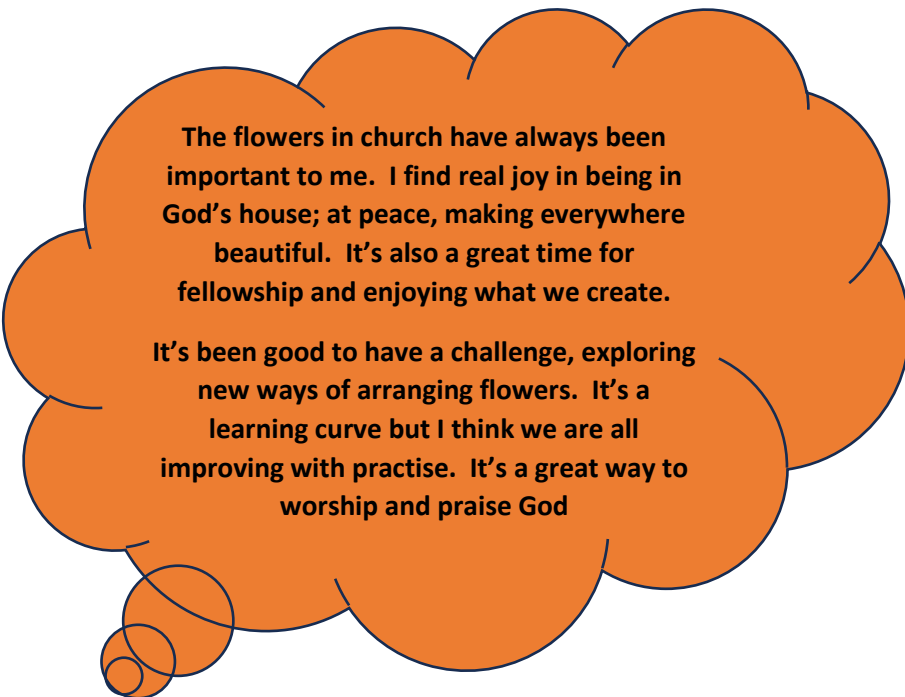
Mary Sapsford



Flower arrangers

The flower arrangers were asked for some input for the annual report. These are some of their comments.

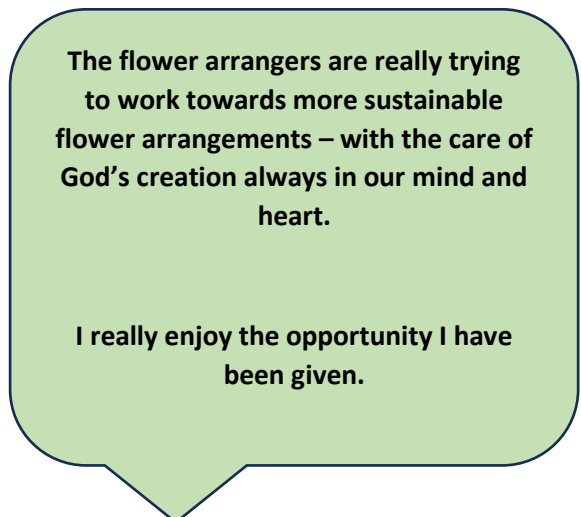
Sustainability - Communication - Guidance - Fellowship



The flowers in church have always been important to me. I find real joy in being in God's house; at peace, making everywhere beautiful. It's also a great time for fellowship and enjoying what we create.

It's been good to have a challenge, exploring new ways of arranging flowers. It's a learning curve but I think we are all improving with practise. It's a great way to worship and praise God

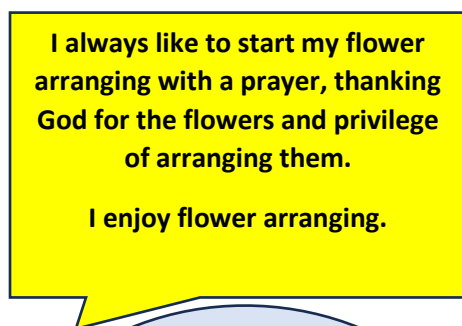
Colour - Beauty - Prayer



The flower arrangers are really trying to work towards more sustainable flower arrangements – with the care of God's creation always in our mind and heart.

I really enjoy the opportunity I have been given.


Cleanliness - Hygiene



I always like to start my flower arranging with a prayer, thanking God for the flowers and privilege of arranging them.


I enjoy flower arranging.

Rota - Support - Guidance



I enjoy the friendship of the group I am in. I love the beauty of the flowers.

I find flower arranging very therapeutic – it's not something I had done before arriving in this parish.



I enjoy and find it a privilege to arrange flowers in Holy Trinity.

Flower arranging is a bit like gardening – it helps me relax and connect with nature.

With Sue's guidance and patience I am now able to try new things and last year started our Easter garden.

Overwhelmingly, it was obvious from their comments just how dedicated a bunch of flower arrangers we are fortunate to have. Everyone had some positive, constructive comments to make, and everyone is committed to taking the best possible care of God's Creation, with suggestions such as...

'Take only the foliage that you need, don't waste it'

'Use beads or plastic covered chicken wire in preference to an oasis'

'Keep flower arranging vessels clean to avoid contamination'

'Pour used flower water away outside, not down the kitchen sink as it blocks easily with debris'

There are 11 flower arrangers in Holy Trinity, divided into 4 groups so working on a rota and led by Beryl Foster and Mary Sapsford. Kathy Browne is responsible for the flower arrangements in St. Thomas' Church, and works with the help of Jean and Olive, while Sue Hodgins and Julie take care of the flower arrangements in All Saints.

Take care of our planet – God's Creation!

Social and Fundraising

Our fundraising efforts for 2024 began with a Quiz in January, which was well supported with approximately 16 teams of 4. Our Quizmaster Bob Mudway once again, planned the quiz and we are grateful for his continued enthusiasm and commitment.

As usual our main fundraiser for the year was the Parish Summer Fete, held at Milford Cricket Club, raising over £6000. This was a huge task which involved an enormous amount of effort from many people. We are thankful that we had many willing hands volunteering to cover the whole range of tasks from car parking, manning a stall, baking, printing, donating goods, sourcing Grand Draw prizes etc.. Without that help the Fete would not be the success that it is.

The twice yearly Makers' Markets were very popular and give local artists an opportunity to display and sell their crafts, as well as bringing in some funds for the Parish. Crafty Café work hard to produce small gifts for sale, Parish Plants are for sale, and the sale of refreshments help to raise a few extra pounds for the funds.

Other social events during the year included the Cheese and Wine evening, a 'Concert for Iona', to enable Iona to attend a Choral Singing workshop in York, a National Tea Day gathering after the Holy Eucharist service on a Sunday, and a very entertaining performance by 'Go Ukulele Crazy!' which included David and Angela Clark playing their ukuleles! Later in the year the John Moor Quire performed an interesting and enjoyable Concert of Georgian era carols and songs, which was well attended, and we also held our traditional Christmas Fayre, another good fundraiser as it also includes the Christmas Draw.

Katharine House Hospice also benefitted from funds raised at a Coffee Morning held at St. Thomas' Church, where there was a range of gifts donated, flowers for sale, plants, books etc.. And of course plenty of choice of home-made cakes to eat in or take home! The four Lent Lunches also raised funds for Christian Aid and our Parish Funds.

Thanks go to everyone who has helped in any way to provide a social occasion or a major fundraiser. If anyone has any ideas for future events, please let us know!



