

St Michael's Church, Myland, Colchester

Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council

for the year ended 31st December 2022

**Incumbent:**

The Reverend Raymond Gibbs
Church House
352 Mill Road
Colchester

Bankers:

Santander plc
Bootle
Liverpool

Treasurer:

Diocese of Chelmsford
Parish Accounts
Service

Independent Examiner:

John Mehen
1 Barnfield Road
Great Horkesley
Colchester
CO6 4TR

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Trustees' Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council of

St. Michael's Church, Myland, Colchester

For the year ended 31st December 2022

Aims and Purposes

St Michael's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, the Reverend Raymond Gibbs, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the church and halls complex of St. Michael, Mile End Road, Mile End, Colchester and for part of the year, The Community Room at Paprika House, Apprentice Drive, New Braiswick Park, Colchester.

Objectives and Activities

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 St. Michael. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how services can involve the many groups that live within the parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

When planning our activities for the year, we have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and especially the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of the parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus.
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary and outreach work.

To facilitate this, it is important that we maintain the fabric of the church and our community facilities.

As last year, the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic brought significant challenges, which affected our ability to undertake many of our past activities, and it is becoming apparent that some things will have to be let go, those remaining reviewed, and hopefully some new things discovered and planned to begin in 2023.

Achievements and Performance

Worship and Prayer

The PCC remains keen to offer a range of services during the week and over the course of the year that our community find both beneficial and spiritually fulfilling, and such services include traditional Holy Communion, quiet morning prayer, wholeness and healing, family worship, and celebrations or commemorations of significant dates and events.

Regular Services

The pattern of services adopted in 2021 had now become our established pattern of worship. As part of that arrangement the mid-week services held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings were moved to the halls to save on heating costs, (roughly from October to April). We use the Church for Sunday worship, and requested funerals, memorials and weddings. The prayer diary has been running for nearly three years now, and it contains a suggested daily Bible Reading and psalm with prayers for people to worship daily in their own home. We have not attempted to resurrect the on-line connection to Sunday's church service, the demand was not there, and there were many technical issues, however, we have overcome some and mobile phone and card giving on a Sunday morning will be an option 2023.

The church has been open for corporate worship, and the scope of what we could do has settled in to a pattern, similar to that of pre-Covid times, which has become our established "norm", and these have stabilised as the National Government Guidelines and National Church guidelines were phased out. Numbers attending all services though, are worrying low. The pioneer ministry of the Reverend Sarah Hayward, her husband Tim and their sons, has moved to take a wider remit and is under the St Luke's umbrella.

All are welcome to attend our services, however, the numbers attending have been stubbornly low as I have already mentioned, and many regulars whether they be weekly, monthly or seasonal have not returned at all, which is disappointing. But the services remain of a high quality, and preaching has been often inspired. We had a Baptism back-log which we caught up with by the middle of 2022, and the demand remains high, however, the financial squeeze on every one has had a major impact upon weddings inside and outside of the church, and we currently have none planned for 2023. Christmas services in 2022 attracted a healthy attendance which was great to see and experience

At present there are 67 parishioners on the church electoral roll, of whom 18 reside outside the parish. One name was removed since the last revision.

Milestone and Special Services

As well as our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones of their journey through life, funeral services/burial of ashes/ memorials have carried on throughout 2022, and the demand for our services remains high. But there were glimmers of hope all around: The October Harvest Service produced a bumper crop of tinned and packet goods for the Foodbank, and the satellite based in the hall foyer is becoming known. The November Remembrance Service, in church and at the memorial, was again well attended, but there is a worrying trend with regard to the uniformed groups parading, it seems each service or event is a decline.

Music

We have been able to sing again in Church, and it was wonderful to have and to hear a singing group at Christmas, may it continue to blossom. We are indebted to Joe and John who play so well for us.

Children's Teaching

2022 has turned out to be another disappointing year, we have not managed to get any of the groups that we had with us pre-Covid back up and running. The depth in leadership volunteers is simply not there, and we cannot add more to those who are already carrying far too much. It is disappointing, we have to hope that 2023 will be better.

Bible Study

Our bible study stayed online, again via Zoom, with an afternoon and an evening group still running. The discussions have been wide ranging, and the Sunday sermon plus the supporting Bible readings have often been the mainstay of the subjects discussed. Lent provided an opportunity to join in on the discussions, but those attending remain stubbornly low, which is a shame.

Deanery Synod / Diocesan Synod / General Synod

The wheels of Church Government turning above the PCC were back to normal. It seems to be all contentious stuff, which brings about the worst in church tribalism, so the 24 hour news had a field day without an ounce of understanding, but apart from that, an awful lot of day to day business happens and goes through these three bodies before filtering down to PCC level, so they do have a purpose. But mention the unmentionables: sex, sexuality, gender & safeguarding, and they become paralysed with fear, and the ability to love one another goes out of the window. A shame really, the church could lead the world, but looks inwards instead. Ah well!

St. Michael's Church and Myland Parish Halls

2022 has seen all the church buildings back in action. I cannot lie, the Covid years have been tough. There has only been enough money to do the basic emergency repairs, and the 'quinquennial' (a detailed structural survey of both buildings) carried out every five years is due in 2023. Both reports are going to make grim reading, and are going to make a headache for the PCC as they struggle to finance an ever increasing quota to the Diocese, as well as keeping the buildings in good repair whole. Above all, we need you. Too much is being demanded of too few, and it deflates the spirits, we really need everyone to examine themselves and the time, talent and money that we have all been given, which leads us to the next paragraph and subject.

Pastoral Care

In 2022 it is now so obvious that we are smaller as a congregation, and that attendance regularity has shrunk, and also that all of a sudden we have been left as an ageing congregation. It means that more than ever before, we have to look after each other in the year ahead.

Our chaplaincy visits to the care homes in the Parish has now normalised and Ray has weekly Woodland View, and John visits Tall Trees as often as he can. There are now two war memorials in the Parish, as Ray unveiled a second one dedicated to the fallen of Severalls hospital in 2022, a beautiful creation by the developers on the Kingswood estate. There is also plans afoot to put an information / memorial plaque at the site of the old Myland church in Rectory Close in 2023. John still visits the local ASDA supermarket on a regular basis, but Ray has given up his school governor role at the Gilberd, and Trusteeship of YMCA Essex, two posts he has held since 2000.

Our regular pre-Covid coffee mornings, are now down to two, Sunday after Church , and Wednesday after Morning Prayer, but these have to be managed and used, otherwise we will lose them.

The Clergy and churchwardens remained contactable at all times, with telephone numbers readily available, including on the website and in newsletters.

Mission and Evangelism

Our Parish Mission Statement continues to be: "Following Jesus' Great Commission, we will continue the ministry of Jesus and live the message of Jesus in the manner of Jesus". This mission takes us out into the community; a community that is diverse, dynamic and an ever-growing in population.

Our mission to the schools in the parish continues, but we have lost contact with New Braiswick Park and Camulus which is a great shame, but we did manage to restore our Christmas programme with Myland and Queen Boudicca, which was wonderful. Sadly we have lost our link to EACH, who seem to have withdrawn from North Essex, and the Good Friday community Easter Egg hunt which we simply do not have the people power to run. But on the positive side, the annual Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Appeal, although smaller in number, happened, and the Lent lunches were back too, and Children's Society box appeal, so not everything was lost.

The church is a 'hub' to which many people are drawn for a variety of reasons, but we hope and pray for new opportunities to arise for us to develop new ways to encourage parish newcomers, as well as more longstanding residents to be aware of our presence, our mission and the fellowship we offer.

New Braiswick Park Mission

The Community Room appears to have its day, we are losing money hand over fist, and the decision has been made to surrender the sub-lease.

The North Colchester Family of Churches

The North Colchester Family of Churches consists of 9 benefices of which we are one. The Bishop is pursuing his own path regarding 7 of the 9, bringing them together as a rural hub under a new Vicar, something that I don't think we can claim. With regard to Myland and St Luke's I think nothing will happen until either I retire or the Vicar of St Luke's moves on, whichever is the sooner, and the Bishop has room for manoeuvre advertising for a new Incumbent.

Ecumenical Relationships

The church is a member of Churches Together in Myland (CTIM), and is moving towards re-committing itself to working in unity.

Financial Review (*Important - Please read it*)

The financial review is provided within the attached Treasurer's Report.

Reserves Policy

It is our policy to invest our current funds balances with the CBF Church of England Deposit Fund, and longer term monies with the CCLA Central Board Investment Fund.

Further Information

We are thankful for all those who continued to support our mission and ministry here in Myland through what has been another very difficult year. We hope to encourage greater stewardship so that we may build on our work here, expand our activities across needs and age groups, and enable St. Michael's Church to continue to serve the parish of Myland in the future.

Structure, Governance and Management

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules 2022.

At St Michael's, the membership of the PCC consists of ex-officio positions, namely our clergy team, churchwardens and Deanery Synod representatives as well as members elected by those of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the church. Other members are co-opted when appropriate. All those who attend our services/members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the electoral roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent.

During 2022, the PCC held seven meetings. The average attendance was 72.5%.

In accordance with the Church Representation Rules 2022 Rule M5 (3), the PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to House of Bishop's guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

Administrative Information

St Michael's Church is situated in Mile End, Colchester. It is part of the Diocese of Chelmsford within the Church of England. The correspondence address is Myland Parish Church Office, Myland Parish Halls, Mile End Road, Colchester, Essex CO4 5DY.

The PCC is a body corporate (Parochial Church Council Powers Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2020) and is a charity registered with the Charity Commission number 1130020.

PCC members are listed below:

PCC members who served from 1st January 2022 until the date this report was approved were:

Incumbent (Priest-in-Charge): The Reverend Raymond Gibbs (Chair)

Associate Priest: The Reverend Hazel Greenland

Churchwarden: Mrs Lesley Hindle

Representative on the
Deanery Synod: Mrs June Chandler

Elected Members

Treasurer:

PCC Secretary: Vacancy (Acting: Mrs Sarah King)

Other Members:
Mr John Barratt
Mrs Jillian Bollen
Mr Kevin Hindle
Mr Roger Smith
Mrs Sue Smith
Mr Joe Richardson

Independent examiner's report to The PCC of St Michael's Myland, Colchester on the Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022

Respective responsibilities of the PCC and the examiner

The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 (2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an Independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to

- Examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- Follow procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charity Commissioners section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- State whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiners Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission.

An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the account presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the management committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit, and consequently I do not express an opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with s.130 of the 2011 Act; or
- to prepare accounts, which accord with these accounting records have not been met; or

(2) to which in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed



Dated 21 April 2023

John Mehen
Treasurer, Great Horkesley PCC
1 Barnfield Road
Great Horkesley
Colchester CO6 4TR

Statement of Financial Activities

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Prior year total funds
Receipts					
Planned giving *	34,633.51	275.00	—	34,908.51	35,315.90
Collections and other giving	1,546.82	—	—	1,546.82	3,142.75
Other voluntary receipts *	15,388.31	—	—	15,388.31	24,522.28
Gift Aid recovered	8,863.44	—	—	8,863.44	9,846.80
Other receipts *	14.00	—	—	14.00	588.81
Activities for generating funds	2,473.54	—	—	2,473.54	2,447.52
Investment Income *	485.66	—	—	485.66	223.33
Receipts from church activities *	30,800.51	785.00	—	31,585.51	24,988.20
Total receipts	94,205.79	1,060.00	—	95,265.79	101,075.59
Payments					
Cost of generating funds	742.73	—	—	742.73	380.72
Missionary and Charitable Giving	—	—	—	—	47.00
Parish Share	53,773.75	—	—	53,773.75	50,000.00
Clergy and Staffing costs *	9,494.04	—	—	9,494.04	8,036.01
Church Running Expenses *	10,633.79	14.88	—	10,648.67	6,796.43
Hall Running Costs *	28,344.22	2,395.74	—	30,739.96	28,078.92
Church Repairs & Maintenance	—	—	—	—	8,160.40
Total payments	102,988.53	2,410.62	—	105,399.15	101,499.48
Net incoming / outgoing resources before transfer	(8,782.74)	(1,350.62)	—	(10,133.36)	(423.89)
Transfers *see summary of Fund movements					
Gross transfers between funds - in	3,000.00	1,625.62	—	4,625.62	—
Gross transfers between funds - out	(1,625.62)	—	(3,000.00)	(4,625.62)	—
Net incoming / outgoing before other gains / losses	(7,408.36)	275.00	(3,000.00)	(10,133.36)	(423.89)
Other recognised gains / losses					
Gains / losses on investment assets	—	—	(989.04)	(989.04)	2,584.63
Net movement in funds	(7,408.36)	275.00	(3,989.04)	(11,122.40)	2,160.74
Total funds brought forward	28,298.80	2,335.00	8,326.07	38,959.87	51,462.27
Total funds carried forward	20,890.44	2,610.00	4,337.03	27,837.47	38,959.87
Represented by					
Unrestricted					
General fund	8,534.70	—	—	8,534.70	11,505.99
Designated					
Charity Collections	—	—	—	—	—
Fabric/Restoration Fund	6,643.13	—	—	6,643.13	6,608.86
Halls Fund	5,343.47	—	—	5,343.47	10,183.95
United Church Project	369.14	—	—	369.14	—
Restricted					
Friends of St Michael's Church	—	2,610.00	—	2,610.00	2,335.00
Endowment					
Canon Bolsin Fund	—	—	4,337.03	4,337.03	8,326.07
Total funds	20,890.44	2,610.00	4,337.03	27,837.47	38,959.87

* see more detailed analysis on the following pages

THIS REPORT WAS APPROVED BY THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL ON 26th April 2023 AND SIGNED ON THEIR BEHALF BY THE CHAIR, THE REVEREND RAYMOND GIBBS



Reverend Ray Gibbs Chair

Statement of assets and liabilities

	This year	Last year
Fixed assets		
CBIFS 608241001S Bolsin		
Canon Bolsin Fund (Endowment)	4,337.03	8,326.07
	4,337.03	8,326.07
Total for Fixed assets	4,337.03	8,326.07
Current assets		
Santander Current Account	7,342.62	7,920.64
CCLA (CBF) 608241001D	16,712.82	23,227.16
Total for Current assets	24,055.46	31,147.80
Total assets	28,392.49	39,473.87
Less: Current Liabilities		
Agency Collections (Due to Diocese)	555.02	514.00
Total assets	27,837.47	38,959.87

Analysis of income and expenditure

Planned giving

	Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	Endowment	Total This year	Last year
Gift Aid - Bank	25,595.00	—	275.00	—	25,870.00	31,325.00
Gift Aid - Envelopes	8,393.51	—	—	—	8,393.51	3,235.90
Other planned giving	645.00	—	—	—	645.00	755.00
Total	34,633.51	—	275.00	—	34,908.51	35,315.90

Other voluntary receipts

Donations appeals etc	15,199.11	189.20	—	—	15,388.31	23,274.31
Non-recurring one-off grants	—	—	—	—	—	1,247.97
Total	15,199.11	189.20	—	—	15,388.31	24,522.28

Other receipts

Other funds generated	14.00	—	—	—	14.00	—
Overpayment Refund	—	—	—	—	—	588.81
Total	14.00	—	—	—	14.00	588.81

Investment Income

Dividends	218.49	—	—	—	218.49	211.31
Bank and building society interest	164.37	102.80	—	—	267.17	12.02
Total	382.86	102.80	—	—	485.66	223.33

Receipts from church activities

Fees for weddings and funerals	5,056.78	—	—	—	5,056.78	4,661.12
Bookstall sales to promote objectives	—	—	—	—	—	—
Church hall lettings - objectives	—	25,743.73	785.00	—	26,528.73	20,327.08
Total	5,056.78	25,743.73	785.00	—	31,585.51	24,988.20

Clergy and Staffing costs

Assistant staff costs	—	—	—	—	—	189.33
Salary of parish administrator	9,494.04	—	—	—	9,494.04	7,846.68
Total	9,494.04	—	—	—	9,494.04	8,036.01

Church Running Expenses

Parish training and mission	—	—	—	—	—	619.54
Church running - insurance	1,925.65	—	—	—	1,925.65	2,295.17
Organ / piano tuning	334.00	—	—	—	334.00	—
Church maintenance	1,067.39	—	—	—	1,067.39	550.20
Cleaning	174.28	—	—	—	174.28	—
Upkeep of services	1,869.49	—	—	—	1,869.49	1,421.12
Organist Honararium	—	—	—	—	—	160.00
Upkeep of churchyard	275.00	—	—	—	275.00	300.00
Cremated remains area	381.98	—	—	—	381.98	276.94
Administration	1,823.42	682.90	—	—	2,506.32	907.71
Church running - electric	2,051.68	—	—	—	2,051.68	257.77
Church running - gas	—	—	14.88	—	14.88	—
Church running - water	48.00	—	—	—	48.00	7.98
Total	9,950.89	682.90	14.88	—	10,648.67	6,796.43

Hall Running Costs

Hall running - electricity	—	3,274.27	1,105.21	—	4,379.48	1,331.96
Hall running - gas	—	580.61	45.00	—	625.61	1,333.61
Hall running - insurance	—	1,980.80	255.53	—	2,236.33	1,865.17
Hall running - maintenance	—	3,994.02	—	—	3,994.02	7,744.15
Halls Cleaning	—	10,123.50	990.00	—	11,113.50	9,300.59
Halls Booking Clerk	—	6,329.28	—	—	6,329.28	5,231.04
Halls Cleaning Materials	—	47.95	—	—	47.95	71.94
Hall running - telephone	—	1,132.79	—	—	1,132.79	1,157.95
Hall running - water	—	881.00	—	—	881.00	42.51
Total	—	28,344.22	2,395.74	—	30,739.96	28,078.92

Fund movement Summary

Fund and type	Fund balances brought forward	Incoming Resources	Outgoing Resources	Transfers	Gains and Losses	Journal Entries	Carried Forward
Unrestricted							
General - General fund	11,505.99	67,990.12	73,961.41	3,000.00	—	—	8,534.70
Sub-totals	11,505.99	67,990.12	73,961.41	3,000.00	—	—	8,534.70
Designated							
United Church Project	—	369.14	—	—	—	—	369.14
Fabric - Restoration Fund	6,608.86	34.27	—	—	—	—	6,643.13
Halls Fund	10,183.95	25,812.26	29,027.12	(1,625.62)	—	—	5,343.47
Sub-totals	16,792.81	26,215.67	29,027.12	(1,625.62)	—	—	12,355.74
Restricted							
Friends of St Michael's Church	2,335.00	275.00	—	—	—	—	2,610.00
New Braiswick Park	—	785.00	2,410.62	1,625.62	—	—	—
Sub-totals	2,335.00	1,060.00	2,410.62	1,625.62	—	—	2,610.00
Endowment							
Canon Bolsin Fund	8,326.07	—	—	(3,000.00)	(989.04)	—	4,337.03
Sub-totals	8,326.07	—	—	(3,000.00)	(989.04)	—	4,337.03
Totals	38,959.87	95,265.79	105,399.15	—	(989.04)	—	27,837.47

Notes

- An adjustment was made in the 2021 accounts due to an error that was discovered after year end 2020.
- There is a notable difference in the heating costs between 2021 and 2022. This is largely due to the Church being closed during the pandemic.
- The Canon Bolsin Fund is an Endowment where income may be utilised by the Church but the original Capital sum (£5,000) is to remain. Over the years, the Fund had risen in value to over £8,000, and the PCC decided to transfer £3,000 to the General Fund. Subsequent to this, the value of the underlying investments decreased by £989.04.
- The Community Room on New Braiswick Park made a loss of £1,625.62 in the year, and as in the past this was cleared by transfer from the Halls Fund. The Community Room has now closed, and therefore the New Braiswick Park Fund will also close.

Parochial Church Council of St. Michael's Myland
Treasurer's Report for the year 2022 - 2023
(And a little bit beyond)

It seems strange to write a Treasurer's report when I am not one. We have existed for the last few years without a named person, but instead use the service provided by the Diocese (at a cost, nothing is ever free), with some of the practical back up stuff divided amongst the staff team, it is not ideal, but needs must...

For accountancy purposes the Church and Halls are divided, but in practical terms they are now one entity, we simply do not possess the people power to run them as separate operations. So, how are we doing? These are hard times for everyone, and the church is no exception. It used to be Covid that kept us out of church, now it is the cost of electricity that limits our ability to use the Church during weekdays in the colder months, but using an unlet room in the hall, although not ideal, it has meant that we have been able to meet regularly and comfortably. The savings made during the week enable us to open on the Sunday, simply that.

As you can see from the accounts 'The Parish Share' is by far our biggest bill, which we pay monthly, and I have to say that it has been touch and go some months, as our cash flow dipped, but we got there in 2022 and are on target for 2023. So before we go any further, I need to say on behalf of the PCC a *huge 'thank you'* for all that you have given, continue to give, and fund raise. Without *your united effort*, we would be floundering. Many outside of the church believe that we are government funded, that is simply not the case, we get the same as any charity, "gift aid" on what is given, but what is given is what you put in the plate, the jar, the envelope or banker's order, without your giving there is nothing. Nothing at all.

So, we have the Parish Share, power bills, and in the years ahead: repair bills. The once 'new hall project' is actually over a decade old, and each hall with up to 3, sometimes 4 lettings a day, for roughly 350 days a year for 10+ years has taken a hammering. The Church, nearly 170 years old, is beginning to crack and creak from carpet to ceiling up to the top of the tower, and both buildings have had their five year inspections (April 2023), and they will not be good reading, I'm sure. The PCC will be faced with some difficult financial choices and decisions in the coming year, so we will need each other, and we will all have to look at what we give individually, and together is supporting each other at fundraising events.

Modern life has so many draws on our time, our skills and our money, but what is our priority? Giving for the church has always been a sacrifice, it is like Lent for 365 days a year. We know "the why", but getting there is the sacrifice.

Revd Ray Gibbs, Priest in Charge.

Parish of Myland, Annual Reports 2022 to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting to be held on 14th May 2023

REVD RAY GIBBS REPORT

2022 has proved to be a difficult year for St Michaels and the Church of England generally. As we came out of lockdown and restrictions there was so much hope for the future, but the new dawn proved false in so many ways. Key people never returned, age was not our friend, and many of those who were attending regularly have faltered; the pressure upon those remaining has grown and grown, and has chipped away at morale, so it feels as if we are under siege, inward looking, financially challenged, and clinging on. In our hearts and minds I'm sure we believed that the church we were to return to after Covid would be the same as the one before Covid. 2022 put that ideal and hope firmly in the realm of dreams, as apathy has become our greatest foe.

To the people of 2022 what are we? What is the Church to them? What are we to Myland, or to Colchester? For those called to be the Church we know the answers to those questions, or I hope we do, but today, we are one voice among many voices and platforms, where information is shared and gathered, and where the secular voice is far stronger and organised than ours. The church used to be the place of first call for baptism, marriage and funerals, but that is no longer the case as the secular world of profit and loss has encroached and entrenched itself, in what was once virtually ours alone.

We have history at our fingertips, but the cost of keeping history is damaging us, it saps not just our money, but time and energy too. We are all aware of the rising energy bills, it hit us hard in 2022, this church is frugal in its expenditure, but eventually you arrive at that point where you have to say, where do we cut next?

We are blessed by a lone churchwarden, doing the work of two, who gives so much of herself, and her team of deputies, who defy the odds and keep us going; a staff team, that does not count the cost, a newly formed fundraising team, that has been blessed with ideas, and our administrator who underpins the work of both church and parish halls, and a PCC that is diligent and hardworking, but it has become very much the same faces doing too much, who need others, new people, to work alongside. If we carry on at the current rate, we face the issue of losing those who serve us now, as their burden is not light, but great.

In 2022, it has been easy to lose sight of what we actually have, our freedom to worship, and to speak out, and to pray without fear, other Christians across the world are not blessed with those luxuries, and our struggles are nothing like theirs, but across the world 'God is working His purpose out'. What is His purpose for St Michael's? God's church cannot stand still, it must evolve, change, grow and be a presence of love in a darker and darker world.

St Michael's though, at the end of the day, is made up of people who God has gathered together to service him in a certain time and place. Why has he called you? How do you respond to his challenge to you? Those are big, big questions for all of us, as we face the challenges of 2023 and beyond. St Michael's needs you, and God has left it up to you to decide how you respond to that call, there is a God shaped place in St Michaels for you, but only you can respond to the call, no one can do it for you. Jesus chose 12: rough, tough, cultured, young, middle age and old, fit and disabled, there is room for everyone in his church and in this place: St Michael's Myland. Amen.

*Revd Ray Gibbs
Priest in Charge, Myland.*