

Annual Report and Accounts
of the Parochial Church Council of
Holy Ascension, Upton by Chester

For the year ended 31st December 2023



Registered Charity Number: 1131069

Vicar's Report

Welcome to our Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2023.

As you read this I want you to be encouraged by the many activities that take place within our church community. We have many people who serve others in lots of ways within the church community through the running of groups, giving lifts, cleaning, flower arranging, leading us in worship or prayer, making cups of tea, welcoming, setting up, doing gardening, there are many other ways of serving that occur that I could mention, but don't have the space to do it. Why are many individuals serving each other in this way? Because as a community of believers we are seeking to become the church that God would have us be.

So I want you to enjoy reading the reports, thank God for those serving in this ministry and see where you could get involved in the coming year.

God bless

Paul

Our stated purpose

To be the people of God in this place, committed to Christ, to one another and to service in the community: Together we worship God with Joy and Love, with an openness to the renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Administrative Information

Holy Ascension is in Church Lane, Upton, Chester and is part of the diocese of Chester within the Church of England.

Correspondence address is: The Parish Office, Holy Ascension Community Hall, Demage Lane, Chester, CH2 1EL

Incumbent: Revd Paul Newman

Reader Emeritus: Mrs Barbara Capstick

Parish Safeguarding Officer: Tara Newman,
email safeguarding@holyascension.org.uk

Bank: Unity Trust Bank, Four Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2JB.

Independent examiner: John McLintock FCA FCCA

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Holy Ascension is a charity registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales, charity registration number: 1131069.

When planning our activities for the year, the PCC gave consideration to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance to charities concerned with the advancement of religion.

The PCC is a body corporate and operates under the Parochial Church Councils Powers Measure 1956 and the Church Representation Rules 2020. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All church members are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC currently has 11 members and normally meets on the second Monday of each alternate month in the Kempe Room.

Members of the PCC:

Elected: Graham Barley
Susan Campbell
Michael Curtis - Churchwarden
Rob Evans
Colin Foden - Churchwarden
Jean Machan – Resigned 13th November 2023
Liz Squire
Sally Symes

Co-opted: Colin Bain.

Ex officio: Sue Burgess
Barbara Capstick
Paul Newman.

Bible Study Group

There are 17 members of this group, 15 from Holy Ascension and 2 from other churches. We meet fortnightly in the Kempe room at 2.40pm with coffee/tea/biscuits and a time of fellowship. Our study begins at 3.00pm with prayers followed by 'what's on' events.

This year we have studied:

- **The Fruits of the Spirit** - following Paul's Lent talks
- **The Feast of St. Barnabas** - in June
- **Growing Older and Wiser** - a Life builder course
- **Advent preparation**

We were challenged by these various studies. They gave us an opportunity through discussion to share our thoughts and understanding of the passages which encouraged us to continue at home.

For both our July and December meetings we chose favourite readings on selected religious themes.

We are always pleased to welcome new members to join us.

Barbara Capstick

Caring & Sharing Lunch

On the second Wednesday of the month, a light lunch is served in the Kempe room after the communion service. It is a time when we can gather together for food and fellowship. All are welcomed.

Hilary Woodcock

Choir

Our choir although small in number continues to be a valuable support and lead to our 9.00 Sunday morning services each week.

Revd Paul Newman

Christian Aid

Christian Aid supporters have been busy raising funds by doing bucket collections, Street to Street collections and Churches Together lent lunches as well as an evening of music and readings by Trevor Dennis supported by local musicians.

The total fund raising was £27,314.63. Sadly this is a decrease of £10,000 despite all the effort from the above fund raising activities.

The main fund raising event was the street to street collection and our church members collected £1,127.06, which was lower than last year. Chester as a whole raised £18,161.64 with many churches taking part.

Please look on the notice board for posters advertising events and support them whenever you can.

Margaret Bain

Churches Together in Upton

The events this year were funded by the CTU surplus.

The main expenditure was for an Organist to play at the fifth Sunday services, also the wreath for Remembrance Sunday.

We share worship on the fifth Sunday in the month, on a rota with the URC and St. Columba's, as well as a Remembrance Sunday reflection at one of the Churches. These services are interesting and have about 25+ in the congregation. The fellowship over refreshments is popular. We lay a Wreath on behalf of the three Churches after the short service at the War Memorial. Advent and Lent material for sharing is readily available. A weekly prayer diary is provided for the Churches to use. The World Day of Prayer was held in March at the URC. There were two fellowship lunches, Lent (proceeds to the Hospice) and Christian Aid. A collection was held at Christmas for Chester Aid for The Homeless. The twice monthly Coffee Mornings are very popular and raise a significant amount of money to be donated to charity; through occasional Bring and Buys and Raffles - Over £1000 in the last year. Carols were "sung" during the Coffee Morning nearest Christmas. A visit to Chester Cathedral was well received with a tour, refreshments and Evensong.

Holy Ascension Representatives are M. Whaley, B. Capstick, J. Butler and Rev. P Newman.

John Butler

Connect Group

The 'Connect' group is aimed at the younger ladies who come to Holy Ascension, to offer them a chance to take time out from their work / family commitments and get together, get to know each other and support each other in the journey of life.

We have been fortunate to meet throughout 2023/ 2024 for a range of activities that have included making a macramé keyring, a walk along the canal by the Countess of Chester and the surrounding countryside, two Catch Up & Cake evenings, meringues and scones in the summer, making a beaded star, creating Christmas decorations and most recently our Potluck Supper in January ...a wonderful opportunity to sample new foods!

We always open with a prayer and then at the end of the evening we take the opportunity to finish with a time of sharing and praying for each other, a chance to offer each other our support and to thank God for blessing our time together. A branch off the 'Connect' group is our bible study group where 7 of us meet weekly in term time to study Gods' word and pray. We use the Life builder study guides to lead us in our studies and in 2023 we continued with the 'I am sayings of Christ' followed by 'Proverbs – Learning to live wisely'. This January we have embarked on studying the book of 'James – Faith that works'. So far the studies are helping us to grow in our understanding of how our faith should be seen in our actions and the way we live out our lives each day.

Tara Newman

Electoral Roll Report

In March 2023 there were 127 names on the Roll. 11 new members were added but, sadly, five members passed away.

Every sixth year the preparation of a completely new Church Electoral Roll takes place, which means that everyone must come off the Roll and re-apply. The next occasion for the preparation of this new Roll will be in 2025.

Graham Barley

Fabric Report

We have continued looking after our buildings and our graveyard making sure that it is in a good state of repair. At the beginning of the year our clock broke down and wasn't working for six months but this has now been repaired. We have done some work on the roof, had our fire-alarm system in the Kempe room replaced and are looking to replace some of the lighting in our church.

Revd Paul Newman

Fellowship Group

We have had a busy programme in 2023 with 30-40 people, on average, attending the meetings.

We meet in Church on the third Monday of the month at 2.30pm, followed by tea and biscuits in the Kempe Room after the talk.

We started the year with a talk by Graeme White "Is Chester a North West, Welsh Border, or West Midland City?". There was plenty of discussion after the talk but there was no answer to the question!

February was a talk about the R.S.P.B. with some lovely photographs. March was a talk by Monty Mercer from Hoole History and Heritage Society about "The Royal Agriculture Show in Hoole in 1893".

We had a Songs of Praise in April with Dennis Jones playing the organ. Coral Greenwood made a return visit in May with "The History of Musical Theatre".

Graham Loach returned to speak about "Memories of the 60's" in June.

In the autumn we started with "Guide Dogs for the Blind" and October with a talk about "The Work of the Children's Society".

We welcomed the Revd. David Chesters in November who gave a fascinating talk about "Heraldry and Ceremonial".

We finished the year with our annual Carol Service of Nine Lessons and Carols.

Margaret Brizell

Finance

The Receipts and Payments accounts for the year ended 31st December 2023 are set out at the end of the Annual Report.

Unrestricted Fund

There was an excess of payments over receipts for the year of £10,294.

Voluntary income was down £5,182 compared with the previous year. Both planned giving and collections fell resulting in a corresponding fall in gift aid recovered. However, the receipt of two legacies and a slight increase in income from church activities meant that total income remained static at £108,016. Total expenditure increased by £4,987 largely due to increased gas and electricity prices for both the church and community hall.

In 2023 we paid our parish share of £71,757 in full. The 2024 parish share will be £75,344, an increase of 5%.

At the yearend there was £10,953 in the general fund bank accounts.

Unrestricted Designated Funds

During the year the clock was repaired and the first stage payment for this was made out of the Clock Fund. We also received a donation of £4,000 towards re-painting the clock face which should happen during 2024.

The Musical Tots designated fund was set up to ensure that the fees from the weekly sessions will cover any future costs associated with running the group. The Hall fund represents money allocated by the PCC to pay for future improvement works on the community hall such as a new boiler and kitchen.

Restricted Funds

The movements on restricted funds are set out in note 2 to the accounts.

Reserves policy

It is the PCC policy to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds which equates to a level they consider necessary to meet forthcoming needs.

Sue Burgess

Flower Arranging Team

Our team of 14 ladies and 2 gentlemen continues to work with enthusiasm and expertise to create beautiful flower arrangements to celebrate the festivals of; Easter, Ascension, Harvest, Christmas and Weddings.

This year we were very excited to be planning flowers in Church to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles 3rd and Queen Camilla on Saturday May 6th.

Preparations began on Thursday May 4th and we opened the Church on Friday May 5th and Sunday May 7th. Visitors enjoyed flowers celebrating the King's life;

- Church porch -amazing flowers represented The COMMONWEALTH
- The Font -the magnificent Crown symbolised MONARCHY
- 6 Nave Windows -depicted the King's many concerns and interests:

Conservation of Trees, Painting, Organic Farming, Music, Ecology

- 4 Transept Windows -England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland.

On Tuesday May 9th the arrangements were dismantled and taken out to folk who were housebound.

After expenses the balance of the Donations were given to the Church.

Flowers are placed in the Sanctuary and on the War Memorial each week.

These are purchased by generous donations from the congregation.

Our church is very fortunate to have so many folk who give a great deal of their time and expertise to arrange flowers throughout the year, for which we are very grateful.

Barbara Capstick

Foodbank

As a church, we support Cheshire's Food bank. People bring items of food to church and leave them on the back cupboard then the Bain's as well as Graham Barley take it to the food bank in Ellesmere Port once a month. Each month a slip telling us how much was taken to the food bank is pinned on the notice board in the church entrance alongside a list of food urgently required. At the moment the food bank is distributing more food than they are receiving so please add an extra item on your shopping list to support this charity.

A big thank you to everyone who has donated in the last year.

Margaret Bain

Heartbeat

At the end of 2023 the PCC came to the decision that six issues will be produced to cover the year. Therefore the amalgamation following the combined December/January issue will be as follows: February/March, April/May, June/July, August/September, and October/November and will cover 24 pages for each issue.

Coloured pages will continue to be limited to four pages a month and for the foreseeable future 150 copies will be printed to be collected from Church.

Heartbeat continues to be available via the website as a PDF.

Sharon Forsdyke

Health and Safety

There is little to report. The one major incident involved the decorative corbel above the lectern crashing to the ground, thankfully during the night, on one Tuesday last year. This now has been re-fixed by a qualified stonemason. An inspection of other similar structures has taken place. The usual risk assessments took place prior to the Christmas celebrations with buckets of water in appropriate places at the Christingle service when candles were lit.

The checking of fire prevention equipment together with portable and fixed electrical equipment is up to date. The church steps have been re-painted white to assist parishioners who suffer from poor eyesight.

Finally, some new wet floor signs have been purchased for use at the Community Hall.

Colin Foden

Music Group

The Church music group has continued to grow. The group now numbers 6, with the addition of a clarinettist and a cellist. We continue to play on 3 or 4 Sundays of the month at the 10.45 service and we have been pleased with the appreciation shown by the congregation. As usual the Christmas period was very busy. As well as our normal services we were pleased to be asked to play at the Christingle service, the Crib service on Christmas Eve and our Christmas Day service.

We shall continue to build up our repertoire.

Mary Foden

Safeguarding

Holy Ascension takes its duty and obligation to protect all extremely seriously. We have adopted the National Church of England's robust procedures and guidelines. You can find out more about the national policies and procedures at www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding.

Earlier in 2023 Tara Newman was appointed as our church Safeguarding Officer, she has spent her time getting much of the safeguarding up to date including obtaining certificates from Disclosure and Barring Services for all of the PCC members and all of those working with our church children in the Sunday Club. All of those have also fully completed all of the safeguarding training requirements set out in the National and Diocesan policies.

New paperwork relating to volunteers in the Sunday Club has also been put in place to ensure our Safer Recruitment requirements are also met and is now in place for any future volunteers within the church.

If you have any safeguarding concerns or issues of a safeguarding matter then you can find useful contact information at www.chester.anglican.org/social-responsibility/safeguarding or you can contact Tara our Safeguarding Officer at safeguarding@holycension.org.uk.

Tara Newman

Schools

We continue to build links with our church school Upton Heath. We have two members of the church who act as governors. We take an assembly every Wednesday afternoon and the school come into church and do a class assembly at the major festivals of the year.

We have also had Acresfield School come into church at Christmas and take a Christmas production.

Revd Paul Newman

Sewing Group

Sewing group continues to meet every Thursday morning in the Kempe Room between 10.00am and 12noon. During the year we made Easter and Christmas decorations which were sold at the Christmas Fayre and Hospice coffee mornings. Everyone is welcome to come along for coffee/tea, biscuits, chat and company irrespective of sewing or knitting ability.

Sue Burgess

Sunday Club

Our age range of the children we have presently is 5 – 10 years old and we usually have 4/6 children every week. A rota of 4 ladies support Tara in leading the Sunday Club and this has worked well throughout the year.

We use the ROOTS material as a basis for the Sunday Club activities. We always start with action songs, games, read a story/passage from the Bible, perhaps watch a video, a discussion time, prayer and some sort of craft activity... the aim is to make our time together learning about God's love in a fun and stimulating way. Presently we are learning about 'Hearing God's call as in the story of Samuel and also 'Responding to God's Call as in the story of Jonah.

All of us that have been working with the children over the past year have seen how they have grown in knowledge and understanding of God's love for them and how they are relating other stories and learning to the new stories they encounter. We pray that all of the children continue to grow in their relationship with Christ and that what they learn with us on a Sunday morning is a foundation for their lives.

Tara Newman

Table Tennis

The group which meets every Monday afternoon and Thursday morning in the back room of the Community Hall has grown significantly in number during the last twelve months. It provides a much needed social outlet for senior male members of the church. While retaining the current Monday afternoon session, it is hoped, shortly, to use the main hall on a Thursday afternoons in order to add other activities such as pool and indoor bowls.

Colin Foden

The Children's Society

The annual box opening in September raised £1,316-30 for the work of The Children's Society. The Christingle Service in December raised a further £163-90. The money will go to provide help and support for vulnerable children.

Margaret Brizell

World Day of Prayer

We welcomed a congregation of over 60 members from the URC, St. Columba's and Holy Ascension Church to the service which was written by Christian women from Taiwan.

During the service, accounts were read by three women describing their lives living in poverty, in fear of abuse from a partner or in isolation because of disability, sexuality or an ethnic background. Sadly there are many ongoing conflicts in Taiwan at this time, so the people are very much in need of our prayers.

This same service is used in 170 countries and islands worldwide. An estimated 3 million men, women and young people will have taken part in the service, which is translated into 60 languages. In The UK alone some 6,000 services took place on this day. We enjoyed singing traditional songs. In our prayers we gave thanks for the women who prepared the service and for the work of the W.D.P. Organisation in spreading the gospel message around the world. A collection was given for Christian Charities worldwide.

Afterwards delicious traditional refreshments were served and enjoyed over lively conversation.

It is always uplifting when the Churches Together in Upton meet for this special Service of International and Ecumenical worship and prayer.

Barbara Capstick

Approved by the PCC on 11th March 2024 and signed on their behalf by

Revd Paul Newman (PCC Chair).....
P. Newman

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Holy Ascension, Upton-By-Chester

Receipts and Payments Accounts for the Year Ended 31st December 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Fund	Unrestricted Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
		£	£	£	£	£
<u>Receipts</u>						
Voluntary receipts						
Planned giving		47,918	-	-	47,918	50,451
Collections at services		6,634	143	119	6,896	8,087
Donations		478	4,000	1,425	5,903	2,674
Gift Aid recovered		11,504	-	-	11,504	13,982
Grants received		-	-	-	-	2,035
Legacies		3,509	-	-	3,509	-
		70,043	4,143	1,544	75,730	77,229
Activities for generating funds	3	2,666	51	-	2,717	2,705
Church Activities	4	32,200	-	1,706	33,906	30,133
Investment Income	5	3,107	-	-	3,107	2,555
Total Receipts		£108,016	£4,194	£3,250	£115,460	£112,622
<u>Payments</u>						
Church activities						
Parish Share		71,757	-	-	71,757	69,666
Fees remitted		5,027	-	-	5,027	3,779
Clergy and Staffing costs		4,862	-	-	4,862	4,329
Church costs	6	16,685	1,669	2,653	21,007	20,037
Vicarage costs		4,139	-	-	4,139	3,710
Hall running costs		10,975	-	-	10,975	8,068
Mission giving and donations		4,364	-	691	5,055	6,607
		117,809	1,669	3,344	122,822	116,196
Cost of generating Funds	7	501	-	240	741	16
Total payments		£118,310	£1,669	£3,584	£123,563	£116,212
Excess of payments over receipts		(10,294)	2,525	(334)	(8,103)	(3,590)
Transfer between funds		-	200	(200)	-	-
Cash at bank and in hand						
1 st January 2023		21,247	11,815	15,643	48,705	52,295
31 st December 2023		£10,953	£14,540	£15,109	£40,602	£48,705

Approved by the PCC on 11th March 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

Rev. Paul Newman

P. Newman

Mr. Michael Richard Curtis.

Michael R. Curtis

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Holy Ascension, Upton-By-Chester
Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31st December 2023

	Unrestricted Fund	Unrestricted Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Cash at bank and in hand					
Lloyds Current Account	2,077	1,654	6,038	9,769	24,715
Unity Trust Bank - Current Account	3,706	2,331	-	6,037	8,088
Unity Trust Bank - Deposit Account	1,848	356	5,548	7,752	1,136
CCLA – Deposit Account	2,829	10,199	3,150	16,178	13,349
CCLA – Building in Faith	-	-	17	17	17
Cash in Hand	493	-	-	493	295
Sunshine Tots Account	-	-	43	43	1,014
Flower Fund	-	-	313	313	91
	£10,953	£14,540	£15,109	£40,602	£48,705
Other Monetary Assets					
Gift Aid Recoverable	£3,997	-	-	£ 3,997	£3,470
Investment Assets					
3,841.83 (3,841.83)					
Shares in The CBF					
Church of England Fund	£86,846	-	-	£86,846	£79,378
Fixed assets retained for church use					
The fixed assets retained for church use are Holy Ascension Community Hall, the Organ (refurbished 2013) and the AV system.					
All assets belong to the unrestricted fund.					
	£	£	£	£	£
Liabilities					
Fees	£187	-	-	£187	£460

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Holy Ascension, Upton-By-Chester

Notes to the Receipts and Payments Accounts for the Year Ended 31st December 2023

1. The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 using the Receipts & Payments basis.

2. The movements in designated and restricted funds during the year were:

	Balance b/fwd.	Receipts	Payments	Transfer	Balance c/fwd.
Restricted	£	£	£	£	£
Family Workers	650	-	-	-	650
Flower Fund	91	1,706	1,284	(200)	313
Sunshine Tots	3,543	-	-	-	3,543
Caring & Sharing	-	445	240	-	205
Other	11,359	1,099	2,060	-	10,398
	£15,643	£3,250	£3,584	£(200)	£15,109

	£	£	£	£	£
Designated					
Hall	6,515	-	-	-	6,515
Musical Tots	4,050	-	-	-	4,050
Clock Fund	1,250	4,194	1,669	200	3,975
	£11,815	£4,194	£1,669	£200	£14,540

3. Activities for generating funds

	Unrestricted Fund	Unrestricted Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Social events	2,652	51	-	2,703	2,481
Sundry receipts	14	-	-	14	224
	£2,666	£51	£-	£2,717	£2,705

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Holy Ascension, Upton-By-Chester**Notes to the Receipts and Payments Accounts for the Year Ended 31st December 2023**

	Unrestricted Fund	Unrestricted Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
4. Church activities					
Fees for weddings and funerals	12,164	-	-	12,164	9,925
Community Hall hire	20,006	-	-	20,006	19,219
Magazine	30	-	-	30	-
Flower fund	-	-	1,706	1,706	989
	£ 32,200	£-	£1,706	£33,906	£30,133
	£	£	£	£	£
5. Investment income					
Dividends	2,374	-	-	2,374	2,361
Interest	733	-	-	733	194
	£3,107	£-	£-	£3,107	£2,555
	£	£	£	£	£
6. Church activities					
Church running expenses	14,004	1,669	516	16,189	16,289
Cost of services	840	-	116	956	1,101
Administration	1,791	-	-	1,791	1,446
Magazine	50	-	737	787	265
Flower fund	-	-	1,284	1,284	936
	£16,685	£1,669	£2,653	£21,007	£20,037
7. Cost of generating funds					
Social events	£501	£-	£240	£741	£16

Independent Examiner's Report to the members/trustees of the Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Holy Ascension, Upton by Chester (registered charity number: 1131069).

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity for the year ended 31st December 2023 which are set out on pages 1 to 4.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

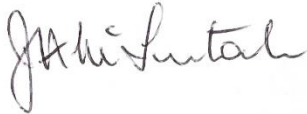
I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



John McIntock FCA FCCA
2 Windmill Rise
Upton
Chester

Date 11th March 2024