

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
of
ST MICHAEL and ST PAUL
ALNWICK**

**Annual Report and
Financial Statements**

**for the year ended
31st December 2024**

**Incumbent
Revd Christian Mitchell**

**St Michael's Vicarage
Howling Lane
Alnwick, NE66 1DH**

**Bank
Barclays Bank plc
Alnwick**

**Independent Examiner
Mr George Clark FCPFA**

Registered Charity Number 1131297

Annual Report of the Parish of St Michael and St Paul, Alnwick 2024

Parochial Church Council 2024

The PCC is the governing body of the parish of St Michael and St Paul Alnwick. The PCC is a team made up of members of clergy and lay members of the church. Together they are responsible for the overall wellbeing, practical as well as spiritual, of their church, the church members, and the church buildings. The PCC also has a duty to promote the mission of the church within the wider community.

The PCC is also responsible for the internal maintenance and running of the Parish Hall. The Hall is leased from the Northumberland Estate which is responsible for the external fabric.

Ex officio members:

Chairman: Revd Christian Mitchell

Churchwardens: Vacant

Deanery Synod Members: (elected in 2024 for 3 years)

Mrs Annette Playle Mrs Jean Darby
Ms Sal Howard

Elected Members:

Mrs Rosie Buxton	(re-elected in 2022 for 3 years)
Mr John Cooke	(re-elected in 2024 for 3 years)
Mr Richard Dale	(re-elected in 2023 for 3 years)
Dr Patty Everitt	(elected in 2024 for 3 years)
Mrs Pat Tweed	(elected in 2024 for 1 year)
Mrs Judy Jobson	(elected in 2022 for 3 years)
Mrs Susan O'Neill	(re-elected in 2023 for 3 years)
Mr Henry Playle	(re-elected in 2023 for 3 years)
Mrs Susan Trafford	(elected in 2023 for 3 years)

PCC Officers:

Vice Chairman:	Mrs Jean Darby
PCC Secretary:	Mrs Rosie Buxton
PCC Treasurer:	Mr Richard Dale

Assistant Church Wardens:

Mrs Pat Tweed
One vacancy

PCC Committees and other groups:

The Standing Committee is the only committee required by law. It has the power to transact the business of the PCC between meetings (subject to any directions given by the Council). Its members are Revd Christian Mitchell, Mrs Jean Darby, Mr Richard Dale and Mr Henry Playle.

Clergy with permission to Officiate:

Revd Canon Sue Allen, Revd Canon Philip Bourne

Readers:

Mr John Cooke, Mrs Annette Playle, Ms Sal Howard

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Safeguarding Officer
Dr Patty Everitt

Church attendance:

Statistics as reported to the Diocese for 2024 (2023 figures in brackets)

Baptisms	11 (15)
Confirmation	1 (0)
Weddings	2 (6)
Funerals	14 (25) in Church, and 9 (4) at the crematorium or cemetery only.

Average attendance: 99 adults and 20 children (95 adults and 7 children)

Christmas: 131 communicants, 437 attendees (126 communicants, 486 attendees)

Easter: 91 communicants, 131 attendees (84 communicants, 99 attendees)

People in our "worshipping community" at the end of 2024:

Total	Children (Age 0-15)	Adults (Age 16+)
125	13	112

Review of the Year 2024

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Volunteers:

We would like to thank all the volunteers who work so tirelessly to make our church the lively, welcoming and vibrant community that it is. There are many committees carrying out work in a variety of areas and many parishioners are members of more than one group. Without everybody's contribution we would not be able to keep the church running.

Church and School Links:

The links between the Church and NCEA Harry Hotspur C of E Primary School remain strong. The Vicar is an ex-officio governor of the school.

Communication:

The Church website is currently suspended while we build a new one. In the meantime, we are making good use of our 'A Church Near You' site which is regularly updated with all the details of our events and services, including copies of the weekly pew sheets and posters for upcoming events. The parish magazine, 'Gateway', is normally published every month.

DEANERY SYNOD – *Revd Canon Alison Hardy, Area Dean of Alnwick*

During 2024 Alnwick Deanery Synod met four times:

24th February – St James URC, Alnwick

The focus was on children's work in the deanery and presentations were given on

- Experience Easter (Amble), Schools Ministry (Chevington), Mini Michaels (Alnwick), Messy Church (Warkworth), Bags of Faith (Shilbottle), Baptism Preparation (Felton)

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6th June – St Mary's Longframlington

The meeting welcomed Revd Stephen Tranter, the Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations who spoke about his role in the Diocese.

4th September – St Mary's Longframlington

We welcomed Izzy McDonald-Booth, a Diocesan representative on General Synod, who spoke about the work of General Synod and its most recent meeting. Izzy emphasised the need for good governance at all levels in the Church of England. As a result of Izzy's input one of our lay vacancies on Diocesan Synod was filled. See below.

2nd November – St Michael's Alnwick

Guest speaker Revd Robert Warren

The morning consisted of workshops on

- Leading Intercessions, Reading in church, Preparing the altar, Welcoming worshippers

Synod also elected Mary Elizabeth McIlroy-Hipwell to represent our deanery at Diocesan Synod

Throughout the year groups established by the Deanery Development Group have continued to work on strands of our Deanery development plan which focuses on how we can support each across the deanery by learning from each other, sharing experience and resources in 5 main areas:

- Leadership & Governance
- Mission & Pastoral Care
- Sustainable Buildings and churchyards
- Development of Lay Ministry
- Generous Giving

Synod members attended three Deanery development "check in" events during the year including a celebratory event at the cathedral.

Our monthly Deanery service has been held on the first Sunday of each month and has moved around the deanery visiting difference parishes each month. The Deanery Environment group continues to meet regularly convened by Rev Gilly Maude.

At year end our two vacancies in Upper Coquetdale and Amble & Chevington remain unfilled. The Area Dean is very grateful to the many people in these parishes have sustained ministry with grace and good will, to clergy and readers who have provided cover for services and to those who continue to pray for the people God is calling to these parishes.

In 2024 the Deanery offered £364,530 in parish share. At year end only one parish did not manage to pay in full. Because of some overpayments (and some parishes making additional payments after year end) the overall return was slightly more than 100%. For 2025 the deanery overall has not managed to achieve the Diocesan request for an extra 8%.

The Area Dean is grateful for the support of Synod, for Hugh, our Lay Chair, Sheila our Secretary and Jo our Treasurer all of whom work hard to ensure that deanery synod is focussed, informative and supportive of the Diocesan vision.

SAFEGUARDING – Patty Everitt, Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)

The PCC believes that it has complied with its duty to have 'due regard' to the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance.

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Introduction

In the latter part of 2024 and early part of 2025, we were presented with disturbing information concerning the safeguarding conduct of some of the Church of England's most senior clergy and the consequences of that behaviour on vulnerable people. One lesson that I have taken from this is that it is important that we do what we say we will do. In that way we know we are doing our absolute best to be a people safely doing Gospel work.

Sadly, in 2024 our Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor stepped down from her post. Our DSA had willingly given me helpful advice, support and encouragement. The DSA is a crucial role for PSOs. In the interim, until a new DSA is recruited, the Archdeacons of Lindisfarne and Northumberland are acting as Diocesan Safeguarding Contacts.

I continue to give thanks for all our volunteers and their commitment and dedication to providing a safe and welcoming environment in all our community and church-based work.

The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy

The PCC continues to support our commitment to the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance.

You will find a copy of the Policy on the Safeguarding Notice Board at the back of the church.

The Parish Dashboard

As a Parish, we continue to keep up-to-date in our compliance to written safeguarding standards with the help and guidance of the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard. Each year the PCC reviews existing policies and procedures to make sure that these are as effective as possible.

In 2024 a new part of the Dashboard was launched, the Safeguarding Hub. The Hub is a great help at keeping track of the training carried out by all our volunteers and reminding me when renewal of training is due.

Safeguarding Training

Safeguarding training is always available online through the Church of England Safeguarding Training Portal. Courses are available to anyone who is interested and on completion of the course, a personal certificate is issued. I have included the link to the Portal at the end of this report.

Training is often a richer and more fun experience when taken as part of a group. In 2024-2025 I facilitated several in-person safeguarding training sessions and have learned so much from our group discussions and the wealth of experience that each volunteer brings to their role. Thank you to all of you who continue to educate me!

Safeguarding Handbooks, Guidance, Policies and Procedures

Copies of these documents are in the blue folder near the pigeon-holes at the back of the church.

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My Thanks

Again, I thank all our volunteers for their steadfast commitment to safeguarding in all they do.

Questions?

If you have any questions or concerns about what safeguarding is or how to access training or what volunteering in any capacity would mean, please talk to me. I would be delighted to have a chat.

If you would like to find out more about any of the Church Officer roles or about being a Church Officer, again please talk to me.

Any questions you may have do not commit you to taking up a role!

Helpful Links

Church of England Safeguarding Training Portal <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/>

FABRIC – *Jean Darby and Henry Playle*

Altar Frontal Chest

The Altar Frontal Chest which was situated just inside the Duke's door in the south aisle, had to be removed.

Initially some fungus at the bottom exterior of the chest was removed and washed down but at later date a large amount of damp and fungus at the rear interior was discovered. Three altar frontals which were no longer used, and another which was folded up on the floor of the cabinet, were badly affected with damp and fungi, were removed. Fortunately, none of the frontals regularly used were affected. Once the chest was emptied it was discovered that, because of the extent of the fungi, the back of the chest was rotten. The cause of the damage were three sheets of hardboard, stacked behind the chest and touching the wall, had drawn the damp and meant there was no air flow. Once the chest was removed the area was brushed and washed. A replacement chest is planned

The Tower

A memorial plaque acknowledging the considerable generosity of the late Richard Allsop which enabled the completion of the Tower Restoration Project, was placed facing the tower door at the bottom of the staircase.

Although the tower is now sound and waterproof, there continues to be concern regarding the uneven stairs, particularly in the area beyond the ringing room.

Due to the unexpected and unprecedented popularity of the bells, the ropes which had been expected to last for about 5 years were showing signs of wear and one did break. All 10 ropes have now been replaced from donations from local and visiting ringers. These new ropes have terylene "tops" as opposed to conventional hemp, consequently they will last for years longer. The original ropes will be retained as "spares".

The Graffiti Cabinet

There had been concern that the cabinet which houses the lead graffiti had no locking device. This has now been rectified and the graffiti is now safely stored.

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Church Path Lamps

A while before the Christmas Tree Festival it was considered that the lighting on the approach path to the church was inadequate. The glass globes were removed and given a soak and clean. Before they were replaced new led bulbs with a higher wattage were inserted, giving the pathway a brighter light.

Church Tower Clock

The clock, having finally been re-gilded due to the gilding fading after its refurbishment, then stopped. This was corrected but there are still issues and the rectifying is continuing. Our thanks to Dick Taylor who has been regulating the clock in the meantime.

General continuing maintenance

Gutters and down pipes were cleared in May. PAT (Testing of electrical goods) was carried out in August. Fire extinguishers were checked in October.

TOWER – Jim Crowther

Bell Fabric

There is very little to report on this front because there has been no change or deterioration to the internal belfry or ringing room fabric. The bells, bellframe and bell fittings are regularly inspected/maintained by the ringers and continue to be in excellent condition.

Bellringing Visitors

Bellringing at Alnwick continues to attract a significant number of bellringing visitors. The excellent tonal quality of these instruments along with a friendly local band have ensured a high number of ringing visitors. The bellringing standard at Alnwick is much higher than the national average, consequently the ringing attracts many return visitors. Bellringing at St. Michaels has achieved an excellent reputation in a relatively short space of time.

Ringling for Services

Always a main priority. Bells on Sunday morning and ringing for ad hoc occasions and services has been fully maintained by mainly local ringers. This, along with the further development of individual ringing skills will continue to be the objectives during 2025.

Local Ringers

The current band comprises members of the congregation who have been taught how to ring along with a number of "recycled ringers" (ringers who learnt to ring at other towers in the past who have since moved to Alnwick and returned to bellringing). The band is supported by a number of experienced ringers who regularly travel Northumberland to support the local ringers. These people have bonded well and become a very strong local group who help each other. The band is an even mix of males/females, the youngest aged 11 and oldest 85. A pleasure to teach/mentor.

Tutors

The 4 principal tutors remain unchanged, they travel from Shilbottle and Slaley, they have over 200 years of bellringing and tutoring between them. Teaching the art of Campanology safely and to a high standard is their skill and priority.

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Local ringers continue to improve their ringing ability and “striking” accuracy.

Ringing Times

Unchanged. Ringing after Sunday Morning Service, general practice on Wednesday afternoon and evening, occasionally on Saturday afternoons and other ad hoc times. Members of the congregation, their family/children and friends are encouraged to visit the belfry and see bellringing in action.....simply ask Jean Darby.

SOUTH AISLE EXHIBITION – Jean Darby, Project coordinator

The display of graffiti in the south aisle continued to attract attention but there were concerns relating to the fact that the cabinet was unlocked. This was eventually achieved sympathetically and all the graffiti is now held securely in the cabinet.

While new branding including a church logo were being finalised, work on the final designs for the interpretation were put on hold. These are now in the final stages and a faculty will be sought. We are pleased that individuals from interested organisations in the town have agreed to join in making this a true community project. Despite the necessary delays we now look forward to a celebratory launch in September 2025.

HARRY HOTSPUR CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL - Jackie Chevaugeron,
Chair of Governors

Good News - our roll has increased since the start of the academic year by ten children!

It has been another positive year for the school community centred on our children within our very special ethos and learning environment. We continue to value each of our children, providing the challenge, opportunity and support they need to grow and flourish as individuals, both academically and personally. Our focus on **Spirituality** with support from **Paul Rusby of the Diocese** has helped us all to “look in, look out and look up”.

In the last few years our governing board lost several experienced members, however we have recruited new members with a wide range of skills and are planning for the future sustainability of the board. We have two new parents represented, who having moved from out of the area and visited all of the Alnwick schools felt **Harry Hotspur** provided the most nurturing culture for their children.

It was a difficult decision to change the name of our school, but our families embraced the discussion and the children became very excited by the challenge of finding a new name which would best represent the school values within the **Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust**. The children are always keen to talk about the school's Christian values - they recently grilled the applicants for Headteacher post about them - in particular courage, perseverance, trust, respect, friendship and love. At the renaming ceremony ‘**His Grace the Duke of Northumberland**’ talked of his ancestor, acknowledging that while he was not perfect, Harry Hotspur had always “done his best”. As one of the children said afterwards, “at our school we are always helped to do our best”. Opportunities for the children to do just that are implicit in our very challenging curriculum and in the day to day.

Our curriculum allows each subject to shine with subject specific knowledge to the fore. Previous learning is built upon, with challenge explicit in every lesson. One of the outcomes of this has been the award of the **Silver Primary History Quality Mark**. One of only two primary schools in Northumberland to have the award, the report highlighted the quality of leadership and enrichment offered to children, as well as the standards achieved. Later this year, the children are to be invited to London for the awards ceremony.

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Researching the history of our school, through school log books and the interviewing of past pupils and staff became the catalyst for a wonderful afternoon in school when the children presented their findings to the gathered audience. The children helped us all to reflect on times past and to look forward optimistically! In geography, staff have engaged in fieldwork training - along the length of the River Aln - so our children regularly experience fieldwork and develop skills. Every child is included in school educational visits regardless of the ability to contribute financially. In particular the residential experiences such as Ford Castle, would not be possible without the support of our friends at St Michael's Church. As highlighted by the staff these situations promote independence and allow all of the children to shine, however it is often most transformative for our least confident and / or most disadvantaged pupils. The significance of this is not lost to us as governors when we refer back to the original Trust Deed from the setting up of the school.

This year, visits have included:

- Our town and castle
- Investigating Harry Hotspur
- Lilidorei World Book Day
- Alnwick Garden - going to work
- Hadrian's Wall
- York (by train - Viking Centre and DIG - archaeologists for the day)
- Residential; to Ford Castle Y3/4

One of our governor roles is to monitor the impact of improvement priorities. Pupils attend meetings and report back on their perspective, sharing views, ideas and samples of their work. The developing confidence of the young people - an ongoing focus across school - is admirable. They present, respond to questions and explain with enthusiasm, clarity and patience. A group of six pupils from Y3, 4, 5 and 6 formed a panel for the Headteacher interviews, asked their own well thought out questions and made recommendations.

We continue to provide whole class and small group violin tuition for every child in Y3/4 and as a result our Ceilidh Band is developing quite a reputation. Several of our past pupils played for the recent DCHS school production. We also host the area Ceilidh Band which includes Swansfield Park and Hipsburn schools.

We have this academic year welcomed to our school, Teddi Redpath as Assistant Headteacher, and more recently we have appointed a new Headteacher John Macfarlane and will welcome him to his new post at the beginning of the summer term. Mr Johnston is leaving us after many years of dedicated service to lead a large primary school in Newcastle. We thank Gavin for his constant commitment to developing and improving our school and of course wish him every success in his new post.

PASTORAL CARE TEAM – *Rev'd Sue Allen*

Church at Home

'Church at Home' is concerned with two different types of activity which provide worship and support to those who are unable to attend church in person.

Pastoral Care Team

This was set up in November 2023, and has met approximately every two months for mutual support and oversight, and to share good practice. Much appreciated help from Patty Everitt ensures that the requirements for Safeguarding are being met.

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A major focus is to co-ordinate Holy Communion services in Care Homes and to individuals. Three new Lay Communion Ministers were Commissioned in June 2024 to add to the existing Readers active in this ministry, and Communion is now taken every month to five local Care Homes, as well as to a number of individuals. A small team takes a more informal service bimonthly in one Care Home, as part of a rota set up by Christians Together in Alnwick, and other visiting is also undertaken in the name of St Michael's.

Online Worship and Fellowship.

As well as serving local people who are unable to attend church in person, St Michael's online community involves people who live geographically distant. This community enables them all to feel connected, and an ongoing part of the life of St Michael's. Three strands of this online presence are reported below.

Livestreamed Sunday Worship

A small team of operators ensures that the 10am Parish Communion is available online. During 2024 the purchase of new equipment and the improvement of the technology meant that the livestream is now more versatile and more reliable. The service is normally watched live by around a dozen people, and with those who watch later it is seen by at least 20 people each week. A recorded version is also taken into one of the local Care Homes and watched by up to 20 people in the Lounge there.

Zoom Compline on Thursday evenings.

Around nine people attend regularly for this more interactive service which includes intercessions and lasts about half an hour.

Sunday Zoom Cuppa and Chat

During 2024 this gathering was held monthly, usually on the first Sunday. It gathers those who are housebound, as well as those out and about locally, and includes contributions from USA. Each person is invited to catch up on their news and to share ideas, normally around a theme. The session finishes with a short prayer which all can join in. It has become increasingly clear that this group is very much appreciated as a way of keeping in touch and belonging.

MISSION ACTION PLANNING (MAP) GROUP – *Christian Mitchell*

In August of 2024, the PCC commissioned a small working party to develop a Mission Action Plan for the church. The Working Party is led by the Vicar and is made up of a further six people from across the life of St Michael's Church. The objectives of the Working Party were agreed as follows:

- To prepare a Parish Mission Statement, designed to underpin and guide the future mission of the Parish, and to seek approval for its adoption from the PCC.
- To develop a Mission Action Plan that sets out the future missional activities of the Parish in the short-term (6-12 months); medium-term (1-4 years); and long-term (5-10 years).

The Working Party met informally for the first time in December 2024 and has since met several times in early 2025. The discussions are developing well, and plans are being made for a parish workshop later in 2025 facilitated by Bishop Mark Wroe with a view to developing a MAP for the parish.

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MESSY CHURCH – Jane Brown

Messy Church continues monthly within our church building. We have a regular cohort of families who come most months to Messy Church. The average monthly attendance is 21 children and 25 adults including the team. We start with tea/coffee for the adults, then have our bible story and Christian songs together. The children spend 30 minutes doing crafts at various stations. We have introduced having the choice of a game this year too. Then we have soup, rolls, sandwiches, snacks and cake together. Many thanks to our volunteers who make food, create crafts and games, tell the bible story, and set it all up.

MINI MICHAEL'S – Pat Tweed

We continue to meet in term time and use the holidays to recover!!

Numbers attending our Thursday sessions are reasonably consistent and although we have said goodbye to children going either to nursery or school, we have several babies coming up into the more planned activity group. However, we are always aware of the need to encourage more to come and join us in our friendly, very child-based Thursday mornings. Refreshments are always provided so please spread the word.

Mini Michaels is a joyous part of our week, and we would welcome any new members who would like to come to help in any way. The team is a strong one, but MORE people would make it even stronger.

We would also like to congratulate Revd Mitch on how well he has learnt his nursery rhymes, he's practically a professional now!!!

THE MOTHERS' UNION – Anne Cooke

We have continued to meet in church on the second Wednesday of the month, with no meetings in January and August. In December we held our Advent service and on this occasion we admitted our vicar Mitch to Mothers' Union.

We now have nine members and one indoor member. Some rural branches have had to close recently through lack of numbers so please come along and give us a try.

ECO CHURCH – Elizabeth Bland

St Michael's Eco Church group met several times during 2024.

They organised an Eco Church Coffee Morning, held in October 2024, which was very much enjoyed by all who attended. Beautiful, sustainably-sourced goods were acquired on a 'sale or return' basis from World of Difference (Alnwick) and Gallery 45 (Felton). Some great refreshments were supplied by the church congregation. Over £100 was raised which was sent to the charity Cool Earth, which works with local communities in the rainforests and helps them to protect themselves and their land (www.coolearth.org).

At their final meeting of the year, in early November 2024, it was agreed that having achieved the Bronze Eco Church Award in August 2024, it was time to explore what St Michael's needs to do to achieve its Silver Eco Church Award. Members of the group are now working their way through the lengthy survey on the Eco Church UK website and are also completing the Carbon 360 section of the Climate Stewards website. Thanks to Revd Mitch, Richard Dale and Jean Darby for their assistance in helping us answer the questions; and also to Gilly Maude from the Alnwick Deanery Environmental Group for her help and advice and for putting us in touch with Tim Mayfield, the Diocesan Environmental Officer.

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Members of the group have continued to attend online meetings of Alnwick Deanery Environmental Group over the course of the year.

We are grateful to Annette Playle for all she has contributed in terms of time, work and enthusiasm to St Michael's Eco Church group.

CHRISTIANS TOGETHER IN ALNWICK (CTiA) – Sue Wiltshire

Chairperson	Sue Smith (Alnwick Baptist Church)
Vice Chair	Gill Lyons
Secretary	Jear Barr (St James's Church)
Treasurer	John Knight (St Paul's)

Hello and Goodbye

This year has seen important changes in our Alnwick church family. Joan Grindrod-Helm retired from St James's church in April last year after 22 years of service. In the due course of time, her place will be filled by a minister who will work with six other parishes in the area. In the meantime, St James's own worship group continues to work hard organizing services and welcoming visiting preachers. Kim Hurst from the Methodist church was relocated creating a vacancy into which Tim Moore and his wife Hazel have stepped. At Alnwick Baptist church Karen Smith was inducted as a new leader while Caroline Friend stepped back from heading up Alnwick Messy Church.

The Year in General

As we have said both goodbye and hello through the seasons, the rhythm of our churches' year has gently continued. The Week Of Prayer for Christian Unity took place in January and in the Spring Gill Lyons and June Etterley hosted an ecumenical Lent course. The Good Friday service of witness took place in the Market Place led by Bob Bain, and moving into May, the 24hours of prayer in May was well supported.

May also brought a wonderful new addition to our fund raising for Christian Aid week. St James's church held a Domino Drive which was great fun, well supported and very successful in the monetary sense, as was the Plant Sale and Refreshments hosted by Michelle and Andrew Duff. Despite the difficult financial climate bringing so many problems for so many people it was marvellous that this year saw no decline in the overall money raised when compared with the last year or so. Sue Wiltshire has stepped down from her role as Christian Aid coordinator for the local churches. This position has been filled by Stanley Trafford.

In November the Remembrance Day Service was led this year by Padre David Haslam and the prayers at the War Memorial were led by Mitch. A rota for the next few years has been organised.

During the Christmas season angels were knitted and distributed around the town and, as always, delighted children and adults alike. About 30 businesses were pleased to receive a crib scene for their window. It was fabulous to see the effort which some shops made to display the figures in the best possible way. Information about Christmas service was collated and made available to the public in several different places.

Throughout the year Bob and Mary Bain from Welcome Network have continued to host 'Stories of Hope' in the Costello Centre, and from October to June the open door of the CtiA coffee mornings has welcomed many visitors.

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Other events were also planned and enjoyed. In September St James' Shilbottle held a flower festival in memory of their long-serving organist Lillian Hume raising three thousand pounds for charity. November saw St Paul's church full of nearly 100 nativity scenes from all around the world while December of course, saw St Michael's full of beautifully decorated and lit Christmas Trees.

Food Bank

People locally and as far North as Belford continue to be supported by Alnwick and District Food Bank, which is run entirely by volunteers. Unfortunately there is also a need to help individuals who are actually homeless and without any cooking facilities. Donations are collected from supermarkets, churches and businesses and are, of course, always gratefully received, as are monetary gifts which allow the organisers to supplement package and tinned food with fresh produce. Current needs are regularly updated on the Facebook page and there is also a website - www.alnwickdistrictfoodbank.com. Here you can learn that 'Our rooms are kitted out like a corner shop so that instead of being handed a parcel, people choose for themselves, accompanied by a Food Bank Volunteer'

Anna Chaplaincy

Across the country there is a growing Anna Chaplaincy network of trained chaplains and volunteers offering spiritual support to elderly people, their carers and supporters. Annette Playle has received training. Locally this work is supported by Welcome Network.

LOUDfence

An ecumenical safeguarding organization. An important event is taking place in St Paul's Church on the 1st May. On this day there will be a special service led by Bishop Steven Wright during which crafted items made earlier in the year will be displayed to show solidarity and support to those people who have been abused in a faith-based setting.

Finances

John Knight, a member of St Paul's congregation, continues in the role as treasurer for CtiA. Outgoings during the year are largely to do with publicity while incoming funds are from the 'subs' each church pays and money collected at Lent Lunches. As in previous years, we have been able to make a charitable donation, this year to Ignite.

Our churches are, separately and together, a lively community of people, each serving God according to their own particular calling. Coming together to meet throughout the year allows for shared activities, awareness of each other's events and is, I think, a source of great encouragement to all.

The CtiA group is now a member of **n.e.c.a.t.** (north east churches acting together)

SOCIAL EVENTS

There were two main social events in 2024; the ceilidh for Burns Night and the strawberry tea at the vicarage in September. More events are planned for 2025 and all ideas and help (however small) are very much appreciated. Please contact Susan O'Neill.

Grateful thanks go to Pat Taylor who has been a driving force in organizing many of the church events over the years.

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FINANCIAL REVIEW - *Richard Dale, PCC Treasurer*

2024 saw some quite remarkable generosity to the church which transformed our financial position and enabled us to start to plan for the long-term future of our wonderful building and the church community.

In January we very sadly learned of the death of Richard Allsop. Under the terms of his £120,000 loan to the church, which was used to fund repairs to the tower, this loan was converted to a restricted donation to the Tower Fund on his death which means that the Tower project is now fully funded.

We received a second and final very large donation of £318,000 from the Bill Hugonin Trust in January. During the year, we also received legacies of £101,948 from the estate of Robin Black, £10,052 from the estate of Eileen Pringle and an interim payment of £10,000 from the estate of Annie Houseman Middleton. Most of these legacies were added to our development fund for the future (which may in time include a pump priming donation to a potential Friends of St Michael's) although some were retained for shorter term projects.

These amazing examples of generosity have had a very significant impact on our financial position. We no longer have the liability of a loan to repay on our balance sheet and we now have a development fund totalling some £510,000 which we can use to invest for the future of our church. We have much to be thankful for. Important though these large legacies are, we need to treat them as one-off income for future development rather than being used to prop up the General Fund, where our day to day giving and fundraising needs to be sufficient to meet our day-to-day operating expenses.

The General Fund recorded a surplus of £2,981 in 2024 increasing the balance from £3,941 to £6,922. In August 2024, the PCC set a reserves policy for its General Fund to aim for a target reserve of at least:

- Three months budgeted fixed cost liability (excluding the Parish Share which is a "debt of honour") plus
- One month's budgeted variable expenditure

On current trends, this sets a target General Reserve level of £7,700 so our position at the end of the year was close to, but not quite meeting, our target position.

Looking to the future, we along with all other parishes in the Diocese, need to significantly increase our Parish Share offer if the Diocese is to maintain the current size and shape of paid clergy. For 2025, this means an increase in our Parish Share from £75,000 to £81,000 which will be a challenge. Our Week of Renewal in October 2024 saw pledges by members of the church to increase regular giving by 20% which was a fantastic act of commitment. However, it should be remembered that this increase is then offset by the loss of regular givers through death or moving away from the area. The exciting news that we will have a Curate from summer 2025 will also increase our costs.

Regular giving declined by 3% in the year reflecting loss of members of the community and some one-off backdated Gift Aid claims in 2023, partly offset by the immediate benefits of the Week of Renewal. Collections at services declined by 14% due mainly to fewer funerals in 2024. The lower number of funerals and weddings also impacted the fees charged for those services which were down 37% on the previous year.

Fundraising income increased from £3,271 in 2023 to £10,066 in 2024, thanks to the enormously successful Christmas Tree Festival. There was an increase in the associated costs but the events produced a significant surplus which helped us to address the loss of

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income in other areas of our activity. Parish Hall income was largely unchanged year on year but with a significantly higher contribution (after expenses) of £4,049 (compared to £962 in 2023) due mainly to lower energy costs.

Church running expenses increased by 2½% in the year with increases in Council Tax and clergy expenses (due to the Vicar having been in post for the full year in 2024) offset by lower gas prices and the full year impact of our latest photocopier lease (which is much cheaper than the previous machine).

Charitable giving was suspended in 2024, reflecting the challenges we face on General Fund finances. Our reserves policy allows for us to reinstate this giving if we record surpluses in future years and we will continue to encourage specific dedicated fundraising activity and special collections for a small number of charitable causes.

As ever, I am grateful to my Standing Committee colleagues for their support to me through the year. I also want to thank our small band of counters who turn up every Monday morning to count the week's cash. We are grateful to the many individuals and organisations who have continued to support us through this period.

Independent Examiner's Report

To the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Michael and St Paul, Alnwick

This report on the attached financial statements of the PCC of St Michael and St Paul for the year ended 31st December 2024 is in respect of an examination carried out in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 (the Regulations) and section 43 of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act).

Respective Responsibilities of the PCC and the Examiner

As members of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements: you consider that the audit requirement under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 does not apply and that an independent examination is needed.

Basis of this report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 43(7) of the Act and to be found in the Church guidance, 2006 edition. That examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the PCC and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiners 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 section 41 of the Act, and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Act.have not been met;
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



George Clark FCPFA
Independent Examiner

February 2025

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Statement of Financial Activities
For the period 1st January to 31st December 2024

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds	2023
Incoming Resources						
Incoming resources from generated funds						
Voluntary income	2	534,105	122,000	0	656,105	195,121
Fundraising	3	30,840	0	0	30,840	24,471
Income from investments		14,797	8,617	0	23,414	4,087
Incoming resources from charitable activities						
Church activities	4	5,055	0	0	5,055	8,022
Other incoming resources		239	0	0	239	184
Total Incoming Resources		585,036	130,617	0	714,653	231,729
Resources used						
Cost of generating funds						
Cost of generating voluntary income	5	2,948	0	0	2,948	1,188
Fundraising costs	6	14,876	1,244	0	16,120	17,427
Church activities						
Parish Share		75,000	0	0	75,000	67,700
Church running expenses	7	50,416	5,038	0	55,454	54,078
Charitable giving	8	0	0	0	0	5,666
Governance costs	9	917	0	0	917	902
Total Resources Used		144,157	6,282	0	150,439	146,961
Transfers between funds		(311)	311	0	0	0
Net Incoming/Outgoing Resources		440,568	124,646	0	565,214	84,768
Balances Brought Forward		79,011	58,860	51,350	189,221	104,453
Balances Carried Forward						
General Funds		6,923	0	0	6,923	3,941
Designated Funds		512,656	0	0	512,656	75,070
Restricted Funds		0	183,506	51,350	234,856	110,210
Total		519,779	183,506	51,350	754,435	189,221

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Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
Fixed Assets			
Tangible assets	10	150,263	154,546
Forster Bequest Capital		40,640	40,640
		190,903	195,186
Current Assets			
Barclays Community Account		1,729	(60)
Barclays Business Premium Account		50,532	98,798
Cash in hand		0	0
CBF Fabric Capital account		10,710	10,710
CBF Fabric Income account		518,201	28,035
Accounts receivable (Debtors)	11	4,288	4,471
		585,460	141,954
Accounts payable (Creditors)	12	21,928	27,919
Loans		0	120,000
Total assets		754,435	189,221
Represented by			
Balance at 1st January 2024		189,221	104,453
Surplus/(Deficit) for year		565,214	84,768
Balance at 31st December 2024		754,435	189,221
Distribution of total equity by funds			
Unrestricted funds			
General Fund		6,923	3,941
Designated Funds		512,656	75,070
Restricted funds			
Fabric Fund	35,114		26,497
Parish Hall Fund	5,592		6,524
Church Tower Fund	142,800		25,839
Endowment funds		183,506	58,860
Forster Bequest	40,640		40,640
D E Reavell Fund	10,000		10,000
A Hogg Fund	710		710
		51,350	51,350
		754,435	189,221

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 25th March 2025 and signed on its behalf by:



Revd Christian Mitchell
Chair

Richard Dale
PCC Treasurer

Notes to the financial statements For the year ended 31st December 2024

1 Accounting policies

1.1 General

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting regulations 2006 together with applicable accounting standards and the Statement of Recommended Practice Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP) 2005.

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The financial statements include all transactions, assets and liabilities for which the PCC is responsible in law. They do not include the accounts of church groups that owe their main affiliation to another body (e.g. the Mothers' Union), nor those that are informal gatherings of church members.

1.2 Funds

Endowment funds are funds, the capital of which must be retained either permanently or at the PCC's discretion; the income derived from the endowment is to be used either as restricted or unrestricted funds depending on the purpose for which the endowment was established in the first place.

The parish's endowment funds consist of:

- The Forster Bequest. The capital for this fund is held by The Newcastle Diocesan Society and is invested in The Investment Fund of the Central Board of Finance of the Church of England. The book cost is as shown on the Balance Sheet (£40,640) and its market value at 31st December 2024 was £92,994 (2023: £90,914).
- The Fabric Capital Fund (CBF 625063004D). This consists of the D E Reavell Fund (£10,000) and the Alan Hogg Fund (£710).

The income from all these funds is paid into The Fabric Income Account (CBF 625063003D) which is a **Restricted fund** (see below) and is only available towards the maintenance and repair of the fabric of St Michael's Church, Alnwick as the Vicar and churchwardens in their absolute discretion think fit. This was laid down by those who gave the endowments.

Restricted funds represent (a) income from trusts or endowments which may be expended only on those restricted purposes intended by the donor, and (b) revenue donations or grants for a specific PCC activity intended by the donor. Where these funds have unspent balances, interest on their pooled investment is apportioned to the individual funds on an average balance basis.

Unrestricted funds are income funds which are to be spent on the PCC's general purposes.

Designated Funds are **unrestricted** funds set aside by the PCC for a specific purpose. They may be "undesignated" by the PCC at any time.

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1.3 Receipts

Planned giving, collections and donations are recognised when received. Tax refunds are recognised when the incoming resource to which they relate is received. Grants and legacies are accounted for when the PCC is entitled to the use of the resource, their ultimate receipt is considered reasonably certain and the amounts due are reliably quantifiable.

Dividends are accounted for when declared receivable, and interest as and when accrued by the payer. All incoming resources are accounted for Gross.

1.4 Payments

Grants and donations are accounted for when paid over, or when awarded if that award creates a binding or constructive obligation on the PCC. The diocesan parish share is accounted for as and when (and if) it is paid. All other expenditure is generally recognised when it is incurred and is accounted for gross.

1.5 Fixed assets

Consecrated and benefice property is not included in the accounts in accordance with sections 10(2)(a) and (c) of the Charities Act 2011.

Moveable church furnishings held by the vicar and churchwardens on special trust for the PCC and which require a faculty for disposal are inalienable property listed in the church's inventory which can be inspected at any reasonable time.

Office equipment and similar items used within the church premises are written off when the asset is acquired.

Capitalised assets are stated at cost and depreciated over their expected useful life as follows:

Parish Hall boiler	10 years
Church bells	50 years

Investments are valued at historical cost with a note of the value at 31st December if available.

1.6 Current assets and liabilities

Amounts owed to the PCC on 31st December are shown as "Accounts Receivable" commonly referred to as Debtors. Amounts owed by the PCC on 31st December are shown as "Accounts Payable" and are commonly known as Creditors.

Short term deposits are held either at Barclays or with the Central Board of Finance of the Church of England.

1.7 Staff costs

During the year the PCC paid an honorarium to a parish hall caretaker and fees and expenses to two organists. None of these persons are members of the PCC.

Fees were also paid to organists and vergers in respect of Occasional Offices (funerals, weddings etc) but these amounts do not form part of these financial statements.

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2 Voluntary income

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	2023
Regular giving				
Gift Aid	41,970	0	41,970	42,306
Non Gift Aid	1,955	0	1,955	3,281
Parish Giving Scheme	19,808	0	19,808	17,409
Income tax recovered	20,106	0	20,106	23,766
Sub-total	83,839	0	83,839	86,762
Collections				
Regular services	3,425	0	3,425	3,125
Occasional services	1,306	0	1,306	2,350
Sub-total	4,731	0	4,731	5,475
Legacies	440,000	120,000	560,000	85,600
Donations and grants	5,535	2,000	7,535	17,284
Total	534,105	122,000	656,105	195,121

3 Fundraising

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	2023
Fundraising activities				
Christmas Tree Festival	7,527	0	7,527	0
Winter Market	1,083	0	1,083	2,435
Organ recital	661	0	661	0
Celidh	287	0	287	0
Other events	508	0	508	836
Sub-total	10,066	0	10,066	3,271
Parish Hall	18,119	0	18,119	18,189
Magazine	1,052	0	1,052	1,073
Catering income	272	0	272	286
Other	1,331	0	1,331	1,652
Total	30,840	0	30,840	24,471

4 Church activities

This income relates to PCC fees relating to weddings and funerals. During 2024, we collected £913 for weddings (2023: £2,108) and £4,142 (2023: £5,914) for funerals. Fees for clergy, vergers and organists and third party collections at funerals are handled by the PCC on an agency basis and are excluded from these accounts.

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5 Cost of generating voluntary income

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	2023
Fundraising expenses	3,172	0	3,172	1,058
Planned giving expenses	130	0	130	130
Total	3,302	0	3,302	1,188

6 Fundraising costs

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	2023
Parish Hall				
Gas, electricity and water	7,750	0	7,750	9,533
Maintenance	879	0	879	832
Caretaker	3,500	0	3,500	4,200
Depreciation	0	1,244	1,244	1,244
Other expenses	1,941	0	1,941	1,418
Sub-total	14,070	1,244	15,314	17,227
Other	806	0	806	200
Total	14,876	1,244	16,120	17,427

7 Church running expenses

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	2023
Church				
Gas, electricity and water	11,774	0	11,774	12,819
Insurance	7,516	0	7,516	6,740
Repairs and maintenance	4,910	264	5,174	1,657
Refurbishment	5,850	1,736	7,586	12,910
Wine, wafers and candles	788	0	788	682
Organists	3,080	0	3,080	1,905
Organ maintenance	1,943	0	1,943	2,438
Worship	2,082	0	2,082	1,957
Depreciation	0	3,038	3,038	3,038
Other costs	276	0	276	976
Sub-total	38,219	5,038	43,257	45,122
Clergy				
Council Tax	4,105	0	4,105	2,369
Expenses and other costs	2,323	0	2,323	1,247
Sub-total	6,428	0	6,428	3,616
Administration				
Photocopier	2,996	0	2,996	3,397
Office supplies etc	1,815	0	1,815	1,199
Telephone and internet	958	0	958	723
Sub-total	5,769	0	5,769	5,340
Total	50,416	5,038	55,454	54,078

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8 Charitable giving

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Giving	2023 from PCC Funds
St Michael's School	0	0	0	2,500
Alnwick Foodbank	0	0	0	1,000
Gallery Youth	0	0	0	1,000
Contagious	0	0	0	785
Children's Society	0	0	0	381
Total	0	0	0	5,666

Special collections, donations and fundraising events which are specifically on behalf of another charity are not included in the accounts.

9 Governance costs

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	2023
Bank charges	505	0	505	582
Independent examination	200	0	200	180
PCC officer expenses	212	0	212	140
Total	917	0	917	902

10 Tangible fixed assets

	Church Bells	Parish Hall Boiler	Total Assets
Cost			
Balance at 1 st January 2024	151,915	12,438	164,353
Additions	0	0	0
Balance at 31 st December 2024	151,915	12,438	164,353
Depreciation			
Balance at 1 st January 2024	6,076	3,731	9,807
Charge for year	3,039	1,244	4,283
Balance at 31 st December 2024	9,115	4,975	14,090
Net Book Value at 31st December 2024	142,800	7,463	150,363

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11 Accounts receivable

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	2023
Income tax recoverable	2,788	0	2,788	3,386
Electricity refund	550	0	550	492
Parish Hall rental income	396	0	396	59
Other	554	0	554	534
Total	4,288	0	4,288	4,471

12 Accounts payable

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	2023
Parish share	0	0	0	0
Gas	1,447	0	1,447	1,312
Charitable giving	17,950	0	17,950	25,235
Other	2,531	0	2,531	1,355
Total	21,928	0	21,928	27,902