



**THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF
THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF
HARPENDEN ST JOHN
REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

FOR THE YEAR ENDED

31 DECEMBER 2023

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The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Harpenden St John is registered with the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales (Charity no. 1131603)

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2023. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in notes to the accounts and comply with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland published in October 2019.

Aims and purposes

St John's Parochial Church Council ("the PCC") has the responsibility of promoting the whole mission of the Church within the ecclesiastical parish: pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also responsible for the maintenance of the Parish Hall.

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and become part of our church community at St John's. The Ministry Team, in conjunction with the PCC, maintains an overview of worship and makes suggestions on how our worship can involve the many groups that live within our parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

As trustees of a registered charity, the PCC must report each year on how we have carried out our charity's purposes for the public benefit, which we set out in this trustees' report. We consider that we have complied with our duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on the meaning and scope of "public benefit", when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

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

- worship and prayer; learning about the gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus Christ, the crucified and glorified Lord
- provision and pastoral care for people living in the parish
- missionary and outreach work.

To facilitate this work, it is important that we maintain the fabric of the Church of St John the Baptist and the Parish Hall.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023 (continued)

Achievements and performance

Worship and prayer

The PCC is keen to offer a wide range of services during the week and over the course of the year that our community may find both beneficial and spiritually fulfilling. In addition to our main 9.30 Parish Eucharist on a Sunday, which we continue to livestream for the benefit of those unable to attend in person, we offer Common Worship Morning and Evening Prayer Monday to Friday, and a weekly midweek communion. We have begun a pattern of services each month at 5pm on a Sunday to offer variety: Faith and Light (non-denominational worship for adults with special educational needs); Book of Common Prayer Evensong; Celtic Evening Prayer; a said Eucharist; a Taizé service.

This year we have been able to welcome more new families to our church, and this is an important part of our vision. We offer All Age Worship on the first Sunday of the month; Junior and Mini Church currently takes place on the second Sunday of the month, and we are planning to increase the frequency. We have started a toddler service on Thursday mornings, which attracts 7-10 toddlers and parents each week.

A total of 8 young people were admitted to First Communion.

The church is normally open daily from 10am to 5pm.

The PCC seeks to ensure that all are welcomed at our regular services. At present we have 175 members on the Church Electoral Roll, 113 of whom are resident in the Parish and 62 of whom have stated their eligibility is due to six months or more habitual worship. Since the previously reported number of 182, 5 members have died, 3 resigned, 3 were removed and 4 were added.

In addition to our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones of the journey through life. Through baptism we thank God for the amazing gift of life, in marriage services public vows are exchanged with God's blessing and through funeral services family and friends express their deep sorrow but also give thanks for the life which is now completed and commend the person into the gracious hands of God. During the year, there were no weddings, 19 baptisms, 7 funerals in church and 1 at the crematorium, 1 memorial service, and 7 burials of ashes.

We have encouraged members of the congregation to deepen their relationship with God in a variety of ways: we offer a monthly bible study and a meditation group and ran Lent courses at different times to meet different needs.

A successful weekend away was held at High Leigh Conference Centre in September, with 30 people of all ages sharing in fellowship.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023 (continued)

Use of the church

During this year, the PCC has been considering how to make best use of our beautiful building. The altar has been returned to its original position in the sanctuary, and we have been able to use a nave altar, lectern and chairs from Southdown Methodist Church to give more space and flexibility in this area. During the coming year we will be continuing to explore how best to use that space.

The PCC is keen for the church to be kept open for personal prayer and is also delighted to see it used for musical events. We were able to welcome back regular hirers of the church for concerts, including Roundwood Park School and Hardynges Choir as well as new groups – eg, Sonorité, Continuum and the AT Society. Many events are already booked for 2024, highlighting the church's use as a good resource this is for the community.

Music

After the resignation of our previous Director of Music at the beginning of the year, we were grateful to all those who were able to keep music going: Tom and Madeleine Venner, Andrew Ballard, Terry Charlston and a number of visiting organists. Craig Greene was appointed to the post in September and led us with enthusiasm and professionalism, with a particularly well-received Nine Lessons and Carols. Unfortunately, for a number of personal reasons Craig resigned on 31 December. The PCC will be exploring options for ensuring music continues to enhance our worship.

The parish hall

The hall continued to be used during the year for both regular and one-off hirers. Fusion Pre-School are the main tenants in the Hall on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays 8-2pm. Little Acorns, our baby and toddler group which meets on Tuesdays, continues to grow, and regular hirers include Slimming World, Dance Studio, and Harpenden Musical Theatre Company.

Extensive work had been required to repair the roof of the hall; we benefited from the professional services of a firm of chartered surveyors to assess the damage, receive and assess quotes from contractors and oversee the work. We were grateful that a generous grant from the Harpenden Trust covered almost 50% of the cost to ensure we can continue to use this building while we seek to build a new parish centre. Fundraising efforts for that new centre restarted in the second half of the year and a five-year fundraising plan put in place (further details in the reports of activities).

Pastoral care

We have a team of pastoral visitors who are able to visit those in need, with some authorised to give Communion. St Luke's Cell is a prayer group, which prays for individuals in any kind of need.

Mission and evangelism

Helping those in need is a demonstration of our faith, and the PCC donates a part of its stewardship income each year to charities: one local, one national and one international. For 2023/24 the charities chosen are: MIND in Mid-Herts, The Children's Society and Missions Without Borders. We run a very successful monthly Tea at 3 event, which provides tea and companionship to a number of people in the parish.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023 (continued)

Outreach

A large number of group activities take place at St John's, led by volunteers with both talent and commitment. These provide a range of services to benefit members of the congregation and the wider parish community. Details of these activities can be found on our website (www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk) and in reports attached to this report.

We publish a free quarterly parish magazine which is available online and distributed to every home and business within the parish. This publicises our church service times and forthcoming events; the aim is to attract and inform readers in Southdown who are not regular churchgoers as well as appealing to our congregation. We also communicate news and events to 247 members of the congregation via a weekly e-newsletter.

Ecumenical relations

St John's is a member of Churches Together in Harpenden. After many years of positive relationships with Southdown Methodist Church, we were sad that Southdown Methodist Church was closed. A service of thanksgiving was held in October, and several members of that congregation have now joined us at St John's.

Financial review

Total income during 2023 was £278,012 (2022: £270,181), an increase of £7,831 or 3% compared to the prior year. This increase was mainly the result of a reduction in Linwood Road property rental of £10,317, a reduction in Gift Aid tax recoverable of £4,182 but accompanied by an increase in church hall lettings of £6,331 and a £14,800 grant towards the hall roof repair. Excluding the Parish Centre, income decreased by £18,082 or 9% to £187,267 (2022: £205,349) for the reasons mentioned above.

Total expenditure during 2023 grew by £11,305 or 5.4% to £222,189 (2022: £210,884). The largest item of expenditure was the parish share of £95,319 (2022: £100,862). Also, there were costs of £24,638 relating to the maintenance of the church hall roof. Once again, cost inflation impacted many expenses in the year.

Our planned missionary giving of 10% of our voluntary income to outside charities in 2023 decreased by 10% to £14,679 (2022: £16,397).

The net of total income and total expenditure for 2023 was a surplus of £55,823 (2022: £59,297). The new Parish Centre had a surplus of £75,945 (2022: £59,237), with the general fund generating a deficit of £34,902 (2022: surplus of £161) and the designated fund a deficit of £20 (2022: deficit of £101). As a result of the net surplus, total net assets as at 31 December 2023 of £548,245 are £55,823 higher than total net assets as at 1 January 2023 of £492,422. Total net assets are represented by general, designated, and restricted funds.

General funds decreased by £19,925 from £40,766 as at 1 January 2023 to £20,841 as at 31 December 2023. This represents around 1.1 months of ongoing expenditure.

Designated funds decreased by £197 from £164,647 as at 1 January 2023 to £164,450 as at 31 December 2023.

Restricted funds increased by £75,945 from £287,009 as at 1 January 2023 to £362,954 as at 31 December 2023, due principally to donations received for the Parish Centre.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023 (continued)

Outlook for the future

The financial position of the PCC as at 31 December 2023 shows the need for substantial improvement towards reducing the underlying structural deficit noted previously. We have been helped considerably by the rental income from Linwood Road, but since the appointment of Ritah as our curate we no longer have that income so further effort is needed in order to establish a financially sustainable position.

The trustees consider that the PCC is a going concern as at the date of approving the 2023 accounts. This is based on considering the level of funds held, the breadth and financial position of its donor base, known or anticipated future changes to either income or expenditure, and planned future capital projects. The PCC will prepare a budget for 2024 which will anticipate further improvements in the underlying deficit. Separately, plans to raise funds for capital projects such as the church porch, re-ordering, a new boiler and an improved sound system will need to be made and prioritised. In all of this, the PCC needs to ensure that the reserves are gradually rebuilt.

Reserves policy

The PCC seeks to operate on a balanced budget basis but periodically sets aside such amounts as it deems prudent to meet anticipated abnormal expenditure. Such amounts are held in designated funds and are represented by bank balances and accounts receivable within the general assets of the PCC. It is the policy of the PCC to hold in general reserves at least the equivalent amount of two months of general running costs, which is currently approximately £37,000. The PCC is aware that at 31 December 2023 this had fallen to 1.1 months (£19,925 - see note in Financial Review above) and that work is needed to restore the deficit.

Structure, governance and management of the PCC

The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England. It operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure and is a registered charity. The appointment of PCC members is governed by and set out in the Church Representation Rules. All members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC. Certain members of the PCC are allocated specific responsibility for some of the matters which affect the parish, e.g., Safeguarding. These individuals attend appropriate training courses provided by the Diocese where necessary and report back to the PCC as a body.

The PCC met six times in 2023 and attendance at meetings was 68% of the maximum possible number of 16.

Prior to each PCC meeting, a Standing Committee (comprising the incumbent, churchwarden, deputy churchwarden, one co-opted member of PCC, Treasurer and Secretary) meets to draw up the agenda of items to be discussed.

At its meetings this year, the PCC has carried out the necessary formalities such as appointing its officers and reviewing its committee structure. Following the resignation of Jacky Dodd as Secretary in March, Mary Jean Pritchard was co-opted to this role in September. There continues to be a focus on safeguarding and all members of the PCC have undertaken the required level of training as provided by the Diocese. The Safeguarding and Health & Safety policies have been reviewed and updated where necessary.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023 (continued)

The PCC devolves some of its work to teams, and all members of the PCC, as well as further members of the congregation with particular skills or interests, are invited to sit on those teams, which meet on a regular basis (or liaise electronically). The current teams are Eco-church, Junior Church and Project Phoenix (our new parish centre project). Two members of the PCC sit on the Deanery Synod providing an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the Church of England.

Approximately a week before a meeting, all PCC members receive the agenda, reports from any groups that have met since the last meeting and any briefing documents for items under discussion. Within two weeks of a PCC meeting, minutes of that meeting are circulated to all members. These minutes go on public display on the noticeboard in the porch, once they have been formally approved at the following PCC meeting.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023 (continued)

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

St John's Church is situated on St John's Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire. It is part of the Diocese of St. Albans within the Church of England.

The PCC can be contacted at: St John's Parish offices, St John's Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 1DJ.

The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2006) and a charity registered with the Charity Commission, number 1131603.

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

Vicar

Tim Vickers

Curate

Ritah Namakula (from July)

Readers

Lauryn Awbrey (also Deanery Synod)

Anne Edwards

David Nye (also Deanery Synod)

Churchwardens

Jane Donati (until March)

Heather Nye

Secretary

Jacky Dodd (until March)

Mary Jean Pritchard (co-opted September)

Treasurer

Jonathan Pitman

Council Members

Andrew Ballard (co-opted May)

Alison Bygrave

Bryan Coventry

Sophie Crowley

Nick Lockett

Liz Macdonald

Dawn Mason (until March)

Alastair Meldrum

Bill Moore (until March)

Martin Myers

Liz Newell (until November)

Liz Sergeant (until March)

The Trustees' Report was approved by the PCC on 5 May and signed on their behalf by:

Heather Nye
Churchwarden

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE PCC OF ST JOHN HARPENDEN

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2023, which are set out on pages 9 to 19.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

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

Independent examiner's statement

Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

Your attention is drawn to the fact that the charity has prepared the accounts (financial statements) in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has since been withdrawn.

We understand that this has been done in order for the accounts to provide a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2015.

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

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the PCC as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
3. the financial statements do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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

Roger Cox FCA (ICAEW)

Miller & Co Chartered Accountants
5 Imperial Court
Laporte Way
Luton
LU4 8FE

Date: May 2024

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

		Unrestricted Funds		Restricted	TOTAL	2022
		General	Designated	Funds	2023	(Note
	Note	£	£	£	£	18)
						£
INCOMING RESOURCES						
Incoming resources from generated funds:						
Voluntary income	2	148,242	-	90,745	238,987	229,631
Activities for generating funds	3	24,101	-	-	24,101	27,977
Investment income	4	6,135	-	-	6,135	1,553
		178,478	-	90,745	269,223	259,161
Incoming resources from church activities	5	8,789	-	-	8,789	11,020
Total incoming resources		187,267	-	90,745	278,012	270,181
RESOURCES EXPENDED						
Cost of church activities						
Missionary Giving	6	16,125	-	-	16,125	17,222
Parish Share	6	95,319	-	-	95,319	100,862
Fabric and Running Costs	6	67,214	-	-	67,214	40,301
Mission & Education	6	8,685	-	-	8,685	6,121
Staff Costs	6	23,272	-	-	23,272	27,002
Other costs	6	11,554	20	-	11,574	19,376
Total resources expended		222,169	20	-	222,189	210,884
Net income/(expenditure) for year		(34,902)	(20)	90,745	55,823	59,297
Transfers between funds		14,977	(177)	(14,800)	-	-
Net movement in funds		(19,925)	(197)	75,945	55,823	59,297
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS						
Total funds at 1 Jan 2023		40,766	164,647	287,009	492,422	433,125
Total funds at 31 Dec 2023		20,841	164,450	362,954	548,245	492,422

The notes on pages 12 to 20 form part of these financial statements.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Note	2023 £	2022 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	9	63,888	63,888
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	10	61,706	21,089
Bank and cash balances		466,542	430,417
		528,248	451,506
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Creditors payable within one year	11	(43,891)	(22,972)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		484,357	428,534
TOTAL NET ASSETS		548,245	492,422
THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY			
Unrestricted income funds:			
General	12	20,841	40,766
Designated	13	164,450	164,647
Total		185,291	205,413
Restricted income funds:	15	362,954	287,009
		548,245	492,422

The financial statements were approved by the Parochial Church Council on 5th May 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Heather Nye
Churchwarden

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparation

The PCC constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011, the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 governing the individual accounts of PCCs and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements have been prepared to give a 'true and fair' view and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair view'. This departure has involved following the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland issued in October 2019 rather than the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice effective from 1 April 2005 which has since been withdrawn.

The financial statements 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, nor those that are informal gatherings of church members.

The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England. It operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure and is a registered charity. The address of the registered office is given in the administrative details section of the trustees' report. The financial statements are presented in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound.

These financial statements are prepared on the basis of the PCC being a going concern. The trustees make their own assessment of the PCC's ability to continue as a going concern to assure themselves of the validity of this assumption when preparing accounts. In making this assessment, the trustees take into account all available information about the future for at least, but not limited to, 12 months from the date the accounts are approved. There are no material uncertainties about the PCC's ability to continue. In addition, as at the date of approval of these accounts, there are no contractual commitments in relation to the new Parish Centre, and its development will be conditional on successful fundraising.

Funds

Unrestricted funds represent the remaining income funds of the PCC that are available for spending on the general purposes of the PCC, including amounts designated by the PCC for fixed assets for its own use or for spending on a future project and which are therefore not included in its general reserves as disclosed in the trustees' report.

Restricted funds represent income funds that must be spent on restricted purposes and details of the funds held and restrictions provided are shown in the notes to the accounts.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Incoming resources

Income and endowments are included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) when:

- the PCC becomes legally entitled to the use of the resources;
- and inflow of economic benefit is probable; and
- the monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Planned giving, collections and donations are therefore generally 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 legally entitled to the amounts due.

Rental income from the letting of the church, the church hall, and the property in Linwood Road is recognised when the rental is due.

Interest income is accrued.

All other income is recognised when it is receivable.

Resources expended

All other expenditure is generally recognised when it is incurred and is accounted for gross.

Liabilities are recognised as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation and settlement is probable and quantifiable.

The diocesan parish share is accounted for when due.

Fixed assets

Consecrated and benefice property is not included in the accounts in accordance with s.10 (2) (a) of the Charities Act 2011. Movable 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). Such assets are not valued in the financial statements. All expenditure incurred during the year on consecrated or benefice buildings and moveable church furnishings, whether maintenance or improvement, is written off as expenditure in the statement of financial activities.

The Church Hall has been fully depreciated, however as it is still in use and is providing economic benefit through rental income it has been retained on the balance sheet but with a valuation of £nil.

The Linwood Road property is held at cost. The land element of the property is not depreciated in accordance with the applicable financial reporting standards. Whilst buildings are ordinarily depreciated, no depreciation is provided on the building element of the property as the current estimated residual value of the property is not less than its carrying amount and the remaining useful life of the property currently exceeds 50 years, and therefore any depreciation charge would be immaterial.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

At each reporting date an assessment is carried out of whether there is any indication that an asset should be written down (i.e. whether the carrying amount on the balance sheet is more than its recoverable amount). If there is no indication that an asset should be written down, it is not necessary to estimate the recoverable amount.

Debtors and creditors receivable / payable within one year

Debtors and creditors with no stated interest rate and receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price. Any losses arising from impairment are recognised in expenditure.

	Unrestricted Funds		Restricted Funds	TOTAL 2023	TOTAL 2022
	General	Designated			
	£	£	£	£	£
2 VOLUNTARY INCOME					
Planned Giving:					
Gift Aid donations	108,247	-	-	108,247	118,172
Tax recoverable	24,162	-	-	24,162	28,344
Non gift aid donations	14,390	-	-	14,390	17,458
Grants	-	-	14,800	14,800	-
Donations, appeals etc.	1,443	-	-	1,443	825
Parish Centre fundraising	-	-	62,288	62,288	52,407
Tax recoverable on Parish Centre funds	-	-	13,657	13,657	12,425
	<u>148,242</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>90,745</u>	<u>238,987</u>	<u>229,631</u>
3 ACTIVITIES FOR GENERATING FUNDS					
Church Hall lettings (non-church activities)	18,194	-	-	18,194	11,863
Fundraising Events	113	-	-	113	-
Linwood Road property rental income	5,794	-	-	5,794	16,114
	<u>24,101</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>24,101</u>	<u>27,977</u>
4 INVESTMENT INCOME					
Bank interest	6,135	-	-	6,135	1,533
	<u>6,135</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,135</u>	<u>1,533</u>
5 INCOME FROM CHURCH ACTIVITIES					
Income from Social events	3,420	-	-	3,420	-
Parish Magazine advertising	1,675	-	-	1,675	3,390
Fees for Weddings & Funerals	3,694	-	-	3,694	7,630
	<u>8,789</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8,789</u>	<u>11,020</u>

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Unrestricted Funds General £	Designated £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL 2023 £	TOTAL 2022 £
6 COSTS OF CHURCH ACTIVITIES					
Missionary and Charitable giving (also see note 8)					
Relief and development agencies	16,125	-	-	16,125	17,222
	16,125	-	-	16,125	17,222
Parish share	95,319	-	-	95,319	100,862
Fabric and running costs:					
Church running costs	12,699	-	-	12,699	9,950
Church maintenance	2,926	-	-	2,926	8,472
Organ/piano tuning & maint.	965	-	-	965	1,019
Grounds upkeep	370	-	-	370	529
Hall running costs	6,617	-	-	6,617	4,114
Hall maintenance	30,739	-	-	30,739	6,262
Vicarage running costs	2,878	-	-	2,878	2,639
Linwood Road property upkeep	1,757	-	-	1,757	416
Upkeep of services	4,666	-	-	4,666	3,870
Parish Office Admin Costs	3,597	-	-	3,597	3,030
	44,172	-	-	67,214	40,301
Mission & Education:					
Parish magazine	6,362	-	-	6,362	5,168
Education	2,323	-	-	2,323	953
	8,685	-	-	8,685	6,121
Staff Costs:					
Working expenses of incumbent	4,478	-	-	4,478	2,191
Wages and salaries	18,794	-	-	18,794	24,811
	23,272	-	-	23,272	27,002
Other costs:					
Flower Guild expenditure	-	20	-	20	101
Promotional and communications	-	-	-	-	144
Sundry expenses	2,861	-	-	2,861	3,095
Wedding & funeral fees to Diocese	1,181	-	-	1,181	3,984
Wedding & funeral fees – other	3,280	-	-	3,280	3,037
Costs of fund-raising	173	-	-	173	808
Bank charges	66	-	-	66	355
Social events	2,331	-	-	2,331	661
Independent examiners fee:					
Independent examination	948	-	-	948	912
Accountancy	714	-	-	714	684
New parish centre costs	-	-	-	-	5,595
	11,554	20	-	11,574	19,376

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

7 STAFF COSTS	2023	2022
	£	£
Wages and salaries	17,598	22,521
Social security costs	1,196	2,290
	<u>18,794</u>	<u>24,811</u>

The average number of staff employed was 2 (2022: 2.5)

There are no employees who received employee benefits of more than £60,000 (2022: none)

8 MISSIONARY AND CHARITABLE GIVING	2023	2022
	£	£
The missionary and charitable giving is made up of the following donations		
Relief and development agencies		
Accrual for 2023/2022 Charitable Giving	14,679	16,397
Harvest Appeal	680	-
Other	766	825
	<u>16,125</u>	<u>17,222</u>

9 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS	Linwood Road property	Church Hall	TOTAL	
			2023	2022
	£	£	£	£
Actual/ deemed cost:				
Brought forward at 1 January	63,888	48,299	112,187	112,187
Carried forward 31 December	63,888	48,299	112,187	112,187
Depreciation:				
Brought forward at 1 January	-	(48,299)	(48,299)	(48,299)
Charge for year	-	-	-	-
Carried forward 31 December	-	(48,299)	(48,299)	(48,299)
Carrying value at 31 December	<u>63,888</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>63,888</u>	<u>63,888</u>

The Curate's House at 2 Linwood Road was independently valued on 2 March 2010 at £380,000

10 DEBTORS	2023	2022
	£	£
Gift Aid Tax recoverable	46,906	21,089
Prepayments and accrued income	14,800	-
	<u>61,706</u>	<u>21,089</u>

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023	2022
	£	£
11 CREDITORS		
Outside giving	14,679	16,397
Accruals and deferred income	28,446	6,575
Other creditors	766	-
	43,891	22,972
	2023	2022
	£	£
12 GENERAL FUNDS		
Brought forward at 1 January	40,766	40,605
Transfer from Designated fund	177	-
Transfer from Restricted fund	14,800	
Net income / (expenditure) for year	(34,902)	161
Carried forward at 31 December	20,841	40,766
	2023	2022
	£	£
13 DESIGNATED FUNDS		
The PCC operates seven Designated Funds:		
Parish Centre	6,988	6,988
Organ - Reserve to fund future organ repairs	21,045	21,045
Legacies - Legacies received and spent	48,777	48,777
Flower Guild	-	197
Fabric reserve	23,752	23,752
Linwood Road property	63,888	63,888
	164,450	164,647

The movements on the Designated Funds during 2023 were as follows:

	Parish Centre £	Organ £	Legacies £	Flower Guild £
Brought forward at 1 Jan 2023	6,988	21,045	48,777	197
Income	-	-	-	-
Expenditure	-	-	-	(20)
Transfer to General fund	-	-	-	(177)
Carried forward at 31 Dec 2023	<u>6,988</u>	<u>21,045</u>	<u>48,777</u>	<u>-</u>
		Fabric £	Linwood Road property £	TOTAL 2022 £
Brought forward at 1 Jan 2023		23,752	63,888	164,647
Income		-	-	-
Expenditure		-	-	(20)
Transfer to General fund		-	-	(177)
Carried forward at 31 Dec 2023		<u>23,752</u>	<u>63,888</u>	<u>164,450</u>

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

13 DESIGNATED FUNDS (continued)

The movements on the Designated Funds during 2022 were as follows:

	Parish Centre £	Organ £	Legacies £	Flower Guild £
Brought forward at 1 Jan 2022	6,988	21,045	48,777	298
Income	-	-	-	-
Expenditure	-	-	-	(101)
Carried forward at 31 Dec 2022	6,988	21,045	48,777	197

	Fabric £	Linwood Rd property £	TOTAL 2021 £
Brought forward at 1 Jan 2022	23,752	63,888	164,748
Income	-	-	-
Expenditure	-	-	(101)
Carried forward at 31 Dec 2022	23,752	63,888	164,647

Fund descriptions:

Parish Centre – for the build of a new parish hall/parish centre, replacing the current hall.

Organ – for the replacement or repair of the organ that is in place in the church.

Legacies – being receipts from legacies where no restrictions apply that the PCC designates for the purpose of paying for items of a capital nature.

Fabric – for repairs to the fabric of the church building.

Linwood Road Property – for work required to upkeep/repair the Linwood Road property.

14 ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS

	Unrestricted funds £	Designated funds £	Restricted funds £	TOTAL 2023 £
Fixed assets	-	63,888	-	63,888
Current assets	64,732	100,562	362,954	528,248
Current liabilities	(43,891)	-	-	(43,891)
Total	20,841	164,450	362,954	548,245

	Unrestricted funds £	Designated funds £	Restricted funds £	TOTAL 2022 £
Fixed assets	-	63,888	-	63,888
Current assets	63,738	100,759	287,009	451,506
Current liabilities	(22,972)	-	-	(22,972)
Total	40,766	164,647	287,009	492,422

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

15 RESTRICTED FUNDS

	2023 £	2022 £
Parish Centre	358,306	282,361
Choir Fund	3,671	3,671
Education Fund	977	977
	<u>362,954</u>	<u>287,009</u>

The movements on the Restricted Funds during 2023 were as follows:

	Fabric	Parish centre £	Education Fund £	Choir Fund £	TOTAL 2023 £
Brought forward at 1 January 2023	-	282,361	977	3,671	287,009
Voluntary Income	14,800	75,945	-	-	90,745
Expenditure	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer to general fund	(14,800)	-	-	-	(14,800)
Carried forward at 31 December 2023	<u>-</u>	<u>358,306</u>	<u>977</u>	<u>3,671</u>	<u>362,954</u>

The movements on the Restricted Funds during 2022 were as follows:

	Parish centre £	Education Fund £	Choir Fund £	TOTAL 2022 £
Brought forward at 1 January 2022	223,124	977	3,671	227,772
Voluntary Income	64,832	-	-	64,832
Expenditure	(5,595)	-	-	(5,595)
Carried forward at 31 December 2022	<u>282,361</u>	<u>977</u>	<u>3,671</u>	<u>287,009</u>

The PCC accounts include certain Restricted Funds, where the monies can only be used for the specific purpose for which they were entrusted to the PCC. These monies are not at the disposal of the PCC for any other purpose.

Fund descriptions:

Parish Centre – for the build of a new parish hall/parish centre, replacing the current hall.

Fabric – for repairs to the fabric of the church building. A grant was received from The Harpenden Trust for part of the cost of the hall roof repair. This was transferred to the general fund towards the repair costs incurred.

16 PAYMENTS TO TRUSTEES

No PCC members received remuneration (2022: £nil). Members of the Ministry Team who were also members of the PCC were reimbursed working expenses, relating primarily to travel expenses, totalling £nil (2022 £111).

17 RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

There were no related party transactions in the year (2022: £nil).

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HARPENDEN ST JOHN

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

18 STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022

		Unrestricted Funds		Restricted Funds	TOTAL
		General	Designated	Funds	2021
		£	£	£	£
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Incoming resources from generated funds:					
Voluntary income	2	164,799	-	64,832	220,155
Activities for generating funds	3	27,977	-	-	26,526
Investment income	4	1,553	-	-	70
		194,329	-	64,832	246,751
Incoming resources from church activities	5	11,020	-	-	10,472
Total incoming resources		205,349	-	64,832	257,223
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Cost of church activities					
Missionary Giving	6	17,222	-	-	17,222
Parish Share	6	100,862	-	-	100,862
Fabric and Running Costs	6	40,301	-	-	40,301
Mission & Education	6	6,121	-	-	6,121
Staff Costs	6	27,002	-	-	27,002
Other costs	6	13,680	101	5,595	19,376
Total resources expended		205,188	101	5,595	210,884
Net income/(expenditure) for year		161	(101)	59,237	59,297
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds		161	(101)	59,237	59,297
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds at 1 Jan 2022		40,605	164,748	227,772	433,125
Total funds at 31 Dec 2022		40,766	164,647	287,009	492,422

Safeguarding report

The PCC of St John's has a duty to have '*due regard to guidance issued by the House of Bishops on matters relating to the safety of children and vulnerable adults*' (from Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016).

Policy

The PCC have adopted a raft of policies derived from the Diocese and the Church of England that concern safeguarding: Safeguarding, Lone Working, Responding to Domestic Abuse, Safe Use of Images, Safer Recruitment, Recruitment of Ex-Offenders.

The Safeguarding Lead regularly checks the Diocesan newsletters and website for any relevant updates in this area. We have subscribed to the Safeguarding Dashboard which gives us standards with which to measure our practice. The Diocese now has a substantial dedicated team for safeguarding and maintains an informative website too.

All policies and relevant documents are available as hard copy in the blue file on the bookcase.

Safeguarding is an essential and important part of the Church of England's ethos and is a legal requirement. This does place a responsibility on everyone in the church, both employees and volunteers.

Disclosure and Barring Checks

St John's subscribes to the 'Thirty-one eight agency' for DBS checks, as recommended by the diocese. "*God's call to 'speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable' as described in Proverbs 31:8*". All checks are completed online, and identification documents can be checked by the Safeguarding Lead or digitally approved. The check now lasts for three years. There is a system to remind those with out-of-date checks to renew, if necessary. Sixteen DBS checks were made since the last APCM, some new, many renewals.

Safeguarding in practice

The focus is always on recognising and establishing good practice as regards safeguarding, and health and safety, through the means of risk assessments for church activities. These documents are available in the Risk Assessment File on the bookcase. As practice is updated or changed, so these risk assessments will also be kept up to date, or at least reviewed annually. It is incumbent upon anyone arranging activities to check the risk assessment, update and amend if necessary; if there is no risk assessment, one needs to be compiled, communicated, and adhered to. An appendix for hirers of the church premises, including the hall, to raise their awareness of safeguarding is in place.

There is also a duty on the PCC to ensure reporting of any ‘serious incidents’ not only to the diocese, social services, police etc, but also to the Charity Commission, as the church is a registered charity. In the year to December 2023 there were no incidents to report.

Liz Macdonald is the new Safeguarding Lead, and she has full information to do this effectively. Jane Donati has stepped down after nine years in the role.

Training

As with the DBS checks, training, at the highest level applicable and undertaken, now also must be renewed every three years. The ministry team all have relevant training. Nearly all of the PCC have undertaken online training as well. In a few of the church’s activities, some need to complete or renew the training. However, despite the many measures taken, we should not be complacent, and we will formally review our policy and procedures at the next PCC meeting, but also recognise that this area permeates all our activities.

Report by Jane Donati

From May 2024 - Liz Macdonald, Safeguarding Lead

Electoral Roll report

For 2024, Church of England Rules required us to undertake an incremental refresh of the Electoral Roll; existing members of the Roll remain on the Roll unless they actively ask to be removed or both live outside the Parish and cease to attend without good reason.

Our new Roll has 175 entries. This is a net reduction of 7 since last year (in 2023 it was an increase of 10); movement is as follows:

Last Year's Roll	182	
Passed Away	-5	
Removed (note 1)	-3	
Resigned	-3	
Carried forward		171
Added to the Roll for the first time		4
New Roll		175

Note 1: Church of England Rules: “a person’s name must be removed from the roll in each of the following cases... where the person (a) has ceased to reside [is not resident] in the parish, (b) has not continued to habitually attend public worship in the parish during any period of six months,

and (c) has not been prevented from doing so by illness or other sufficient cause. ...The name of a person must not be removed from the roll in [these] cases unless the PCC has taken reasonable steps to establish the relevant facts".

The revised Roll (names and an in/out of Parish indicator only) will be displayed in Church from today.

Of the 175 entries:

- 113 are residents in the (ecclesiastical) Parish and 62 outside the Parish or state that they have worshipped for 6 months or more – a ratio of 1.8 to 1.
- 117 are female and 58 are male – a ratio of 2.0 to 1.

For 2025 we will be undertaking a full renewal of the roll and everyone on the current Roll will need to confirm that they wish to remain on it. This will be a significant activity.

Neil Middleton

Electoral Roll Officer

26th April 2024

The easiest way to apply to join the roll is usually via our Google Form – use the QR code for access; or blank forms are available in the Church Porch and from stjohnsharpenden.org.uk/electoralroll



Wheathampstead Deanery Synod report

REPORT YEAR TO 31 DECEMBER 2023

Three meetings were held during the year.

Deanery services were held on Ascension Day and in October.

January: A presentation on the new system for vocations within the Diocese, by Revd Charles Burch, the Diocesan Vocations Officer.

Charles explained that vocation just means that we have a calling. Narrow definition.

We spent a few minutes sharing our stories of 'being called'. We all need to spot people in our parishes that we feel might have gifts to offer, and actually ask them!

Clergy have an opportunity to encourage people to 'have a go'. This is encouraging to people who might lack confidence.

Ordained ministry is a **national** system, for Reader selection, it is at Diocesan level.

Remember that we need to encourage **all** people. Don't need to have a degree to train for ministry. Age limit 58 for self-supporting, 53 for stipendiary.

July: A presentation by Kate Ford, Diocesan Giving Advisor.

Kate explained that she wanted to help us to address the challenge of getting financial support for our churches, which is a struggle facing us all– even more so after Covid.

Kate was promoting the new National Giving Scheme. Kate is willing and able to talk to PCCs about all giving matters.

November: A presentation by Tom Abraham, the Diocesan Net Zero Advisor.

We have the destination of being net zero by 2030 and have both a national route map and a diocesan strategy to get there, but at the moment we don't have a full picture of where our carbon is being created. Tom spoke about Net Zero Scope • Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) • smart meters • electric heating systems • measuring the cost of a service • grants • resources. He gave some really helpful examples of where energy might be saved and of cost comparisons.

Much useful information is available if we only ask for it.

David Nye
1 May 2024

Report from the Churchwarden for the APCM 12 May 2024

This report does not dwell on the necessary and important work that many church groups have carried out during this last year – you can read about them in other places. However, I do want to highlight some of the really important services which were led with great enthusiasm and which show how important it is to remember and celebrate these special occasions. I particularly recall our Harvest Festival celebrations, the Patronal Festival, the wonderful celebration for the coronation of our King and services too many to mention at Christmas and Easter.

None of these events take place without a great deal of planning and we are grateful to Tim our vicar for being at the sharp end! We were delighted to welcome Ritah as our new curate last July and she has been a most welcome addition to our ministry team. We look forward to her ordination as priest at the end of June. Sadly, Tim has had health problems earlier this year and we hope that after a period of adjustment he will be returning to full strength.

I do also want to pay tribute to several people whose efforts contribute greatly to the smooth running of St John's and all that we do. The flower arrangers regularly beautify the church, and we are grateful to Liz Curran who has just stepped down having led the group for 10 years. Stuart Burnett has worked diligently to ensure that the hall roof no longer leaks, Matt Barter is always on hand to resolve day-to-day property issues and the Dorcas group led by Helen Davies has recently completed a wonderful altar frontal in the Lady Chapel. Mary Jean took on the role of PCC secretary and is doing a wonderful job. In the parish office, Amanda joined last summer replacing Anna, a hard act to follow but one which she has done with enthusiasm, friendliness and efficiency. Thank you, Amanda. During Tim's absence Ritah and Anne Edwards ensured the church was unlocked and locked every day and thanks should be paid to the ministry team for ensuring that our services continued more or less as normal.

Sadly, we said goodbye to John and Jacky Dodd; Jacky had been PCC secretary for a number of years, and both had contributed in many ways to the life of St John's. We also said farewell to Moira Carrington, our first woman churchwarden, who moved to Cornwall having worshipped at St John's for over 70 years. On a personal level I also want to thank those whom we call deputy wardens who week by week make sure that everything is in order before our 9.30 service can start. Thank you to Bryan and also to Martin and David Brown, who have supported and encouraged me over this last year. Above all thanks to Jane Donati, who served as churchwarden for 6 years and has been a stalwart as a deputy during this last year.

There will be others who have played their part but who are too numerous to list here – I know who you are and you know who you are! Thank you all so much.

Heather Nye

Churchwarden

6 May 2024

REPORTS OF ALL OUR ACTIVITIES

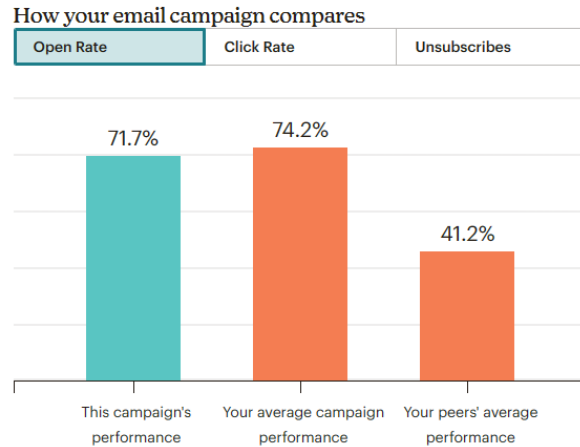
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COMMUNICATIONS

Email newsletters

Our weekly email subscriber count is currently 247 (last year 234), and around 70 – 75% of recipients at least open the email each week (this is unchanged from last year). Mailchimp, our provider, suggests that we are just under twice as successful as our peers, but whether this is fair or not is not clear as we do not have the definition of “peers” beyond them being “non profit”.



Social media

We currently have accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Given the change in direction for Twitter (more news and politics) it is now receiving less attention from us.

We have 369 followers on our Facebook page (up from 269 last year) and 146 followers on Instagram (up from 134 last year).

We are using social media to reach more people; most crucially social media is a good way to communicate with younger people and those who do not yet come to church.

Our most popular post of 2022 was an early November one setting out our Advent and Christmas services that reached 1,900 and had 103 reactions.

If you aren't already following us, you can find us at the following locations:

Facebook: @stjohnsal5

Instagram: @stjohnsal5

Twitter: @stjohnsAL5

Website

The St John's website has continued to be one of our key “shop windows” as St John's seeks to demonstrate how we are Living God's Love. During 2023 we had a significant refresh of the website look and feel to bring it up to modern standards, including a better appearance on mobile devices.

We are currently without statistics, as the website provider has discontinued these and we need to enable Google analytics.

Live streaming

We have continued to routinely live stream our services since first starting this activity in November 2020.

During the last 12 months we've had 3,900 views (down from 6,400 views), and, of more relevance, 702 hours of viewing (from 761 hours of viewing). We have 208 subscribers (March 2023: 185).

Our live stream serves two audiences:

- for our regular services, members of the congregation who cannot make it to church.
- for funerals, those who live away from Harpenden, including the frail; our most viewed service of the year, by a considerable margin, was a funeral.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow live streaming crew for their support in delivering our live streams; if you are interested in joining us, please do get in contact.

Neil Middleton

DORCAS

Since completing the all-season altar frontal for the Lady Chapel, the Dorcas group has carried out various repairs to chasubles and regular replacements to amices after laundering. Financial constraints have prevented any new projects, but suggestions would be welcome to enhance our already beautiful place of worship.

Helen Davies

ECO CHURCH

The Eco Church group have had another busy year, here are a few highlights.

Clothes Swap Event Oct 2023 A staggering 1.92 million tonnes of textile waste is produced every year, and the environmental impact of the fashion industry is huge. In response to this, the eco church groups from St John's, All Saints, St Mary's and St Nicholas churches in Harpenden got together to hold a special Waste Not Clothes Swap event on Saturday evening, October 7th. Many people donated good quality clothing beforehand and on the evening. Around 50 adults and teenagers came to the event and enjoyed selecting and trying on the clothes, over a drink and nibbles. We then drew lots to take it in turn to pick our favourite items. We all had a fun evening, and many people went home with lots of excellent quality second-hand clothes, a perfect way to recycle and reuse. As an added bonus, we raised £250 for the clothes waste charity Fashion Revolution, which aims to end human and

environmental exploitation in the global fashion industry. We plan to hold another event in 2025.

Litter picks: We run two litter picks a year, on Sundays in June and November. These are well supported by members of the congregation and people in the wider community.

Cleaning products: in discussion with Amanda, we have switched many of the cleaning products we buy to keep the church and hall clean to environmentally friendly versions.

Recycling: We are no longer able to recycle the pill blister packs, as Superdrug no longer accept bulk collections. Many thanks to Di Borthwick for all her hard work in contributing to saving over 80 bin bags of pill packs from landfill. Superdrug are still accepting empty blister packs from individuals.

Energy audit: We obtained a grant from the Diocese for a professional Energy Audit of the church in January 2024. The report is currently with the PCC.

Carbon footprint challenge. Many members of the congregation have had a go at finding out their carbon footprint, using the WWF calculator <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk>. We hope this will be useful as a way of thinking about which parts of our lifestyle have the biggest environmental impact, and how to make a positive change to reduce our carbon footprint.

We include regular items in the pew sheet and magazine about ways to care for the wonderful world God has given us. We hope by the next report to have received the Silver Eco Church award. Please do contact me or one of the other members of the group if you would like to join us, either to help with one-off events, or on a regular basis. We are always looking for new members and ideas.

Margaret Charlston

FAITH AND LIGHT

Not many people may know this, but Faith and Light has been running at St John's for over 30 years. Our numbers have gone down since Covid, so most of our meetings this year have numbered about 20 people. We have new members of the planning team: Sarah Vardy, Jenny Cope, and Sue Walker, which has strengthened the core.

An important part of our gatherings is always the tea, but this is not just because we like eating and drinking. Every church in Harpenden contributes by bringing tea once a month, and this allows Faith and Light to witness to all those volunteers, as well as being an important inter-church activity. This year we had two new churches join the tea rota: All Saints Batford and Christ Church.

Faith and Light worship is deeply faithful, thoughtfully prayerful, and wonderfully out of tune. We warmly welcome all to our service at 5pm on the first Sunday of the month, or to any of our sessions.

Lauryn Awbrey, Chaplain

FLOWER GUILD

It has been a very quiet year in that we have had no requests to arrange flowers for any weddings, funerals or memorials. We have of course provided flowers for Sunday worship each week. We have lost three people from the rota, so we now have 21, some of whom help just at festivals. We were down to half that number at Harvest because of holidays so the church could not be completely decorated.

After over 11 years in the driving seat I felt there was a need for someone with fresh energy and ideas. I was glad and relieved when Mary Hoare said she would take over. I give her my best wishes and I 'm sure our ladies will give her all their support as they have done to me over the years.



Elizabeth Curran

LITTLE ACORNS

We have had another busy and successful year!

Little Acorns meets on a Tuesday morning from 10.00 - 11.30 am in the church hall. Over the past year we have had 46 sessions with an average attendance of: 39 children and adults (Spring term); 33 children and 35 adults (summer term) ;31 children and 32 adults (winter term); 29 children and 30 adults (Spring term 2024).

In addition, Tim and Ritah led six stay-and-play sessions over the summer holidays with an average attendance of 25 adults and 30 children. This proved very popular.

We have had donations of £3,400, expenditure of £922.40 and donated £120 to the church for the coffee we use. Since September we also have a QR code to make donations through and have had approximately £82 through this system.

I would like to thank all the volunteers for their support as without them the group could not run. A special thanks to Steve Whiting for handling the money and Alison Gardener for producing our tick sheets.

It has been a pleasure to welcome Revd Ritah to our tea; she has been very dedicated in her support.

Since September 2023 Fusion have been meeting on a Tuesday in the committee room. They return at 12.00 to the main hall for lunch.

We are famous for our homemade cakes and delicious coffee! It doesn't matter how many cakes we have, they always go. We have done a wide variety of activities, including pancake races which are great fun. Many pancakes get eaten before the race is started! We aim to celebrate significant Christian festivals as well as national events.

We celebrated the King's coronation where activities included making crowns and marching around the church, at Harvest we collected a basket of food for the foodbank, and we had a lovely Christmas service in church. We gave each child a copy of the Christmas story and a chocolate angel, which were much appreciated. At Easter 2024 we had an Easter egg hunt to the church, Ritah told the Easter story, and each child received a chocolate egg.

We now look forward to another year. It is always sad to say goodbye to children who have been with us for some time, but it has been a pleasure to watch them grown and develop. We look forward to welcoming new children in September.

Christine Kenyon

JUNIOR CHURCH

Junior Church and Mini Church continue to take place once a month on Sundays at the same time as the main parish Eucharist. They are run by a team of volunteers who create a place of worship and learning for both school-aged children (Junior Church) and under-5s (Mini Church).

In 2023 Junior Church sessions took place on the second Sunday of each month and were regularly well attended. Thank you to Beti, Caroline, Carolyn, Christine, Kirstine, Lauryn, Liz, Naomi, Nicola, Ritah and Steph for all their hard work. A nativity play was put together in December which was also well attended. Thank you to Madeleine and Tom Venner for providing the music for this. Mini church also grew in numbers over the year. Attendance was generally around 10 - children/ babies and toddlers. Thank you to Gemma and Sarah for their support but more volunteers are always needed!

From May 2024, Junior and Mini Church will take place twice a month, on the second and fourth Sundays of each month during term-time. A Junior Church session is approximately 45 minutes long and consists of gathering together with a welcome song and lighting of a candle, an interactive Bible story, followed by crafts, games or activities to develop each child's understanding of the Bible story, and finishing up with a calming prayer. The sessions follow

the structure of the Diddy Disciples programme, with scripts that allow children to act out the key themes reflected on in church. Mini church is an informal act of worship including a short activity. The child must be accompanied by an adult. It is a very relaxed group and usually finishes with snacks for the children and cookies for the adults. Both Junior and Mini Church return to the main parish Eucharist in time for communion.

The dates for the next Junior and Mini churches are:

- Sunday 12th May
- Sunday 26th May
- Sunday 9th June
- Sunday 23rd June
- Sunday 14th July

Sophie Crowley and Christine Kenyo

MAGAZINE

The Parish Magazine's lively and forward-facing tone introduced last year continues. The aim is to attract and inform Southdown readers who are not regular churchgoers, as well as to appeal to St John's congregation and serve the community. Wider Southdown information has been included in some issues thanks to Revd Tim's outreach, for instance the Harpenden Trust's Well Bean Café and Grove School's summer fair. Appreciative feedback continues.

Susan Kerr continues as Editor, and Martyn Wainwright as designer. Sarah McKie took over from Steve Whiting in charge of distribution after his long time in this role – many thanks to Steve. Sarah maintains regular contact with the printers and organises the volunteer delivery, enabling timely and efficient deliveries to 4,000 Southdown homes and businesses. The delivery volunteers are vital to the magazine and St John's, a precious link within the parish. The magazine is posted on St John's website as well.

New Parish Administrator Amanda Knights is the lynchpin for the advertising content. The cost of producing the magazine continues to exceed the revenue from advertising. She is focussed on exploring options to improve this (new advertisers, advertising rates, number of pages, change of printer, change of advert/editorial ratio). At present no way to reduce costs was found. The conclusion was that the spend provides a valuable representation of St John's Church in Southdown, our presence and service, over four seasons of the year.

Susan Kerr, Editor

MOTHERS' UNION

Mothers' Union promotes the wellbeing of families and fights for gender justice and equity across the world. Members are active in 83 countries and work to serve communities to build a future where people of all faiths and none thrive.

Here at St John's we have a membership of 23 and we meet in the committee room at 2.30pm on the first Thursday of each month. Visitors are always very welcome.

MU Corporate Communion is held one Wednesday morning before Easter and again before Christmas.

This past year has been very enjoyable with guest speakers inspiring us with a variety of talks, including 'Jesus, a life in art,' 'An Archdeacon's story,' 'Friends of Tose,' 'Talking books,' and 'Domestic abuse.'

In July Revd Tim joined us on a very interesting visit to Gorhambury House. Lord Verulam's daughter-in-law gave us a very personalised guided tour of her beautiful home.

In August we enjoyed a summer picnic in Sandra Cresswell's delightful garden. A collection was made for the Summer of Hope Appeal and we raised £170.

In January some members attended the Epiphany Service at St Mary's Redbourn. As usual the delicious refreshments and lively conversation after the service provided us with the opportunity to make new friends from the West Cluster group of churches.



Having worked as a happy team on the morning of Saturday March 18th making 150 Mothering Sunday posies, it was a joy to see the baskets filled with spring colour at the foot of the altar at the Sunday service. Our Mothers' Union banner was proudly paraded by Brenda Cottle, and Anne Edwards gave a beautifully delivered sermon on the origins and significance of Mothering Sunday.

Before Christmas we made 80 Christingles, which delighted the children at the afternoon service on the following day and raised money for The Children's Society.

In November a small group of us made our way to King Charles the Martyr in Potters Bar for the Autumn Sharing Day.

Ruth Robb, the CEO of the Azalea Project, an organisation set up by Churches Together in Luton, spoke about the brilliant work being done to support homeless and abused women in the city. We were delighted to pass on two large bags of new items donated by our Branch for distribution to women and children in need.

25th November- 10th December: the 16-day international Campaign Against Gender-Based Violence was given a new logo this year - RISE UP against domestic abuse. The diocese supports refugees from members' donations and fundraising. Revd Tim was very supportive, and prayers were said on many occasions in church during the 16 days.

We continue to send Baptism anniversary cards each year for five years to those who have been baptised at St John's.

We said goodbye to three members this year who moved to be near family, but we have been delighted to welcome a new member, our curate, Revd. Ritah Namakula and we are very pleased that Jenny Cope and Sue Walker have joined us at our meetings.

All members of St John's Mothers' Union share a passion for the ideals of MU and all that that generates in action. We are determined to remain vibrant and relevant and as well as supporting our international charity we will support members of St John's church family whenever opportunities arise.

Carol Cooke, Branch Leader

OUTSIDE GIVING

Each year we give away part of our income to charities to demonstrate the imperative from Jesus Christ to love our neighbour and help those in need. The parishioners of St John's put forward suggestions of charities to support; this was shortlisted to 3 local charities, 3 national charities and 3 international charities. The parishioners then voted for the charity they wished to support and these are the results for 2023/24.

There were 111 voting slips and the results are as follows:

LOCAL	MIND in Mid-Herts - 34 St Albans & District Food Bank – 28 Open Door, St Albans - 25
NATIONAL	The Children's Society – 39 The National Brain Appeal – 35 The Church Urban Fund - 14
INTERNATIONAL	Missions Without Borders – 36 CURE International UK – 27 Embrace the Middle East - 21

We will shortly be able to announce the final figure from the accounts for donation in equal part to the 3 successful charities. The charities will then be invited to St John's to receive the donation and tell us more about the work of their charity.

We will also soon be asking for nominations for our outside giving programme for 2024/25

Pat Hudis, Keith Slinn and Nick Lockett, Outside Giving Committee

PROJECT PHOENIX

The plans for building a new Parish Centre to serve the church and the community have been steadily gathering momentum during 2023.

Planning permission from St Albans District Council was granted again in May 2023 after the first planning permission expired after three years in September 2022. We are now actively assessing ways in which we can implement the new planning permission, to ensure that a further application is not required in two years' time.

In July we held an event to express our thanks to all our donors for their continuing support during the difficult hiatus of Covid and the cost-of-living crisis, and to celebrate the successes of the project to date. We are very grateful to all the donors who have been able to maintain their giving. Only five people have withdrawn from the pledge scheme in the last four years (mainly due to moving away).

Back in 2019, the estimated building costs were £1.6m; a revised cost estimate has been established and is now £1.9m. It is therefore important that we step up our fundraising activities now, as costs will only increase in the future.

At the end of 2023 there were 32 people actively pledging to the project. The total amount pledged, including one-off donations, currently stands at £510,000 (including Gift Aid). A further £11,500 has been raised through various fundraising events. It is also interesting to note that we have received six one-off donations/pledges from people completely unconnected to St John's, thus emphasising the interest in this project to the wider community.

Approximately 95% of people who have been approached by the project ambassadors have either pledged or made a donation. We have another 120 or so members of the congregation to approach, which is our focus for 2024. Analysis of the pledges and one-off donations received to date, and a forward projection of what might be received from those we have not yet approached would indicate that there is no reason at all that we cannot achieve our stated targets.

The way ahead for us all is clear. We now invite everyone in the congregation to support the project through a donation, however large or small, and ideally through a five-year pledged gift. Our team of ambassadors are available to answer all your questions and to talk through the process in detail.

As always, we ask for your continuing prayers and support as we move into the next phase.

Key Project Milestones - achieved

September 2019 – Planning permission granted by St Albans District Council

February 2020 – Fundraising launch party

April 2020 – Fundraising total from donations and pledges (including Gift Aid) - £500,000

June 2022 – Relaunch of the project

May 2023 – Planning Application renewed

Autumn 2022 – Fundraising events begin again

July 2023 – Donors' thank you event

Matt Barter and Liz Sergeant

ST LUKE'S CELL

St Luke's Cell is a prayer group dedicated to praying for people in any kind of need. It has members both at St John's and High Street Methodist Church. The St Luke's Cell list is of people in the parish or relatives or friends of those living in the parish who are in particular need, and for whom our prayers have been asked. St Luke's Cell Prayer Group are always happy to pray for you (confidentially if needed). The group is named after the disciple and physician Luke, who is the patron saint of doctors. A request can be as simple as a name, if preferred. We don't need to know details in order to pray. Each of us prays for a small number of people on the list, moving to a further group each month. We also meet together on the second Wednesday of each month in St John's Church at 2.30 pm when we pray for all those on the list in a short service. Would you like us to pray for you? You can get in touch with the parish office, a member of the ministry team or with Michael Hughes (01582 765576) from the group.

Michael Hughes

SERVERS

Servers have an important role to play in the life of the Church because they assist the Celebrant at the altar so that they can focus on their role in the Eucharist. They play a key part in public worship in ensuring that the service runs smoothly, thus enabling the congregation to focus on the important elements of the Eucharist.

I am grateful for the support from everyone on the team during the past year, we have six adult and seven younger servers, although we need to recruit more, particularly for the 8am service.

It is a wonderful privilege to serve St John's as Head Server, but I feel that the time is right for me to retire after 25 years in the role. I will be retiring at the end of September this year. I will, of course, continue to worship at St John's as I have done for the past 34 years, and will give my successor my full support and encouragement.

Michael Readman

SOUND SYSTEM

It is planned to replace the current system with a system that is reliable and better suited to our requirements. The loudspeaker system will be replaced in order to make speech more easily heard. There will also be a hearing loop provided for the hard of hearing. Planning work continues, including seeking the necessary approvals from the Diocesan Approvals Committee (DAC) to give us a faculty for the new system, and to investigate sources of funding.

Volunteers are sought to operate the sound system at the 9:30 Eucharist, making sure that the levels are correct and that the appropriate microphones are live. There are other services where an operator is required on an occasional basis, such as carol services. It is quite straightforward and training will be given; there is no need for detailed technical knowledge. It is anticipated that when the new system goes live there will be one operator for both the sound and live stream elements combined.

Michael Readman

TEA AT 3 (T@3)

Over the past year, since our last report the news of St John's T@3 is spreading within the Harpenden area, and we are seeing many more people attending. Numbers are frequently in

the 30s and the hall is filling up with our steady regulars and new customers alike, as well as occasionally their carers, drivers etc - all are most welcome. The Harpenden Trust has been supporting the teas and have brought or directed people to join us.

All this is most encouraging but does mean we need to spread the load a bit and find more people to provide food and help us run these events. We are a small team of 10 people but we are not always available at the same time although we make a jolly good fist of it! If anyone knows of a benevolent baker or two who may be interested in joining the team we would love to know.

Briony Linsell